JOURNEY OF THE PHOENIX

Overseas study and women's changing position in China

Anni Kajanus

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CONTENTS

List of tables

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INTRODUCTION

'Everyone wants their son to become a dragon and their daughter to become a phoenix' (*Wang zi cheng long, wang nü cheng feng*) was a phrase I often heard from the urban Chinese parents and their student children in response to my questions about the parental investment on the education of sons and daughters. The mythical creatures, phoenix and dragon, connote power and distinction, the implication being that regardless of the sex of the child, every parent wants their only child to succeed. The beautiful and graceful phoenix is associated with femininity and the dragon, being the symbol of heavenly and worldly power, with masculinity. Here in short is my argument. The educational achievement of the daughters and sons of urban single-child Chinese families is equally supported by their parents. This is evident when looking at parents who are willing to take on the considerable financial burden of sponsoring their child's overseas study. In the past four decades, the proportion of women in the student migration flow has increased fivefold, marking a clear change to the previous focus on investing in the future of sons. But despite the relatively equal access to resources and support, the cultural models of gender, that is, what women and men *are* in essence, influence the ways success is defined and pursued. This results in the paradox that women's educational and professional success is supported in some contexts and not in others, or to put it another way, *women as daughters are supported to succeed, but women as wives and mothers are not*. The gendered models for familial roles and obligations, success and security shape the experiences and the choices of the young student migrants, but in turn, their cosmopolitan engagements become part of the transformation of the social and moral landscape of China (Yan 2011). Now let us trace the way back to the questions behind this argument, and the reasons for asking them in the first place.

Migration and the patrilineal family

Across the research on historical and contemporary migration flows originating from China (for a review of the patterns see Wang 1991), a relatively consistent image of the migrant and his culturally defined motivations emerge. From the 19th century coolie migrants (Campbell 1923; Kung 1962; McKenzie 1925; Mei 1979; Shen 1970; Stewart 1951; Zo 1978), to the traders in Southeast Asia (Fitzgerald 1965; Skeldon 1996; Purcell 1965; Skinner 1950; Suryadinata 1985); from the Republican period educated sojourners (Harrell 1992; Orleans 1988) to the reform era labour migrants to the US and Europe (Benton and Pieke 1998; Chin 1999; Liang 2001; Pieke and Mallee 1999; Pieke et al. 2004); and to the cosmopolitan business men (Ong 1999, 2006), the Chinese migrant is male, and his ventures abroad are partly aimed at fulfilling his role as a son, a husband and a father in the patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system. By remitting money and investing in home-place projects he fulfils his filial duty not only to the family, but also to the motherland. Taking up the strategy of migration that is high in risk, cost, and hopefully returns, is also in line with the gender model that assigns the male gender with existential qualities (Kopytoff 1990) of physical and mental strength, autonomy and aggression (Evans 1995: 371-2). In line with their existential gender qualities: physical and mental weakness, responsiveness and altruism (Evans 1995: 371-2), women play the supporting roles in Chinese migration. They are the left-behind wives who care for the parents-in-law, the children and the households. Some achieve mobility through the initiative of others, when they follow their husbands or parents abroad. A notable exception is marriage migration, which is initiated by women who move abroad to marry foreign nationals (see the edited volume Constable 2005a). But even though women are the initiators of these flows, their migration is still largely in line with the central cultural models of kinship and gender in China, patrilineality and patriarchy. They marry 'out' of their natal families, and they marry 'up' according to the logic of global hypergamy.

However, while in Amsterdam conducting research for my master's degree in 2006, I came across a group of Chinese migrants who, almost invisible in the scholarly work on Chinese migration, seemed to challenge the compliance between mobility and cultural models of kinship

and gender. The young mainland Chinese women who had come to the Netherlands to study were there not to support a (male) family member, or to work for the greater good of the family. They were the daughters of urban single-child families, and their parents were spending their life savings to support their overseas study. These young women articulated their migration in terms of personal goals and interests: career ambitions, desire to see the world and to experience different cultures, to be free and independent. Many of them had no intention of returning to China. Some had Dutch boyfriends and planned to marry, others hoped to remigrate to even more desirable destinations such as UK or US, after graduation.

There are a few historical reviews of Chinese students in the US (Orleans 1988; Ling 1997, 1998) that also deal with women. These accounts address time periods before the 'overseas study fever', when student migration was still mainly a strategy of a few elite families, the number of women student migrants was very small, and many of them were spouses of male student migrants. After the start of this project, student migration has gained more scholarly interest (e.g. Fong 2011; Nyíri 2006; Waters 2005, 2008; Xiang and Shen 2009). None of these works, however, deals with the parental investment in the overseas education of their only child in the context of the cultural models of kinship and gender. Sending sons abroad to study makes sense in terms of the patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal principles of Chinese kinship. A son is responsible for caring for his parents in old age and parents thus benefit from his success and rely on it. Daughters, on the other hand, become part of their husband's family upon marriage and are responsible for performing in practice much of the care their husband owes to his own parents. According to this logic, parents can expect no direct return for their investment in their daughter's future. But as the family planning policies have made a single child the norm in urban areas (Mueggler 2001: 292-98), parental support for daughters's education and future has increased to an extent that there appears to be little difference between sons and daughters (Fong 2004; Tsui and Rich 2002; Zheng 2000).

Gendering student migration

The findings of my research support this view. Urban parents are willing to go into great lengths to ensure their only child, a daughter or a son, will get a share of the newly available wealth of the country. This development is reflected in the increased investment in daughters' education abroad. By 2000, when the first generation of singletons had reached the age of entering higher education, women had come to constitute half of the student migrant flow to the UK (Table 3). In my LSE survey, 94% of the female students received funding for their studies from their parents, for the male students the figure was 88%. The 'problem' I set out to explore in this project can be articulated as 'How does the recently increased familial support for female student migration interact with the cultural models of kinship and gender?' Interaction here points to the mutual impact between culture and migration. First, my aim is to offer an insight into the transformation of the social and moral landscape of China, and the role migration plays in the changing family and gender dynamics. Second is to look at how cultural models shape the migration flow and the experiences of migrants. In other words, what makes the student migration specifically Chinese?

To understand these mutually constitutive dynamics, we need to look at all three aspects of migration flows: the structural context that facilitates migration by enabling and driving people to look for opportunities elsewhere; the cultural models that shape the form the mobility takes and the way it is viewed and experienced; and the role of individual choice and manoeuvring. Chinese student migration is clearly embedded in the transformations of the Chinese society and culture in the past three decades, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 1. In brief, student migration has responded to the economic needs and desires of both, the country and the people. The reform era governments have promoted the internationalisation of education as one of the keys to the country's development. For individual families and students, overseas education has given opportunities for career development, higher earnings and accumulation of capitals (financial, social and cultural) outside the national politico-economic borders. The main destination countries, as well as the international education industry with its various agents, brokers and institutions, have generally been eager to

accommodate the needs and the fees of the student migrants. The policy changes in China and the destinations countries, as well as the economic trends in both national and global levels, have effected periodic fluctuations in the flow. Apart from these structural developments, the sociocultural changes of the recent decades have given Chinese student migration its character. The increase of youth autonomy, consumerism, the rise of individualism and women's changed position in the society and in the family, are all directly linked to student migration (Jankowiak 1995; Kleinman et al. 2011; Rofel 2007; Whyte 2003; Yan 2003, 2009, 2011).

Migrant subjectivities

To analyse the dynamics of migrant experience, I employ the concept of *subjectivity*, which encompasses structural conditions, cultural models and individual reflexivity (some would say agency). I take Sherry Ortner's (2005) view that culture, as a set of models, meanings and dispositions shared by a historically situated group of people (i.e. within particular structural conditions), is simultaneously collective and subjective, constitutive of people's subjectivity and reflected upon by them. Cultural formations are thus powerful constituents of people's subjectivities, but at the same time, they are rarely internalised in full. She argues:

> I said earlier that I take people to be "conscious" in the sense of being at least partially "knowing subjects," self-aware and reflexive. Subjectivities are complex because they are culturally and emotionally complex, but also because of the ongoing work of reflexivity, monitoring the relationship of the self to the world. No doubt there are cultural subjects who fully embody, in the mode of power, the dominant culture ("Davos Man"), and no doubt there are cultural subjects who have been fully subjected, in the mode of powerlessness, by the dominant culture. By and large, however, I assume at the most fundamental level that for most subjects, most of the time, this never fully works, and there are countercurrents of subjectivity as well as of culture (2005: 59).

Change and transformation are central to Ortner's notions of culture and subjectivity. New modes of power, often originating in economic and political transformations, come to be embedded in the cultural formations that are central to the subjects' positioning and self-positioning in the world. In China, perhaps the most important of these cultural formations has been the family, or the kinship system. The importance of the particularistic ties of kinship in determining a person's status, identity and role in both public and private domains has continued (although not unaffected) across various structural transformations during the past century. Each of them has left a mark to the relations of power and attachment in the family, from the rise of conjugality during the collectivist era to the rise of the desiring individual in the reform era (Kleinman et al. 2011; Rofel 2007; Yan 2003, 2009, 2011). I will thus begin the study of the student migrants' subjectivity within the domain of the family. As Yanagisako and Collier (1987) and more recently Carsten (2004) have argued, kinship and gender are often mutually constituted cultural formations, and the study of one should include the other. I treat them not as separate domains but as two perspectives on the same set of issues that concern human relatedness. The recent transformation of the Chinese family system, which has followed from the one child policy and other reform era transformations (urbanisation, market capitalism, consumerism), has critical implications for the cultural model of gender.

Cultural formations are models that inform the subject on an abstract level, they do not determine actions on a practical level. They form an ethical discourse against which moral dilemmas of lived experience are reflected; explaining, justifying and motivating actions and relating a person to the world. To conceptualise the relationship of an acting subject to these abstract models, to see how they are intersubjectively produced and enacted, and to bring them to the level of lived experience, I turn to the concept of *affect*. Of its various recent theoretical deployments, I find Richard and Rudnyckyj's (2009) concept 'economies of affect' particularly useful. This Foucauldian 'economy' refers to a zone where certain types of subjects are produced through affective attachments and enactments. Affects are thus not only the emotional impacts other people, landscapes, encounters and objects have on individuals and groups (Stewart 2007; Navaro-Yashin 2009) but a form of subjectification (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009; see also Muehlebach

2011). Family is a site of strong affective attachments and it is through these ties of affect that cultural formations become alive; in other words, the models of kinship and gender become part of the student migrant experience. It is precisely to emphasise the impact emotions have, and the way the emotions are produced in the cycles of care in the family, that I have chosen to use affect instead of emotion, feeling, passion or other similar concepts. Affect is not an inner state outwardly expressed, but a relationship of sentimental nature that has an impact, thus being inherently reflexive and intersubjective (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009).

For most modern populations, the economy of affect is a single zone where the self, the family and the state form a continuum of government. In the case of China, the state tries to forge affective attachments with the student migrants by instilling in them a sense of filial nationalism (Fong 2011). Even more importantly, it directly influences the affective ties within the family through various policies that have, sometimes unintentionally, resulted in the recent transformations of the intergenerational, conjugal and gender relations. Apart from the affective ties with the parents, sexual and romantic affect is central to the experiences of the student migrants, who are in the age group that has recently started dating or are hoping to marry soon. I consider the sexual and romantic ties of affect as part of the domain of 'family' in the continuum of government. They include not only romantic and sexual relationships, but powerful fantasies about an ideal relationship and a partner. Finding a compromise between fantasy and reality often involves reflexive work on the various models of kinship and gender the student migrants are invested in.

To put it simply, affect refers to relationships practised between individuals, not to the experience of the individual per se. Cultural models are enacted in these relationships, thus becoming constitutive of the subjectivity of the individual, i.e. her of his modes of perception, desires and anxieties (Ortner 2005). Two important points follow from this conceptualisation. First, particular types of affect enable particular types of subjectivities. In order to understand the subjectivities of the Chinese student migrants and the global connections that emerge from this flow, we must look at the ties of affect they have with the Chinese state and with their families, and moreover, how the state influences the affective ties within families. Second, locating agency in the reflexive quality of

affect, and thus subjectivity, removes its problematic association with individual autonomy, freedom and resistance. As Saba Mahmood (2005) has argued, having agency does not equal to exercising free will. More precisely, freedom is always of a historically specific kind, defining the techniques of the self through which agency is exercised (Laidlaw 2002, drawing from Foucault). The systems of power are multiple, and we thus need to be careful when defining people's actions as resistance. When a Chinese student migrant claims that her filiality towards her parents is best performed by pursuing personal success and happiness, should this be seen as a manifestation of the waning patriarchy and generational hierarchy, or as the result of the rise of the neoliberalist individualism and market-driven consumerism? Agency that reflects upon and acts against one system of power is often embedded in another power system, not in some mythical autonomy of the individual (Mahmood 2005). As a result, groups of people have subjectivities that are partly shared but never exactly the same.

In China, power systems include for example the hierarchies of gender and generation, regional and economic stratification and the political system. In the case of the student migrants, cosmopolitan resources, and cosmopolitanism itself as a resource, can be added to the list. Because of their cosmopolitan engagements, i.e. engagements with the power systems of other cultures and societies, as well as a 'cosmopolitan competence' (see Friedman 1994; Hannerz 1990) they develop to varying degrees, student migrants are at the forefront of many sociocultural transformations in China. Pierre Bourdieu (2007) has called a similar process in post-war France a 'unification of symbolic markets', when women and landless men from rural Béarn started to migrate into cities. As a result, the value systems of the rural and urban societies became unified in a way that devalued the peasant way of life and shifted the rural power hierarchies. Bourdieu's focus is the changing marriage market, and I will take up his work again in my discussion of the student migrants and the Chinese marriage market in Chapter 5. Here I want to borrow his more general insight that the unification of symbolic markets is not a process that encompasses the society as a whole, but takes place through countless individual journeys. Each individual must negotiate the conflicts of different symbolic systems in her or his personal experience. For the student migrants conflicts between different ideas about kinship

and gender arise when they try to combine personal interests, hopes and ambitions with the gendered models of filiality and success. The conflicts can take the form of personal anxiety when individuals are invested in more than one symbolic system and must act against one; or become conflicts between people, often the student migrant and her or his parents, about the terms of familial responsibility (gendered forms of support that flow between parents and the child), the parents' expectations and personal aspirations (what subject to study, where to work and live, whom to marry, etc.).

Five discourses

I have identified five major discourses that the student migrants commonly draw from in their negotiations of the conflicts. They are: patrilineality, patriarchy, gender equality, filiality of daughters, and romantic love. The cultural model of patrilineality still has strength as an ethical discourse that can be used, or sometimes very consciously manipulated, to evaluate and articulate lived realities. But as its institutionalised forms: patrilineal inheritance, ancestor worship and patrilocality, are not held up by many urban families, it can be de-emphasised to the extent that other discourses take precedence. Patriarchy is a more general model of male supremacy that includes patrilineage and its institutions. It also encompasses the existential, asymmetrical and hierarchical gender model. At times it is used as a rationale for a natural order of things, as when used as an explanation for gender discrimination in the job market. At other times, it is held up as an ideal model that needs to be completed through appropriate social action, for example through hypergamous marriages.

A gender equality discourse was part and parcel of the Maoist project of liberation that aimed, and by and large succeeded, to universalise women's participation in education and non-domestic work (Bauer et al. 1992; Lin 2001; Entwistle et al. 1995), and to end the 'feudalist' practices of arranged marriage, concubinage, etc. (Evans 1995; Jacka 1990). In the reform era (post-1978), the state propagated model of gender equality has been linked to the larger project for population quality (*suzhi*) that the family planning policies are part of (Greenhalgh and Winckler

2005; see also Kipnis 2009; Mueggler 2001). The rationale is that fewer children will result in a better nurtured, educated, and healthier population. Campaigns that promote the value of daughters through ideological teaching and negative and positive incentives have supported the project, most recently the 'Care for Girls' campaign that combats the alarmingly high sex ratio in some regions (Shang, Li and Feldman 2012).

The discourse about the filial daughters is used to emphasise their value to parents through claiming that daughters are in fact more filial than sons, because they love their parents more. This discourse draws from two sources: the change in intergenerational power dynamics and the cultural gender model. Firstly, as Martin King Whyte (2003: 7) has pointed out, the notion of filiality includes both the divine obligation and the built up emotional attachment. In the recent decades, the emphasis has shifted from the former to the latter. Women, through their existential gender identities are considered (and thus taught and expected) to be more caring and altruistic than men. Men's relationships with their parents, in contrast, have been more mediated by their formal patrilineal attachments and obligations. As familial obligations and formal filiality have lost weight with the rise of the desiring individual (Rofel 2007; Yan 2011) and decline of the patrilocality and ancestor worship in urban China, the filiality of the child is seen to a growing effect to result from the degree of emotional attachment the parents manage to cultivate in the child (Kleinman et al. 2011; Yan 2003). The building of such attachment is considered easier, or more precisely, more natural, between parents and a daughter than a son. The idea of the more filial daughters have thus emerged, often used by parents and daughters to articulate their feelings, experiences and choices.

The discourse of romantic love is used to negotiate conflicts that evolve around dating, marriage and sexual relations. With the growing emphasis on individuality and desire, the idealisation of love and romance has become central to the experience of the urban youth. It is often set against the more instrumental rationale of a 'proper match', which conforms to the hierarchies of gender and class and is a powerful model in the marriage market.

These discourses are used in conflicts that evolve around parent-child relations, cycles of familial support, choices about study, work and place of residence, and about dating and marriage partners and sexual

relations. They can all be used in ways that contest or conform to systems of power. For example, young women often use the patrilineal and patriarchal discourses to claim independence from familial control and obligations, and the discourses of gender equality and filiality of daughters to claim a valuable role in that cycle. Some of these discourses are considered more traditional than others, but this does not mean that the newer discourses are always associated with progress. For example, the parents of the students often criticised the contemporary youth for being materialistic and practical in their attitudes towards marriage. They contrasted this with their own youth (for most in the late 1970s and during the 1980s) when relationships were based on love with little concern for other factors. The complexity and creativity in the ways these discourses are used will become clear in the following chapters.

The discourses of patrilineality, patriarchy and filial daughters rest mainly on Chinese systems of power, while the discourses of gender equality and romantic love combine elements of Chinese and foreign systems. The foreign elements become part of the changing Chinese moral landscape through cosmopolitan engagements. The student migrants, through their personal processes of adaptation and alienation, play a central role in the wider process of the partial unification of symbolic markets that is going on in China. Their journeys are motivated, shaped and restricted by a very particular kind of structural context in which the politico-economic trajectories of the Chinese state and the destination countries are connected by the international education market. In this market the rhetoric of cosmopolitan education covers the interests of various states and other agents, including educational institutions, agents, brokers, supranational institutions (World Bank, WTO, UNESCO and OECD), etc. Let us now turn to the concept of cosmopolitanism and how I use it to analyse the trajectories of the student migrants, their parents, the different states involved, and the international education industry.

Cosmopolitanism

Of the various terms that refer to internationally mobile persons and their attachments to different places (transnational, international, cross-border, cross-cultural, etc.), I have chosen to use 'cosmopolitan', as it

encompasses both the fact of mobility (of people, but also of things and ideas) and its ideological connotations. For the young Chinese student migrants and their families, cosmopolitan subjectivity is something to be desired, and achieved through conscious effort. The Chinese state promotes the training of 'talents' (*rencai*) through overseas study with its policy that is reflected in the slogan 'Support overseas study, encourage people to return, give freedom to come and go' (*Zhichi liuxue, guli hui guo, lai qu ziyou*). What does being cosmopolitan mean, then, to these different agents? Nothing, in a sense that it was not a term used by my informants or the Chinese state in this context. But as an analytical concept, it encompasses the various identities, dispositions, desires, skills and abilities that stem from the international encounters of student migration.

The concept of cosmopolitan brings together the desiring, the enterprising and the caring aspects of the Chinese student migrant subjectivity, which I will outline in detail in Chapter 1. The association of certain places with ideals of modernity, freedom, wealth and adventure, or what I call the 'geography of desire', following Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar's (2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003) concept 'geography of power', motivates students to pursue an access to these places. An access is gained through individual enterprising to acquire the credentials, skills and resources that are required for successful manoeuvring in these privileged spaces (e.g., Western countries, China-based foreign and multinational companies). The cycle of familial care facilitates the pursuit of these resources, as the student migrants often rely on their parents' sponsorship. The paradox is that while supporting a child's cosmopolitan quest can give her or him better material means to return the care to the parents in old age, the physical mobility that often follows raises barriers to the effective return of emotional care, which in fact is considered more important by many urban parents. This is one of the many potential interruptions in the cycle of familial care that the student migrants and their parents must negotiate.

Of the different conceptualisations of the term listed by Vertovec and Cohen (2002), cosmopolitanism as a *'mode of orientation to the world'* (see Hannerz 1990) and as a *'set of competencies'* (see Friedman 1994) best describe the goals of the student migrants and their parents. Some students and parents view cosmopolitan competency in utilitarian terms, as a cultural capital that can be converted into other forms. For others,

cosmopolitan orientation is something more abstract, a widening of horizons, a form of self-development and fulfilment that has value in addition to its practical benefits. In her study of Chinese student migration, Vanessa Fong (2011) similarly found that the motivation of the students involves both the concrete benefits and a desire to step into a wider field of action and opportunities. She explains this cosmopolitan pursuit in terms of trying to acquire a 'developed world citizenship' that she divides into 'legal' (the legal rights of residency, work and citizenship), 'social' (the status that gives access to a certain level of services, prestige and comfort), and 'cultural' (the sense of belonging and its recognition by others). I want to emphasise that the degree to which the students and their parents view the cosmopolitan pursuit in terms of skills and competency or a mode of orientation to the world varies, which results in conflicts between them. Moreover, their perspectives and motivations change throughout the process. Chapters 3, 5 and 6 explore the different ideas about the aims, benefits and disadvantages of the overseas study and the conflicts that emerge between the student migrants and their parents.

The processes of adaptation and alienation the student migrants experience, and their particular way of inhabiting physical and sociocultural space, reflect a cosmopolitan *'socio-cultural condition'* (see Appadurai 1996). This cosmopolitan condition is produced by three types of travel: physical, imaginative (via media images) and virtual (via information technology) (Szerszynski and Urry 2006), thus involving not only the people who move, but also many who stay put: family members, students who wish to move but are not able to, and students who have the means to move but choose not to. The imaginative and virtual modes of travel are significant in fuelling the desire for migration and cosmopolitanism. They play a key role in constructing the geography of desire by linking locations with imageries of backwardness or progress, stagnation or opportunity, dependence or independence, and hardship or luxury. Physical travel produces the power dynamics of the cosmopolitan sociocultural condition. The student migrants partially relate to several physical locations and socioeconomic fields, and their positioning vis-à-vis the various power systems shifts with their mobility.

The international education market and China's engagement in it is best understood in terms of cosmopolitanism as a *'political project to*

build transnational institutions' (see Kaldor 1996), although it must be noted that this is a project as much driven by economic as political interests.[1] This will be discussed in Chapter 2.

It should be clear by now that even though I use cosmopolitanism as a concept to explore ideals and desires that may connote universalism, detachment and freedom, my use is far from the Kantian universalist philosophical sense. I take as a starting point that 'actually existing' (Malcomson 1998) cosmopolitanism is always culturally and politically rooted and particular (e.g., Cohen 1992; Cheah 1998; Ong 1999, 2006; Werbner 2006), a mode of attachment rather than detachment (e.g., Ong 1999; 2006; Robbins 1998), can involve the underprivileged as much as the privileged (e.g., Abbas 2002; Clifford 1992; Mardsen 2008), and the mobiles as much as the immobiles (e.g., Notar 2008).

Cosmopolitanism characterises all three aspects of Chinese student migration. The individual student migrants hope to gain cosmopolitan competency and orientation through migration. For some it means becoming a cosmopolitan subject, a person who feels and can act with confidence in transnational settings and has the same range of opportunities as the citizens of developed countries (*fada guojia*). For others the most important benefit is not the competence in transnational settings, but the prestige such competence might bring them in China, and the advantage it could give in the extremely competitive domestic labour market. The second aspect of the dynamics of the Chinese student migration, the structural context, is cosmopolitan in a sense that at its centre is the international education market, from which different institutions and nation states try to benefit. Finally, the cultural formations that forge student migrant subjectivities are not static. Through their cosmopolitan encounters the student migrants engage in a wider range of power systems, e.g., different discourses of gender. By bringing these discourses into the parent-child relations, and the relations of romantic and sexual affect, they are participating in the unification of symbolic markets between China and their destination countries. Moreover, their very mode of existence can be described as cosmopolitan, in the sense that

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1 Vertovec and Cohen (2002) list two more conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism that are not directly relevant to this discussion: as a philosophical or worldview (see Beck 1998); and as a political project to recognise multiple identities (see Held 1995).

they are able to manipulate social and geographical distance in their engagements with different sociocultural fields.

Geography of power

Finally, I will use Mahler and Pessar's (2001) concept 'gendered geographies of power' to highlight the relationship between power systems and spatial mobility. Their basic premise is that individuals are situated within power hierarchies that are not of their own making and limit their actions. Their positioning in the hierarchies of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, generation and sexuality constitute their social location at a particular physical location. At times I drop out the 'gendered' prefix, as many aspects of student migration are not influenced by gender and other hierarchies can be more relevant. The positioning of individuals in the various hierarchies shifts with their physical mobility across geographical scales, and the hierarchies intersect in complex ways. For example, the student migrants' positioning in the generational hierarchy can change through migration, as they gain a higher degree of autonomy from parental control though spatial and sociocultural distance. But at the same time, their status in the hierarchies of nationality and race may decrease as they become aliens in another country. Moreover, a shift in one hierarchy can influence the positioning in another. For example, the requirement of the proof of financial resources and the restrictions for work that are imposed on non-nationals in the destination countries, can increase the dependency of the student migrants on their parents support. In this example, the hierarchies of generation and nationality, or in Mahmood's (2005) terms, power systems, intersect in a way that the parental power over the student does not necessarily decrease, but changes its form.

I have outlined the conceptual framework for encompassing the three elements: structural conditions, cultural models and individual agency, in the analysis of the dynamics of Chinese student migration. In the first two chapters I will outline the structural and the cultural contexts of this migration flow, and devote the final four chapters to the exploration of the strategies and the experiences of migrants and their families.

In the field

The main part of the data for this project was collected during seventeen months of fieldwork in China from September 2008 to February 2010. I chose Beijing as my base, as it is a major source of Chinese overseas student migration, as well as a major destination of the domestic student migration. I enrolled as a part-time language student in a private language school, which arranged my visa for the first eleven months. For the last seven months I was a language student at the Renmin University of China. I had started this research project in Europe, and the Chinese students I knew in Amsterdam and in Helsinki provided me with some initial contacts in Beijing. For the first 11 months of fieldwork I shared a flat with Hannah, a recent graduate with plans to go abroad to study, and for the last seven months, I shared a room with a Chinese undergraduate student at the Renmin University dormitory. The social networks of the informants were not bound to a single locale. I met their classmates, friends, colleagues and partners when accompanying them to shopping centres, restaurants, bars, KTVs (karaoke), cafes, the gym, the library, the cinema, match-making events, concerts and art exhibitions. I met their families and relatives when I visited their homes, or if they no longer lived with their parents, when accompanying them on a home visit.

I took as my starting point that migration is a process during which aims, interests, and dispositions change. I thus wanted to include young people (and their parents) who had a vague dream of going abroad, who were actively making plans and arrangements, who were currently studying abroad, or who had graduated and were either living in China or abroad. For the purposes of clarity, I refer to all these young people as 'student migrants', sometimes using the specifying prefixes 'aspiring', 'current' and 'returned'. For those who have studied abroad and currently live in China, I use the term 'returnee', regardless of their future plans that range from permanent settlement in China to a remigration, or back and forth movement between China and other destinations.

In China my group of key informants consisted of nine families and 25 individual student migrants whose parents I did not meet. Of these, 21 were aspiring student migrants, 13 were returnees, 23 were women and 11 were men. I also got to know well two sets of parents with

a child, who I never met, studying abroad. Some of these key informants I became closer to than others, but with all of them I spent time in informal settings, as well as sitting down for semi-structured interviews at some point of our acquaintance.

I have used some of the material I gathered in Amsterdam for my master's dissertation on the social, cultural, political and economic connections between the different groups of Chinese migrants. This included interview data with seven current student migrants, and fieldnotes from my participation in formal (recruitment events and festivals) and informal social events (meals, house parties) with Chinese student migrants. I have supplemented the data on current student migrants after my return from China to Europe, by interviewing 13 student migrants in the UK and eight in Finland and by taking part in formal and informal social events. Some of the friendships developed in the course of this research have now lasted for several years, and during this time students have migrated back and forth between China and other locations. I have thus been able to take part in the lives of some of them in different countries, as I have myself moved back and forth between Holland, Finland, China and UK. I have also kept in contact with 19 of the key informants via email, instant messaging, text messaging and social networking websites.

My account and analysis of the Chinese student migration relies most heavily on the data gathered from the interactions with these 86 people, who include male and female student migrants at all different stages of the migration process and their parents. I have met numerous other people in the context of this project, many of them also student migrants and parents, with whom I have discussed issues relevant to this research. These discussions ranged from a few exchanged words to semiformal interviews. Many times I was not a participant, but an observer in the discussions. I have not recorded the number of these people, who are friends, relatives, acquaintances, colleagues and fellow students of the key informants, participants in events organised for student migrants, or in some other way connected to the social setting in question, but they number several hundred.

For the semi-structured interviews I used a rough list of topics of discussion. With most informants, the interview/s (usually more than one) took place after some time of knowing each other, but in some cases

the interview worked as a way to establish initial contact, which then built into a long-term friendship. The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour to five hours. Most were either recorded with my mobile phone recorder, or I took notes by hand during them. In some cases (e.g. when interviewing while taking a long walk with an informant) I did not record or take notes during an interview, but wrote notes immediately after the meeting. At complicated settings and events such as calendrical festivals, family celebrations, weddings, funerals, trips, fairs and exhibitions, I took pictures and made short video recordings that have later served as memory cues. I have also used photographs and video recordings in interviews to get clarifications on some aspects of rituals and events. I collected commercial and promotional materials (e.g., from overseas studies agencies, education institutions, match-making events). I collected news and stories from newspapers and magazines relating to the themes of my research, and followed internet discussion forums (Tianya, Mop, Sina), video sharing websites (Youku, Tudou, 56.com), social networking sites (Weib and Renren), and QQ (instant messenger that also hosts profiles, blogs, a discussion forum, etc.) that are popular among the urban youth.

I have also interviewed representatives of the different institutions of the international education industry. Many of these interviews I conducted at the 14th China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) in March 2009 at the Beijing's Guomao centre. Others were individually arranged with overseas study agencies, university professors, English teachers and promoters in China. These interviewees include: eight representatives of overseas study agencies, five university promoters (US, UK, Canada, the Netherlands), two high school promoters (UK, US), a promoter of preparatory courses for universities (US), a promoter of Erasmus Mundus programme, a representative of the Mayor of London Office, three English teachers in China, the President of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) in Amsterdam, and three Chinese university professors involved in the international education exchanges of their institutions.

Additionally, I carried out two surveys to get quantitative data on the themes of my research, one at the Renmin University of China (n=427)[2], and one among the Chinese students at the London School of

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2 See Appendix 1 for details.

Economics (*n*=203)[3]. My main Chinese sources of statistical data have been the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the China Scholarship Council (affiliated with the Ministry of Education). However, I was not able to find, or to gain access to, Chinese statistics on the key issue of this research: the proportion of female and male students in the student migration flow. I thus had to resort to using data from one of the main destination countries. I used the statistics on the Chinese students in the UK, provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the UK Data Archive for Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS). UK has been among the top destinations for Chinese student migration throughout the reform period. The UK statistics thus provide a reliable indication for the trends in the sex ratio.

LIMITATIONS

At the centre of this study are the individual student migrants. The reason for this is in part methodological and in part the nature of the phenomena that is studied. My main informants were women and men mostly in their twenties, who had either recently moved away from their families (and their home-places), or had lived an independent life for several years. Most were yet to marry and none had children. This time of their life, when the families no longer lived together and were yet to have grandchildren, was a phase of relatively little contact between the student migrants and the parents. Moreover, the centrality of individualism, success and desire in the experience of contemporary urban youth means that student migration is not primarily a family strategy. The students define their migration in terms of self-development and self-fulfilment rather than some collective interests of the family. The role of the parents is to facilitate and to support, not to benefit from the migration. The spatial and sociocultural distance that emerges between the students and the parents in the course of migration, and importantly, which is often purposefully sought by the students, created methodological problems for equally including the perspectives of the students and the parents in this study.

Many of the student migrants I got to know were not originally from Beijing. Some of those who were, were reluctant to introduce me to their parents. This may be partly due to unwillingness to bother their busy

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3 See Appendix 1 for details.

parents with questions and interviews. It also seemed that some student migrants considered the issues we talked about: their education and career plans, their dating, marriage and future aspirations, as their personal concerns and did not wish me to discuss them with their parents. In these circumstances, my research became focused on the student migrants, rather than on entire families. I was urgently aware that the perspective of the student migrants would not be enough to address my research questions and tried to alleviate the problem by a few things. I accompanied four students on their home visits, each extending from 12 to 18 days. During these trips to their hometowns or villages, staying with their families, I had the opportunity to interview the parents, relatives and friends, as well as to observe some of the family dynamics. I also purposefully sought out some informants who had family in Beijing. This gave a chance for regular meetings with the families through participation in family meals and special celebrations. Finally, I included four families in my research in which the parents, rather than the students, were my main informants. Two of them had a young child still in primary school whom they planned to send abroad in the future. The other two had a child currently studying abroad. These strategies were aimed at gaining more data on the parent's perspective, but they did not completely erase the bias.

The tension between the pursuit for independence and the practical and financial reliance on the parents is central to the experience of the Chinese student migrants. I have therefore chosen to present much of my data in the form of stories of individuals, to give insight to this tension, the complexity of their subjectivities and to the negotiation of the different power systems, of which some are of Chinese and others of foreign origin, and still others can be described as cosmopolitan in nature.

CENTRAL CHARACTERS

I have chosen a few student migrants whose stories I recurrently use to illustrate different themes of the chapters. They differ from each other in personal characteristics, family's status and resources, academic performance, parental involvement, and the stage of the migration process they are in. Although not covering all the various positions, they offer a glimpse to the diversity of the student migrant population, as well as serving as examples of some of the common positions. By recounting the

stories of these individuals in detail throughout this thesis, they become a background against which the references to various other individuals become more comprehensible. I will here briefly introduce these central characters.

Jonatan is a 24 year old returnee. His parents are originally from Beijing, and with the relative success of his father in real estate and pawn business, they could easily support Jonatan's studies of business administration in Austria. Jonatan was not a particularly good student in school, and to him, or more precisely to his ambitious father, overseas study gave an alternative to the unpromising prospects in the extremely competitive Chinese education market. Jonatan's migrant experience has been much influenced by the tensions between him and his authoritative father, and by the structural restrictions on his mobility. His pursuit for autonomy and adventure has continuously been interrupted by visa problems and his father's ambitions that differ from his own. As Jonatan's family lived in Beijing, I was able to get to know them relatively well.

Nicole is the only child of an elite family from a county level city of a relatively poor southwestern province. We lived on the same street in Beijing and I visited Nicole's family in her hometown. After my fieldwork we both moved to London, where Nicole went to study media and broadcasting. Nicole's parents possess various means to ensure she has the best opportunities for a successful future, and they strongly guide her towards it. Having received all this support and guidance, Nicole is immensely loyal and filial to her parents, listens to their advice and tries to fulfil their wishes. At the same time, she has been brought up to consider a wealth of opportunities within her horizon, and not surprisingly, has developed interests and ambitions that are not in line with those of her parents. The careful negotiations that should not threaten the family unity thus characterise the relationship between Nicole and her parents. Nicole went to good primary and secondary schools and was a diligent student. In her case, going abroad to study is not a strategy to avoid the competitive domestic market, but to take the next step from the national to the international field. Through her family background, Nicole is already part of the national elite. Through her cosmopolitan quest she encounters a whole range of new opportunities and challenges.

I first got to know Lulu in Finland where she studied international business. I got to know her family during my fieldwork in China and accompanied Lulu on her hometown trip. Our friendship continued after my return to Europe. After graduation, Lulu married an English man who lives in Finland, and the couple now live and work there. Lulu is the only child of a middle-income family from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Lulu's parents are an example of a family who, despite their limited financial resources, are able to send their child abroad because all resources can be directed to one child. In addition, the family searched for low-cost opportunities for overseas study, and a major motivation for choosing Finland was the absence of tuition fees. An average student, Lulu could have fared well enough in the Chinese education market, in fact she gained access to a university and enrolled on a statistics course. Her mother, however, continued to encourage her to go abroad. Her long-term dream of sending Lulu abroad was more motivated by the wish to give her daughter a chance to experience something new and exciting and a general hope that this would provide her with some good opportunities, than the kind of detailed plans Jonatan's or Nicole's parents have for them.

Hannah is a recent graduate originating from rural Fujian. I shared an apartment with her for the first 11 months of fieldwork. She has two brothers and is the only one in the family who has received higher education. Hannah was a particularly high achieving student in school, and with the help of her teachers, managed to persuade her parents to first send her to a good middle school, and then to a university. The family borrowed money to pay for Hannah's studies in Beijing, where she studied international business in one of the country's top universities. Hannah's goal is to start her own business, and to study for an MBA in the UK. However, after graduation her family's requests for financial support have made it difficult for Hannah to save money for her business ventures and studies. In Hannah's case, the overseas study is not a family project, but an individual aspiration she tries to pursue in conflict with her family's interests. It may well be that Hannah is the cosmopolitan who never manages to move abroad. The only daughter of a multi-child rural family, Hannah's situation differs greatly from that my urban informants'. I have chosen to include her story in this thesis, in fact devote one chapter

entirely to it, as it illustrates the tensions between new social practices and durable cultural models particularly well.

NOTE ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND NAMES

In the interactions with the informants, I have used Mandarin Chinese, English and Finnish. Language is an important cosmopolitan resource, a marketable skill and a tool of inclusion and exclusion. The chosen language of communication in different occasions was thus not only a practicality of research but a type of data, and I tried to always follow the initiative of the informant in this. Many young people wanted to practice their English with me, others used it in the presence of their parents for the very reason that the parents could then not understand our conversation. Others preferred to use Chinese because it was easier for them. Almost all the parents used Chinese. When accompanying students on home visits, I interacted with people in Mandarin Chinese, and relied on others to translate some of the interactions in the local dialect between the family, friends and relatives. Many analytical points raised by the use of language are brought up in the following chapters.

Similarly, the use of Chinese and English names varied among informants and was a conscious act of self-positioning and identification among the young cosmopolitans. All young Chinese I met had chosen an English language name for themselves, often already in school, and many preferred to use that in interactions with foreigners, including me. There were also individuals who took the use of their Chinese name as a marker of either patriotism or a proper kind of cosmopolitanism. In identifying individuals in this work, I have followed their own practice of using either a Chinese or an English name. To protect their privacy, all names have been changed.

1. AFFECTED MOBILITY

To answer the question of what is specific to the subjectivity of the Chinese student migrants, this chapter looks into the power continuum of the self, the family and the state, where ties and enactments of affect produce particular types of subjectivities. With the retreat of the providing state, the waning importance of patrilineage in favour of nuclear family, and the rise of the desiring individual, a student migrant subjectivity emerges that can be explored through a tripartite model: the caring subject, the enterprising subject, and the desiring subject. In China, the affective attachments in the family are enacted through the exchange of emotional, material and practical care. The state policies have direct impact on the way families circulate support. In the reform era China new opportunities for socioeconomic mobility have emerged, but people have highly unequal access to them. Moreover, as in many transitional societies, the dismantling of the services of the communist state has rendered people more reliant on familial support and informal networks. The state also directly cultivates affective ties with the people, for example through nationalist education. As Fong (2011) notes, of the discourses of nationalism promoted by the Chinese state, the one that models after the filial parent-child relationship has been the most successful. Rather than drawing on nationalistic pride based on current achievements and past glory, the contemporary Chinese youth are prone to feeling strong emotional attachment and filial duty to the state, from which, despite all its faults, they can not detach themselves any more than from their parents (Fong 2011). But unlike the previous generations who had to prove their patriotism through anti-internationalism, the contemporary student migrants best demonstrate their filial duty to the state, and to an extent to their parents, by becoming successful cosmopolitans who use their cosmopolitan resources, skills and competency to the benefit of the motherland. Finally, the pursuit for success through individual enterprising involves a strong emphasis on individual desire. The desire to *have* and to *be* is a strong motivation behind the cosmopolitan pursuit of the student migrants. These three aspects: care, enterprising and desire, which characterise the Chinese student migrant subjectivity, are the source

of many tensions and ethical dilemmas that will be explored in this chapter. I will first outline some of the historical and current developments that shape the dynamics between the three parts of the economy of affect: the self, the family and the state.

The self, the family and the state

On most nights Hannah, my flatmate, returned late from the office. We cooked some vegetables and rice for dinner and then sat in front of the TV to eat. More often than not, the conversation wandered to one of three topics: Hannah's career plans, her hope to study in the UK, or her search for a good, preferably foreign, husband. One night, what started as Hannah's halfhearted commentary on the news report of the US presidential election, turned into a critique of the overseas Chinese migrants' relationship with the motherland and their parents.

> Hannah: I don't like it when Chinese people go abroad, to America or to Britain, and just stay there because it's rich. They just think about themselves. Maybe stay there when it's good, and when [the countries] have problems, then just return to China. I know some people, my previous flatmates and some others, who've been born in the US and then their parents have sent them to China to learn Chinese language and culture. They don't know anything about China! And they can't speak Chinese! So they come here to discover that they are Chinese.

> AK: So what about, if you go to the UK and meet a European man and get married?

> Hannah: I would like to move back to China. If he is willing to come with me, then OK. But if not, then it's just: sorry, not going to last. I will not stay there all my life. Because I think, if you stay there, you just think about yourself and how to make life better for yourself. But if you return, and have a very excellent education, you can work for your country. People

will respect you and honour you. Because, you know, your country has spent so much on you, on your primary and secondary education and everything. Then you don't know how to thank your country! No, I don't like this, I will not stay there forever. […] And also, if I have children, I will hire a Chinese teacher for them, to teach Chinese culture and language. Because in China, in school, children know how to take care of themselves! We have this saying in Chinese, it means: if you can't keep your house in order, how can you keep the country in order? The Americans [previous flatmates] didn't know how to clean their rooms! So if you can't do that, how can you organise a big company? You can't! The parents don't know how to raise their children! If my children were like that, I would say: get out! [...] In America everyone is so free. The parents can't say anything to their children. The children just close the door and the parents can't say anything! In China it's different, until you can make your own living, you have to listen to your parents. [...] So it's like that, America has so many problems because if they can't even clean their houses, how can they organise a country.

This quote expresses the ideal connection between the self, the family and the state, as well as anxiety over the contradictory processes that threaten the harmony. The state nationalistic project promoted in schools, which aims to encourage the return of the 'overseas talents' to the motherland in order to catalyst its development[4], filters through to Hannah's narrative. Until the early 20th century, imperial feudalism operated largely through the patrilineal kinship system. Its ethical counterpart was the Confucian notion of filial piety, which not only dictated family hierarchy, but was a model for natural hierarchy of the social universe. The relationship of the father and the son was an earthly mirror image of the relationship between god and humans, and the emperor and the subject; a model for the continuum that organised the ancestors and the living, the elders and the youth, and men and women in

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4 See for example Wang (2010, 2011) for China's National Talent Development Plan, which was jointly issued by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the State Council on June 6, 2010.

positions of power and subordination. On the basis of these principles, family was idealised as a harmonious microcosmos, a parallel model of the empire, and a corporate unit working for the benefit of the whole (for a classic account of the Chinese patriliny and the state, see Freedman 1958; for a critical review of these early anthropological works within the lineage paradigm, see Watson 1986). Hannah uses the analogy of the family and the state to highlight the degeneration of the Chinese migrants, who have suspended the proper ties of affect with the motherland. Their unfiliality to the state repeats, and duplicates, itself in the unfiliality of their children towards both, the state and the parents. Hannah's critique has a very familiar ring to anyone with knowledge of the current popular discourse of morality in China. Anxiety over the declining filiality and the rising individualism, corruption, selfishness and hedonism, all ills associated with Westernisation (sometimes Americanisation in particular), recur in the media and in conversations with people.

The transformation of intrafamilial relations of power and attachment started well before the reform era marketisation, urbanisation, consumerism and family planning policies. It was already under way in the republican China, but took a radical leap during the Maoist socialism (from 1949 to the late 1970s). The CCP implemented various policies that either directly aimed at, or indirectly supported, dissolving the old hierarchies and created new ones based on the ideology of class struggle and loyalty to the party-state. The power of the family elders and gender inequality were on the list of feudalist traditions to be eliminated. Universal education and women's participation in the labour market were promoted with impressive results. The percentage of girls who completed primary education increased from 30% in 1955 to 70% in 1958, and women's participation in the workforce increased from around 29% before 1949 to nearly universal in urban areas in the early 80s (Bauer et al. 1992: 342, 350). Following the patterns of women's employment and educational attainment throughout the Maoist period to the early reform era also shows, however, that women tended to concentrate in positions of low pay and low status. In all levels of education, women's move up to the next level was less likely than that of their male counterparts. A woman's chances for higher education were significantly increased if she had a highly educated father or no brothers (Bauer et al. 1992: 365).

Nevertheless women's lives changed considerably after the Communist Revolution (1949).

Some direct measures were also taken to change the gender roles within the family. The 1950 Marriage Law prohibited arranged marriages, bigamy and concubinage, legalised divorce and set the minimum age for marriage at 20 for men and at 18 for women. In general, the family and sexual policies of the CCP promoted the idea that common good came before family interests, and the main function of the family was to support a stable society. Rather than focusing on the family or sexual relations, people were expected to preoccupy themselves with hard work and collective enthusiasm for the new China (Evans 1995: 358). Yet several scholars have pointed out that the CCP policies also strengthened family ties, especially within the domestic group. Xin Liu (2000) argues that during the collectivist period, lineage ties weakened but those within the household strengthened. As the ownership of land and the link between ownership and labour were eliminated, people's control over production and consumption diminished. Meanwhile the houses remained in the family's possession, thus becoming the centre of familial identity (2000: 37-8). The restrictions on mobility and access to health care and famine relief that decreased child mortality also contributed to the strength of the patrilocal families (Davis and Harrell 1993). Finally, a person's political positioning was determined by her or his family background, as class labels were assigned on the basis of family history. Despite the efforts to replace the feudalist lineage system with socialist hierarchy, it continued to be entwined with kinship.

As the social and political importance of the lineage waned, dynamics within the family also changed. The collectivist system removed the basis of the corporeal family, thus undermining the power of the elders. Especially in urban areas the state provision of childcare, education, pensions and healthcare weakened intergenerational dependency. Parish and Whyte (1978) and Yan (2003) report another, indirect impact collectivism had on family relations. For the young, collectivities created a new social space where it was possible to interact with the opposite sex outside the reach of parental supervision and control. They argue that these informal interactions played a more significant role than the new marriage law in increasing youth autonomy in spouse selection. The 'romantic revolution' that started during the

collectivist era and continued in the 1980s and 1990s, has been an important part of the shift of the affective weight in the family away from the parent-child (or more precisely father-son) unit towards the conjugal couple. To summarise, increased youth autonomy, the start of the 'romantic revolution', and women's changed role in the society and in the family were central transformations in the Maoist period, although it must be noted that these trends were not straightforward and there were some paradoxical policy outcomes, exemplified by the strengthening of the nuclear family.

Apart from these trends that have continued in the reform years, new ones have recently emerged. Most notably, the rise of the individual (Yan 2009). It is somewhat misleading to treat these as linear developments from less to more freedom, autonomy, individualism and equality. While women have become more involved and vocal in the public arenas of work and politics, the removal of positive discrimination measures have lead to increased institutional discrimination in the labour market since the 1980s (Jacka 1990; Zheng 2000). More women are also lead to capitalise on their youth and beauty when competing over jobs (Zheng 2000). The trend of increasing youth autonomy and the rise of individualism have been countered by the financial reliance of the youth on parents, and the parents' reliance on their only child, resulting from the one child policy and the increased need for capitals to arrange education, marriage, jobs, housing and healthcare. These countercurrents are part of the reformation of power relations in the current Chinese society. The relations and hierarchies are not reversed, but they take new forms, and groups formerly disadvantaged find new avenues of agency.

With the dismantling of much of the patriarchal and patrilineal structures as well as the socialist hierarchy, which formerly provided a frame for a person's identity, new space has opened for individual desires and development. This is not to say that they did not exist before, but that their articulation has changed. Passions formerly positioned in kin relations or class struggle are now expressed and understood in terms of individual rights and longings. The rising living standards, consumerism, and the engagement with foreign popular culture (imported from the US, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong) have offered avenues for self-identification and expression. This is what Lisa Rofel (2007) has called the emergence of the 'desiring subject' in the 1990s. At the same time, the

return of meritocratic education, the dismantling of job allocation and public welfare systems, and the introduction of free market policies has enabled, and forced, the emergence of the 'enterprising self' (Kleinmann et al. 2011; Rofel 2007; Yan 2013).

The echo of neoliberalist project inevitably comes through this description, but the label can be assigned too quickly. The continuum of the self, the family and the state is of a very specific kind in China, and recent scholarship has struggled to categorise it in the terms of the current discourse on neoliberalism. The past three decades have been a combination of privatisation, the retreat of the providing state and the partial liberalisation of the markets, while the strong involvement of the state in other parts of the market, its unlimited political power and the lack of transparency have remained. David Harvey's (2005) 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' and Zheng Yongnian's (2008) 'mutated form of neoliberalism' seek to emphasise the historical specificity of the system. In this line, Xibai Xu (2010) argues that neoliberalism, as an ideology and practice, does not best explain the social inequalities created by the current Chinese politico-economic system. Rather, it is a dynastic tradition with its reversed welfare system (state provision based on privilege, being a gift, not a right) and the unlimited political power, that forms its basis. In this structural environment, individuals are left to build their own success and security, but cannot rely on equal or meritocratic access to opportunities and resources. Social trust that is characteristic of highly mobile, individualistic societies of strangers is low in China because the institutions that protect the individual, such as the freedom of speech, rule of law and checks on power and privilege, are absent (Yan 2011). The self-serving individual on the rise in China is thus vulnerable to other such individuals. Meanwhile the circle of personal trust has closed in considerably with the erosion of patrilineal and socialist network systems.

The families in this study viewed the financing and the practical arrangements of overseas study as a private matter of the nuclear family. Various connections could be mobilised for the purpose, but the wider kin group, including lineage elders, was not involved in the decision making. Nicole's family illustrates this particularly well. Her mother is a police officer and her father a government official in charge of the department that deals with state-owned real estate. Through these positions, the parents have gained considerable wealth and influence, which they have

used in various ways to ensure Nicole receives the best possible education that will eventually lead to a successful career. For example, to increase her chances to get access to a key-point high school in the provincial capital, Nicole's mother changed her ethnicity registration into one of the official minorities, which gave her extra points in the application process. Nicole went on to study media and broadcasting in London, with the plans of returning to China to work after finishing a master's degree. Nicole's parents are beneficiaries of the privatisation reforms and they know how to operate the new system for personal gain. This brings a risk of public and official critique and corruption accusations, which limits the overt flaunting of their wealth. Considering the high cost of overseas education, their daughter's study in the UK might raise some unwelcome questions. The family has thus decided to keep it a secret, not only from strangers, but also from close kin. Apart from a very small trusted circle, relatives, friends and acquaintances have been told that Nicole studies in Tianjin. When I accompanied Nicole on a visit to her hometown, the family introduced me to others as her English teacher, and asked me not to talk about my research or Nicole's overseas studies in the presence of others, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins we met daily. For Nicole's family, the opportunities in the reform era China are seized through the mobilisation of interpersonal resources, but at the same time, keeping one's strategies and intentions to oneself.

Adding to the affective contradictions is the relationship between the individual and the state. People have embraced the neoliberal subjectivities of the self-expressing and self-governing individual. The state has actively promoted them by legitimising the pursuit of wealth and circulating discourses of quality (*suzhi*), civilisation (*wenming*), culture (*wenhua*) and modernity (*xiandaihua*). These discourses, however, are enfolded in a nationalistic project that articulates individual development in terms of patriotic duty, and frames it in terms of competition with other nation states (US, India and Russia in particular). This is a powerful discourse permeated through education and official media, and comes through in the stock phrases the student migrants use. 'Serving the motherland', 'helping our China to develop' and 'loving my country' are an integral part of the self-development trajectory of many of them, including Hannah above. In the early reform years, the role of the overseas Chinese in spurring on economic growth and linking China with

global markets cannot be overestimated (Harvey 2005). The state makes continuous efforts not to lose the new 'overseas talents' who have migrated for higher education since the 1980s. Not relying only on patriotic sentiment, the central and local governments have introduced a variety of policies that favour returnees in taxation, *hukou* registration (residency registration system that determines access to health care, jobs, education, etc. in a particular location), setting up businesses, etc. (Wang 2010).

The subject that emerges from this context is simultaneously a highly individualistic in her or his endeavours and desires, and highly entwined in ties of affect with family and the state. As Richard and Rudnyckyj (2009) argue, affect has not waned, but has been reorganised with the effect of the globalised, neoliberal capitalism. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to tracking these ways for the student migrants. Drawing from Rofel (2007) and Kleinmann et al. (2011; see also Yan 2013) and adding the aspect of exchange of care, I explore three parts of subjectivity: care, enterprising and desire.

The caring subject

The subjectivity of the student migrants is partly formed in the relations of care, as affective ties within families are largely enacted through its circulation. The parents' acts of support: when they carry the child's backpack and walk her to school, when they prepare nutritious foods when he studies for the exams and then stand a silent vigil outside the examination halls, or when they spend their savings to send her abroad, are filled with familial feelings of attachment and care. These acts of practical, emotional and material support affect, i.e. have an impact, on the constitution of the self and subjectivity. Charles Stafford (2000b) has argued that the cycles of care (*yang*) are at the centre of Chinese relatedness, and work somewhat independently from the lineage system in creating and reproducing ties. Lineage ties can be disrupted if obligations of care are not fulfilled, and relatedness can be founded exclusively on the basis of care. This is an element of Chinese relatedness that has remained constant throughout the various transformations of the past century (Stafford 2000b). It is this core of exchange that enables

continuity in the cultural formation of the family, despite the shifting focus from the lineage to the domestic group, from the intergenerational unit to the conjugal couple, and the dissolution of the patrilineal systems of inheritance, locality and ancestor worship. Family relations and *guanxi* (informal instrumental networks) are mobilised to give security where the state fails to provide, and to make the most of the opportunities available. Between parents and children the exchange of care is the medium for enacting affect. For the parents, it usually takes the form of the practical care for young children, facilitating access to education (tutoring with homework, paying for extra classes, using various strategies to get the child to a good school, paying for higher education) and work (using *guanxi* networks), financing marriage (can include the wedding, an apartment, a car, household appliances), and helping adult children with childcare and household chores. Children help their ageing parents financially, by giving food, clothes and other material goods, by helping with chores and by providing physical assistance. As is clear from these lists, the times of need for different types of care vary, and the balance of exchange changes over time (Fang and Whyte 2003: 47-50).

Many urban families have no son who would continue the lineage and live with the parents taking care of them with his wife, while the daughters of the family 'marry out'. Do daughters then care for the parents? According to recent research, they do, significantly. Reports from rural China show that the migrant worker daughters often play a crucial role in facilitating their brothers' education, thus indirectly providing for their parents, and also give considerable material support directly (Obendiek 2011; Fang 2011). In urban China the daughters' supporting role is even more clear, as they are often the only child of their parents. Fong (2004) shows that in Dalian, the previous generation of daughters already started to take on more responsibility of providing for the parents. Being the mothers of the first single-child generation, their lighter burden of domestic duties enabled devotion to paid work, and gave more time and material resources to care for their parents. Based on this experience, they trust in their own daughter's ability to care for them in old age, and are willing to invest family resources on their child's education and career regardless of the sex of the child. Martin King Whyte and colleagues' 1994 survey in Baoding shows that in multi-child families with both daughters and sons, married daughters actually gave more support than married

sons in the categories of help with daily chores, physical care and providing material goods. Sons gave slightly more financial support, but when the factor of men's higher incomes was controlled, the daughters' support was higher in frequency and amount also in this category (Whyte and Qin 2003).

As the responsibility of caring for the parents is still in the future for most of my informants and survey respondents, I have little data about the care daughters provide for parents. Being students or recent graduates, they are still mostly at the receiving end of the parent-child exchanges. But discussions with the students and their parents, as well as the surveys I carried out among the aspiring and current student migrants, give some insight to how the gendered responsibilities of care are viewed. The survey asked students what types of care they plan to provide for the parents in the future. The results (Tables 1 and 2) show that there is little gender difference in planned care, and for most categories the percentage of women who intend to provide that type of care is in fact higher than of men.

Some of the forms of care listed in the survey, such as helping with chores, visiting and giving gifts and money occasionally, have traditionally been forms of care daughters provide after marriage. Furthermore, in a patrilocal household, helping with housework is mainly the responsibility of the daughter-in-law, not the son. Therefore the women's high rates of planning these forms of care do not contest the more traditional gender roles within the family. The higher percentage of the women planning to live with their parents and to give money regularly, both traditionally male forms of care, however show that the women born in the 1980s and early 1990s do not plan to limit their support to forms previously preserved for married-out daughters. The survey results are in line with my ethnographic material. Commenting the general principles of care, most parents and children of single-child families agreed with the official discourse that daughters these days are equally responsible for caring for their own parents. Female and male student migrants displayed equally strong filial attitudes. The men used the partilineal discourse to explain their duty to the parents, and women used the discourses of gender equality and greater filiality of daughters.

Table 1. Planned care for parents by gender, Aspiring student migrants

			Female	Male	Total
Planned care for parents in old age	Live together	Count	53	24	77
		% within sex	44 %	32 %	40 %
	Give non-monetary gifts	Count	67	34	101
		% within sex	56 %	46 %	52 %
	Regularly give money	Count	64	32	96
		% within sex	53 %	43 %	49 %
	Occasionally give money	Count	16	11	27
		% within sex	13 %	15 %	14 %
	Help with housework	Count	59	24	83
		% within sex	49 %	32 %	43 %
	Visit	Count	70	39	109
		% within sex	58 %	53 %	56 %
	Hire help for parents	Count	27	20	47
		% within sex	23 %	27 %	24 %
	Send parents to an old-age home	Count	4	1	5
		% within sex	3 %	1 %	3 %
		Total count	120	74	194

Source: Author's survey at the Renmin University, Beijing [5]

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[5] Table 2 has higher percentage in each category of care compared to Table 1. This should not lead to a conclusion that filiality increases over the migration process. The LSE sample reflects the gender composition of the Chinese student population at the LSE, of which 70% are female. The Renmin sample is more gender balanced with 54% of the respondents female. As more female than male respondents in both samples answered yes to different categories of planned care, it is expected that in the LSE sample the total rates are higher than in the Renmin sample.

Table 2. Planned care for parents by gender, Current student migrants

			Female	Male	Total
Planned care for parents in old age	Live together	Count	79	18	97
		% within sex	50 %	43 %	48 %
	Give non-monetary gifts	Count	98	18	116
		% within sex	62 %	43 %	58 %
	Regularly give money	Count	128	31	159
		% within sex	81 %	74 %	79 %
	Occasionally give money	Count	31	6	37
		% within sex	19 %	14 %	18 %
	Help with housework	Count	96	21	117
		% within sex	60 %	50 %	58 %
	Visit	Count	137	33	170
		% within sex	86 %	79 %	86 %
	Hire help for parents	Count	104	29	133
		% within sex	65 %	69 %	66 %
	Send parents to an old-age home	Count	23	2	25
		% within sex	14 %	5 %	12 %
		Total count	159	42	201

Source: Author's survey at the London School of Economics, UK

Some of the forms of care listed in the survey, such as helping with chores, visiting and giving gifts and money occasionally, have traditionally been forms of care daughters provide after marriage. Furthermore, in a patrilocal household, helping with housework is mainly the responsibility of the daughter-in-law, not the son. Therefore the women's high rates of planning these forms of care do not contest the more traditional gender roles within the family. The higher percentage of the women planning to live with their parents and to give money regularly, both traditionally male forms of care, however show that the women born in the 1980s and early 1990s do not plan to limit their support to forms previously preserved for married-out daughters. The survey results are in line with my ethnographic material. Commenting the

general principles of care, most parents and children of single-child families agreed with the official discourse that daughters these days are equally responsible for caring for their own parents. Female and male student migrants displayed equally strong filial attitudes. The men used the partilineal discourse to explain their duty to the parents, and women used the discourses of gender equality and the filiality of more loving and sensitive daughters.

Looking at the response rates to one particular form of care, 'live together', raises some interesting questions. The number of students who plan to live together with their parents in the future is surprising (almost half in both samples), considering the trend of neolocality since the late 1980s. Even more striking is women's higher percentage. Even if a young urban couple would decide to go against the trend of neolocal marriage, there is a strong historical preference for patrilocal rather than matrilocal residence. It is thus surprising that women not only plan to live with parents, but with their own parents. The first point to make here is that the survey measures people's opinions and attitudes, not their actual practices. When asking the student migrants how they will care for their parents if they end up settling abroad, a common answer was that they will bring their parents abroad to live with them. If I asked about particular arrangements and the parents' opinions, it turned out the student migrants had not thought the plan through. When discussing the same issue with the parents of the same students, they strongly stated that they would not be willing to migrate abroad, away from everything and everyone they knew. The student migrants thus feel a strong sense of filiality, while their actual plans of caring for their parents are marked by vagueness. This is not surprising when considering the different ways sending a child abroad disrupts the cycle of care. The parental support is not only an enactment of familial attachment, but it affects the child by cultivating a sense of filiality, both as an obligation and as an emotional attachment. The proper avenue for enacting this would be to care for the parents when they are old, more specifically here, by living with them. But the support the parents provide is aimed at creating a condition where this is impossible. Moreover, going back one more step, the intense parental support for the child's education is linked to the fact that they only have one child. The flip-side of not having to compete for the

parental support with siblings is, of course, not having siblings to share the filial obligations.

The student migrants' plans to live with their parents that seem surprising in light of the trends of youth autonomy and individualism, could also relate to the geography of power. Migration has impact on the positioning of students and their parents in the generational hierarchy. The power dynamics are very different when an elderly parent migrates abroad to join her or his already settled adult child, than when a young daughter-in-law moves into the family home of her husband. Ellen Oxfeld (2005) describes this situation in her account of the intergenerational power dynamics of the Chinese families in Calcutta. Many of the adult children of Calcuttan Chinese migrate to Toronto, and as the parents follow them, they sometimes find themselves in a position resembling that of domestic help, isolated and completely dependent on their child and her or his spouse in terms of language and cultural knowledge. In these circumstances, many of the parents choose to return to Calcutta. Around one third of the survey respondents (33% of those in the planning stage and 24% of those currently studying abroad) were willing to settle abroad permanently. The rest would prefer to return to China immediately upon graduation or after some years of working abroad. My ethnographic data suggests that many returnees wish to try their chances in Beijing, Shanghai or one of the other metropolises rather than return to their original home place. If they succeed in finding work and settling down, co-residence can only be arranged if the parents relocate, if not abroad, at least to another city in China. This puts the child into a position of relative power. It thus comes as a little surprise that in the urban families of reasonable economic security and living standard, it is primarily the parents, not the children, who wish to limit future dependency on the children.

Is there an explanation for the daughters' equally, if not more, filial attitudes that come across in this survey in general? Furthermore, why daughters plan to live with their *own* parents? The cultural and the structural transformations of the recent decades have resulted in a situation where many urban parents cannot, and need not, rely on material support from their children. In the process the notion of filiality has taken a different emphasis. Filiality is not a mere obligation to return the care received as a child to the elderly parents. It is an ethical model for

relationships that partly rests on duty and partly on affection (Whyte 2003: 7). As the children's practical responsibilities and their patrilineal basis have waned, the parent-child ties have become more centred on affection than duty, and as a result, on reciprocity rather than moral obligation (Kleinman et al. 2011; Yan 2003). As explained by Jonatan: 'It depends on the parents, how they treat their child, how the child treats them back. It's like, how you treat your child, is the way you treat yourself.' In a patrilineal and patrilocal tradition this type of relationship, one defined by reciprocity and affection, has been more characteristic of parents and 'married out' daughters, than parents and sons, whose relationship has been more mediated through continuing obligations. As the sense of filial obligation has decreased in the recent decades and its basis on affective relations between parents and children has strengthened, it is not so surprising that daughters show a high degree of filiality in attitudes and practice, in particular toward their own parents rather than parents-in-law. This is further supported by the gender model of more sensitive and caring women. The discourse of the greater filiality of daughters rests on these basis, and many parents and student migrants claimed that daughters are emotionally closer to their parents and take better care of them because they 'love their parents more' than sons.

Finally, I cannot discuss family care in China without a mention of the ageing of the population. Urbanisation, women's participation in education and paid work and economic development are all factors well known to have effected fertility transition in other societies. In China, the family planning policies have made the process fast and abrupt. The problem this generation of singletons and their parents will face in the future, is that in the absence of siblings to share the responsibility, the only child will not have enough time and resources to provide the parents with sufficient material and emotional care. Both parents and the younger generation are well aware of this. When talking about this issue with the parents of the students, they invariably stated that they do not need or expect material support from their child. Most urban parents now have pension plans and savings for retirement. The following quotes are from interviews with Mr Zhang, whose son currently studies in the US, and Mrs Wu who has a young daughter she plans to send to a high school in Canada. They bring up the general change in lifestyles and the problem of an ageing population.

The ageing population is not a big problem, with elderly homes. We call them eldergardens (*laorenyuan*), like kindergardens [laughs]. In big cities we have many of them. When we get old, we can find a place like that, go there. My son and my future daughter-in-law, they are just two with four old people to look after. But when his sons marries, they will have eight old people. So they must also go to an eldergarden. […] From the perspective of tradition, our son should take care of us. In our opinion, ours and his, he should take care of us. But in reality, how will he take care of us? This is the problem of every household. Because his work will be busy, he won't have time to take care of us. (Mr Zhang)

I think in the one child families, the child has no way of taking care of the parents. [...] I think it's because of lifestyle as well, now we don't have the idea of taking care of the elderly anymore. I have no expectation at all that my daughter would take care of us in the future. [...] Our child is the only one. So I think it's best that we take care of ourselves. Because she won't have the ability, practical or economic. So I think it's best that us two take care of each other. (Mrs Wu)

Elderly care homes are mostly talked about in a joking manner. Although they might well be in the future for some of these parents, the option is still almost too absurd to be seriously discussed. The care facilities are being developed, but the general view is that their quality is still very poor, and more importantly, there is a cultural sanction against the family not taking care of their elderly by themselves. This is also clear from the students' responses. Only 3% of the Renmin sample planned to send their parents to a care home in the future. The figure remains low (5%) for the male students at the LSE, but is slightly higher for the female students (15%).

Urban parents are willing to go to great lengths to give the best care to their only child. They know that the support they provide can make a difference in the competitive Chinese education and job markets. Facilitating the child's overseas study is one form of support. The student

migrants are not only aware of the work and sacrifices of their parents, but emotionally affected by it, in a way that the sense of filiality significantly constitutes the relationship they have to their parents, their sense of self, and their self-positioning in the world i.e. their (migrant) subjectivity. Yet this part of their subjectivity, which I have termed the 'caring subject', is very much entangled with the other two: enterprise and desire. It is easy to see how the current emphasis on enterprising and desire fit well with the practice of parents supporting their child's success, but create problems when the cycle of care should be completed, i.e. the flow of support reversed. Migration itself, through creating spatial and sociocultural distance between students and the parents, creates its own problems. But as the vagueness of their plans shows, the obligations to care for parents is not something the student migrants are greatly preoccupied by at this point of their lives. Their focus is in projects of self-development, studies and career plans, adventure and romance. In other words, enterprising and desire.

The enterprising subject

Enterprising subjects are considered to be 'rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for self-care' (Rofel 2007:17). The idealisation of such individual agent is an important part of the subjectivity of the student migrants. Determination and strong belief in one's ability to not just live, but to *make* a successful, happy life, is characteristic of many of them. This ability is also necessary, because it is clear that in transitional China, such a life is not freely awarded to all. The cosmopolitan pursuit is to become an enterprising individual who has the confidence and the ability to seize opportunities, wealth, prestige and happiness wherever it may arise. Most student migrants have to reconcile the ideal of self-reliance and enterprising with the dependency on their parents. To accomplish this, they try to weaken the ties of affect. The sense of being more independent can be achieved through geographical distance, which limits the parents' involvement in their daily lives; by living the student life in a foreign country with no local support network, being forced to learn how to cope with difficulties

independently; and by returning the financial support the parents have provided.

The last strategy is particularly interesting, because as common as it was for student migrants to talk about returning the money to the parents, I never knew or heard of a person (of urban origin) who would have done that. All the urban parents I interviewed claimed, often with a laugh, that they do not want or need their child's money. Many students, however, insisted that they plan to pay the money back and support their parents financially in the future. I asked if they expected their parents to accept the offer, and it turned out many students expected a refusal and some had plans for alternative uses of the money. Xiao Wei, a second year new media student with plans to go to New York to do master's in interactive media design, had clear plans for his life after graduation. He is to go to Tokyo to earn money, and after saving five million yuan, to return to China. He will have to offer this money to his parents as a repayment of their financial support. His parents will not accept it and they do not need it, so in reality he will use it to found his own company. Xiao Wei's friend Emma had similar plans of working abroad and offering the saved money to her parents, which she expected them to refuse. To explain this dynamic, she said: 'This is Chinese culture, if you treat your parents well, they will also treat you well.' How do you treat your parents well, I asked, 'If I live a good life, they will also be happy' she responded. Nelly, a 26 year old returnee with a master's degree and a 6000 yuan monthly salary, lived with her parents who are retired workers. Her parents had spent 150.000 yuan on her studies abroad. Nelly and her friend Sarah, also a returnee, explained to me:

> Nelly: They didn't mind spending the money. Because you know, Chinese parents are like this, they want to spend all their money on you. So they will support you. Even if they have nothing, they still want to give you everything.
>
> Sarah: Yeah, they live for their children.
>
> Nelly: Yeah, some will sell even blood or sell their land to pay for their children's education or something. There are these

stories. So my parents for example, they don't care how much it costs, as long as I'm happy. They think it's worth it.

AK: Do the parents get anything in return?

Nelly: No. They don't ask for anything in return. They just want us to be happy and healthy.

Sarah: That's our parents' generation, our generation is different. I live for myself.

Nelly: Well, after first year of working, I wanted to give my parents some money every month, like 500 a month. But even that they didn't accept. They said, don't give us your money, rather buy something nice for yourself. I mean, it wasn't much, but I wanted to give it to them just to show filiality. But they didn't even take that.

Sarah: I bought one thing for my parents when they moved. A washing machine! [laughs]

Nelly: And I've bought my mother a necklace, gifts like that on mother's day.

For these student migrants a sense of entitlement to their parents's support partly resolves the tension between enterprising and caring. The game of offering and refusing the money can batch up the disrupted affective cycle of care. But the problem of care is not only that it evokes a sense of obligation or duty, but also that it evokes a sense of being cared. As Liu Zhu, a second year social work student in Beijing who hopes to study for an MBA abroad explained:

I want to study abroad and do everything all by myself. Now I think, I'm the only child of my family, I depend on my family so much. My parents care about me, they don't want me to be tired or something, they just want to do a lot of things for me. I want myself to get excellent, especially my independent

ability. […] If I'm strong enough I can control the world, and
not let the world control me.

Parents are not against the development of the students' independence.
On the contrary, they cite confidence, knowledge about the society and the
world, a critical and inquiring mind, and learning new ways of thinking
as the most important benefits of overseas study. But while for the parents
these are marketable skills and competencies, for many a student migrant
they are as much about making a break from parental authority and, yes,
care.

From these experiences of the students, we can see the complexity
of their subjectivities that encompass the sense of entitlement to the
support and opportunities available, and the idealisation of the
independent, enterprising subject. The sense of entitlement at times
resolves the tension between the idealisation of independence and the
actual reliance. This is still an uneasy union, as shown by the game of
money return. In any case the tension between the idealised autonomy
and the parental authority and influence remains, which will become
apparent in many examples in the following chapters. In the quote in the
beginning of this chapter Hannah gave her own idealisation of the parent-
child hierarchical relationship, tying parental authority to material
support. Parental authority would thus end when the child attains
financial independence. This was certainly not true in her own family
relationships. Her family's constant negotiations over exchanges, duty
and autonomy exemplify the problem of caring and enterprising
particularly well, and are detailed in Chapter 6.

The enterprising subjectivity is framed in filial duty, national
development and competition for wealth and success. But most of all, it is
framed in *desire*, an individualistic pursuit to better one's life. The third
part of student migrant subjectivity, the desiring subject, is thus very
much entangled with the first two.

The desiring subject

The desire to have, to experience and to be something better is not
just accepted, but required from a properly modern, cosmopolitan

Chinese subject. Consumption, education and career aspirations are routes to self-expression and development that distance one from the political passions of the previous decades (both Maoist and the 1980s reformist) (Rofel 2007). The accompanying transformation in people's subjectivities has been the rise of affects that centre around individualistic emotions, ranging from romantic love (Jankowiak 1995; Yan 2003) to depression (Lee 2011). In the cosmopolitan arena of action, desire is embedded in the geography of power. The actions of student migrants are partly motivated by the desire for upward mobility in the hierarchies of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc., which can take the form of higher income, better work opportunities, residency rights or citizenship and the resulting access to opportunities and services the countries higher up in the global hierarchy can offer. For many there is still more to the project than these practical benefits. The goal is to become a cosmopolitan subject, a person who feels and can act with confidence in transnational settings, feels no inferiority and has the same range of opportunities as the citizens of developed countries (see Fong 2011). Powerful imageries of what is desirable, modern, high quality and progressive are central to becoming a properly cosmopolitan Chinese subject. This is what I call a 'geography of desire'.

When I met Xiao Zhao a month into my field work, she was a 21 year old returnee and an aspiring overseas student. A student of German language and literature, she had spent a year in Germany as an exchange student and was planning to return there for a master's degree. I instantly noticed that Xiao Zhao was different from the other aspiring migrant students I had got to know so far. Generally I had found it easy to meet students, through my room advertisement and further introductions, or simply by being approached in public places. When I told students about my research, many offered their help, becoming my first informants. There were at least two reasons for their willingness to participate. First, my research subject was directly relevant to their own experiences, which made it interesting for them. Second, these were young people with cosmopolitan orientations, I was a young foreign person, and our friendship was often clearly part of their cosmopolitan pursuit. Most preferred to use their English names and insisted on speaking English with me. We often met at foreign chain restaurants, visited night clubs and bars frequented by foreigners, drank expensive coffee in chain cafe's and

walked around the upscale shopping centres, rather than going to one of the markets that offer Chinese and fake foreign brands, where we could actually afford to buy something. I was solicited for opinions about fashion, American pop music, TV shows and films, education, family relations, sex, dating and marriage. In these conversations, I represented the 'foreigner', an identity defined not by my nationality but by being Caucasian and Western. At times I also found myself representing this identity for the purpose of signifying the cosmopolitan identity of others. As the 'foreign friend', I accompanied informants to meetings with friends, colleagues, relations and relatives, or simply to public places where we were seen together by strangers. At the same time, I was often treated as a guest, shown the best scenic spots and historical sites, or the most fabulous symbols of development and modernity; being treated to meals at expensive restaurants, or shown the local secrets unknown to tourists; i.e. being explained and shown the best parts of Chinese culture. For many informants, our relationship was a type of cultural and language exchange (growing into a closer friendship over time with most). They helped me by sharing their thoughts and experiences and by allowing me to become involved in their lives to varying degrees. In return, they were able to practice with me the ways of interacting, thinking, behaving and speaking as cosmopolitan subjects.

My relationship with Xiao Zhao was different. She introduced herself by her Chinese name and patiently put up with my slowly improving Chinese, only changing into English on my initiative or if the discussion was clearly too complicated for me. She took me for long walks around the various suburbs and inner city areas, where there was nothing significant to see, because walking was good exercise and did not cost anything. We ate at small, cheap restaurants, always splitting the bill, or sat at her friend's coffee shop drinking hot water and smoking cheap cigarettes. During our walks, Xiao Zhao shared her experiences and thinking on various topics related to my research. She did not ask for my advice, and was not interested in my views about Chinese or Western cultures. What she did expect, however, was for me to relate some personal experiences and feelings, and was ready to contest my thinking. Unlike with some other informants, I felt that our relationship was not based on exchange, because while I had everything to learn from Xiao Zhao, she had very little to gain from me.

This feeling became more familiar as I got to know more returnees. They did not need me to serve as an access point to a cosmopolitan identity. Nevertheless, also for them, our relationship and conversations were a site of articulating and negotiating proper cosmopolitanism. Xiao Zhao used her Chinese name consciously, and squirmed at people who use English names with foreigners, 'It's so stupid!'. She complained about the Chinese music scene that copies Western styles but has no real soul, telling me about going to a heavy metal concert in Beijing and feeling embarrassed because the Chinese audience did not know how to behave accordingly. They had been pogoing when they should have been head-banging. A devoted fan of punk music, she dressed in Dr. Martens and bright coloured tights, showing disdain to the decorative, feminine styles worn by the majority of young women. 'Some of my friends think I look like a man. Because of my behaviour too. Chinese women look so weak! Not at all independent!', she commented. Xiao Zhao met a German man online, who later became her boyfriend. He had told Xiao Zhao that wearing Dr. Martens was dated and pretentious. This concerned her so that for the first and the last time, Xiao Zhao asked my, 'the foreigner's', opinion about the boots. Xiao Zhao wanted to distance herself from the domesticated cosmopolitanism (Rofel 2007), which in her view was an embarrassingly incomplete imitation of the proper cosmopolitan subjectivity she had learned while staying abroad. In her view my flat mate Hannah was a representative of the first type.

One night I told Hannah that Xiao Zhao and I were going to watch an Italian film at the cultural centre. Hannah decided to join us. We first walked to a small Xinjiang restaurant to have dinner, and by the time we got there, I knew it was going to be an awkward evening. Hannah, an aspiring student migrant with a very instrumental view on overseas study, was asking Xiao Zhao detailed questions about her studies abroad, about the university rankings, education methods, convertibility of credentials and so on. She was keen to get as much information as she could. Xiao Zhao, who was not a 'good student' or interested in detailed career planning, tried to avoid Hannah's questions and change the subject. Her annoyance turned into embarrassment when during the dinner Hannah kept making comments that expressed her 'wrong' kind of cosmopolitanism. For example, she laughed at the flat shoes Xiao Zhao and I were wearing, and pointing to her stylish boots, said that she had

noticed at the airports that all stylish foreign women wore high heels. When we got to the culture centre, Xiao Zhao quickly went off with a German friend and we did not see her again that evening.

Hannah and Xiao Zhao had both dated foreign men. For Hannah, foreignness signified progress, high quality, romance, and emotional and sexual sensitivity, all which were lacking in Chinese men, who in general 'need to improve themselves'. She did not date Chinese men, and decidedly declined the many pursuers she had over the years. Xiao Zhao had dated both foreign and Chinese men, but felt that it was difficult for her to find a Chinese man who would accept her music taste, tattoos, smoking, and unconventional ideas about marriage and sex. She explained that even though many of her Chinese male friends shared her interests and ideas, they wanted to find more conventional girls to date and to marry. For both women, dating a foreigner was about expressing and enacting their own cosmopolitan subjectivity. Since middle school, people around Hannah had told her that she was exceptional in her intelligence, beauty, determination and ability. 'My classmates always said, you will marry a foreigner and have mixed-blooded babies', she proudly remembered. Marrying a foreigner was part of her ambitious life plan. For Xiao Zhao, dating a foreigner meant wider horizons to explore ideas and greater freedom to express identities.

For both women, the desire to be cosmopolitan was about stepping out to the world and becoming *something else*. They had already moved out of their original sociocultural circuit (Xiao Zhao by going abroad, Hannah by becoming a white collar urbanite) and through technologies of self-government (consumption, bodily practices and relationships with others), they tried to make sure they kept moving forward. Their geographies of desire were on a different scale, because their positions on the geography of power were also different. Xiao Zhao, the only child of two professionals living at the embassy section of the city, whose artistic parents accepted her unconventional behaviour, had very different resources in her display than Hannah, a daughter of rural multi-child family who had not lived abroad. While to Hannah cosmopolitanism was a means to access the middle-class urban life style, Xiao Zhao's cosmopolitanism was alienating her from it.

The enactment of desire through consumption, bodily practices and romantic and sexual relations, is simultaneously a pursuit for

pleasure and freedom and a form of neoliberalist self-government with the aim of becoming a properly cosmopolitan Chinese. It is also a means of reflecting on and negotiating this subjectivity, but the ability to reflect is tied to the positioning vis-à-vis other systems of power, such as market-driven consumerism (wearing the right kind of boots) or international mobility (going abroad vs. going to the airport).

Conclusion

The economy of affect that produces Chinese student migrant subjectivities consists of the continuum of the self, the family and the state, which I have explored in this chapter by looking at the interconnections between the state policies, family support and the individualistic projects of self-development (i.e. enterprising) and self-realisation (i.e. desire). The emotional complexity results from the powerful and contradicting affects defining the self. A self-reliant, enterprising subjectivity is not only idealised, but also necessary in the competitive reform era Chinese society. Parents are devoted to supporting their only child's development into such subject, in the case of the student migrants, through a cosmopolitan pursuit. This pursuit is articulated in terms of individual desire that to varying degrees revolves around tangible benefits (higher income, living standard, etc.) and intangible imageries of progress, freedom and pleasure. The fact that family care is such an integral part of these individualistic pursuits creates tensions in the reflexive work of subjectivity building. From these dynamics emerges a set of aspirations, modes of perception and anxieties that is historically and culturally specific to the Chinese student migrants. Even though these are shared by all student migrants from urban single-child families, gender shapes the particular forms of caring, desiring and enterprising. This will become apparent later when I explore in more detail the lives of the student migrants, their experiences and the negotiations over issues regarding education, work and sexual and romantic relationships. Having now drawn out the structural and cultural context from which the students embark on their journeys, I will next delve into the structural dynamics of the actual migration, i.e. the international education market and China's involvement in it.

2. COSMOPOLITICAL EDUCATION

Between 1978 and 2013, around 2.6 million students left China for overseas study, over 90% of them since 2000 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2013). This makes China the main student sending country of the world for the past three decades. The top destinations of the Chinese students are the English speaking countries US, UK, Australia and Canada as well as Japan. Low tuition fees, less restrictive visa policies and high quality of education also make some European countries, such as France and Germany, relatively popular. At their main destinations, Chinese students form the largest overseas student group.[6] The most popular fields of study are languages, business and management, physical and life sciences, and economics (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2008). Overseas study is a considerable investment to the families of self-sponsored students. The expenses vary depending on the country of study, the level of the degree and the course, but typically range between 150.000 and 400.000 yuan per year, which is five to thirteen times the average annual income of urban households (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009). The first migrant students in the 1980s were predominantly sons of elite families and were funded by Chinese scholarships, but by the early 2000s, the majority of the students were self-

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6 US: Institute of International Education 2011, Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students, 2009/10-2010/11, Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, http://www.iie.org/opendoors

UK: UK Council for International Student Affairs 2011, *Top Non-EU Sending Countries*, International Students in UK Higher Education: Key Statistics, http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/statistics_he.php#table1

Australia: Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011, *Top Source Countries for Total Grants - 2009-10 (PY)*, http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/study/

Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011, *Total Entries of Foreign Students by Source Country*, Facts and Figures 2010 - Immigration Overview, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2010/

sponsored, came from a variety of family backgrounds, and around half of them were women (Table 3).

To understand how the student migration has reached such wide a scale and what keeps it going, this chapter outlines the macro and the median level contexts of the flow. This will help to understand the positioning of individual student migrants and families on the geographical scales of power, which I will explore in the following chapters. I will here look at the international education market, its connections to various state, suprastate and institutional level agencies, and finally, China's engagement in it. The internationalisation of education pulls the student migrants while the problems of the Chinese education system work as a push, and the network of institutions facilitate and maintain the flow. In an effort to include all these elements in the analysis, I treat Chinese student migration as a migration system. The system approach became popular in migration studies in the late 1980s, when the focus on single flows came to be regarded as too restricted (see e.g. Kanaroglou et al. 1986; Fawcett and Arnold 1987; Fawcett 1989). It takes migration as a dynamic system that includes not only the population that moves, but various linkages that motivate, shape and restrict the movement. Among others, these include state-to-state relations, trade relations, mass culture connections, migration business, and intangible linkages such as economic dependency.

At the centre of the Chinese student migration system is the international education market. The different agents connected to it use the rhetoric of cosmopolitan education, based on the assumption that access to standardised education increases equality across political and economic boundaries, and benefits global interests. This discourse masks the *interstate anarchy* (Cheah 1998) in the cosmopolitan field of education. Kant's cosmopolitan right, a moral principle asserted in the name of common humanity, was directed against the inter-state anarchy of absolute dynastic states of the time. Pheng Cheah (1998) argues that the current interstate system has not come far in two senses: in the absence of any cosmopolitan sovereign authority or ideal institutional framework, states claim the absolute authority over their territories, and the interstate relations are governed by self-interest and self-help. It is clear that this is also the situation in the cosmopolitan field of education. With no moral principles or sovereign supranational institutions, the various agents try

to engage in this field for particularistic interests. To call this dynamic interstate can be misleading, because of the complex connections between the education and the business sectors of different countries, and the involvement of suprastate institutions means that the sovereign states only shape rather than control the dynamic. It is to highlight this power play that I have followed Cheah (1998) to call the internationalised education cosmopolitical.

International education market

Major international organisations, including the World Bank, WTO, UNESCO and OECD, sanction and mobilise the internationalisation of education. According to the general view they promote, higher education should no longer be focused on serving national interests, but the global economy. For this purpose, education should be standardised and student populations, funds, ideas, methodologies and facilities should be allowed to move relatively freely across the globe. This view is reflected in their policies, for example in the World Bank loan conditions for international educational exchanges that are in line with its Structural Adjustment Policies, and the OECD educational indicators and international comparisons (e.g. PISA). It is reproduced through the ranking systems (for example by the Shanghai Jiaotong University and the Times Higher Education Supplement). Even though the criteria for rankings has been criticised, for example for ignoring the specialisation of universities in certain disciplines and goals, they are influential. Educational institutions must take the standardisation and the commodification of higher education into account when they compete over students and resources. Institutions refer to ranking criteria when deciding the future areas of emphasis, which in turn contributes towards the further standardisation of higher education (Brooks and Waters 2011). For the main destination countries higher education has become an export commodity, and students have become customers who weigh their purchasing power (which includes money, academic credentials, country of origin) against the products available in the education market. To mediate these exchanges a professional group of experts, promoters, agents and brokers has emerged, fine-tuned to move between the different

ideals, values and motivations attached to education by students and educators of different countries.

Many of these agents were represented at the 14th China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) in March 2009 in Beijing. Organised by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) and approved by the MOE, the 2009 expo toured 20 Chinese cities and drew around 89,000 visitors. Around 250 educational institutions from 25 different countries were represented in Beijing, mostly universities and colleges but also secondary schools, language schools and institutions offering preparatory courses for universities, as well as Chinese private schools with international affiliations, embassies and various international or national institutions connected to educational exchanges. Students came to the exhibition with a clear idea of the country and the institution they planned to apply for, or with a few options and an aim to narrow them down. Some came with less clear objectives, to walk around, collect promotional materials and to talk to the exhibitors of various countries and institutions. Many parents came without their children, especially to collect information of the secondary and preparatory education abroad.

Most of the exhibitors I spoke to were seasoned promoters. They emphasised the importance of understanding what the students and the parents in each country want. All of them agreed that the interest in rankings and the quality of the institution was characteristic of the Chinese students and parents. In some countries they got asked about the physical study environment (including student housing and institutional facilities, and the safety, entertainment and scenery at the surrounding city/area) or the content of the programme, but Chinese students and parents rarely showed interest in these. The ranking of the institution and the programme, the transferability of the qualifications, fees and scholarships were their main interest. Understanding the general rationale of how Chinese students and parents choose an institution, the exhibitors tried to play on their strengths. A Canadian promoter said that it was difficult to explain to the students and the parents that rankings are not considered important in Canada. Her strategy was to emphasise that the choice of institution should mainly depend on the subject of study, not on the general ranking. Exhibitors were aware of the advantage the US institutions had in competing over applicants. They benefit from the general prestige attached to American education and the centrality of the

US in the imageries of progress and modernity, which places it at the top of the hierarchy in the geography of desire. A Dutch promoter emphasised the high international ranking of the university he represented, stressing to the students that despite having some of the best ranked universities in the world, US also has many institutions of poor ranking and quality. Apart from recruiting individual students and increasing general visibility, the promoters' other objective was to make contacts and to establish partnerships with Chinese schools, agencies and other institutions. Partnerships enable more focused promotion at education institutions that have a student population directly in their target group. The promoters had scheduled talks at schools, negotiations about partnerships and interviews with students. These partnerships are part of the institutional network that not only facilitates, but drives student migration for the direct benefit the institutions get from the flow.

A notable part of the institutional network are the overseas study agencies. The internationalisation of higher education offers many opportunities for the business sector. One example are the standardised tests that are part of the application process for student migrants (IELTS, TOEFL, ESOL, GRE, SAT). The agencies offer consultancy services, language training, and preparation for the standard tests for potential students migrants. The agents I interviewed quoted charges between 10.000 and 30.000 yuan for the agency services, which included preparing the visa application and the applications to the education institutions, making financial transactions, making travel arrangements and sometimes arranging an airport pick up and accommodation at the destination. On the language classes, the average student spent two to three thousand yuan, often during a few week period prior to the language test. For students who wanted private tutoring, each 'VIP class' could costs several thousand yuan.

Overseas students are not only important to individual institutions, but an integral part of the wider political and economic interests of the destination countries. At the CIEET expo, several countries and regions were represented to increase their visibility as an overseas study destination. For example, British Columbia had a large section separated from the rest of Canada. Most institutions were exhibiting in China for the first time, and had joined a general government-supported project of promoting British Columbia as an overseas study destination.

Destination country policies

While the overseas study fever gathered momentum in China at the turn of the millennium, the main destination countries of the Chinese students drastically cut public spending on education.[7] Fees charged on international students have come to constitute a major chunk of the higher education revenues. Even though all major destinations encourage student migration, there is variance in the policies. For example, US (especially after September 2001) has tight entry requirements, but is relatively lenient towards granting permanent residence. It is easier to enter the UK, but the opportunities for work and residency rights are very limited. Australia and Canada generally encourage permanent immigration of skilled migrants.

These policies are not permanent, but change according to the political and economic focus of each administration. Student migration also relates to wider political issues, especially to other types of migration. The recent policy change in the UK illustrates this. After a decade of trying to increase the number of non-EEA students and making UK the forerunner in the internationalised education market (Brooks and Waters 2011: 41), the new coalition government announced a new policy in 2011. The aim is to reduce the annual total net migration (immigration minus emigration) from 250,000 to under 100,000 by the end of the parliament in 2015. As part of this effort, new restrictions have been introduced to student visa regulations, including raised standards for English language proficiency and proof of sufficient finances, restricting the right to sponsor international students to institutions that are accredited as 'highly trusted sponsors', further restricting the hours students can spend working part-time, restricting the number of years that can be spent on a student visa to three years at a non-degree level and five years at a degree level, and restricting the right to bring dependants to government-sponsored and currently enrolled graduate students. Perhaps most importantly, the Post-Study Work visa (PSW, Tier 1) that allowed students to spend two years in the UK after graduation, has been abolished. The time allowed to look for work has been cut to four months, and only the people with a graduate level job offer with a minimum of 20.000 GBP salary, are eligible for work

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7 World Bank data on Public expenditure on education, total (% of GDP). Accessed 4.6.2012 at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS

visas (Home Office, UK Border Agency). According to the Immigration Minister Damian Green the aims of these changes is to 'focus on quality, rather than quantity' (in terms of both, incoming students and those who stay in the UK to work), to eliminate bogus institutions and bogus students, and to reduce the number of years students spend in the UK after graduation (Home Office 2012).

For many student migrants improving their job prospects is an integral part of the overseas study project. The education promoters I interviewed at the CIEET expo agreed that issues that interested students and parents from all countries, including China, were visa issues, work permits and job opportunities after graduation. Better work opportunities can be defined in various ways, but the Chinese student migrants often hope to work abroad to earn higher income and/or to better their position in the Chinese job market (including multinational and foreign companies operating in China). The former can relate to earning back the money spent on overseas education, or a to a more long term goal to increase life-time earnings and to achieve a certain level of living standard. Depending on the goal, a few years of working abroad might be enough, or the student migrant may wish to settle there permanently. Whatever the aims of the student migrants and the destination country government, they often conflict. The UK government tries to have the students in just long enough to add to the education revenue, and then, except for a select group of 'highly skilled' individuals and entrepreneurs, have the rest out. It is obvious that this kind of restrictive policy is against the interests of the student migrants, but the relationship between policy and migrant interests is not simple in terms of always following the 'less restrictive - more in line with migrant interests' rationale.

This is illuminated by the Finnish case. The Finnish policy has been to have the free higher education[8] to work as a pull for skilled immigration, with the intention that the international students will turn into tax payers and permanent immigrants to fill for the looming labour shortage as the population ages. For many Chinese student migrants,

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8 A trial for introducing tuition fees for non-EU and non-ETA students is currently running (2010-2014) in a small number of higher education institutions. It is part of the debate of how to compete in the international education market in a way that benefits the Finnish economy. One suggestion is that students who stay in Finland to work will get their tuition 'repaid' in tax-reductions during the first five years. (Act of Parliament 91/2012)

however, studying in Finland is a way to get an overseas degree with reasonable financial cost, or a good quality education in one of the fields Finland is considered to possess special expertise (certain fields of design, IT, architecture, engineering, etc.). For some it works as a stepping stone to more desirable destinations, as the Finnish diploma is used to apply for work or graduate study in other countries. Of the ones who would wish to stay and work in Finland, many are reluctant to do the work required for the integration into the job market, most notably learning Finnish which is seen as a difficult and marginal language that adds little to general cosmopolitan competency. Unlike in Germany and France, where language competency is an entry requirement to most study programmes, in Finland studies can be conducted in English. This turns against the student when trying to enter the job market, as opportunities for those who do not speak Finnish are very limited.[9]

The interests of the student migrants are often not in line with those of the destination country governments. Furthermore, it must be noted that different sectors of the destination countries also have differing interests. Going back to the UK case, the new restrictions have been widely criticised. A report by the Institute of Public Policy Research (Mulley and Sachrajda 2011) states that cutting the number of international students in the UK (in 2011 around 80,000, which, according to the Home Secretary Theresa May, the government plans to reduce by a fourth) will have a substantial negative impact on the financial and academic viability of education institutes and the general UK economy. A group of chancellors, governors and university presidents responded to the policy change with a a letter to the Prime Minister David Cameron, in which they described the devastating impact that the new restrictions will have on the universities. They requested that the international students would be classed as temporary rather than permanent migrants, which would remove them from the total net migration statistics.[10] The current debate in the UK bears resemblance to debates in other main destination countries. Aihwa Ong (2006) notes that the higher education in the US has become so reliant on international students, especially from China and

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9 My interview and ethnographic data among the Chinese students in Finland used as a basis for this section is in line with the results of a general survey conducted among international students in Finland (Kärki 2005).

10 Guardian 30.5.2012

India, that any policy proposition towards a stricter visa regulation is met with an outcry from the education sector. Moreover, this dependency creates pressure to tailor education according to the needs of the international students (Ong 2006: 154).

The international education business that is at the centre of the Chinese student migration system connects the educational, commercial and supranational institutions, state governments, and the student migrants. I will now examine the development of Chinese student migration, looking at how these different agents are part of it, and how the Chinese state has tried to engage with the international education market in a way that serves particularistic interests.

Chinese student migration

Chinese migration for higher education started in the mid 19th century. The main destinations in the early years were US and Japan. These flows were interrupted when the Communists came to power in 1949, and apart from the small numbers of students sent to USSR and other socialist countries for specialist training in the 1950s and 1960s, student migration was in standstill until the late 1970s.[11]

FIRST STAGE (from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s)

Soon after coming into power, Deng Xiaoping started a campaign to resume international exchanges in science and education. In his speeches at the National Conference for Education in March 1978 and the National Conference on Science in May, he stressed the importance of learning from other countries to reform the Chinese education system. In June, he proposed sending students abroad to study subjects other than language, which was soon approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In 1979 the MOE set an annual quota of 3000 for students to be sent abroad in the next five years and later that year a decision was made that apart from scholars, also graduate students could be sent. The initiative of the Chinese government to resume student exchanges was enthusiastically received by many countries, and within the next three

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11 For accounts of student migration in the late Qing, Republican and Maoist periods see Harrell (1992), Ling (1997) and Yao (2004).

years, agreements for exchange and cooperation in education and science were signed with the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan and several European countries. US decided not to limit the number of visas granted to Chinese students and opened access to fellowships and grants offered by American universities. As China joined the World Bank in January 1979, new loans and funding for educational exchanges became available. Bureaucratic institutions proliferated under the MOE, universities and various administrative departments, to manage and to claim stake in the expanding flow of people, money and technologies (Zweig 2002: 164-8).

Overseas student migration in the 1980s was characterised by a strong centralised control, which also influenced women's proportion in the student flow. At first all leaving students and scholars were approved and funded by the MOE. In sending students abroad the government followed its policy of four modernisations (agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defence), favouring students of natural sciences and engineering. The proportion of women in the student flow reflected the sex-ratio in domestic higher education. Roughly 10% of natural sciences and engineering students in China were female. In medical sciences and humanities the percentage was higher, ranging between 30% and 45% (Ling 1998: 152-3). Less than a fifth of the students who went to US before 1983 were female (Orleans 1988: 96-8). Of the student migrants to UK in 1980, only 12% were women (Table 3).

Table 3. Chinese undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UK by gender

Year	Male		Female		Total
1980	126	88 %	17	12 %	143
1985	563	83 %	113	17 %	676
1990	1631	75 %	554	25 %	2185
1995	1550	66 %	799	34 %	2349
2000	5368	51 %	5209	49 %	10577
2010	22745	45 %	28232	55 %	50977

Sources: Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS), UK
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), UK[12]

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12 See Appendix 2 for notes on these statistics.

Table 4. Students going abroad and returning to China by year

Year	Number of Students Going Abroad	Number of Returned Students	Percentage of Returnees
1978	860	248	29 %
1980	2124	162	8 %
1985	4888	1424	29 %
1986	4676	1388	30 %
1987	4703	1605	34 %
1988	3786	3000	79 %
1989	3329	1753	53 %
1990	2950	1593	54 %
1991	2900	2069	71 %
1992	6540	3611	55 %
1993	10742	5128	48 %
1994	19071	4230	22 %
1995	20381	5750	28 %
1996	20905	6570	31 %
1997	22410	7130	32 %
1998	17622	7379	42 %
1999	23749	7748	33 %
2000	38989	9121	23 %
2001	83973	12243	15 %
2002	125179	17945	14 %
2003	117307	20152	17 %
2004	114682	24726	22 %
2005	118515	34987	30 %
2006	134000	42000	31 %
2007	144000	44000	31 %
2008	179800	69300	39 %
2009	229300	108300	47 %

Source: China National Bureau of Statistics 2010

After 1981 self-sponsored (*zi fei*) overseas study was allowed, at first for a very limited number of people. Restrictions were further eased after the Second National Conference on Study Abroad in 1984, when it was decided that anyone with sufficient funding could go abroad to study, with the approval of their local Public Security Bureau (Zweig 2002: 168-9). The proportion of women now started to increase and the range of subjects studied became wider. Orleans reports that women constituted around 40% of the self-sponsored students in the US by the mid-80s (1988:

96). Table 3 shows a 5% increase in the proportion of women students in the UK by 1985. Women's overall proportion in the UK figures is lower because both self-sponsored and officially sponsored students are included. These statistics suggest that already in this period there were women who, when given the freedom to do so, were willing to go abroad, and notably, able to mobilise private financial support.

SECOND STAGE (from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s)

The decentralisation process in domestic higher education and student migration management continued in the following years and increasing numbers of students went abroad annually (Table 4). Towards the end of the 1980s, student protests and unrest, culminating in the June 4 events at the Tiananmen in 1989, as well as the rising concern about brain drain resulted in the tightening of the policies. In short, the aim of the new regulations was to allow fewer students to go, motivate more return migration, and to send more older scholars than young students (Zweig 2002: 171). The numbers of overseas students continued to drop until 1991 (Table 4), but the number of applicants increased and more of those who went abroad chose to stay there. Student migration was used as a strategy to escape the political turmoil. At a birthday party I attended in Beijing I met several returnees who had left China soon after 1989. Their group of friends had played an active role in the student protests, and many of them had been arrested or placed under surveillance after the crack down. Those who managed to arrange a visa went abroad to study, only returning after gaining the citizenship of their destination country.

After 1992 the government renewed its focus on economic modernisation. Return migration was now encouraged by various preferential policies and special facilities, and schools and universities were permitted to set up their own procedures to select candidates for overseas study, which further decentralised the control on student migration (Zweig 2002: 172-5). The new slogan 'Support overseas study, encourage people to return, give freedom to come and go' (*Zhichi liuxue, guli hui guo, lai qu ziyou*) was declared at the Third Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress in 1993. Following these reforms, both the number of students going abroad and returning started to steadily increase.

David Zweig (2002) argues that the internationalisation of education was instigated to rejuvenate the education sector, impoverished by the anti-intellectual Cultural Revolution, but its rapid growth was helped by the fact that despite the strong centralised control over visas, rights to use foreign capital to import equipment, etc., bureaucrats were unwilling to restrict the exchanges as their own children directly benefited from them. Apart from the new opportunities for overseas study, students in China also benefited from the inflow of equipment, investment, teaching materials, research methodologies and so forth. Moreover, as gatekeepers, the education and international relations bureaucrats quickly saw the opportunity for personal gain through the commoditised international education exchanges, and were thus motivated to maintain and to expand the flow. Internationalisation of education, both in Chinese institutions and via student migration, thus became part of the social stratification process in the new politico-economic context. The first students to go abroad were mainly the children of the small political elite or the relatives of the overseas Chinese already settled abroad (Xiang and Shen 2009). In the 1990s the link between overseas education and class formation became even more apparent as the new rich started to convert their economic capital, often acquired by questionable means in the process of privatisation of the state assets, into internationally recognised cultural capital. The support of the party-state to overseas education and return migration legitimised their position in the new elite through the acquirement of political capital (Xiang and Shen 2009).

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s the international education market was developing fast, and in the absence of effective regulation, irregular businesses and practices came to characterise this period. Language schools with poor teaching quality and resources proliferated in the destination countries, offering an entry (and sometimes a gateway to more desirable destination countries) and a diploma in exchange of fees. In China, agency business took off and illegal or inept practices such as forging documents plagued a part of the business. According to Xiang and Shen, overseas study in this period was sometimes seen as a means of purchasing a label without necessarily acquiring much substance in skills and knowledge (2009: 521). Student visas that were relatively easy to attain to many destinations in the 1990s were also used for labour migration. A Canadian promoter who has promoted and organised

educational exchanges in China for more than two decades, noted during our interview that the 'disappearing students' were a serious concern for Canadian institutions in the 1990s. In his view, the practice has since become less prevalent, but the Canadian institutions still avoid cooperation with agencies from Fujian (the main source of illicit labour migration from China to North America) because they expect most of the student visa applications to be refused.

THIRD STAGE (late 1990s and 2000s)

The turn of the millennium saw a dramatic expansion in student migrant numbers, which more than doubled from 2000 to 2001 (Table 4). Several factors contribute to this jump and the subsequent rapid increase. As argued by migration network theorists, migration flows tend to follow a cumulative, staged pattern towards increasing prevalence and diversity in socio-economic and demographic terms. This takes place as social capital is accumulated through the networks between migrants and the source communities (Massey et al. 1994). The first Chinese students to go abroad were mainly of elite background and male. As the migration flow matured, more information and alternative routes became available and a 'culture of migration' (Kandel and Massey 2002: 982) emerged, other groups started to embark on the journey. This process was aided by the rising living standards and the family planning policies especially in the urban areas. The first generation of children born after the implementation of the one child policy were now entering universities, and more families had the means to invest in their child's education abroad.

As the number of student migrants and returnees has increased, the migration flow has become more stratified and professional. Parents and students have become more focused and informed in their demands and expectations when dealing with the agencies and education promoters of the destination countries. Because of the devaluation of overseas diplomas, the university rankings have become important not only to the students and the parents, but also to the employers hiring returnees. At the same time, tighter visa policies and regulation of the international education business both in China and the destination countries have weeded out a good part of the irregular practices common in the 1990s (Xiang and Shen 2009).

The student migrants of this third stage of migration system development are somewhat distinct from the migrants of the previous decades. Their migration is characterised by the cosmopolitan pursuit that emerges from the particular dynamics of the caring, the enterprising and the desiring subject. Fong (2004) describes this generation of urban singletons as first world children living in a third world country. Even in families of moderate economic means, parents have provided their only child with luxuries and lifestyles not affordable to themselves. One rationale behind the pampering is that nothing should distract the child's focus away from study. Children thus grow up with high expectations about the future, partly because they desire and feel entitled to the elite lifestyle, and partly because of a sense of filial duty to pay back their parents' sacrifices through enterprising and success. Student migration entails a prospect of becoming part of not only the national, but of cosmopolitan elite. Also the Chinese state has recently promoted the value of cosmopolitan skills and competencies by announcing its Talent Development Plan that views the overseas students and scholars as an indispensable part of transforming China from a manufacturing hub to an innovation economy (Wang 2010, 2011).

Chinese state instigated the reform era student migration but it soon propelled into a self-sustaining migration system with the education market at its centre. Apart from the practical benefits that the overseas diploma can bring in terms of job opportunities and higher income, geography of desire plays a major role in the rationale of push and pull. For many student migrants I knew the desire to study abroad had been evoked by imageries coming from Hollywood films, shopping at Wal-Mart in China, etc. The final section of this chapter discusses the last piece of the migration system dynamics. That is, the Chinese education system and its problems that work as a push factor for tens of thousands of students every year who choose overseas study over domestic higher education.

Chinese education system as a push factor

The current education system is riddled with a number of intertwined problems: uneven investment and unequal access,

competitiveness that puts an immense pressure on the young children, and teaching and testing methods that are oriented towards exam performance rather than creative ability and critical thinking were most often mentioned by the parents, student migrants and education professionals. A brief historical review of the education system will shed some light on how these problems have developed. Despite the variety of political and social trajectories education served during the Imperial, Republican and Maoist periods, the current education system has elements from all of them.

STRATIFICATION

The current education system is partly modelled after the Republican (1911-1949) system. In the late imperial China education had revolved around the civil servant exams that tested knowledge in Confucian moral and political theory classics. A network of state schools had existed but remained marginal in comparison to the classical training organised by lineage schools, private academies and tutors (Elman 1991: 8-12). The goal of the Republican reformers was to establish a system that was more equal, encompassing and better adapted to the needs of modernisation. A new public school system was established but education remained divided into two strands, the underfunded and neglected public schools, and the privately funded and managed (by foreign Christian missions, lineages, returned overseas Chinese) schools for elites. In the 1930s senior secondary education was divided into academic (college preparatory) and technical/vocational streams. The latter was especially directed to students from low-income families, who would not have the funds to continue to the tertiary level (Pepper 1996).

The focus of educational reforms of the Maoist period varied greatly during different political campaigns. Among the more consistent goals were the elimination of illiteracy, the universalisation of primary education and the emphasis on technical training. The early initiatives included nationalisation (or closing) of all private institutions, standardisation of teaching materials and curricula, and the use of Mandarin Chinese and simplified characteristics in teaching. The expansion of basic education was taken as the matter of most urgency, and impressively, enrolment in primary education went from 49% in 1952 to 80% in 1958 (Hannum 1999: 195). This focus, however, did not leave

enough resources for a total reform at secondary and tertiary levels, and the old system that concentrated education above secondary level in urban areas, with some vocational and technical institutions in rural areas, was kept in place. As the need for skilled specialists increased, investment became even more focused, coming to prioritise a number of key point (*zhongdian*) institutions at the expense of others (Andreas 2004; Hannum 1999). Until the Cultural Revolution, the policy of 'walking on two legs' (*Liang tiao tui zoulu*) kept the two education systems fairly separate, the rural system aiming at eliminating illiteracy and training middle-level skilled labour force, while higher level training and more comprehensive education was concentrated in urban areas.

Between 1966 and 1976 education was submitted to the radical political agenda of the Cultural Revolution. Education institutions were initially closed for a few years, and after reopening, the former curricula were replaced with ones that consisted largely of political propaganda and manual labour, the track system (academic and vocational) was eradicated, as was exam-based progression. The link between educational and occupational achievement was removed and political loyalty emphasised over academic achievement (Hannum 1999). Education management was decentralised from county level education bureaus to communes and production brigades (Pepper 1996). These reforms had a devastating impact on the quality of education, but at the same time, were successful in eliminating many of the institutional and social barriers that had previously stood in the way of the children of the workers and peasants in getting access to the same opportunities as their more privileged counterparts (Andreas 2004; Pepper 1996).

The objectives of education changed again drastically in the late 1970s. Class struggle and egalitarianism were abandoned as the primary objectives and a more competitive, meritocratic system that was deemed better to serve the country's economic development, was re-introduced. The new system (Table 5) built on the pre-1966 model, dividing secondary and tertiary education into academic and vocational tracks, bringing back the entrance exams, and focusing investment on key point institutions. Alongside the marketisation policies, private schools and multiple sources of funding were permitted, and various experimental forms of education, including short-cycle, correspondence and video courses and evening schools were introduced. A gradual process (still somewhat incomplete) of

universalising a nine year compulsory education was started from the coastal areas, moving to the less developed inner and western regions. Compared to the uniform and egalitarian schooling during Cultural Revolution, the new system was more complicated, selective and focused on training skilled experts to all levels of the labour market. The Soviet model used in the 1960s, which separates arts and sciences taught in comprehensive universities from technological subjects, engineering and medicine taught in single or multi-faculty colleges, and teacher training offered by normal universities, was kept in place.

The division into elite and regular education has been under criticism and debate since the early 1980s, and several provinces have officially abolished the key school system. Despite this, the system is very much alive with a few selected institutions harnessing a majority of funding and resources, the best teachers and the best students, and preparing them to pass the entrance exam to the best institutions at the next level. In every day language, the institutions are still referred to as key point and regular, and parents and students are very clear about which schools in their area belong into which category. Another basis of ranking institutions is the administrative level (national, provincial, municipal, county, etc.) that manages and funds them. This favours children from urban families with wealth and connections. As the best institutions are concentrated at urban centres and affluent areas, and children gain access to primary schools on the basis of their household's registered residency (*hukou)*, elite children automatically get into the track that prepares them to enter the top institutions at the next level.

Table 5. Current education system in China (not including private and adult education)

3-6 years	**Higher education** *Gaodeng jiaoyu*	Doctorate degree (*Boshi xuewei*)	2+3 Master's and PhD		Non-compulsory Fees charged
		Entrance exam (*Kaoyan*)			
2 years		Master's degree (*Shuoshi xuewei*)			
		Entrance exam (*Kaoyan*)			
2-6 years		University (*Daxue*), 4 year college: BA (*Xueshi xuewei*), Diploma (*Benke wenping*) Key/regular	Short cycle college (*Duanqi zhiye daxue*) 2-3 year diploma courses (*Zhuanke wenping*)	Specialised/Technical/Vocational college (*Gaodeng zhuanye/jishu/zhiye daxue*)	
		College entrance exam (*Gaokao*)			
2-4 years	**Secondary education** *Zhongdeng jiaoyu*	Academic senior secondary school (college prep high schools), (*Gaoji zhongdeng putong xuexiao*) Key/regular		Specialised/Technical/Vocational senior secondary school (*Gaoji zhongdeng zhuanye/jishu/zhiye xuexiao*)	
		Senior secondary school exam (*Zhonggao*)			
3-4 years		Academic junior secondary school (*Chuji zhongdeng putong xuexiao*) Key/regular (*zhongdian/putong*)		Vocational junior secondary school (*Chuji zhongdeng zhuanye xuexiao*)	Compulsory education No fees
5-6 years	**Primary education** *Chudeng jiaoyu*	Primary school (*Chudeng xuexiao*), Key/regular (*zhongdian/putong*)			
Up to 6 years of age	**Pre-school education** *Xueqian jiaoyu*	Pre-school and kindergarden (*You'eryuan*)			Non-compulsory Fees charged

Sources: MOE China, Education in China; UNESCO-IBE World Data on Education 2011

There are many strategies to cope with and manipulate the stratified education system, using money and connections. The families I knew had used various irregular of illegal strategies to get their child into a good school or to compensate for poor performance. Parents had made donations or paid extra fees (20.000-50.000 yuan) to key point schools in order to have their child accepted in spite of an insufficient exam score; bought a house in an area that belonged to the catchment area of a particular school; paid money to change their child's *hukou*; changed the child's ethnic registration to get extra points through a minority quota; paid bribes to the admission committee; and bought a forged school certificate.[13] Aside from these backdoor strategies, most parents try to create optimal conditions for their child's academic development and worry constantly about both, the child's performance and the pressure the child has to endure while going through the system. The children are pampered with comforts and care, not permitted to do household chores and have little time for unsupervised play, all of which the parents hope will enable them to focus entirely on study. In addition to spending most of their time at school or doing homework under supervision, children take private classes in academic subjects and in arts during evenings and weekends, and some spend their school vacations at tutoring camps.

The stratification of the Chinese education system shapes the student profiles and their migration motivations. Students of high academic ability have the choice of studying at top-ranked national institutions, or applying for scholarships abroad. Even though the scholarships allow students of low-income families to go abroad, the domestic disparity in educational quality and investment that channels children into different tracks from a very early age, makes it difficult for these children to develop their academic competence. Students from wealthy families with low academic performance can, on the other hand, use overseas study as a backup strategy in case they are unable to compete in the domestic system.

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13 These were relatively cheap and accessible. In 2010 I bought a forged university diploma for one of the country's top 10 universities for the price of 300 yuan. A group of women who gathered outside the university gates daily, accompanied by babies to avoid harassment from the city management officers, dealt various forged documents from exam results to diplomas, student IDs, etc.

EXAMS

Entrance exams are at the core of the Chinese education system. The disparity in the education quality and investment further magnifies their importance. The exam scores largely determine the quality and the type of institution the student is admitted to at the next level. The exams thus give a chance of bettering one's educational trajectories. But of course the quality and the type of education at the previous level influences the student's exam performance.

Education as a route to social mobility and a means of class consolidation has a long history in China. Exams that are (in theory) open to all have been the basis of this mobility since the Tang dynasty (618-906), when the early form of the examination system for imperial civil officials was launched. After successfully entering imperial officialdom, a person could expect to climb up the ladder of ranks in a bureaucratic process that was relatively independent from personal connections. The literati were at the top of the class structure, above peasants, artisans and merchants, and the examination system was virtually the only access point to the category. Education thus offered a real opportunity for social mobility (Elman 1991: 8-12). References to the imperialist classical education and the civil servant examination system are regularly made in debates that surround the current education system in China. The student migrants and the parents often said that the knowledge-based education in China with its focus on exam performance (*versus* education abroad that is thought to emphasise problem solving and skills) had its basis on the Confucian classical education and was ill-adapted to serve the modern society. 'I think the school wants you to be a scholar, rather than a manager. So you learn a lot of knowledge, but you don't learn many skills.', a 20 year old student of agricultural economics in one of China's top ranked universities complained. 'In China students only study for the exams, after the exam they forget everything', stated a mother of a high school student whom she was trying to persuade to go to UK to study. Yet people also defended the exam system as the best alternative currently available to ensure equal opportunity and access to higher education. Also the long-standing tradition of valuing education is a source of nationalistic pride, and an integral part of the national identity. All Chinese, the poor, the rich, the urban and the rural people think education is important, simply because it is part of Chinese history and culture, I was repeatedly told.

The college entrance exam (*gaokao*), is a defining moment in a student's life. The pressure mounted on this one event is immense, it is said to determine the entire future of the student, and the three years of high school devoted to preparing for the exam are said to be the hardest years of one's life. The student migrants remembered these years as being buried under school work, exhausted and anxious about the expectations of their parents and teachers. At the same time, they remembered the strong companionships with classmates, and the lengths their parents went to in order to support and to care for them. For those students who, in spite of the pressure and support, were not interested in study and did not perform well, the time was characterised by feelings of boredom and humiliation.

The psychological problems the rigid schedule, the workload and the exam pressure causes are widely discussed and publicised in the media. The news reports about student suicides and attacks against teachers peak around *gaokao*, as the students cannot cope with the pressure of preparing for the exams, or get disappointing results. Another common theme in the media is cheating scams. In 2010 a high school teacher was reportedly caught having sold (for 20.000 yuan each) his students electronic sensors that could be hidden in the mouth and used for receiving exam answers.[14] Another example are the so called exam migrants, who are discovered every year taking the exam in a province that has a lower score requirement for a good university.[15] The news stories about cheating or manipulating the system anger the parents and the students, as the only justification for the gruelling exam system is thought to be its fairness and egalitarian nature. The reported efforts to prevent cheating in 2009 included setting up surveillance cameras and wireless network signal jammers in the exam halls, using metal detectors for checking the entering students, and using wireless vehicle tracking equipment to seek suspected signals in the areas surrounding the exam halls. In some provinces, the students were not permitted to bring their own stationery, watches or mobile phones to the exam hall. The exams are organised by local authorities, but the process is monitored by the MOE that sends inspection groups to the provinces.[16]

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14 China Daily 7.6.2010

15 China Daily 7.6.2009

16 China Daily 5.6.2009

On the actual days of the exam roads and construction sites near the schools quiet down and images of anxious parents waiting outside the school gates are spread through the media. After the exam, the students and the parents must wait for the results that will determine the success of their university application. The applications are filled in before the results arrive, which means that the students and the parents must accurately estimate the exam performance in order to put down subjects and universities that match the *gaokao* score. If the score is lower than expected, the student might not be admitted to any of the programmes chosen. If it is higher, she or he might regret not having applied to more selective programmes. Even when getting into a good programme, the entire process leaves many students feeling disoriented and not in charge of their future. The students I knew at the Renmin University had all done well in their *gaokao* and had relatively good career prospects waiting after graduation. Yet many of them confessed not liking the subject they studied, and found it difficult to find the motivation, the self-discipline and the right methods for university study, after so many years of having their time and activities comprehensively structured by others.

For some parents, sparing their children from the pressure of the Chinese education and exam systems is a major motivator of sending them abroad. Parents of a seven year old girl who had recently been diagnosed with a deteriorating eye condition, were making plans to take her to Canada as soon as she finished primary school. Describing their daughter as sensitive and physically weak, they did not believe she could cope with the workload and the pressure of the Chinese education. The mother was planning to leave her accountant job to accompany her daughter abroad, while the father, an engineer, would stay in Beijing and support the family financially. Several of the students I knew who had gone abroad after high school had not sat the *gaokao*, but had prepared their applications for foreign universities while their classmates crammed for the exam. Others took the exam, but with the backup plan that if their score was not high enough to enter a prestigious programme in China, they would go abroad. Some students had initially planned to study in China, but scored lower than expected in the *gaokao* and had to enter a low ranking programme in China. Unmotivated by their studies, they started preparing their applications abroad and after a year of two, left the programme for overseas study.

Graduate job market

According to the MOE, 68.7% of the exam participants in 2010 were admitted to institutions of higher education. That was a 7% increase from the year before.[17] The rapid expansion of higher education since 2000 allows more secondary school graduates to continue into higher education, and the job security formerly associated with a university degree has disappeared. This further emphasises the importance of the rankings of Chinese universities. Employers are most interested in graduates from prestigious institutions and programmes, and many consider getting a degree from a low ranked institution not worth the effort at all.

The expansion of domestic education contributes to another push factor for student migration, the competitive graduate labour market. New enrolments in regular institutions of higher education went from 1.2 million in 1998 to 2.7 million in 2001. New institutions mushroomed around the country to facilitate this expansion. Having remained around one thousand for a decade, the number of institutions doubled between 2000 and 2008 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009). Coupled with the dismantling of the state job allocation system a few years earlier, unemployment became a real threat for new graduates. Until the abolishment of the system in the late 1990s, education institutions carried the main responsibility for allocating jobs to graduates. Higher education thus guaranteed a job at the high end of the labour market. Graduate employment rate dropped from over 90% in the 1990s to near 70% in the 2000s[18] (Li and Zhang 2010: 40-1). Although the expansion of higher education has in part been a response to the labour demands that result from the restructuring of the economy, another driving force has been the need to fuel domestic consumption. Until now, the Chinese have been more inclined to save than to spend money, and education and housing are among the few targets people are willing to invest on. In this context, more students are driven to seek a competitive edge and career security through an overseas degree. Moreover, graduate studies, both overseas

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17 China Daily 8.6.2010

18 The employment rate, reported by the government has increased again after 2009 (87%) due to a government campaign to create jobs for the graduates (Li and Zhang 2010: 40-1).

and in China, are pursued as an alternative to entering the uncertain labour market.

The problems of the Chinese education system worked as a push factor for overseas study for most of the student migrants and the parents in my study. They hoped it would give access to a better quality education that focused on problem solving, creative thinking and adaptable skills, through the use of interactive teaching methods and research rather than memorising and lecturing for the sake of passing exams. They also hoped that overseas education would develop the student's abilities, and give formal qualifications needed and respected in the current globalising labour market. Finally, the students hoped to study in a more relaxed and less competitive atmosphere, with a lighter workload. The parents and the students also saw the benefits of the Chinese education and the advantages it could give them while studying abroad. Many valued the Chinese primary and secondary education for the amount of knowledge and the degree of diligence it instilled in students. For example, once abroad, the students of maths and finance found that their maths skills were well ahead of their fellow students from other countries, and some found it easy to cope with the coursework because they were used to working hard. Not all expectations were fulfilled, however, and some became disappointed with the content and teaching quality of their overseas courses, or found it too difficult to adapt to different study methods.

Conclusion

Mao once stated that the three oppressive mountains the Chinese people must overthrow are imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. In the post-reform China this popular saying has been rephrased to reflect the new challenges people struggle with, namely: education, housing and health care. As education is a major route to economic betterment and job security, many hope that conquering this mountain will help overthrow the other two. The Chinese education system and its problems constitute a part, the push factor, of the student migration system. At the centre of the current student migration system is the international education market, which I have here called

cosmopolitical, because the various state, suprastate, educational and commercial agents try to engage in this apparently cosmopolitan field for very particularistic interests. The neoliberalist perspective on education as standardised and commodified training of highly mobile and flexible workforce for the needs of either global or national economies underlines these trajectories. The Chinese state, depending on the economic and political project of the time, has effectively restricted or instigated migration for higher education. But as tends to happen with migration flows, once initiated, they easily become self-sustaining systems with a growing number of institutions and agents involved as beneficiaries. What is more, migrants develop their own strategies and interests, that can change the dynamics of the flow in a way that does not serve the initial state interests.[19] Against the structural social and cultural contexts laid out in these first two chapters, the next chapter looks at how the individual migrants and families make decisions and experience their journeys within the migration system, enacting the caring, enterprising and desiring elements of their subjectivities.

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19 For an example of 'migration industry' see for example Pieke et al (2004) on smuggling networks from Fujian to US. For an example on state initiated migration that has been taken on a different course by the migrants, see for example Constant and Massey (2002) on Turkish guest workers settling in Germany in the 1950s and 1970s.

3. JOURNEYS ON THE FIRST MOUNTAIN

The previous chapter looked at the dynamics of the migration system as a whole. I now turn to the individual migrants, asking: what plans they make and what they hope to achieve through migration; and then, how these plans, hopes and goals turn into actual experiences. The aim is to understand how the relatively simple rationale behind going abroad to study turns into a variety of experiences. This process in linked to the relationship between different sources of power and spatial mobility. For the analysis I will take Mahler and Pessar's (2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003) entire model for geography of power, and apply its building blocks to the case of the Chinese student migrants. The first block is Doreen Massey's (1994) 'power geometry'. People are situated differently regarding access to flows and interconnections, and influence over them. For the Chinese student migrants their family background (parents' income and education levels, social status and connections, rural/urban residency, etc.) is part of defining the geometry of power. The second block, 'social location' refers to the positioning on the hierarchies of kinship, generation, gender, race, class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, etc., that shift with spatial mobility. It should be clear by now that much of what defines the student migration experience is not gender specific. Gender does, however, play a role in defining some parts of it, which will be discussed using the fourth block, 'geographical scales'. This block looks at how 'gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (e.g., the body, the family, the state) across transnational terrains.' (Pessar and Mahler 2003: 815). For the Chinese student migrants, the main contradictions arise from the operations of gender on the scales of family, heterosexual relations, education and work. Finally, Mahler and Pessar draw attention to the contribution individual characteristics and social imaginary, or 'mindwork', in shaping migrant experience. For the latter, I take up the issue of cosmopolitan affect. It is not only familial affect, but the affect produced in the cosmopolitan encounters with people as well as physical locations, material objects, images and events, that shapes the student migrant experience. Let me start by briefly outlining

the widely shared ideas about the goals and benefits of student migration, before going into the analysis of how they turn into a variety of experiences.

The benefits of studying abroad

In the discussions about their motivations for overseas study the following benefits were repeatedly listed by both female and male student migrants: improvement of language skills, better quality education, better career prospects both in China and abroad, higher earnings in the future, learning about other cultures and 'broadening of vision' (*tuo kuan shiye*). For some students, study abroad was seen as a starting point for a more comprehensive life plan of living abroad permanently and starting a family there. My surveys at the Renmin University and at the LSE support these ethnographic findings. A total of 12 possible benefits were listed in the survey. Students rated them as 'very important', 'important', 'not important', 'not important at all', or 'there is no such benefit'. The seven listed in Table 6 were the most highly rated, with no significant difference between female and male respondents.[20] Benefits that were rated high by 90% or more students were the improvement of language skills and cultural understanding, better quality education and the broadening of vision. This set of benefits is integral to the pursuit of cosmopolitan subjectivity. They are at the core of cosmopolitan competency and orientation, giving the ability to move across sociocultural fields, to communicate effectively and to relate to people and conditions in various settings. In contrast, the slightly lower rated benefits: better career opportunities in China and abroad, and higher future income, are concrete benefits that will hopefully follow from such cosmopolitan subjectivity.

Of the top rated benefits, improvement of language skills appears the most concrete, easily measurable benefit of studying abroad. In the international education market it is treated as such through the standardised tests that are required as a proof of language proficiency when applying to universities (TOEFL, IELTS) or for jobs (e.g., TOEIC, Cambridge ESOL tests: CAE, BEC, BULAC). In effect, the language studies

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20 The results of the LSE survey are not presented here as there was no statistically significant difference to the Renmin sample.

Table 6. The rating of the benefits of overseas study by gender (aspiring student migrants)

		Female	Male
Improvement of language skills	Very important or important	97 %	94 %
	There is no such benefit	1 %	1 %
Education quality better abroad	Very important or important	89 %	96 %
	There is no such benefit	4 %	3 %
Opportunity to work abroad after graduation	Very important or important	64 %	67 %
	There is no such benefit	9 %	14 %
Better career prospects in China after return	Very important or important	83 %	82 %
	There is no such benefit	10 %	11 %
Higher income after graduation	Very important or important	75 %	76 %
	There is no such benefit	15 %	11 %
Understanding foreign cultures and lifestyles	Very important or important	90 %	90 %
	There is no such benefit	4 %	7 %
Broadening vision	Very important or important	97 %	96 %
	There is no such benefit	1 %	1 %

Source: Author's survey at the Renmin University of China (Female *n*=112, Male *n*=91)

of the aspiring student migrants are usually aimed at passing the standardised exams, rather than being able to communicate in real situations. Most students I knew had taken preparatory classes for these tests in private language schools in China. They separated this type of learning, its methods and its aims, from what they hoped to attain while studying abroad. The ability to use language in real life interactions was not connected to the class-room learning, but to experience of such

interactions. Ability to communicate was the ultimate language goal of student migration.

The better quality education was defined as a general Western emphasis on critical analysis and creative thinking, and access to cutting edge theories and methods in the fields still lagging behind in China (e.g., design, media and broadcasting, social and political sciences, business management). The knowledge and the ways of thinking, i.e. the cosmopolitan skills and competency, that could be gained from this kind of education were deemed necessary to anyone regardless of where they wanted to work in the future. To those who wished to work abroad, in multinational companies or in foreign companies in China, the value was obvious. But even those whose career plans were clearly tied to China, Chinese companies and markets, thought they would benefit from education abroad. In the view of the student migrants, cosmopolitan skills and competency would help to adapt to the rapidly transforming work environment in China, or to become an active contributor in China's development. Skills and qualities that at the moment could only be acquired through cosmopolitan engagements, would in the near future become indispensable if one wished to succeed in China.

The phrase 'broadening vision' was sometimes used when talking about education quality, especially in terms of access to new ideas, theories and methodologies. But more often it referred to the abilities, experiences and understanding that could be gained from living outside China, in a foreign society and culture, being exposed to foreign media, and interacting with people from other countries. Together with the benefit of understanding foreign cultures and lifestyles, it can be classed as cosmopolitan orientation (Vertovec and Cohen 2002); a form of self-development and fulfilment that has value aside from its practical benefits. Lulu's friend Storm explained why studying in Hong Kong would broaden his vision:

> Hong Kong is more developed than China, so I think I can learn many things. It will be good for me to see another side. Because you know, Hong Kong is freer than China is. So for example the press and the media, here it's all censored. So maybe we can see some things but not everything. It will be good to see all things.

The broadened vision also related to how one perceived him or herself, or was perceived by others, in cosmopolitan encounters. When I talked with Jonatan and his father about the benefits of studying abroad. Jonatan said, 'Father always says that one important thing is confidence. That when I meet with high status people, I don't feel inferior. That we have a common topic and we can communicate. Studying abroad has had this benefit.'

Broadening one's vision was used in reference to how the subject relates to the surrounding political and economic environment, and acts in relatively superficial encounters in these contexts. Cultural customs and lifestyle, on the other hand, refer to the ways of acting in intimate and informal situations, such as spending time with friends, dating and family life. The complex processes of adaptation and alienation, and the affective urgency of experiencing them are discussed in more detail below. For now, suffice it to say that this was the area where students experienced some of the great self-developmental successes, but also had feelings of great anxiety and disappointment when their hopes and expectations were not met.

The more concrete benefits: higher incomes and better career opportunities, were viewed with more ambiguity. First, a higher proportion of students thought that overseas study will have no such benefits. Students preparing and currently studying abroad are aware of the devaluation of the diplomas since the overseas study fever started in 2000, and have heard many stories of returnees not having their expectations about jobs, salaries and benefits met. Most students thus know that an overseas degree no longer guarantees a significant competitive advantage in the job market. The high cost of studying abroad further decreases the advantage it might bring in terms of higher earnings. The survey respondents considered enhanced prospects in the Chinese labour market more important than the job opportunities abroad. These attitudes reflect the economic trends at the time of the surveys (the Renmin survey in early 2010, the time of the global economic crisis; the LSE survey in early 2012, during the Euro crisis). As seen in Table 4, the number of returning students has increased since the 2008 crisis started. The widely held view is that China currently offers better opportunities to overseas graduates than the destination countries.

The student migrants hope to gain some concrete benefits through their overseas education, but the primary objective is the more intangible project of becoming a cosmopolitan subject. This all seems very reasonable, but only sets the general picture. The emphasis individual students put on different goals varies and some students are more successful than others in achieving them. Moreover, motivations emerge and goals are pursued from a particular position in the geography of power. I will start by looking at how the final element in Mahler and Pessar's (2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003) model, personal characteristics, shape the experience of student migration.

Personal characteristics

In line with their general attitude towards education and work, some student migrants viewed the project primarily in instrumental terms, with clear ideas about the role it would play in their overall career development. Others valued the experiential side more, having only very vague, if any, expectations about concrete benefits. Liu Zhu, a student of social work at the Renmin University, had plans to go to Canada to study for a business degree. She clearly articulated her project in terms of the concrete benefits, namely higher income level and better opportunities in the competitive Chinese labour market. Describing herself as a traditional (*bu kaifang*) girl, she had little interest in adapting Western habits and culture. The experience of living with European students in India had affirmed her disinterest, even disdain, toward their student lifestyle. Her ultimate goal was to work for the Chinese branch of a foreign owned company, thus benefiting from the higher pay and better terms of employment, while still being able to live and work in China. Liu Zhu's friend Ben also wanted to study abroad and then return to China. A student of agricultural economics at the Renmin University, he had been disappointed with the content of his course and the teaching methods. In his view the course did not put enough emphasis on learning adaptable skills and knowledge. To get the kind of education he wanted, Ben planned study finance in the US and was preparing applications to UCLA and UC Berkeley. He explained these choices through the rationale of education as an investment. A degree from the most prestigious

university, from the country where education quality is considered to be the highest in the world, on a subject that would give the best possibilities for high earnings, would bring the best return for the investment. As for his plan to return to China, he explained:

> I'm used to China and I think it's my home. And another reason is that now the economics of China is very good, gives you more chances. I think that if you haven't been born in America and you are not American, then America will not offer you lots of chances.

A sense of belonging and contacts that will help in integration can of course develop during the migration process. Liu Zhu and Ben were both still at the preparation stage, but both had experience of staying abroad for several months, Liu Zhu in India where she worked with European students, and Ben in the US where he had done two internships. Their time spent abroad had not evoked in them a desire for cosmopolitan orientation, but they remained focused on the cosmopolitan skills and competency overseas study could bring. Their attitudes were in contrast with those student migrants whose main interest was to live abroad, or to some, not to live in China. Meng was one of them. A rebellious child, she had not been a good student. In her memories high school was a humiliating experience, and she had found the methods of motivating students through comparison and competition particularly distressing. At the end of high school, unable to pass her exams, Meng had bought a forged high school certificate for 100 yuan. 'The school wanted to get rid of bad students, so it was easy to find a certificate to buy.' After high school she started a vocational course but dropped out before finishing. She then floated between casual jobs, living with her boyfriend of several years. At the age of 23, an opportunity presented itself to go to UK to study. Her boyfriend's friend who lived in the UK offered help to make arrangements for the couple to live and to study there. In the end, only Meng went. For her, the motivation was not to further her career, to get good quality education or to ensure higher future earnings.

I went abroad not so much because I wanted to go back to studying, but because I wanted change. At the time I had started to meet foreigners, and I started to think I want to do something different. I also wanted to get rid of my boyfriend. Since a teenager I had felt very depressed and lonely, I wanted to change something. I felt that my parents didn't love me, my boyfriend wanted to kill me, and no one was there to help me.

Meng enrolled in a small private art school, but soon dropped out. According to her the school was one of the bogus institutions that had proliferated in the destination countries during the 1990s. The few courses that were offered were of bad quality, and Meng decided there was little more than a student visa to gain from this school. She ended up staying in the UK for four years, working and taking courses in design. At the time we met in Beijing, she was 33 years old, well past the ideal marriage age for women, but still unmarried. She worked as a freelance costume designer in film industry. Feeling anxious in this relatively settled life, she wanted to go travelling again. Soon she managed to arrange a visa, and left to stay with friends in Germany and UK for three months. After a short stop back in Beijing she was off again, this time to New York, with no clear plans other than staying with a friend, maybe joining a yoga school, and possibly rekindling a past romance with an American man. During the course of her migrations, Meng had undoubtedly developed some cosmopolitan skills and competencies through working and studying abroad. But she had little interest in turning this social and cultural capital into concrete benefits. Her initial motivation had been to escape the bounds of her sociocultural field, and she had achieved this by becoming cosmopolitan in her orientation, moving back and forth across sociocultural fields with relative ease and confidence.

Between the two extremes of placing most of the emphasis on the instrumental aspect of overseas study, or focusing on its value to personal emotional and experiential side, were the majority of students who were to some degree motivated by both aspects. They talked about a desire to have new experiences and to see the world, while also making clear plans to gain tangible benefits from overseas study.

Family background and power geometry

Apart from individual characteristics, the characteristics of the family play an important role in shaping the student migration project. The position of the family vis-à-vis the flows of international education market are determined by factors that I call 'family background'. Urban families in my study can be roughly divided into three categories that to some extent have different motivations for overseas education, ways of organising it, and conflicts that arise in the process. The first category, elite families, includes students whose parents have a high political and economic status in China (high level cadres and government officials). Also students whose parents belong to the new cosmopolitan elite (e.g., professionals and academics whose work involves travel and living abroad, those involved in international business and diplomats) belong to this group. The latter differ from the former in being able to mobilise overseas networks to facilitate their child's migration. Parents I knew in this category were able to screen and choose a university for their child through connections or personal visits, arrange internships, make living arrangements and to mobilise various forms of support for the student through friends and relatives already living abroad. This was the case for Wang, whose mother is a university professor of international business. During her several visits to US she had got to know a high school vice director in Seattle. At the age of 16, Wang was sent to attend this school and lived with the vice director's family. At the time he finished high school, his host took a job in the student recruitment department of a private college in Ohio. Wang applied to the same college to study economics and finance, was accepted and moved with the family. This is an example of the how the networks of the international education business develop not only through institutional, but also personal connections.

It also shows that the cosmopolitan elite families are in a position in the power geometry that gives them the capacity to benefit and even shape the migration flows. Their relatively powerful position vis-à-vis the flows makes their engagement more proactive in comparison to most families who merely hope to find a way to benefit from the flows, not to actively shape them. To bring their children into the same cosmopolitan field of action with themselves, these parents often encourage their child

to work or even to settle abroad after graduation. Aihwa Ong's (1999, 2006) work on 'flexible citizenship' shows how accumulating passports, education and residential rights in different countries works as a neoliberalist strategy of (Hong Kong) Chinese cosmopolitan elite, to gain power and capital(s), while avoiding the constraints imposed by different state regimes.

The families belonging to the domestic politico-economic elite also use social capital in the form of connections to various Chinese brokers of overseas education in the preparation. Even though sending a child abroad to study is not uncommon among the political elite, some of these families need to consider their public image in the process. I have described in Chapter 1 how Nicole's family decided to keep her overseas study a secret even from close friends and relatives. Another student's parents, both high level cadres, did not keep her overseas studies a secret, but made other arrangements to evade interest in their finances. The house they bought in the same year their daughter went to UK for a master's degree, was bought under a relative's name, to avoid drawing attention into two major investments in the same year.[21]

What is common for both elite groups, is that they posses the economic means to provide their child with the best opportunities available. This can take different forms. A child can be sent abroad for secondary education in one of the elite schools, so that she or he can start acquiring the cultural capital of the global elites at a young age and will have good chances at entering a top-ranking university. This is a similar process that takes place in China, where wealthy and well-connected parents are able to get their child on the track for prestigious education form an early age. For the students who do not do well in the domestic competition over places in respected universities, getting a degree overseas can offer a backdoor. With the general benefits associated with overseas study, a degree from a mediocre university abroad can offer more

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21 The political elite's transnational strategies of amassing wealth and privileges abroad has been much discussed in recent years. At the time of writing this, the highly publicised fall from grace of a Party leader Bo Xilai had expanded into a scrutiny over his son's activities abroad. Bo Guagua was being held up as an example of the corrupt officials sending children abroad. In April 24, Bo Guagua released a public statement, defending his school records, his lifestyle abroad ('I have never driven a Ferrari'), and claiming that he has not been involved in any for-profit activities while abroad and his education has been funded with scholarships and his mother's personal savings (Harvard Crimson 24.4.2012).

prospects than a degree from a Chinese university of similar ranking. Of course many children of elite families rely on their own hard work and academic ability to get ahead in the education system in China or abroad. But it is the students who need a backup plan who benefit the most from the good economic standing of the family.

The children of elite families can greatly benefit from the social and cultural capital of their parents, but it is also the source of many student-parent conflicts in these families. As the parents are well informed and connected, they often wish to play a central role in the decision making and arrangements related to overseas study. For most student migrants, going abroad is a way to gain more independence and freedom, and to pursue their own dreams and goals. Conflicts over which subject to study, which university to choose, and whether to stay abroad or to return to China, were common in the families I knew, and the negotiations extended over several years. The outcome was usually a compromise of some degree. Lulu's friend Mei Long, a daughter of an army officer and a university lecturer, was not interested in going abroad at all, preferring to study in Shanghai with her boyfriend. Under pressure from her parents, who had initially hoped she would obtain a degree abroad, she agreed to apply for a six month exchange programme in the US. Storm's parents made plans for his graduate studies in Canada, where the family had a strong network of relatives and friends. Storm, however, had got a taste of freedom from familial control after moving to Shanghai for undergraduate study, and had found his place in the city's queer scene. Unwilling to surrender this newly found independence, he was adamant not to study anywhere where he had family. Emphasising the benefits of being close to the mainland China and its southern economic centres, he made a case for graduate study in Hong Kong, which his parents agreed to support in the end.

Nicole wanted to study music, her father hoped she would study business, and eventually both settled for media and communications. As her final year started, Nicole confessed that she hoped to return to China after graduation, to look for work in fashion industry. Her parents, however, insisted that she would continue to study for a master's degree. By the time of Nicole's graduation, they had come to an agreement that Nicole would continue her studies, but not in the US as the parents had initially hoped, where earning a master's degree would take two years.

She would stay in the UK, where a she could complete the degree within a year and then return to China to work. Father had initially planned to use his connections to arrange a job for Nicole at the CCTV (China Central Television) in Beijing, but as Nicole's interest in fashion continued to develop, father helped to arrange an internship in fashion industry. The parents' heavy involvement in all decisions regarding Nicole's future required constant negotiations between them. While being a source of tensions and arguments, these negotiations were also constitutive of the familial cycle of exchange, which, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, had to be upheld in order to reproduce of family relations.

The second and the third category of students, those coming from the middle and low income families, are the beneficiaries of the one child policy. Their parents are able to support overseas education by focusing the limited family resources on one child. For the low income families I knew, the project of going abroad was initiated by the student, some of the parents opposing the idea at first, while others had neutral attitudes. The students thus had to persuade their parents to let them go. This was done through presenting the parents a convincing practical plan, or displaying enough motivation so that the parents could not refuse. Nelly's parents, a retired factory worker and a truck driver, had at first opposed her plan to go abroad. She nevertheless continued to make preparations on her own. Her parents finally came around when Nelly got back the results from her first attempt at IELTS language test. She had failed to reach the required score and was upset to the point of crying. Seeing this, her parents said they understood how important this was to Nelly, and from then on supported the plan. Even though Nelly took the low cost route by only applying to low ranking colleges in continental Europe that offered full scholarships, her parents still had to cover most of the living and travelling expenses (all together 150.000 yuan). This pattern was common for the low income families I knew. The parents provided limited financial support and the students found creative ways to cover the rest. They relied on scholarships, chose countries with low tuition fees (e.g., The Netherlands, France, Germany and Scandinavian countries), and worked part-time to support themselves abroad. These families had no influence over the flows of the international education market, and tried to find ways to get access to them. Importantly, it was the students who drove the parents towards participating in these flows. As the elite parents were

themselves engaged in the flows, they also directed their children to study and work abroad. In the low income families, it was the students who were more engaged with the cosmopolitan flows through information distributed at schools, experiences of friends and acquaintances, and the virtual and imaginary forms of travel through foreign media.

In contrast, middle income parents were more aware of the overseas study trend and considered it an option for their own family. Several parents told me that sending their child abroad was something they had planned for years. Lulu's parents, an engineer and a shop clerk, had been planning to send her abroad since she was a child. They pointed to me that they had no car and lived in a small flat - choices that enabled them to pay for the preparatory language classes, agency fees and living expenses when Lulu went to study international business in Finland. The financial burden was manageable, as there was no tuition fee and Lulu partly supported herself by working part-time in a Chinese restaurant. In the social circles of both middle and low income families, having a child studying abroad was still relatively rare and a source of pride and prestige for the family. Students who had returned or were visiting from abroad were proudly taken to family gatherings, the parents distributing the gifts they had brought. The gifts included foreign delicacies, decorative souvenirs and consumer goods such as clothes, accessories and electronics. On several occasions I witnessed relatives consulting the student migrant on matters relating to their own child's education, or asking him or her to talk to their child about the importance of education.

This section about the positioning of families vis-à-vis the flows around international education market has touched upon the conflicts between the student migrants and their parents. The spatial mobility of the student migrants often shifts their position in the generational hierarchy, as they gain more autonomy with the geographical and sociocultural distance to their parents. Generation, however, is only one of the hierarchies that constitute the social location of the student migrants. Others include nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, etc. As Abbas has noted, it would be a mistake to assume that the movement of even the elite cosmopolitans is always voluntary and that their interaction with other cultures and societies is negotiated on equal and favourable terms (Abbas 2002: 210-11). The way a person's positioning in these hierarchies shift

with migration is illustrated by the following example of one student migrant's experience in London.

Shifting social location

Nicole's friend, Chen, found it particularly difficult to adapt to the different teaching methods and the use of English language in his studies. Failing several of his exams, he did not graduate with his course. He had the opportunity to retake his exams the following year. While waiting, Chen looked for work, but without a UK degree and limited skills in English, he failed to find work related to his field of study and ended up temping for his Chinese friends. He lived a marginalised and modest life in the Chinese ethnic niche of London. Chen felt he had lost the social status he automatically had in China as a Chinese national and as a man. He wanted nothing but to return to China as soon as possible. Chen however felt obligated towards his parents to succeed in his cosmopolitan pursuit. As he said: 'I can't go back, I haven't achieved anything! I have nothing to show to my parents.' This sense of failure was not only evoked by filial obligation, but also by the gender model that assumes men's higher status in heterosexual relationships. Chen liked Nicole, but she was embarrassed by Chen's interest, and said to me: 'How could I like him? He has no ability at all.' Chen stayed in London, continuing his struggle to find work and to graduate. Eventually he graduated after having retaken some of his courses. This had meant a considerable addition to his course fees and Chen hoped to earn some of this money back before returning to China. But by then the new immigration policy had been launched, with a stricter criteria for a post-study work visa. As Chen could not find a graduate level job, he did not qualify for the visa and had to return to China.

Chen's positioning in the power hierarchies shifted with his mobility. The geography of power put him in a disadvantageous position in the UK on the basis of his nationality and student migrant status. Chen did not acquire cosmopolitan competency that would have helped him to integrate in the job market. He lost the privilege and power he had drawn from the hierarchies of gender and kinship in China but at the same time, it was his positioning in these Chinese hierarchies that motivated him to

stay in the UK, despite his marginalised position there. In the end, the UK state policies that aim to engage in the international education market in terms that serve national interests, forced him to return to China.

Cosmopolitan affect

Central to Chen's experience is what I call cosmopolitan affect. The concept of affect here has a somewhat different emphasis from the 'economies of affect' (Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009) that I have used to analyse the forging of subjectivities through emotional relationships in the continuum of the self, the family and the state. Drawing here from the work of Yael Navaro-Yashin (2009) and Kathleen Stewart (2007) I look at the emotional impacts that arise from the engagements with people, material objects, ideas and images at the different geographical locations throughout migration. It relates to the processes often termed as adaptation and alienation, but I use affect to highlight the emotional work involved. As Maruška Svašek (2010) has argued, differences between the imagined, actual and remembered emotional encounters are crucial in constituting the emotional side of migration. These differences are the source of much of the feelings of alienation, and also account for some of the disparity between the imagined and the actual experiences of living abroad.

Chen had an engineering degree from a relatively prestigious Chinese university, and had had a good chance of getting into a good graduate programme in China. But at the time, he had been certain that overseas education would yield far superior career prospects, and in his words, 'raise me to the high class of the society'. This imagery was so strong that as Chen's parents did not have the financial means to support his studies, he came to England as a labour migrant to work for a business of Chinese friends. After saving money for two years, he first enrolled in an English language preparation programme, and then on a master's program at a university in London. Now the very things that had motivated him to study abroad, i.e. the different education methods, English language and interacting with people from different cultures, raised negative affective responses in him. He felt embarrassed when the lecturer asked him a question and shy in the class room discussions; the

jokes of his class mates did not make him laugh, and he did not find having drinks at the pub relaxing. The emotional impact these interactions had on him increased his feeling of isolation and difference. He felt like an outsider and did not form close friendships.

In her discussion of the tensions between immigrant groups in Sydney suburbs, Amanda Wise (2010) has argued that their main source is not racist ideology or prejudice. People from different cultures 'feel uncomfortable' with each other because of the improper affective responses that arise in everyday interactions (ways of greeting, touching, speaking, eating, etc). Chen felt so uncomfortable in these interactions that he isolated himself to a small circle of Chinese students and labour migrants. In effect, he never became fluent in English, which further worked against him in the job market. In the two years after finishing his coursework, still waiting to retake some of his exams but no longer participating in classes, his use of English was limited to short encounters with shop clerks, his landlord, etc. What made the emotional burden heavier, was the pressure Chen felt as a Chinese son and a Chinese man, to succeed. Importantly, Chen had almost entirely supported himself during his time in England. Therefore the obligation he felt towards his parents did not arise from their investment in his overseas education, but from a general filial duty of the only son to succeed. To put this complicated dynamic in one sentence: Chen's failure to achieve his imaginary of cosmopolitan subjectivity resulted from the negative affect evoked by the interactions in the new sociocultural field, but it was further defined as a failure by the negative affect arising from the Chinese sociocultural field.

The example of romance further illustrates how the improper affective responses to people, objects and ideas, in this example to food, can create distance in cosmopolitan encounters. The sharing of food is a central medium of enacting emotional attachment in China, and the type and the amount of food indicates the closeness of the relationship (see for example Stafford 2000a, 2003). Food reflects the affective attachments between people, but moreover, it *affects* those sharing the act of commensality.

For many student migrant women, the ideal of romance was strongly tied to the imageries of American popular culture they had

consumed in China. They imagined foreigners[22] to be more romantic and sensitive than Chinese men, and some hoped to find a foreign boyfriend. For many, the actual experience of dating foreigners was a disappointment. The disparity between the imagined and the actual romantic encounters came from the differences in affective responses.

Hannah hoped to eventually marry a foreigner, so much so that she refused to date Chinese men. Her pursuit was not helped by the fact that she lived in China, and she was excited when a handsome American man who worked in the same building struck up a conversation with her in the elevator. The two started chatting online, talking on the phone and sending text messages. Hannah was happy to discover that the man seemed to have high career ambitions and a lively personality, in Hannah's terms, very much husband material. It was obvious that the interest was mutual, but what concerned Hannah was that she was not sure if the man was looking for a serious relationship with an objective of marriage. He was sometimes slow to respond to text messages or missed Hannah's calls. But most of all, he kept asking Hannah out for drinks, not for a meal. Surely this meant that he was not interested in a proper relationship? Hannah asked my opinion, as a 'foreigner', about the man's intentions, and I told her that many of the relationships of my friends and acquaintances had started from a date in a bar or a cafe, rather than a restaurant. Maybe it was just cultural difference, Hannah concluded, but remained wary. Then one day the man called Hannah around lunch time, to ask her out in the evening. He told her that he was having lunch with colleagues at a restaurant that was around thirty minute subway trip from our home. After the call, Hannah was upset. The man had not asked Hannah to join them for lunch, or at the least, asked her if she had already eaten or what she planned to eat! The fact that he had not shown concern over Hannah's eating, while having lunch himself, showed that he did not care about her at all. This decided it for Hannah, and she stopped all contact with him.

Many of the student migrants I have known abroad have shared Hannah's perception. As one of them said: 'If a man asks you out for drinks, he's after sex. If he asks you out for dinner, he cares about your wellbeing, and really likes you.' For them, with regards to dating

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22 In this context meaning white Euro-Americans. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion on 'dating foreigners'.

relationships, affects that revolve around sharing of food include care, generosity, emotional closeness, love, and permanent attachment, in contrast to the affects reflected and evoked by the sharing of drinks: selfishness, sexual interest, and temporary attachment. Even though parts of these associations might also hold in different Euro-American cultures, the ways of showing romantic and sexual interest vary cross-culturally, and create difficulties for communication, sharing and evoking emotions – all the stuff of cosmopolitan affect.

Gendered geographical scales

I have argued that on the geographical scale of family, gender does not influence the ability of women, *as daughters*, to pursue overseas study. Parents want their daughters to succeed, and are willing to support this pursuit in practice. There are, however, two geographical scales, where gender does matter for the student migrants: job market and marriage. Researchers have pointed to the occupational gender segregation in the reform era China, as well as to the increased discrimination against women in the job market (Broaded and Liu 1996; Jacka 1990; Li and Zhang 2010; Wang and Cai 2008; Xiang and Shen 2009; Zheng 2000). The existential gender model that associates aggression and strength with men, and passivity, weakness and altruism with women (Evans 1995) influence ideas of suitable jobs for men and women. This gender model carries on to the field of heterosexual affect through a belief that the education, income and status of a man should be higher than a woman's. In marriage women *as wives and mothers* are expected to carry the main responsibility for performing familial care in practice, and should thus be able to devote much of their time and energy to this task. In this context, women are drawn to occupations that are considered relatively stable and low risk (e.g., teaching, government official jobs, nursing, administration).

The parents often emphasise the importance of stability and security when advising their daughters about education and career choices. Mr Wu, a consultant with a PhD in engineering has a daughter currently in primary school. The parents plan to send her abroad to study in the future. Mr Wu and his wife support their daughter's educational success in many ways. They managed to enrol her in one of Beijing's best

primary schools. Part of her evenings, weekends and holidays are spent taking extra classes in maths and English or being tutored by her mother, also a teacher. On Saturday mornings Mr Wu and his wife take their daughter to an Olympiad maths class. I sometimes met them for lunch after the class, and we spent the afternoon together. The young daughter was encouraged to take the opportunity to practice her English, and each time she confidently exchanged with me the few phrases she knew. She then focused on her maths exercises, and while we talked, the parents timed her performance and occasionally helped her with a problem. In my view, there was little more the parents could have done to support their daughter's education, and nothing more the parents of sons I knew, did. Knowing my interest in the attitudes towards sons and daughters in single-child families, Mr Wu often stressed to me that these days there was no difference in raising a daughter and a son. But when we talked about the future career direction he hoped for his daughter, the gendered expectations came across.

> Mr Wu: Because of women's position in the family, people think that women should do a little more housework, have time to do that. So often people think that girls should have a stable job. Like a teacher, doctor, a civil servant. These are all quite stable. But for men, people think they should go and do business, start their own business. These jobs are not necessarily very stable. But all men want to give it a go. Of course they hope that in the household there is a wife who is very stable. Because if the wife is stable, the household is stable. Whatever they face outside doesn't matter, the household will be stable. If a woman's job is not stable, people's feeling might not be very good. It's a psychological thing, people feel that it's better when a woman has a stable job.

> AK: Do you also hope that for your daughter?

> Mr Wu: I also hope that she will have a stable job.

None of the parents of female students I knew wished their daughter to become a housewife or to be financially dependent on her husband. But many tried to direct their daughter towards subjects of study and jobs that were considered relatively stable and undemanding. Such careers were considered to support both, women's needs and qualities that arise from their existential nature, as well as the proper enactment of their gender roles as wives and mothers.

In the early 1990s, Broaded and Liu (1996) saw the acquirement of overseas credentials as women's strategy to tackle the increased discrimination they were facing in the Chinese job market. In my study I found no evidence of female student migrants viewing their overseas pursuits in terms of conscious strategy against gender discrimination. This is not to say that my informants were not aware of the discrimination. Hannah, for example, worked in a male dominated industry, being the only woman employee in her office and often the only woman participant in conferences and networking events. A very ambitious and career oriented person, she made use of her beauty, youth and social skills to build *guanxi*. 'Men control business, and they care about beauty', Hannah claimed, 'and I think, now that I'm still single and beautiful, men want to make friends with me! But after 30 or something, nobody will care. So it's good to make these friends now.' Hannah had several male friends who were her senior in their field of business and able to provide useful advice, connections and resources. She chatted with them online, sometimes sending pictures of herself when they requested or meeting them for dinners, but firmly rejected any dating and marriage proposals. She viewed their possible romantic or sexual interest in very instrumental terms, as a way to motivate initial contact and willingness to help, then trying to build a relationship on common interests and shared business ventures.

Many other female informants were also aware of the gendered assets they had in the job market, but to those who were not as skilful and determined as Hannah in using them to their own advantage, they were more of a burden. Kate, a 26 year old returnee who worked as an administrator often had to accompany her boss to dinners and karaoke nights with business associates. The practice of inviting young women, often junior employees of the company, to business related meetings to make the atmosphere 'more lively' is very common, and more than once I

found myself filling in for such role when accompanying informants to dinners and karaokes. At the meetings I attended very little business was discussed. Men challenged young women to drinking games and to singing duets, and engaged in light hearted banter with them. Kate accepted these meetings as part of her job and did not feel they included an expectation sexual engagement. 'Men, especially government officials, enjoy having dinners with young girls, drinking and joking with them, but they will not do anything else because it would harm the business', Kate said. Nevertheless she did consider the meetings burdensome and to have very little benefit to herself.

> Sometimes it's fun to know people in high positions, to make myself more sophisticated, but I think there's just too much drinking. And most of these guys are very nice and kind, but some like to make dirty jokes and all that. But for a secretary, or if you work in sales or in marketing, it's very important you can drink!

Apart from being a burden for young working women, the practice of cultivating business relations in these types of settings where women are recruited to provide entertainment or services, has other implications. Hsiu-Hua Shen (2005) calls this the masculinisation of business, which produces the idea that only men have the potential for full career development, as only they are able to take part in these relation-building events, and moreover, are not as restricted as women by their familial obligations to do so (2005: 421).

The gendered assets women have in the job market do not help them to get into high positions of power. Zheng Wang (2000) has written about the 'rice bowl of youth'-jobs at the bottom end of the urban job market (e.g., promoters, assistants). Women, often migrant workers, with few skills and educational credentials can use these jobs as access points to higher paying clerical and managerial jobs (2000: 73). Zheng argues that even though women have to perform the role of ideal femininity in these jobs, they give women one possible route to upward socioeconomic mobility the young, unskilled men do not have. The situation at the top end of the job market, where my informants aim at, is different. There are certain fields that almost exclusively hire women who through their youth

and a beauty embody ideals of modernity, but these have very limited prospects for upward mobility.

Two female graduates I knew hoped to become flight attendants. The recruitment events had several stages. I attended a recruitment event of one airline, which was organised at a shopping centre. Hundreds of young women, preselected on the basis of their applications, gathered at a fenced square. While waiting for their turn they changed into dresses, skirts and high heels, and applied make up. They then lined up and were given number tags. They proceeded in groups of ten to the stage, and as the audience of hundreds watched, each took their turn to step forward and introduce themselves to the judges. On the basis of this introduction that very much resembled a beauty pageant, the judges selected women to the next round of the recruitment process, which included interviews and group assignments. Doll and Sally, both graduates in their early twenties, sent applications to different airlines and were invited to the next rounds. Despite several attempts, Doll failed to pass the recruitment process. An exceptionally beautiful woman with good language skills and an outgoing personality, she still failed to fine tune to the ideal image of femininity the airlines looked to present. The feedback she got from one airline said that she had worn too much make up and had laughed too much during the interview. Doll finally abandoned this dream and returned to her job at the English language nursery. Sally passed the recruitment process and was hired by a Hong Kong based airline. Fluent in four languages, she soon became an in-flight interpreter and was often asked to mediate 'cultural differences', for example, explain rules about smoking to the Chinese passengers, or to explain their requests to the European crew members. Sally's cosmopolitan skills and competency were thus useful in this job, but within a couple of years she came to feel it was unrewarding and with few prospects, and gave it up to pursue graduate study in Amsterdam.

Women can use their gendered assets to advance their career, as Hannah has done, but not everyone has the skill, the opportunity or the willingness to do so. For most highly educated women their gender gives few advantages in the job market. Even though the female student migrants I knew did not consciously view overseas study as a strategy to tackle discrimination, many graduates and returnees felt that the experience had developed their 'independent ability', social skills and self

confidence in ways that made them more aggressive and confident in the job market, and importantly, in negotiations with their parents. Nelly was one of them, explaining to me:

> So sometimes I question if it was the right choice to go overseas to study. But I think it was, because it opened my mind, I changed a lot. I went to many places, got to know the people and the habits, made lots of friends. It changed my personality. I used to be very quiet and always listened to what my parents said. Now I'm very outgoing and open minded, and I like to do marketing. Before I could never had imagined to do marketing, I was very quiet. But now I love it. My mother says I've changed a lot. When I came back, I moved in with them. The first three or four months we just argued all the time. For example, when I was looking for a job, my mother said that I should find something in administration. She thinks this kind of job is very stable, and suitable for a girl. But I didn't want to, I wanted to do marketing.

Nelly was one of the several students I knew who had initially followed their parents' advice in choosing a field of study, but during her time abroad developed interests in other fields, which she would have initially considered too demanding or challenging. Upon graduation, she had gained enough confidence to pursue the new direction despite facing some parental opposition. Nelly went on to find a marketing job and a few years later she won another important conflict with her parents, by managing to get their approval for her marriage to a man who did not match the parents' ideas of a good husband.

While ambitious female students face gendered obstacles on the mountain of education, my research suggests that the cultural model of gender can also allow women more freedom than men to choose their route. Even though much emphasis is put on education success in securing a prosperous and happy future, good marriage is also considered an integral part of it for both sexes. For men, securing a good marriage match rests largely on their high economic status, entrepreneurial spirit and potential, often referred to as ability (*nengli*). These qualities are also

seen as assets for women, but due to the ideal and common practice of hypergamy, women can further their socioeconomic position also through marriage. Women's success in the marriage market is therefore not linked to their educational and career achievements to the same degree as men's. The stress of finding a good job after graduation was felt particularly strongly by the male graduates I knew, both returnees and those who had stayed abroad. The female graduates who struggled to find satisfying employment anguished about their financial situation, visa issues, and whether they would be able to find a job worth their efforts that would bring personal satisfaction. These concerns were shared by the male graduates in a similar situation, but unlike the women, they stressed the feelings of losing face and disappointing their parents if unable to succeed.

Women may feel less pressure to achieve and succeed than men, but the other side of the coin is that ambitious women who *want* to succeed, must take into account the disadvantage this may bring them in the marriage market. A popular belief among students is that women with undergraduate education are best positioned in the marriage market. Men want to marry women of similar or lower educational background, and women want to marry men of similar or higher background. A bachelor's degree is an asset, but a graduate and postgraduate degrees decrease the pool of potential husbands. Apart from the model for a good match, for many young educated men I knew, a woman's high education level was an indication of qualities that in excess are not desirable in a wife, such as ambition, career orientation, critical thinking and independence. Xiao Wei, a particularly outspoken 21 year old university student explained to me:

> Xiao Wei: I want to find someone who has a job, but doesn't earn more money than me. For education level, she should be a university graduate. If I have a masters degree and she does too, I can accept that. But if she has a PhD, that's very terrible. It's a very bad element for the family. Because education is for making money, and if she has a higher education, and then also a better job, it's bad for the family. Maybe the wife will look down upon the husband.

AK: So what about the husband, will he look down upon a wife who is less educated or doesn't have as good a job?

Xiao Wei: Because of our traditional culture, the husband will always look down upon the wife. So it doesn't matter. Maybe these days he doesn't look down, but also doesn't see her as an equal.

Xiao Wei's expression may be brash, but it reflects a real situation in the marriage market, of both men and women wishing to act out the hierarchical gender model. The statistics show that the model has influence beyond the level of ideas. In Table 7 the proportion of never married urban women increases with the education level (28% of women with high school education, 33% of undergraduates, 36% of post-graduates), while the men's likeliness to be unmarried decreases with higher education (31% of high school graduates, 28% of undergraduates, 23% of post-graduates).

Table 7. Never married urban population (>15 years) by gender and education level
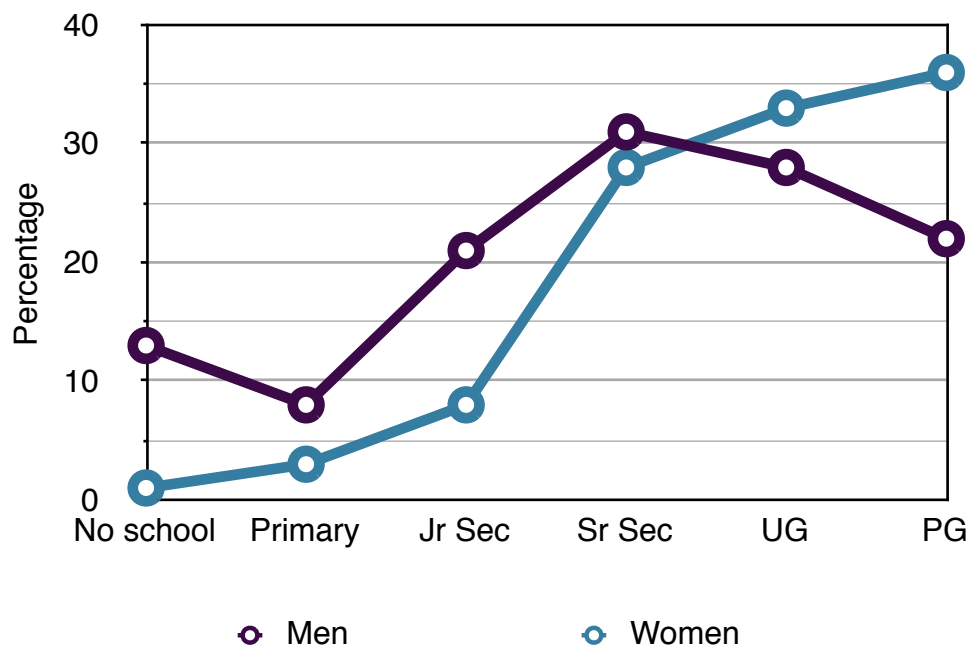
Source: China National Bureau of Statistics, 2005 National 1% Population Sample Survey, table 6-2a

Not all women, however, are put off from doctorate study by this pressure. The female PhD students I knew were well aware of the negative view most men would have on their education. An added concern for them was age, as most people postpone marriage until they have finished their education and there is a strong idea of an ideal marriage age, which for urban women is around 25. Those with the least to worry about were the ones who were already in a long term relationship before the start of their doctorate studies, with plans to marry after graduation. Those who were single admitted to worrying about their situation, but believed that one way or another, they would eventually get married. Some hoped that they would find a man with very high attributes, while others contested the hierarchical gender model altogether. They all agreed that the disadvantage they suffered in the marriage market was not enough to stop them pursuing doctorate education. As one student of sociology, studying for her doctorate in the UK put it: 'Women should not lower themselves to fit the men's expectations.'

On top of their own concerns, these women have to deal with the pressure to marry coming from their parents. The child's education and marriage are the two principal concerns of urban Chinese parents, and it is thus difficult when the two come into conflict. Many parents told me that they would discourage their daughter from getting a doctorate education, because it would make it difficult for her to find a good husband. The parents I knew whose daughter studied for a PhD, were all supportive of her studies. They had resolved the conflict by alternating their focus on education and marriage. 'First worry about education, then worry about marriage', one parent told me. Some students dreaded their graduation because they knew the pressure to marry would then become immense. Parents could also take an active role in helping their 'too successful' daughter to find a match. On several occasions I was asked by parents if I knew any suitable candidates to introduce to their daughter (or a daughter of a friend or a relative) who had recently earned her doctorate.

After finishing their education abroad, the students enter the gendered marriage and job markets. As education greatly influences their future positioning in these markets, the gendered constraints, opportunities and expectations inevitably influence the decisions they

make regarding education. In their cosmopolitan field of action, however, student migrants can draw from different symbolic resources. They also have the choice of entering the job and marriage markets of their destination countries. Even when the students return to China, they can use their cosmopolitan competency to tackle some of the barriers of the gendered job market.

The contradiction for the female student migrants arise form the fact that gender simultaneously operates on multiple geographical scales, such as schools, family and job market. The equal focus of urban singletons, boys and girls, their parents and teachers, on the importance of school performance is not matched by equal opportunities in the job market. What is more, gender operates in contradictory ways even within these scales. 'Family' is obviously not some fixed set of relations, but a person's positioning in its hierarchies and roles shifts throughout life. In the light of my material, it seems that in the position of daughters, women are encouraged to pursue self-development and success as much as sons. But their anticipated roles as wives and mothers shape the way their success is defined. The same, of course, goes for men. Their anxieties, concerns and aspirations are influenced by the cultural model of masculinity that encompasses the role of a son and a husband.

Conclusion

In many respects, the process of going abroad is not influenced by gender. Differences such as the family background are more characteristic of groups of students and their access and control over the flows of international education market. Personal characteristics shape the aspirations and imageries attached on the journey and the way it is experienced. The student migrant subjectivity is constituted not only through the affective ties with those in China, but through cosmopolitan affect that arises from the encounters during the journey. For some more than others, these are marked by disruptions in the understanding of each others emotional responses, and the differences between the imaginary, actual and remembered encounters.

Finally, the experience of student migration, including the emotions attached to the process, practical decisions about what subject to

study and where to work, and the emphasis this pursuit has in the more comprehensive life trajectory of the student, is influenced by the workings of gender on different geographical scales. On some of these scales (parent-child nexus in the family) gender has little influence on the educational aspirations and achievement. But on others (job market, marriage), gender matters. As these are interconnected scales, individuals must negotiate the contradictions in their own experience. Furthermore, as these geographical scales extend to transnational space, a partial unification of symbolic markets (Bourdieu 2007) takes place. This is not some general integration of different gender and kinship models into Chinese culture, but occurs in individual experience, which in turn has effect on the surrounding society. I will now go on to explore some of these individual journeys through looking at the Chinese marriage market, how student migrants are part of its transformation, and how individuals resolve some of the contradictions in their experience.

4. LEFTOVER WOMEN

On a Saturday afternoon just before the Spring Festival, Helen sits in a tea house in one of Beijing's trendy neighbourhoods. A stream of single men is guided to her table by the matchmaker of Touyuan dating agency. After introductions she leaves the couple to chat for a good half an hour, then they either exchange contact details or move on to the next candidate. The upcoming Spring Festival and the adjacent home town visit puts extra pressure on some of the singletons taking part in the match-making event, as they dread the questions and urges from worried parents. In Helen's case the parents' worry is somewhat justified. A 31 year old professional woman with an overseas master's degree, a decent salary and good career prospects, she has many things working against her in the urban Chinese marriage market. In popular discourse she is called a 'leftover woman' (*shengnü)*, a woman of three highs: high education, high salary, and high professional status (*sangaonü: xueli gao shouru gao zhiwei gao de nü*), who is over the ideal marriage age for urban Chinese women and has difficulties finding a suitable husband. As is well known, the family planning policies of the past four decades have resulted in a high sex ratio and the problem of involuntary rural bachelorhood has been widely addressed by both researchers and worried policy makers.[23] How does it then occur that there are women marked by success in other areas of life left without husbands?

Béarn bachelors and Chinese leftover women

In this analysis of the urban Chinese marriage market and the way the student migrants are part of its transformation, I draw from Bourdieu's (2007) analysis of non-marriage in post-war rural France. To summarise very briefly, Bourdieu discusses the problem of involuntary

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23 On security concerns see for example Edlund et al. forthcoming; Hudson and den Boer 2004; Jin et al. 2012; Ross 2010; on sexual health concerns Tucker et al. 2009; Tucker et al. 2003; on abduction and trafficking of women see Chao 2005; Gates 1996; Zhao 2003.

bachelorhood in his native rural Béarn after the war. The eldest sons, the primary inheritors of the family property, used to be at the top of the marriage market and finding an appropriate match was of primary concern for the continuity of the patrimony. The ideal was to marry a woman who could bring enough dowry to provide for the marriage of the other siblings, but not too much to pose too high a risk in the occurrence on repayment, that is, if the marriage broke down before any children had been born. This logic collapsed in a process that started with economic changes. Because of the post-WW1 inflation, no-one could pay dowries that would match the value of the patrimony. The link between marriage and land was weakened, and it became more a matter of social status and lifestyle. Moreover, as the rural economy became more dependent on the urban economy, and the development of transport and education made the population more integrated, a unification of symbolic markets followed. This was not an egalitarian process, but dominated by urban views and devalued the 'peasant way of life'. Unlike women and younger sons, the eldest sons remained attached to the land and could not take up the new opportunities of education and employment in the urban areas, or adapt the new lifestyles. Parental authority over marriages declined and courtship was left to individual initiative. The eldest sons now had two things working against them. The land had become a burden because women were reluctant to attach themselves to a lifetime of obligations to the parents-in-law and the patrimony. What is more, the eldest sons embodied the devalued 'peasant way of life' in their habitus and bodily hexis, which made it even more difficult to attract a bride.

The book Bachelors' Ball (2007 [2002]) is a republication of three works (originally published in 1962, 1972 and 1989 respectively), drawing together Bourdieu's treatment of the subject from three paradigms, first using structuralist approach, then his theory of practice (habitus), and finally the symbolic market. He identifies the two fundamental oppositions, women vs. men and great houses vs. small houses, at the basis of the values marriage holds up in rural Béarn: male supremacy and primogeniture (protection of the patrimony). He then argues that these are embedded in people's matrimonial strategies through their habitus, and even in the midst of social change, people's manoeuvring follows these underlining principles learned in childhood. Finally, he shows how symbolic change drives the process. Bourdieu argues that the non-

marriage of the eldest sons, as detrimental as it was to the 'peasant way of life', upheld the important cultural principles of male supremacy and primogeniture.

The case of the Béarn bachelors shows that in the midst of sociocultural change a part of the population whose position is produced by the old system and who are unable to fit the standards of marriageability in the current system, can fall into the trap of involuntary non-marriage (for another account, see Scheper-Hughes 1979). This is the case for the Chinese bachelors at the bottom end of the marriage market (i.e. men from poor rural families, those living in underdeveloped regions, migrant workers in the cities). A long-standing patriarchal belief in the Chinese marriage market is that a man's socioeconomic position should be similar or higher than a woman's. As this logic is coupled with the high sex ratio and the recent sociocultural transformations, which include later marriage age and the higher education level of young women and their higher earning power (increasing the value of daughters to their natal families), the power in marriage negotiations has shifted in favour of women and their families (Yan 2003, 2009). Young women in the middle and bottom ranges of the marriage market hierarchy are the main beneficiaries of the intensified practice of spatial and socioeconomic hypergamy. As they 'marry up', the men at the bottom of the hierarchy have difficulty finding a wife.

In the urban areas where sex ratio is smaller, a different problem arises. Having grown up as the single child of their parents, young women of marrying age have had similar support and opportunities as men. *Patrilineage*, one of the central values marriage has upheld in China, has become unsustainable in urban areas after the one child policy, and its main institutions: inheritance, patrilocality and ancestor worship, have largely been discontinued. Marriage has become more about the conjugal couple than the lineage. The second principal value upheld by marriage, *patriarchy*, has also been undermined with the increase of youth autonomy in general, and in spouse selection in particular (Jankowiak 1993; Yan 2003). But here is the paradox, the value of male supremacy is still being upheld, at least at the level of an ideal model. Apart from a few exceptions, all female student migrants I knew hoped to marry a man of a similar or preferably higher socioeconomic status, and many considered a good marriage instrumental not only to their emotional, but also material

well-being. As I was explained to: 'You marry a chicken, you follow the chicken, marry a dog, follow the dog' (*Jia ji sui ji, jia gou sui gou*). Being so outstanding (*youxiu*) themselves, the 'leftover women' want a man of matching ability (*nengli*). This sets high, at times impossible, standards for the men they are willing to marry. For men, on the other hand, the ideal is to marry a woman whose objective qualities are as high as possible in absolute terms, while not too high relative to their own.

The current conflict in the Chinese marriage market bears some resemblance to what Bourdieu describes in post-war rural Béarn. Change in social practices and values challenge the economic and the value base of marriage. But unlike the Béarn bachelors, the Chinese 'leftover women', and especially the student migrants, are among the instigators of the unification of the symbolic markets. Their challenge is to negotiate the different symbolic resources, i.e. values and ideas, that at times are in conflict with each other and do not fit well with the current demographics. While abiding to new ideas of romance, intimacy, and women's role in the family and society, the women also aim to act out the hierarchical gender model in their selection of a spouse. The same variety of symbolic resources that creates this dilemma also comes to the aid of individuals when they try to resolve it. When the Béarn bachelors encountered the changing marriage market, they found no other solution but to stay unmarried. The cultural model for marriage that the bachelors failed to act out was preserved in their non-marriage. The Chinese 'leftover women' can develop more varied strategies, and the student migrants among them draw from their cosmopolitan field, orientation and resources. Before discussing these strategies, let me outline the ideal model for a good marriage match, which is shared by the urban youth to a striking degree.

Good wives, good husbands

Lets sit back at Helen's table at the dating event. Confidently she lists her requirements for a potential husband: he should have a good family background, at least a master's degree and be tall. He should earn a monthly salary of at least 20.000 yuan and own 'a house' (apartment) and a car. It is difficult to find a man who fits all of Helen's requirements, but she cannot settle for less because of her own background and status.

She herself owns a car and an apartment, and has a monthly salary of 10.000 yuan. Her parents are highly educated, a university professor and an engineer. She wants to find a husband whose background and current situation is better than hers. Being over thirty, Helen realises that many men already consider her too old for marriage. To add to the pressure, her parents constantly worry about her situation and urge her to get married soon. After seven years of studying and working in Australia, Helen has recently returned to Beijing. She explains that the need to find a husband was one of the main reasons for her return. Not willing to marry a non-Chinese, she thinks she will have a much better chance of finding a Chinese man of her high standards in Beijing where the level of education and income is generally high, than among the Chinese migrants in Australia. Her search is a time-consuming effort, in the two months that she has been a member of the Touyuan agency, she has taken part in ten match-making events, has been on several individual dates, and has communicated with potential men via email and telephone.

I catch a moment with Mr Wang, the busy manager of the Touyuan agency. Showing me the lists of personal information his customers fill up upon joining, and explaining their most common requirements, he confirms the impression I have already got during my fieldwork. The ideas about what makes a good wife and a good husband are strikingly uniform in contemporary urban China. The same list of objective standards recurs in discussions with student migrants, their parents and other urban youth, and in TV shows, pop songs and internet discussion forums. When choosing a spouse, the main considerations are (in random order): family background, occupation, education, income, ownership of a house and a car, age, appearance and personal character. Even though the list is the same for both women and men, the attributes have gendered content and they are differently emphasised by women and men, as well as their parents. While parents emphasise the importance of similar family background, many young people consider it advantageous but in importance well below the more personal attributes of the potential spouse, such as his or her income and education level. That is, apart from the family's place of origin (rural - urban, interior - coast, big city - medium city etc.), which is considered to greatly influence an *individual's* outlook and habits. Women emphasise income and assets, while men value beauty. Occupation is linked to income, but also to other

characteristics desirable in a spouse. Stable jobs, such as positions in teaching or state owned enterprises, were mentioned as good for women because they leave more time and energy to be devoted for the family. For men, challenging jobs in the private business sector with good prospects to increase earnings were thought particularly good.

In this model we can see the traditional rationale for conjugal exchanges, in which material care mainly flows from husband to wife, and reproductive care mainly from wife to husband. Nevertheless this is not a model determined by some timeless cultural rationale, but clearly shaped by the current emphasis on the individual over family (Kleinman et al. 2011; Rofel 2007; Whyte 2003; Yan 2009). This cultural logic of marriage does not quite work in the current marriage market, or more precisely, at its top end, the highly educated urban population. When looking at the continuum of the marriage market, we can see that it is the very mobility of women in general that leaves the 'leftover women' unprotected in the marriage market.

With China's high sex ratio and the increasing power of women and their families in the marriage negotiations, it may seem surprising that among my main informants, the educated urban youth, I found a strong sentiment that it is the men who have more choice in the marriage market. While the young women I knew often worried about finding a good husband, the men of the same age group told me with satisfaction that they had more choice and more time than women, and thus needed not compromise on their demands. Women's demands, on the contrary, were mere hopes and if they stuck to them for too long, it may happen that no man would want them.

Bourdieu (2007) argues that the non-marriage of the Béarn bachelors resulted from the disintegration of the protective economic and value mechanisms of the marriage market, exposing it to the anarchy of individual lovers' choice (2007: 173). In China, the marriage market was protected by the value principle of patriarchy and the economic principle of patrilineage (enacted in living arrangements and inheritance). The family planning policies disrupted this logic. As the ideal of hypergamy is still in place, women in areas with high sex ratio simply have more choice and migrate to more desirable locations for marriage. Those left unprotected in this upward circulation of women, are of course the men at the bottom and women at the top of the hierarchy. Apart from this basic

rationale, there are some other factors that contribute to the tensions at the urban end of the marriage market.

The main bridewealth in urban China is 'the house'. On the current property market, its acquirement has, however, become almost impossible to many young men and their parents. At the time of my fieldwork, the Bureau of Statistics of the Beijing Municipality reported a 27:1 price-to-income ratio, 5 times the world average (China Building Industry 2010). The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2009) estimated that 85% of urban residents could not afford to buy a house at the current market. Despite these adverse conditions, all my informants agreed that a newly married couple needed a house, usually meaning an apartment, strongly preferring this to living with the in-laws or renting. As the families with daughters do not need to save money for the marriage of sons, many have the ability to share the financial burden of starting a marriage. In these conditions, many young women and their parents still hold the ideal that the groom should provide the house and the car upon marriage, but are aware that in reality it will require some input from both families. The one child policy and the property market bubble in urban China thus contribute to a situation where urban families with sons can expect the bride's family to share the financial burden of marriage. The daughters of urban single-child families are thus not benefiting from the increase of women's power in the marriage negotiations to the same degree as their, in many other respects more disadvantaged, rural counterparts.

Finally, the gender model that informs ideas about appropriate age for marriage, works as a further check against the power of women in the marriage market. The educated urban youth I knew were very consistent in their opinions about the ideal age for themselves and their partner at the time of marriage, namely, mid-20s for women and around 30 for men. The explanations men gave to the preference for younger women were their physical beauty, simple (*jiandan*) minds and lack of status and power (*quanli*) that tend to increase with age. The age bias works for men's favour in the marriage market, as they can find a spouse in their own age cohort or in the next one, but women's best window is limited to their twenties.

The ideal gender model for marriage is difficult to enact in contemporary China, particularly so for the 'leftover women and men'. Now we get to the interesting question of what the 'leftover women',

more specifically the student migrants among them, do when they face the disparity between the ideal and the real conditions. First, there are two qualities that can be emphasised to compensate when the partner or the relationship falls short of the ideal. These draw from the two central aspects of the subjectivity of the urban youth, desire and enterprising. The latter is realised through the quality of *nengli*, which means ability, potential and ambition, a conveniently vague term to be adapted in various circumstances. For example, facing the reality of having to participate in financing the house and the car upon marriage, women and their parents emphasised that a man's *nengli* was more important than his current assets. *Romantic love,* a reflection of the desiring subject that is expressed through affects that centre around the individual (Rofel 2007), also mediates the gap between the ideal model and the reality.

The grown emphasis of both of these qualities is part of the unification of the symbolic markets. This process should not be viewed simply in terms of the adaptation of Western ideas of individuality, sexuality and romance, and rejecting Chinese social norms. Individual desire is very much part of the particularly Chinese subjectivity of the student migrants, and has its origins in the current politico-economic conditions as well as in the collectivist era. The retreated welfare state and the unequally distributed wealth and opportunity that have given rise to the self-interested, enterprising individuals encouraged to express identities through consumption, have accelerated the sociocultural transformations that were already under way before the reforms, such as the 'romantic revolution' (Yan 2003). It is from this background, as well as from the symbolic resources drawn from their cosmopolitan encounters, that the student migrants draw from when contesting and negotiating the Chinese models for gender and romantic and sexual relationships.

Love

In Béarn the unification of symbolic markets was largely a one-directional process of the urban way of life replacing the peasant values. But the idea of romantic love among the student migrants (and the urban youth in general) shows that what has taken place in China is not a replacement of Chinese values with the Western ones, but a unification

that combines ideas and values from different sources. The idealisation of romantic love has a long history in China, elaborated in the works of art and literature through different dynasties. Songs, stories and popular tales also served as cautionary tales, to warn people about the tension between love, which was considered an individual desire, and social obligation, such as filial duty. A common theme was thus the ability of romantic love to inflict suffering on those involved (Jankowiak 1995). In contemporary China, individual desire is an accepted, or even a required, part of a properly modern and cosmopolitan identity, but at the same time, the tension between that desire and social obligation remains, as can be seen in the negotiations between parents and children about dating and marriage.

The current idea of romance has been influenced by American popular culture, which emphasises public displays of affection in speech and behaviour that are not overtly sexual (Jankowiak 1995). Informants used the word romantic (*langman de*) when referring to these Western forms of behaviour, e.g., giving gifts, arranging surprises and talking about love. Other words (often love, *ai,* and care, *guanxin*) were used when talking about more traditional Chinese ways of expressing affection in a romantic relationship, which include paying interest to the small details of each others' daily activities, being concerned over each other's health and well being, and accompanying each other in activities. Many women considered 'foreigners', in this context referring to white Euro-Americans, as the model for romantic behaviour and attitude that Chinese men should learn from.

These two ideas of love and romance are combined in the TV-dramas, films and pop music produced in Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and in the recent years most notably, South Korea.[24] The young people I knew had little interest in Chinese TV, sanctioned by the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT). Instead, they downloaded and watched shows from the internet, or bought cheap DVDs from street corners. The Korean TV-dramas often show a beautiful, kind-hearted woman of no wealth and status to overcome the obstacles of parental disapproval and class prejudice to be with her true love, an heir of a rich, notable family, who expresses his love by grand romantic gestures. The

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24 For the Korean wave see for example the edited volume *East Asian Pop Culture. Analysing the Korean Wave* (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008)

traditional East Asian themes of romantic love: suffering, filiality and destiny, are combined with the current cosmopolitan themes of overseas study, premarital sex, cohabitance, homosexuality, etc., in a setting that is utterly desirable, modern and cosmopolitan.

Romance in its overt, dramatic forms was greatly idealised and appreciated by my young informants. Grand gestures were used to express and evoke romantic feelings especially at the early days of a relationship. Jonatan, a good singer and a piano player, arranged a surprise for a woman he had been dating for a while. On the Gregorian New Year's Eve, he took her to a bar that had live music. Jonatan got on stage to serenade to the woman and handed her thirty-three red roses. The meaning of the number, as he explained, was that as three roses carried the message 'I love you', thirty-three meant that they would be together forever. Another informant, a 21 year old student, approached the girl he liked by inviting her to a classroom in the evening. He decorated the room with candles and flowers, arranging them to the shape of her name. In front of a group of their friends, whom he had invited to witness the occasion, he asked her to be his girlfriend. Overwhelmed by this romantic gesture, she happily accepted.

Young urban couples are not shy to physically show their affection in public. Couples holding hands, kissing, embracing, sitting on each others' laps, cutting each other's nails, combing hair, correcting make up or clothes and making other similar intimate gestures are a common sight in the public spaces of Beijing. When I asked students and their parents about this phenomenon, both attributed its increase to 'learning from the West' during the past decade or two. The reason these public displays of affection seemed remarkable was not only their degree of intimacy but also their frequency. Shopping centres, cafes, bars and university campuses are conspicuously populated by young couples engaging in affectionate behaviour. There are at least three possible explanations for this. Chinese students in secondary education are strongly discouraged against dating by their parents and teachers. At this time, nothing should interfere with their focus on study, which is ensured by almost constant supervision by the school and the parents. Of course the more rebellious and the less studious youth find the time and opportunities for dating, but most of the students only start dating after they finish high school. Away from their parents' supervision, with a great deal more unstructured time

in their hands than before, informal socialising and dating becomes an important part of the university experience. Second, dating relationships are intense and intimate. Couples I knew spent most of their free time together and showed great interest in each others' well-being and everyday activities. Finally, there are few private spaces available for students, who live in single-sex dormitories, sharing a room with up to twelve others. Couples loiter at public spaces or go to the hourly paid hotels near university campuses for more privacy. Others rent a room or an apartment together outside campus, usually without the knowledge of their parents who live in a different city. Cohabitance before marriage is disapproved by many parents. The young couples are reluctant to openly act against their parents' wishes, but the fact that many students leave their hometowns to study and to work, only seeing their parents once or twice a year, facilitates non-compliance without direct conflict.

The youth autonomy in spouse selection increased rapidly after the 1950s in both rural and urban China (Jankowiak 1993, 1995; Parish and Whyte 1978; Yan 2003). Even though it is extremely rare these days for marriages to take place against the will of the young couple, parental involvement in the process prevails. Several of my informants stressed that it would be very difficult for a couple to stay together without the approval of the parents of both sides. I did not know any couples, dating or married, who were together despite parents' direct opposition. Jonatan's romantic gesture at the bar did not have the outcome he had hoped for. The woman's mother saw Jonatan walk her daughter out while she waited in the car outside the bar that night. The next day the woman called Jonatan, saying that her mother had asked questions about him, and disapproved the relationship. Jonatan worked for his father's business and the mother thought that businessmen were unreliable. She also thought Jonatan was too short for her daughter and they did not look good together. In a tear-filled meeting the couple agreed not to meet anymore. Jonatan often emphasised the stress and anxiety that surrounded dating. The difficulty, in his view, was not to find a woman he liked, but to gain the approval of his and her parents. The importance of parents' opinion was not only due to filial obligation, but his financial dependence on them. Abiding to the ideal model, Jonatan explained the a man was expected to provide a house and a car upon marriage, but the astronomical sums required for these assets force men to depend on their

parents for assistance. If his parents did not like his girlfriend, they simply would not pay for the house, the car and the wedding. Jonatan's mother explained to me that it was the duty of the parents to help their child to make a good choice, a woman who would be good to him and to the whole family. She thus planned to pay close attention to the background and the personality of any woman Jonatan was to introduce.

Delaying the introduction between boyfriend or girlfriend and the parents is a common practice in China. Couples can date for several years before meeting each others' parents. For many, the motivation is that they do not want to involve the parents before an engagement and marriage is planned. For some, however, it is a strategy against parental disapproval. Of the couples I knew, those who had formed relationships against conventions of age and status and expected opposition hoped that the endurance of their relationship would prove its value to the parents. The parents' opinion is important in the process of partner selection, but the youth are not completely without strategies were they to disapprove. From the young people's perspective, an agreement needs to be reached with the parents, but some are more willing than others to test its boundaries, as will be shown below.

Sex

Another field in which the unification on symbolic markets is taking place is sex and sexuality (Zhang 2011). In the midst of rapid transition, attitudes and practices range on a wide scale. A 2006 survey covering both rural and urban districts of Shanghai shows a significant change even within a short time span of nine years. The respondents were divided into two age cohorts (16-19 and 20-28), which were then compared in terms of the percentage of females and males who had experienced dating, fondling and coitus before the age of 18. Across the rural and urban, male and female categories, all these behaviours nearly or more than doubled between the older and the younger cohorts (Zabin et al. 2009). None of my young urban informants disapproved premarital sex, but their attitudes, knowledge on the subject and experiences ranged between two extremes. At one end were the informants who only wanted to have sex with a person they planned to marry. Some of these

informants had very little knowledge about the technicalities of sex or contraception. A few used our conversations to ask questions on the topic. They found the subject embarrassing, but felt able to ask questions either because I was older and married, or because I was foreign and therefore presumably open (*kaifang)* in my thinking.

At the other extreme were the informants who had curious or unabashed attitudes toward sex. They engaged in sex relationships that did not involve emotional commitment. Kate, a 26 year old returnee had sex relationships with various men, including her ex-boyfriend, a married friend and a middle-aged businessman, while at the same time dating men she would potentially want to marry. Her arrangement with the businessman is an example of a much publicised practice of young women, often students, having sexual relationships with older men, businessmen and government officials, in exchange for material benefits. These arrangements are referred to as being a kept mistress (*baoyang/ baoernai*), living off a rich man (*bang dakuan*), and compensated dating (*yuanzhu jiaoji*). They are usually long-term arrangements and the terms are negotiated between the two individuals. In contrast to more direct forms of prostitution (solicited on the streets, in hair saloons, karaoke bars and restaurants), the compensation is often given through sponsoring an apartment or giving material gifts rather than giving money. Kate had no formal agreement with the man, but upon their mutual understanding, she occasionally accompanied him on business dinners and he visited her in her apartment for sex, and in exchange he bought her designer clothes and other expensive gifts. She saw this relationship as a harmless experience that could offer some excitement and material gain, but would have no significant impact on her future, including her marriage plans. The attitudes and the experiences of most informants fell somewhere in between these two extremes. They had some knowledge about the subject, discussed it with close friends, and considered sex a natural part of a love relationship, both during dating and marriage.

The openness of attitudes toward sex did not follow gender lines, both male and female informants ranged from the conservative to the liberal extremes. Yet ideas about proper sexual behaviour and how it links to the existential characteristics of a woman and man were gendered. Xiao Wei, a 21 year old male student, who had had various sexual partners and had dated a woman who was previously a kept mistress to a

businessman, said that he could not consider marriage with her, or a woman with many sexual partners. He believed that he would make a good husband in the future, because his sexual experiences would help him to 'know what he likes' and he would no longer have interest in other women. In contrast, a woman with similar experiences would not make a good wife, because she would no longer be a good woman. Both men and women used the patriarchal discourse to explain that the differential and hierarchical gender roles originated in the Chinese cultural ideology, history and traditions. But while the men cited the cultural traditions to articulate their own views, women used them to explain the expectations the society and men have on women. Even when acting in accordance with these expectations, they did not fully adapt them as their own. Kate hoped to eventually settle down with a wealthy man. Despite her various sexual relationships with men, single and married, her idealisation of marriage included fidelity, but only from her side. She explained her double standard for fidelity in marriage with the patriarchal model.

> Because of the dependence. It's just like that. I think it's like that, men are supposed to be strong and hard, women are supposed to be soft. So women can rely on men and men will take care of them. So I think, if women can rely on men, then men can have some privileges. [Laughs surprised] It sounds so strange! When I explain it like this, I think, what a strange idea!

Kate's confused statement shows that she is aware of the patriarchal discourse and cites it with relative distance, without internalising it in full. Kate is a daughter of two high level cadres, her family is wealthy and well connected. They were able to buy Kate an apartment at the prestigious part of the city, and supported her extravagant lifestyle. Kate herself earned a starting salary of 10.000 yuan at a job she had started only recently. Her wealthy background and good job did not mean Kate would forfeit the ideal of hypergamous marriage. On the contrary, her number one requirement was that the husband should be able to bear the full responsibility of the family finances, offering the lifestyle that Kate was accustomed to and Kate's own assets and earnings would be a mere bonus. In turn, she would be a loyal wife

and allow her husband 'privileges'. This is what Kandiyoti (1997) would call a 'patriarchal bargain', men paying money to buy their wives' loyalty and silence about extramarital affairs, and women trading their positions for financial security.

It is notable that all female informants who had particularly liberal views on sex and sexuality were returned student migrants. This was not the case for male informants. Moreover, most of these women claimed that staying abroad had had a significant impact on their views. They did not link the change to having lived in a sexually more liberal society, but to the experience of increased independence. Surviving on their own abroad had made them more self-assured and less concerned with other people's opinions. This shows that there is more to the transformation of the marriage market than the introduction of new symbolic goods through actual, virtual and imaginary travel. With their individual journeys, the student migrants' positioning in the hierarchies of generation, kinship, gender, etc., shift (Mahler and Pessar 2001), and many experience an increased sense of autonomy from these power systems. In addition, the cosmopolitan orientation and competency (Vertovec and Cohen 2002) they develop, helps them to situationally treat cultures as 'artworks' (Hannerz 1990), view them from the distance (Szerszynski and Urry 2006) and compare them. The cosmopolitan orientation and competencies, the geography of power, the emphasis on romantic love and *nengli*, and the new symbolic resources adapted from abroad, are all part of the experiences of the student migrants as they negotiate their difficult position in the marriage market. Their courses of action can be categorised as compromises, non-compliance and engaging in the marriage markets of other countries.

Compromises

Compromising on either romantic love or on the objective standards was the most common strategy of the student migrants I knew who were not able to find a spouse to match their ideal. Kate and Nelly both had Chinese boyfriends while studying abroad, but broke up with them upon returning to China. Kate met her boyfriend in Holland where the two studied and lived together for three years. After earning their

bachelor's degrees, they took different directions, Kate going to UK to study for a master's degree, and her boyfriend enrolling in a university in Amsterdam. As Kate returned to Beijing to work, her boyfriend found a job at a multinational IT company in Amsterdam. On Kate's account, the two never officially ended their relationship, but in addition to her sex relationships with various men, she also dated men with the objective of finding a husband. When I first got to know Kate, she viewed the prospect of marrying her university boyfriend with disdain. She claimed that their relationship lacked passion and feeling, and hoped to fall in love with a man who would also meet her objective requirements of wealth and success. Kate's university boyfriend, on the other hand, seemed more interested in maintaining the relationship and directing it towards marriage. He came to visit Kate in Beijing, but she went out with friends, only returning to her apartment in the morning after he had left for the airport. He suggested that he would arrange a transfer to the company's Shanghai office, and asked Kate to move there with him. Kate refused on the excuse that she liked Beijing more and all her friends lived there. She told me that the real reason was that she liked her 'single life' in Beijing, and did not want to marry him. Despite avoiding intimacy and finding excuses against his attempts to move the relationship forward, Kate did not completely end the relationship. Fulfilling all of Kate's objective criteria for a good husband, he was her backup plan, in case she failed to find a man of similar attributes but also mutual attraction. A few years later, after various relationships of both sexual and romantic nature, which had left her disillusioned with love and romance as a basis of relationships, Kate was starting to seriously consider marriage with her university boyfriend. 'I am a materialistic and practical person', she explained, 'I like to enjoy life, so I pursue a stable and secure lifestyle.'

Nelly made a different choice. She had met her boyfriend while an undergraduate in China. When Nelly went abroad for two years to study for a masters' degree, the couple stayed together with the plan to marry upon her return. The parents of the couple met for negotiations, and the boyfriends' family bought an apartment and a car in preparation for the marriage. But the time abroad had a profound impact on Nelly, and when she returned, she wanted to cancel the marriage plans. Unlike Kate, who had sought comfort and security from a relationship while studying abroad, citing that as her main motivation to stay with her boyfriend,

Nelly grew more independent, outgoing and open-minded. While abroad, Kate mainly socialised with other Chinese students, spent most of her time with her boyfriend and relied on him in taking care of practicalities. Nelly, in contrast, actively engaged with the surrounding student community and the local society by making friends, attending parties, adapting new ideas, style of dress, and ways of interacting with people. But upon returning to China, it was Kate whose quest to find a new relationship(s) was motivated by the desire for symbolic goods associated with the West: romantic and sexual passion. Nelly's separation from her boyfriend was motivated by the Chinese cultural logic of a good match. Having increased her *nengli* through self-development, she felt, in line with the hierarchical gender model, that her boyfriend's attributes no longer matched, let alone surpassed, hers. Against the wishes of her boyfriend and the parents of both of them, Nelly ended the relationship.

During the following three years, Nelly dated several men and often agonised over the difficulty of finding a decent man with whom she 'had feeling' with. She then started to like a man, a friend's friend, who did not match half of her requirements. Having quit his career in business to take care of his parents, he owned a small shop for selling his own artwork. 'The feeling together is very good, but he has no money! That's the only problem!' Nelly lamented upon meeting him. After some time of dating, Nelly concluded that the man's *nengli* was high and he had simply become a victim of unfortunate circumstances of his parents' illness. After a year together, the two got married without any marriage transactions taking place, with the reluctant approval of Nelly's parents. They now live in a rented flat in the outskirts of Beijing. As the husband's mother has now passed away and his father requires less care, he is able to devote more time to develop his skills as a carver, and his shop and online store is running better. Nelly works as a manager for an IT outsourcing company. In Nelly's words, she has grown more mature and is willing to work together with her husband to build a good life, as long as the feeling between them is good.

Kate and Nelly's experiences show how the cosmopolitan subjectivity of the student migrants in enacted in complex ways. The lifestyles and the degree of integration while abroad does not predict the way students live and make decisions once they return to China. Both Nelly and Kate claimed that the experience of studying abroad had

influenced their values and personalities. Nelly linked her process of self-development directly to adapting new ideas and ways of behaving while abroad. Her marriage appears to match the Western ideal of a 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1992) better than Kate's planned marriage to her university boyfriend. But Nelly articulated her decision to break off her first engagement in terms of the Chinese logic of a good match. She also drew from it when rationalising the new relationship, deciding that the man's *nengli* and the love between them were enough to compensate for his shortcomings on the objective criteria.

The migration experience attached Kate *more strongly* to the Chinese sociocultural field, as she came to realise that she was most comfortable working, dating and socialising in a culturally, socially and linguistically Chinese environment. But her attachment was now a choice, and the way she reattached herself was influenced by her cosmopolitan experience. She contrasted her party lifestyle with the boring life in Europe. Getting drunk at the clubs, having sex relations without emotional attachment and in exchange for material compensation, and dating married men went against social norms in China. Kate nevertheless viewed them as specifically Chinese ways of acting. She therefore did not account these behaviours to 'learning from the West', but on the contrary, explained them with the practical nature of the Chinese society, and herself being a Chinese person. What she did account to her cosmopolitan experience, however, was her courage to engage in such behaviours. Student migrants thus not only introduce new symbolic goods to the Chinese sociocultural field, but also engage in already existing modes of behaviour, which they would have avoided before their migrant experience. Bruce Robbins (1998) has noted that cosmopolitanism is not a mode of detachment, but of attachment and reattachment, multiple attachment, and attachment at a distance (1998: 3). As the student migrants attach to the Chinese sociocultural field, their cosmopolitan existence becomes part of it.

Non-compliance

Some returnees question the cultural models for gender and marriage altogether and have relationships that are in a clear conflict with

them. Nelly's best friend, Sarah, was one of them. While Nelly dated men with the objective of finding a husband, Sarah was not interested in marriage. When I first met Sarah, I asked if she had a boyfriend. 'No', she laughed, 'I don't have boyfriends, I have lovers.' Similarly to Kate, Sarah maintained several sex relationships at the same time, one of them with an Austrian man she met regularly when travelling to Europe for business. Unlike Kate, Sarah did not see this as a passing stage of experimenting before finding a culturally sanctioned match for marriage.

The only time she seriously considered marriage was when one of her sex partners of several years proposed to her. The two had grown emotionally attached, and the man wanted to either get married or to end the relationship. A hairdresser eight years her junior, his status was below Sarah's by all standards from age to education, occupation, income and family background. He was also very handsome, while Sarah possessed few of the features considered attractive by Chinese standards. These ill-matched characteristics prompted Sarah's friends to advice against the marriage. Sarah also knew that she would have her work carved out in trying to gain her parents' approval. After pondering the situation for months, she finally decided against the marriage. In our discussions during this time, Sarah's main concern seemed not to be the differences in qualifications and income. She emphasised his *nengli*, and said that despite the differences, they had similar views and personalities. Sarah felt that socioeconomic mobility through marriage was the strategy of women who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, or did not have *nengli*. Her own success rendered her free to choose a spouse by other than material considerations. By this, Sarah clearly rejected the cultural model of gender hierarchy. But she showed her awareness of it in her considerations of the age difference. Sarah worried that even though the age difference did not seem a problem now, it would become such in the years to come. 'When I'm forty, he'll be thirty-three. I'll be old and he'll still be attractive. Many girls will flirt with him, and I will have to worry about it. I don't want that.' Even though Sarah rejected the gender model that values men's higher status and women's youth and beauty, it was part of her subjectivity, influencing her motivations and anxieties in the decision making. After her decision, Sarah did not start to search for a better matching candidate for marriage. At the age of 34, she is still unmarried.

The couples I knew whose relationships strongly conflicted the cultural gender model, experienced immense pressure from their friends and families. Many gave in eventually, ending the relationship. The practice of delaying the introduction between the parents and the dating partner for several years allows the youth to push the boundaries of cultural norms. But crossing them by marriage is another matter, and for most these relationships remain experiences of the youth, before a more 'mature' choice is made for marriage. The physical distance created by migration somewhat changes this dynamic. As the students' immediate living environment is controlled by different social norms, they feel less pressure to follow the Chinese conventions. Even after returning to China, the cosmopolitan orientation allows some student migrants to maintain some distance to the local power systems.

Dating and marrying foreigners

Marrying a foreigner is one of the cosmopolitan strategies of the 'leftover women'. Social mobility through marriage across national borders has its roots in the traditional practice of women's spatial hypergamy in China. In patrilocal societies, where the bride has to adapt to the new living conditions after marriage, it is logical to aspire to marry to a location that is similar or more desirable than the natal place (Oxfeld 2005: 19). In the reform years, the distances travelled for marriage have grown and brides increasingly cross provincial and national borders. 'Marriage scapes' that link fantasies of gender, race, sexuality and modernity with certain sites, have formed (Constable 2005b). For the student migrants, the most desirable destinations for study are also the most desirable sources of non-Chinese marriage partners. Women's wish to marry a foreigner is linked to both, the project of finding a husband of higher status by objective standards, and to the cosmopolitan desires that equate foreign men with romance, freedom, independence, progress and modernity.

The nationality and race of foreigners at times overrides other objective standards in the marriage market hierarchy. Economic wealth, global political power, cultural heritage, natural environment, civil society, social welfare and crime rate are among the indicators of development

that are used to rank countries. For example, while US is considered to be at the top in terms of global economic and political influence, some European countries are valued for relatively clean environment, safe cities or rich cultural heritage. Apart from nationality, race is a marker of status. The Chinese discourse of race, in both its scientific and folk forms, is based on the lineage model and a racial hierarchy where the 'white and yellow races' are placed above the 'brown, black and red races', in competition with each other (Dikötter 1997). A citizenship of a developed country and a 'white' racial status can sometimes compensate for the other objective criteria when a Chinese woman marries a man whose status in his home country does not match her high status in China. It must be noted that the value of these assets seems to be in decline with the expansion of China's global economic and political power, and the increased prevalence of cosmopolitan encounters of its young urbanites. Foreign men are increasingly assessed by the same standards as the Chinese men. Many of the young, highly educated women who had plans or experience of living abroad told me that they were not interested in dating the foreigners in China, who were mostly young drifters, language teachers with no proper careers, or old divorced men looking for young beautiful wives, all of low social and economic status in their home countries. This shows that the unification of the symbolic markets is a constant process, and the value attached to symbolic goods (here nationality and race) continues to evolve as they become more integrated into the local symbolic market, and moreover, as the unification of *economic* markets develops.

Marrying white Euro-Americans has been a practice of Chinese women rather than men (Constable 2005b). One explanation is the racial discourse in the West that feminises Asian men, rendering them undesirable partners (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 38). Another perspective is given by Bourdieu (2007), who argues that objective attachment to a place creates subjective attachment to its culture (habits, lifestyles, fashion, etc.). In the case of China, there is no doubt that the patrilineal institutions have attached men more strongly than women to their home places. But does this hold for the student migrants, the sons and daughters of the urban single-child families? In the light of my research, much of the importance of the patrilineal institutions has waned. But at the same time, patrilineality and its complement patriarchy remain powerful discourses,

and I found that male student migrants used them alongside the racial discourse to rationalise why they themselves or Chinese men in general did not want to marry foreigners. Chinese women were described as more adaptable to new customs and skilful in languages and thus able to have successful cross-cultural marriages. On the flip side, men often told me that because of the higher status of men in Chinese society, the women had less to lose if they married a foreigner. If a man married a woman of high racial, national and economic status, he would feel great pressure to retain an appropriately high status to ensure a well balanced marriage. A woman, on the other hand, did not have to compete with her foreign husband, but could climb up on the socioeconomic ladder through marriage. My impression was that men preferred to use this discourse rather than the racial one, which they were also aware of. Even though very few used the racial discourse as a primary explanation of why they did not want to marry foreigners, some commented that finding a foreign girlfriend would be difficult, that they would not dare to approach foreign women, or that dating a foreign woman would 'give face'.

Bourdieu gives another conceptual tool that helps to understand why the cross-cultural marriage still remains mainly a women's strategy. He argues that the force of attraction the new sociocultural field exerts and the force of inertia of different agents against it varies according to their attachment to the old field (2007: 171-3). There are at least two factors that can increase the force of attraction the cross-border marriages and permanent settlement abroad have on female student migrants more than on the male student migrants. These are the Chinese job market and the marriage market. The gendered job market not only pushes women toward certain, less prestigious occupations, but also limits their upward mobility (Broaded and Liu 1996; Li and Zhang 2010; Wang and Cai 2008; Xiang and Shen 2009). The logic of the marriage market, in which women circulate upwards, drives the women at the top to extend their field across national borders, importantly, to countries higher up in the geography of desire.

As I have noted, male student migrants tended to articulate their choices, pressures, and concerns in terms of filial obligations more than the female student migrants. The question of the continuity of their stronger attachment to the old field through the patrilineal institutions and ideals is thus difficult, and in need of more research. Indicative of this

complexity, or even change, are my survey results. The surveys included a set of questions about the students' attitudes towards dating and marrying foreigners. To my great surprise, in both surveys (the Renmin sample of the aspiring student migrants, and the current student migrants at the LSE) men showed more positive attitudes than women. In all categories (dating a foreigner, marrying a foreigner, dating an ethnically Chinese foreigner, marrying an ethnically Chinese foreigner), a larger percentage of men than women responded 'willing' or 'very willing'. Even though their practices do not currently match the attitudes, these results contest the image of the unadaptable Chinese man who is concerned with the racial purity of the lineage and resistant to cultural adaptation.

I can only offer some tentative thoughts on these surprising results, but one thing they suggest is that men feel that factors that are not controlled by themselves render cross-cultural relationships difficult. The racial discourse is of course one of them, and even though seldom used by men when talking about dating and marriage, discrimination in general was one of the central concerns for male student migrants. For example, some men gave their disadvantaged position in racial hierarchies as a major reason to return to China after graduation. Female student migrants, in contrast, did not show much concern over discrimination. Men's higher gender and kinship status in China results in a greater decline of status through migration, than what women experience. To the men, their positioning in the Chinese gender and kinship hierarchies was significant to their experience of status abroad. In contrast, women primarily articulated their status abroad in terms of their positioning in the local hierarchies of gender and race. In this context, the hypersexualisation of the Asian women, or in the words of my informants, 'the popularity of Chinese women in the West', was interpreted positively.

Nevertheless, the results also suggest an ongoing change. As the cosmopolitan encounters of the young Chinese men become more prevalent, the significance of the idea of the asexualised Chinese man in the West (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 38) decreases as its place is taken by other competing discourses, ideas and personal experiences. In fact, this racial discourse was rejected by those male informants who *had* dated foreign women. These men were still an exception among the student migrants, often those whose parents had sent them abroad at a young age

for secondary education. Wang was one of them. Having dated several foreign women both in China and in the US, he claimed that the reason why romantic and sexual relationships between Chinese student migrant men and White Euro-American women were still relatively rare, was not the prejudice of the women, but the misconceptions and the lack of confidence of the Chinese men.

Conclusion

The conflict in the Chinese marriage market results from the tension between cultural ideas of gender and the new social practices. The high sex ratio, changed family composition, increased investment in daughters' education and economic inequality all contribute to the situation where large numbers of men and women have difficulties finding a spouse. Being high achieving women with exposure to a variety of cultural ideas about sexual and romantic relations, marriage is not a simple matter for the female student migrants. Their gendered positioning in the marriage market renders the men who meet their objective standards relatively few. Complicating the matter is their desire for a relationship with romantic and sexual intimacy. They are free to go about the search for a husband on their own, but know that the approval of the parents needs to be gained eventually. The complexity of this dynamic justifies the question of how anyone actually manages to marry. But unlike the Béarn bachelors, the Chinese student migrants *do* get married. This suggests two things. First, these women have more room to manoeuvre and more varied strategies at their disposal than the Béarn bachelors. They draw from the enterprising and the desiring part of their subjectivities to emphasise *nengli* and romantic love to compensate the falling short of the ideal model for marriage. They can also engage in the dating and marriage markets of their destination countries. Second, the ultimate principles of primogeniture and male supremacy were preserved in the non-marriage of the Béarn bachelors. When the Chinese 'leftover women' *do* marry, they challenge the values held up in the cultural model for marriage. The challenge on patrilineage and patriarchy is of course not new in China, but the student migrants are part of this transformation through their individual journeys. They draw new ideas and practices

from their cosmopolitan encounters thus contributing to the unification of the symbolic markets. Their cosmopolitan orientation gives them reflexivity over different values and models that are part of their subjectivities. Finally, their mobility across spatial and sociocultural fields shifts their positioning in the geography of power, at times in ways that gives them a sense of relative autonomy from different systems of power.

The Chinese marriage market is part of the student migrant subjectivity, as the cultural models for gender and romantic and sexual relationships are enacted in affective relationships. At the same time the cosmopolitan subjectivity of the student migrants becomes part of the Chinese marriage market and its transformation. I have shown how the cosmopolitan skills, orientation and politics work in particular settings of education and marriage markets. In the next chapter, I aim to explore how the different aspects of cosmopolitanism are manifested in the lives of individual student migrants as a whole.

5. COSMOPOLITAN LIVES

In the early days of my research, I understood the back and forth movement of student migrants in terms of migration and return migration. Within a few years of their graduation, I thought, the student migrants make a choice (voluntary to varying degrees) of either settling abroad or returning to China. I often asked students and their parents questions that posed these as the two, mutually exclusive choices. But in the course of my fieldwork, it became clear that dividing the process of migration into such sections, and conceiving the choices of the student migrants in terms of settlement and return did not best illuminate their experiences. Some of them got stuck in the preparation stage of migration, never actually managing to leave China but sustaining their dream of migration; others went abroad, graduated, started working and got married, but periodically moved between their new country of residence and China; still others returned after graduation to start a career in China, but remigrated after some years. Whatever choices made after graduation, their mode of being-in-the-world had become cosmopolitan in nature (Szerszynski and Urry 2006). Different cultures and social environments coexist in their individual experience (Hannerz 1990: 239), a condition that Ulf Hannerz describes so well that I quote it here in full:

> Perhaps real cosmopolitans, after they have taken out membership in that category, are never quite at home again, in the way real locals can be. Home is taken-for-grantedness, but after their perspectives have been irreversibly affected by the experience of the alien and the distant, cosmopolitans may not view either the seasons of the year or the minor rituals of everyday life as absolutely natural, obvious, and necessary. There may be a feeling of detachment, perhaps irritation with those committed to the local common sense and unaware of its arbitrariness. Or home is really home, but in a special way; a constant reminder of a pre-cosmopolitan past, a privileged site of nostalgia. This is where once things seemed fairly simple and straightforward. Or it is again really home, a comfortable

place of familiar faces, where one's competence is undisputed and where one does not have to prove it to either oneself or others, but where for much the same reasons there is some risk of boredom. (Hannerz 1990: 248)

In this chapter I will describe the cosmopolitan lives of three student migrants, Lulu, Jonatan and Nicole. Through the discussion, I want to draw attention to the different aspects of cosmopolitanism that drive, facilitate, shape and discipline their experiences.

Lulu – Cosmopolitan mastery

Lulu came to Finland in 2007 to study international business. An average student in school, she could not compete for a place in the most popular programmes (international business, finance, etc.) in the most prestigious universities of China. She thus rationalised that she would get a better footing in the competitive job market by studying a subject that gave a specialised skill, than getting into a popular programme in an average Chinese university. Lulu started studying statistics in one of the universities in her home city Chengdu. She planned to finish her degree and possibly apply for a master's abroad. But her mother continued to actively search for opportunities to send Lulu abroad, and soon after Lulu had started her studies, found an agency that specialised in sending students to Finland. Most importantly, the family found out, Finland did not charge tuition fees, which left only the living expenses to cover. After more research on the education and living conditions, Lulu and her parents decided to pursue this direction. International business was chosen as a field for two reasons. First, it seemed like a logical subject to study abroad, and second, the choice of courses taught in English in Finnish colleges and universities was limited. Lulu passed the entrance exam and was offered a place. Her start of the course was however delayed as the agency failed to confirm her acceptance of the offer. They gave as an explanation the disorder caused by an underground earthquake that had hit Chengdu at the time, but Lulu suspected they had simply forgotten to complete the paperwork. She was offered a chance to go to Finland as scheduled, to start her studies part-time at the open

university. The agency also arranged her to retake the entrance exam. She passed again, and was able to start her degree studies one term late of the initial schedule.

After four years of study, Lulu graduated with a BBA degree. As the graduation approached, she pondered between applying for a master's degree or looking for work. Staying in Finland, going to another country like UK or Sweden, or returning to China were all initially within her range of options, which narrowed down when she met her boyfriend David during her final internship. David is British but as his daughter from a previous relationship lives in Finland, he is committed to staying in Finland. Two years after Lulu's graduation, the couple are married and have started a consulting company together, offering services to Finnish businesses planning to launch in Chengdu, Lulu's home city, and to Chinese investors in Finland. As their business is yet to take off, Lulu still works at a Chinese restaurant, a job that supported her through her studies. She feels constant pressure as working in the restaurant leaves very little time to devote to their business ventures, but at the same time, the couple need her income. David receives unemployment benefit and devotes his time to networking, developing and marketing their company, as well as looking for other opportunities for work and business. Last year, Lulu and David traveled to Chengdu to visit family and to negotiate partnerships and connections. They came back convinced that they need more time in China to develop a strong *guanxi* network and to learn more about the Chinese business environment. Lulu and David started planning to move to Chengdu for a few years. Meanwhile, they also started pursuing alternative plans. David planned to launch a multi-level marketing company to sell English handicrafts in Finland, or to set up a secondhand books store. Lulu applied to do a degree in social services, applied for translating jobs and developed connections to brokers in migration business.

After seven years, Lulu is relatively settled into a life in Finland. She knows her neighbours, shovels snow in the winter mornings and knows where to buy what she needs. But her orientation remains cosmopolitan, with several sociocultural fields coexisting in her experience. This is illuminated by her use of language. Lulu has not learned to speak Finnish fluently. She and David speak English together, and at the restaurant she speaks Chinese with her colleagues, and basic

Finnish and Swedish with the customers. She speaks English with her group of friends, which mainly consists of other student migrants from all over the world, notably few from China. In a sense, the restaurant job is a benefit Lulu got through her cosmopolitan connections and competency as a Chinese person in Finland, but with its low pay and low status, it is an example of the less favourable positioning of a cosmopolitan at the host society that Abbas (2002) refers to. In fact, it is precisely Lulu's cosmopolitan mode of relating to a place, that works against her in the Finnish job market. Her new plan of studying social work in Finland requires a step up with her engagement with the Finnish society, as the admission pends on passing a Finnish language test, and the programme is based on the Finnish model of civil society. Lulu thinks that she will be able to combine her business studies with the social work knowledge, by for example starting a private day care centre. Again Lulu's perspective is cosmopolitan, she hopes to either make use of her Chinese language skills and immigrant status in the Finnish environment, or take the knowledge acquired of the Finnish social services system and civic society to China. Aware of the prospects the social services field in China will offer in the future, Lulu has conceived several plans of how she could market her skills and expertise there as a consultant or a private entrepreneur.

Another way of directly drawing from cosmopolitan resources are Lulu's attempts to become a migration broker. I discovered this when a relative of mine was selling a company. A private physiotherapy clinic, operating locally in Western Finland, was bought by a Chinese couple with no prior connections to Finland. When I mentioned this to Lulu, she told me that buying a small or medium sized family business was becoming a common strategy for migration. She had in fact acted as a broker in similar negotiations. The idea was that buying a well established small company would be a safe route to gaining a residence permit. This resembles the flexible citizenship strategies of the Hong Kong families in Aihwa Ong's (2006) work, but there are notable differences. These are not Chinese elite families involved in international business ventures, but middle class families with no considerable prior connections abroad, who have enough capital to invest in a small business, such as a cafe, a bakery, or a physiotherapy clinic. The families Lulu had negotiated for, were not from any of the major migrant sending areas in China. Lulu explained that investing capital abroad played a part of the motivation, but ultimately

this was migration for education rather than work. The families had a young child, whom they hoped to educate in Finland. Via residence permit, their child would have access to the free Finnish education at all levels.

Several student migrants I knew became brokers and agents in the international education business after graduation. Some worked for overseas study agencies in China, while others, like Lulu, worked as contacts in the destination countries. Apart from providing information and acting as brokers for individual migrants and families, they also worked to build institutional connections. Lulu's most recent venture is to become a contact point in Finland for the agency she originally used to arrange her migration, to work out new exchange programmes between universities and colleges in Finland and her in home province in China.

As these examples show, Lulu lacks no ideas on how to build a career on the basis of her cosmopolitan resources, skills and competencies. Her orientation is not towards integrating into the Finnish job market, but to making use of her particular mode of cosmopolitan existence. These endeavours make her the model for the mode of cosmopolitanism the Chinese state currently promotes. Moving away from the focus on encouraging return migration, the state now promotes the building of continuing international links and connections that can contribute to economic development (Wang 2010, 2011). Whether Lulu will be able to make a successful transition from a client to a broker in the international education market is yet to be seen, but without a doubt it will be aided by her skills to draw from various resources, or in Hannerz's (1990) words, her cosmopolitan mastery.

The distance Lulu and David have to their respective native societies, cultures, families, and to the Finnish host society, allows them to treat these cultures as 'artworks' (Hannerz' 1990), which they can observe, appreciate and criticise, and selectively adapt. Lulu and David situationally distance themselves from the Finnish cultural norms and customs. For example, they see themselves as two foreigners, trying to find their feet together in the Finnish business culture that is alien to them. Situationally they also set Chinese and English cultures together against Finnish culture. For example, in their view Finnish culture places extreme value on independence and equality, which results in distant family relations and the eradication of positive gender differences. On these

issues, they find similarity between their Chinese and English cultural backgrounds. These examples are of mediating symbolic resources in superficial cosmopolitan encounters. An example of a more profound use of cosmopolitan mastery (Hannerz 1990) is Lulu's negotiation with her parents to gain their approval for her relationship with David.

When Lulu started seeing David who is eleven years her senior, has a daughter from a previous relationship and no stable job, she knew to expect the disapproval of her parents and friends. The physical distance, however, had transmuted into a relative emotional independence, and Lulu pursued the relationship with the belief that her parents and friends would eventually come around. Over the years Lulu convinced her parents that David's unemployment was not due to his lack of *nengli*, and the two would combine their cosmopolitan skills and competencies to eventually run a consulting company. Lulu's parents were also worried about the financial strain David's child would put on the couple. Lulu explained that the cost of raising and educating a child in Finland and in China was not comparable. She also explained the sociocultural environment in which out-of-wedlock children and separation carried little stigma. Lulu repeatedly told her mother that her concerns were grounded on the norms of the Chinese society, which she should ignore altogether when judging Lulu's situation, as Lulu did not live in China.

Lulu's strategy of slowly gaining her parents' approval worked. When Lulu and David visited China two years later, mother suggested that they get married. After a few months, Lulu and David married in a civil ceremony in Finland, and later had a wedding celebration in China. In retrospect Lulu commented the negotiations by saying that living abroad was significant, not so much for determining her ideas of a good relationship, but for giving her the strength to persist against the opposition of the family and friends. Lulu drew from her cosmopolitan mastery to reflexively, and selectively, explain values and norms to her parents. The geography of power also worked to her advantage, as the spatial and sociocultural distance weakened her parents' authority in commenting and influencing her choices. Lulu and David yielded to one compromise. David's daughter was to be kept secret outside the immediate family circle for the time being. Lulu said that she agreed to this not for her own sake, but for her parents', as it was them who would have to deal with the gossip and criticism on a daily basis. David accepted

not introducing his daughter to the wider circle of family and relatives as he did not want to make his young child a point of arguments and gossip. Both hoped that the situation might change in the future. Despite the relative autonomy Lulu gained from the Chinese systems of power through migration, the affective ties with her parents kept her connected to them. The awareness of how the gossip and criticism would affect her parents was enough for her to agree to keep David's daughter a secret. In this way, affect indirectly reached across the physical distance.

In Hannerz' (1990) terms, Lulu shows a great deal of cosmopolitan mastery and reflexivity over Chinese, Finnish and British cultures. The skilful but often less than conscious nature of this mastery is well exemplified by the dynamics between Lulu and I during a trip we made together in China. Lulu had been in Finland for two years when she came back to visit China during 2008 Christmas holidays. I was in Beijing at the time, conducting my fieldwork. Lulu first stayed with me in Beijing for a week, and we then travelled together to Shanghai to meet her high school friends, and finally to her hometown to visit her family. When Lulu arrived, I was struck by how 'European' she seemed. Since we had last seen each other, Lulu had adapted new ways of conduct, talking and dressing. Right a way she told me how she had been taken aback at the flight when a Chinese passenger sitting behind her and her friend had asked them not to disturb his leader with their chatting. Lulu took this to be an example of the difference between the hierarchical Chinese society and the more egalitarian West that she had now become used to. She made several such irritated or amused observations during her first few days. When talking about her experiences of studying in Finland, she praised the Finnish education system, the social welfare, the liberal society and the political system. I asked if she had missed China and if it felt good to be back. No, she was now quite used to living in Finland, Lulu responded, and had actually felt sad to leave. On Lulu's initiative, we spent our days sightseeing, visiting all the major tourist spots of Beijing, standing together in front of them having our picture taken. I wrote in my field notes that the feeling was very much of two European tourists traveling.

This dynamic changed when we got to Shanghai. Although unfamiliar with the city, Lulu was now surrounded by old friends from high school. She enjoyed her time immensely, chatting and laughing with

her friends in her own dialect. She was now less interested in touring the city, and seemed to forget my presence for long periods of time. During her first week back she had told me several times that she had not missed China much, and did not plan to move back for several years. While in Shanghai, however, she started to consider the possibility of doing an internship there, to be close to her friends. We met with Lulu's mother's friend, a business executive in Shanghai, to discuss Lulu's opportunities to work in there. At this point of our trip, Lulu no longer criticised the Chinese customs and the society. Instead, she started explaining aspects of it to me.

Further change took place after we arrived at Lulu's hometown, Chengdu. We now turned from two traveling friends into a host and a guest. Lulu showed the sites to me and explained the customs and the character of 'us', now meaning the people of Chengdu. She took up ritual behaviour of taking care of me as a guest, creating further distance between the two of us: she put food into my bowl, switched on the desk light when I wrote notes, filled up my tea cup, and even covered me with an extra blanket for the night. She took pride in the customs and the character of 'us', the Chengdu people, and explained them in a way that implicitly set them in contrast with Finnish culture and customs. On the Christmas Eve we walked the crowded streets of the city. Lulu was in a great mood and explained that this was the evening when everyone came out to the streets to have fun. 'We like crowded places, when there is a lot of people, we feel very happy. I think in Chengdu the suicide rates[25] are the lowest, because there are so many things to keep you busy. Like talking, always about the same things, small details. Like we talked with my classmates in Shanghai. We Chengdu people, we talk a lot, but just bullshit, we can talk bullshit all day!', Lulu laughed.

The gradual reintegration of Lulu into the Chinese sociocultural setting took place on several levels: geographical, social, cultural and temporal. On all these levels, the distance was greatest at the start of her trip in Beijing, an unfamiliar city where I was the only person she knew. In turn, the distance to Finland at all these levels was the greatest at the end of our journey, in her home town among family and friends. Lulu showed a high degree of cosmopolitan mastery in moving across spatial and

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25 Popular discourse links Finland's notoriously high suicide rates to the culture of silence and solitude.

sociocultural space. Even when acknowledging the often less than conscious nature of this mastery, Hannerz' (1990) view of cosmopolitanism is very agent centred. To use Vertovec and Cohen's (2002) conceptualisations, this is cosmopolitanism as a *'mode of orientation to the world'* and as a *'set of competencies'*. In these senses, cosmopolitanism is a resource that can be enriching in an abstract sense, as well as cultural and social capital convertible into other forms of capital. Other forms of cosmopolitanism facilitate, shape and restrict the actions of the cosmopolitan agent. Flows and connections between locations in the compressed time-space produce a particular cosmopolitan *'socio-cultural condition'* (Vertovec and Cohen 2002; see also Appadurai 1996). Institutions have been set up to mediate these flows often using cosmopolitan rhetoric but serving the interests of the market and particular nation states, as in the case of the international education business. Individuals are situated differently regarding access and power over the flows, according to their social location and position in power geometries (Pessar and Mahler 2003; see also Massey 1994).

Lulu's engagement with the international education market worked relatively well for her. The overseas study agency did cause a delay in her plan by failing to confirm her acceptance of the place. But as we will soon see in Jonatan's story, this was a relatively small hitch, as eventually Lulu was able to go abroad to the country and institution of her choice, and graduated with the degree she had planned to obtain. After graduation she and David started their company, which gave Lulu also a residence permit. After marriage, her permit transferred into that of a family member, as David holds a permanent residency in Finland. Lulu's mobility between Finland and China has thus not been restricted by the policies of either state. Her positioning on the geography of power nevertheless shapes her mobility. David now plans a trip to the UK to buy handicrafts and Lulu has decided not to accompany him. Apart from the difficulty of fitting the trip into her work schedule, she finds the paper work required for a visa too troublesome. Another factor that puts her off of traveling to the UK, is the humiliating experience of being questioned by the sarcastic customs personnel upon arrival. 'I don't want to put myself through that, to humiliate myself again and again', Lulu said. Cosmopolitan affect discussed in Chapter 3 does not only arise in individual encounters between migrants and the locals, but in the

institutional settings such as border crossings. As Svašek (2010) points out, in these hierarchical encounters migrants are constructed in ways that push particular modes of emotional interaction. For example the discourse of 'threat', which constructs migrants as posing potential danger to the legal citizens, influences the emotional interaction, evoking negative affective responses in the migrants, such as fear, humiliation or annoyance (Svašek 2010: 872; see also Hall 2010).

Jonatan – Reluctant returnee

Jonatan is a 24 year old returnee who studied in Austria and now lives with his parents in Beijing. In the 1990s his father left his factory job to start a private business, first in real estate, and later owning a pawn shop. The family's moderate wealth stands out among their relatives and they are proud to have been able to send Jonatan abroad to study. As Jonatan was not a particularly good student in school, his grades only gave him access to a vocational high school where he studied English and business. His ambitious father was determined to have Jonatan study business at a university level, so he decided to send his son abroad. Jonatan's main interests were music and languages, but his father wanted him to continue in his own footsteps. He decided to send Jonatan to Austria, where the family had a friend who could give advice and help with practical arrangements. Jonatan was ready enrol on a BBA course for the Fall term 2003, but because of the SARS outbreak, was not granted a visa until January 2004. This hitch in the plan offered him a short window to pursue his own interests, and for the Spring term 2004 he enrolled on a German language course at a college in Vienna, where he also studied music and performance. After the Spring term, he followed his father's wish and transferred to a business school. A year into his BBA degree, Jonatan was forced to return to China, as his residence permit was not renewed. On Jonatan's own account, this was due to the malpractice of the agency that had handled all official paperwork for his school applications, transfer, visa and residence permit. In 2005 the agency got caught having forged documents for students' applications. This lead to a careful review of all the renewal applications of students who had used the agency's services. In Jonatan's opinion, his transfer from a German language

programme to an BBA degree that was taught in English raised further suspicion, and as a consequence his renewal application was denied. He returned to China after eighteen months abroad, without a degree. His father was obviously disappointed.

Jonatan had enjoyed his time abroad immensely. Gifted in languages, he had become fluent in English and German. He had embraced the new sociocultural environment, making friends of different nationalities, dating a local girl, and adapting local habits of eating, dressing and socialising. Having grown up under a strong influence of his parents, Jonatan felt that living abroad gave him a chance to be independent and free. This shows that the positioning of an individual in the geography of power does not only depend on extra-personal characteristics, such as gender and nationality, but also on the personal characteristics of the migrant and those who have influence over her or him, namely here, the father. Jonatan quickly acquired a high degree of cosmopolitan competency, i.e. language skills and cultural knowledge that allowed him to move across socio-cultural fields relatively freely. Because of this and the strong patriarchal authority exercised by his father, Jonatan felt that he gained power upon leaving China. After his return, Jonatan thus wanted to go abroad again, perhaps to study in the US. Father however decided that it would be best to focus on getting work experience and later study for a diploma in business administration or accounting through adult education.

In the following years Jonatan and his father constantly negotiated the limits of his autonomy. Jonatan would not openly oppose his father. Father drew his authority from the patrilineal and patriarchal models that regulate not only the intergenerational, but also heterosexual relations. Connection to the former is obvious, it would have been unfilial for Jonatan to oppose his father openly. As for the latter, father held significant power over Jonatan's status in the marriage market, which partly depended on his ability to provide 'a house' and a car upon marriage. This rendered Jonatan financially dependent on his parents, giving father further leverage in the negotiations. He said that Jonatan was free to do what he wanted, work where he wanted, or even to go abroad, but the financial support was subject to following his advice. Unwilling to risk his ability to marry in the near future, Jonatan gave up

his plan of quick remigration, and focused on gaining some autonomy over his career development.

Father had used his *guanxi* to arrange an administrative job for Jonatan at a language school. Jonatan wanted to find work by his own means, and persuaded father to allow this. He found a job at the ticket sales of Air China. 'That's when I really found myself. At Air China I discovered my skills and realised I had power.' His exceptional skills in languages and communication made an impression on the office manager, who praised Jonatan to his superior at the head office. Jonatan was given a commission of the sales, a rare use of performance based incentive in a state owned company. But even with the bonus, the monthly wage only came to just 1300 yuan. Father thought this was too little, and suggested Jonatan would take one of the limousines from the pawn shop and become and driver. Jonatan's wage was not even enough to cover his personal expenses: petrol, phone bill, nights out at bars and restaurants. Facing the risk of having father withdraw his support, Jonatan regretfully left Air China and went to work for his father. Father had him trained in various aspects of the pawn business, such as evaluating jewellery, but Jonatan's eye was constantly on the job market. As he repeatedly told me, he desired to find his own path to success, discover his abilities, and to be more independent. But without a degree and refusing the help of his father's *guanxi*, it was not easy to find a job his father would approve of. Despite short periods of employment in advertising and accounting, Jonatan always returned to his father's company. The last time we spoke, he was working for his father, had received a diploma in accounting as his father had wished, and was dating a girl his parents approved of.

During these years, Jonatan continued to dream about going abroad. He maintained his cosmopolitan identity by socialising with foreigners and styling himself in American fashion, complete with baggy jeans and long hair that made him stand out. He took great pride in the fact that he was often mistaken for an American born Chinese by American tourists. He liked to spend his free time at the bars frequented by tourists, where he could chat with foreigners using English and German. Father promised that after he got married he could go to US with his wife, but Jonatan knew that several obstacles might stand in his way. He might be too old to study by then and it would be difficult to get a job and a work permit. As his parents would age, he would feel more

obligated to stay close to them. In his typical figurative manner, Jonatan told me: 'Well you know, going to the US is just a dream. Like hand cream, disappears very fast from your hands.'

When comparing Jonatan's story to Chen's, which I discussed in Chapter 3, it is clear that Jonatan's life in Beijing was more cosmopolitan in orientation than Chen's life in London, and he showed a higher cosmopolitan mastery of moving across sociocultural fields. This brings us to the important point that cosmopolitanism as an orientation and competency is not bound to a locale, nor does it necessarily increase with mobility. For Jonatan himself, the events that best testified for his high cosmopolitan competency were the ones that distinguished him from the rest of the locals *in China,* i.e. his ability to serve well the foreign customers at Air China, and the fact that he was mistaken for an American tourist in China. His cosmopolitan competency thus gained some of its strength from the fact that he exercised it in China, not abroad.

Jonatan's mobility was profoundly shaped by the geography of power, more specifically, his positioning in the hierarchies of gender, generation and nationality in different locations. His migration was initiated by the patriarchal authority of his father. The plan was interrupted when, as a Chinese national, Jonatan got caught up in the political muddle that followed the SARS outbreak, involving both nation states and the suprastate World Health Organisation. The contingencies resulting from one hierarchy disrupted the dynamics of another, as the initial refusal of his visa gave Jonatan a chance to pursue his own interests for the Spring term in Austria. The disadvantage of being a Chinese national gave him, even if only momentarily, an advantage in the generational hierarchy, as he was able to supersede his father's position as a key decision maker. Unlike Chen, who lacked cosmopolitan competence and felt that he lost status and power through migration, Jonatan quickly developed new skills. Eventually, his cosmopolitan pursuit was cut short because of the conflict between its brokers, i.e. the overseas study agency and the Austrian immigration authorities. Upon his return to China, he regained the privileged position of a citizen, with the rights to reside, work and to study, but lost the relative autonomy he had gained through geographical distance from his father.

Comparing the migrant experiences of Jonatan and Chen, it becomes clear that filial obligation can motivate students to stay abroad as

much as to return to China. Even though many student migrants feel pressure to return to China to be close to their parents, in Chen's case this filial obligation was overrun by his filial obligation to succeed in London. The student migrants often told me that their parents wanted nothing from them, only to see them live happy, secure and successful lives. This can be seen to illustrate the emphasis on individual desire among the contemporary urban youth. But from another angle it is also a form of filial obligation. Urban parents do indeed *need* little from their only child. They devote a great deal of energy and resources, often at the expense of their own comfort, to support their child. The child's success is not only a privilege, but a duty to pay back the parental support. Both daughters and sons have this sense of duty, but as the gender model articulates men's success more in terms of personal achievement than women', male student migrants more often express this anxiety than women.

In this account of Jonatan's migration, return and aspiration to remigrate, parental pressure and the desire for autonomy plays a far more central role than in Lulu's story. In fact, even though the involvement of parents in the process varied across the gender lines, it was rare for female student migrants to cite parental pressure as a motivator when talking about their decisions to stay, to return and to remigrate. In contrast, it was very commonly mentioned as a major motivator by the male student migrants. Even though Lulu's parents, particularly her mother, played a major role in initiating and implementing the migration, Lulu cited career considerations, her relationship with David, and personal liking for a place, as the main motivators for migration, settlement and remigration.

Steven Sangren (2003) has modelled the dynamics of the Chinese family (as the ideal patrilineal, patrilocal type) in terms of obstructions that evoke particular gendered desires in daughters and sons. The unrecognition of daughters as agents in the official patrilineal model, or in Stafford's (2000a, 2003) terms, the inevitable separation between parents and daughters, is an obstruction that evokes in (some) daughters the desire not to be separated, and to be recognised. The discourse of 'more filial daughters' is one of the avenues for women to express this desire. With the discourse of 'gender equality', it also provides the rationale for equal parental support for sons and daughters. Sending daughters abroad to study, thus investing familial resources in their future, can in fact be seen as an act of parental recognition. While daughters seek recognition,

Sangren argues, sons desire autonomy and freedom. Even though the patrilineal system guarantees their privileged position, their attachment is obligatory and unchosen. Their power only becomes effective upon the ultimate separation from the father, i.e. his death (Sangren 2003). As many of the official institutions of patrilineality (patrilineal inheritance, patrilocal residence and ancestor worship) that give men their agency in the model have been discontinued in urban families, the discourse has lost some strength as the dominating model for value and agency. Yet the greater obligation male student migrants seem to feel towards their parents, testifies for the continuity of the patrilineal model.

Nicole – Family ties across distance

I have explored the various ways familial affect, obligations, hierarchies and exchanges shape, facilitate and restrict migration and forge migrant subjectivities. In this final section, I wish to draw attention to the other side of cosmopolitanism and family relations, that is, the conflict between intimacy and spatial distance. I will do this by looking at how relatedness is enacted across distance, and how the emotions of separations and reunions are managed.

Nicole's parents took an active role in planning and making decisions that concerned her studies abroad. The negotiations over which subject to study, at which university, whether and where Nicole should pursue graduate study, and where she should settle eventually have been ongoing since the planning first started, and the periodical decisions are usually compromises between their different ideas. In 2009, a few months before Nicole left China for London, we visited her parents in their hometown, and the disagreements over these decisions surfaced again. During one argument, Nicole's father proposed that he will give Nicole ten million yuan as a one time payment, and no longer *yang* (care, raise, support) (Stafford 2000b) her. Nicole and her mother were so upset by his proposition that they started crying. Nicole refused, saying that this sum would be less than what father would spend if he continued to *yang* her by paying for her studies, housing, living expenses and marriage in the future. Comparing the amount of money father would give in each case was a way to turn his proposition into a joke, and the family went on to

humorously debate the cost of Nicole's future *yang*. I later asked why Nicole and her mother had been so upset, and Nicole explained that even if father was joking, they could not bear him talk such way, saying that they would *no longer be a father and a daughter*.

A few months later when Nicole left for the UK, her parents came to Beijing to see her off. The last night before her flight, we had dinner together and again talked about Nicole's future, the possible challenges of adapting to the life abroad, and the likelihood of her returning to China after graduation. Nicole listened in silence as her parents alternated between saying that she could do whatever she wanted and they would support all her decisions, and telling their very detailed opinions of what she should do (study for a graduate degree in the US, return to China to work, marry a Chinese man). Nicole's father then brought up the first disagreement the family had had to negotiate when starting the preparations for her overseas study. After graduating from high school, Nicole spent a gap year living in Beijing and making preparations for going abroad. During this time, much of her time was spent pursuing her interest in singing and song writing. She made contacts with record companies, recorded demos, wrote music and performed in local clubs. She was offered recording deals by two companies and was torn over a choice between going abroad to study and pursuing a music career in China. Over discussions with her parents, they persuaded her to abandon any plans of staying in China. In their opinion university degree was a basic requisite for an economically secure and socially respectable future. Nicole decided to follow their advice, hoping that she would be able to focus on music again later, either in UK or in China. As we discussed Nicole's future the night before she left for UK, her father again brought up this issue. Declaring that Nicole could make her choices freely as her parents needed nothing from her, he went on: 'Our wealth is her wealth. If she doesn't want to go to university, she can still have ten million yuan.' Nicole broke her long silence with a shocked laugh, exclaiming to me in English (knowing her parents could not understand): 'What? I don't think so! I don't think I would get that money!'. Mother and Nicole then silenced father by laughing and telling him to stop joking.

The negotiations between Nicole and her parents illustrate two things. First, as Stafford (2000b) has argued, the exchange of care is so central to family relations that as a metaphor of relatedness it can take

precedence over lineage and descent. Even in a form of joking, the idea of father severing the ongoing *yang* relationship with Nicole was very upsetting to her and her mother. Posing this threat gave father power in the negotiations over Nicole's future. What is important here, is that at no point father threatened not to support Nicole financially. The sum he proposed to pay would have been more than enough to cover Nicole's tuition fees, living expenses abroad, and expenses related to marriage in the future (wedding, housing, car). The issue was, whether the financial support would be given over the years, or as a one time payment. The ongoing support would not only mean that continuous transactions would maintain a relationship between the parents and Nicole, but that each transaction would involve parental input in the decision making about education, housing, jobs, etc. Despite the irritation and pressure Nicole often felt over her parents' heavy involvement in the decision making, the idea of severing this relationship was shocking and upsetting to her. It would mean that they would no longer be father and daughter. This brings us to the second point, that the material support the parents give to the student migrants, is not a mere reflection of their affective attachment, it is directly constitutive of it. When the student migrants and their parents talk about money, food, clothes and other materia that flow between them, they are talking about affective attachment. The continuity of exchanges is a way of doing family across geographical distance.

Stafford (2000a, 2003) has argued that the moments of creating distance between family members, and again cutting across it, have particular importance in China. The partings and returns of family members usually take place without fuss, sometimes without a word. The more distant the relationship, the more elaborate often the rituals of greeting and sending-off. Stafford argues that this is not a simple issue of honouring the relationships to important people with rituals, although that is certainly sometimes the case, but the unity of families is held so strong that separation is impossible. 'That is, mere physical departure should not be allowed to threaten the underlying, and fundamental, unity of kin. Friendships, by contrast, are inherently more fragile, and the unity of friends may sometimes need to be publicly declared.' (Stafford 2003: 7) Yet the partings and reunions between parents and the student migrants easily evoke strong emotions, considering that months, sometimes years, pass between the meetings. What is more, other strong emotions, such as

the worry of sending a child alone to a foreign country, or homesickness felt by the student while abroad, are entangled in these moments. I came to see how these difficult moments were managed when I was present at the partings and reunions between the student migrants and their parents.

I accompanied Nicole and her parents to the airport to see her off. We were joined by close family friends, closeness marked by the use of kinship terms between the families. During the next hour, the 'uncle' and 'aunt' took charge of the sending off while Nicole's parents took a more passive role. They pushed Nicole's luggage trolley, found the right check-in desk and uncle queued with Nicole despite being told not to by the airport personnel. The rest of us waited behind the separating line. Not much needed to be said as aunt's incessant, cheerful chatter filled the silence. Nicole had extra carriage and had to repack her luggage at the desk. It was not the parents, but uncle and aunt who first rushed to her aid. We then walked to the security check, where goodbyes were said. As Nicole took her hand luggage from aunt and uncle, preparing to take her leave, mother started crying. 'My mother, she's crying!', Nicole yelled distressed. Aunt quickly took charge of the situation, laughing: 'She'll be back in no time, no need to worry at all! Give me those bags and give mother a hug!' As she held the bags, Nicole and mother gave each other a short, stiff hug. Aunt did not let the awkwardness of the situation last long, and went on with her laughing and fussing, 'Will I not get a hug?'. The two gave each other a much stronger and more relaxed hug. She told Nicole to hug her father, and even shorter and stiffer embrace followed, father keeping his head turned away. Uncle then took Nicole's bags, and started walking her to the security check. The two had arms around each other's shoulders. As Nicole went through the gate, she turned back a few times to wave. Mother was still crying, covering her mouth with a handkerchief. Father walked in circles and whistled, not looking Nicole's way. Uncle and aunt smiled and waved back. Then she was gone and uncle and aunt started ushering us out.

To me it seemed clear that aunt and uncle's role at this moment of separation was to act as distractions; to lighten the emotional heft of the moment; and to properly enact a cheerful sending off. The moment of the child's departure for overseas study cannot easily be passed without a mark, but aunt and uncle's presence gave the parents a chance not to become too involved in the fuss of their daughter's departure. The

displays of affection at the moment of separation could be more relaxed between Nicole and uncle and aunt, than between her and the parents. For as Stafford (2000a, 2003) suggests, separation between parents and a child is ultimately impossible, and should therefore not be drawn much attention to. It is notable that at the dinner on the previous night, the atmosphere between Nicole and her parents was tense and few words were exchanged between them, but the food was lavish and the restaurant was arguably the best one in Beijing that offered the cuisine of their home province. As Stafford (2000a, 2003) notes, collective commensality is an act of greeting, sending off and honouring, and a proper avenue for expressing familial emotions in the moments of separation and reunion.

I observed the same pattern of distraction at the reunions of parents and their returning student migrant children. Family members were accompanied by aunts, uncles, cousins and friends to receive the arriving student, and these relatives often took the main role in the conversation and handled the practicalities. An act of commensality always followed, a meal with friends and relatives, who kept the conversation lively. My own presence also influenced the greetings. When I accompanied students on their home visits, I was a guest and was greeted accordingly. I often visited homes of students who studied in China, but lived in the university dorm or in a different city. In these occasions, the attention upon our arrival was directed to me. The parents ushered me in without greeting their child. This happened regardless of the time since the last meeting between the parents and the student, which could be anything from hours to months. But the reunions between student migrants and their parents were more marked with public displays of emotions and exchange of greetings, and the attention was divided between welcoming the guest (myself) and welcoming the child. When Lulu and I arrived at the Chengdu airport on Christmas Eve, two years after Lulu had left China, we were received by her parents and maternal uncle. Lulu ran to hug her parents with tears in her eyes and they embraced without an air of awkwardness. After this short moment of emotional greetings, Lulu's parents turned their attention to greeting me. Mother put her arm around me and walked me to the car. She then insisted on sitting between us, and while continuing a friendly conversation with me, held her daughter's hand.

The behaviour of parents and children in these moments of separation and reunion marked the depth of emotions evoked by the geographical dispersion. Nevertheless an effort to downplay these emotions, thus properly enacting a close parent-child relationship, was made. This suggests that the geographical distance *was* seen as a threat to the ideal emotional closeness between the parents and the child, which should be so self-evident that the rituals of separation and reunion, as well as the strong emotional displays at these moments, threaten their taken-for-granted nature (Stafford 2000a, 2003). The expression of these emotions was not completely restrained, but other people could act as welcome distractions to lighten up the atmosphere and to draw attention to the public rites between more distance relations. The proper avenue for the expression of familial emotion was the sharing of food that always preceded separations and followed reunions. The conversation between the parents and the child could be sparse at this point, but the food itself was always plenty and often ritually passed from the mother to the child. In fact, when Lulu came to visit home, her mother took a week of unpaid vacation 'to cook all her favourite dishes'.

Conclusion

Negotiating distance that is integral to cosmopolitan existence becomes part of the family relations of the student migrants. The families find ways to maintain ties across the distance and to deal with the emotions that the distance evokes. Both the physical and the sociocultural distance also influence the familial power dynamics. Many student migrants develop some sense of autonomy from both the parental authority and the Chinese sociocultural conventions. The cosmopolitan orientation enables them to selectively adapt new ideas and norms, or to abide to cultural models while retaining a degree of reflexivity. The individual's cosmopolitan mastery over sociocultural fields is nevertheless shaped and restricted by the complex intersections of hierarchies that are not only familial, but also political and economic. Cosmopolitanism in its different forms can thus be as much progressive as regressive, give individuals more freedom as much as create new constraints, be the driving force behind people's mobility as much as restrict it. But

regardless of their decisions of return, remigration and settlement, the cosmopolitan mode of existence is manifested in the skills, competencies and the orientation of the student migrants.

Recent scholarship has emphasised that also people who are not themselves mobile engage in the cosmopolitan flows (Notar 2008). The agents of the international education market, the individual student migrants and the media bring symbolic goods that promote cosmopolitanism, within the reach of those who are not directly participating in the flows. These include foreign credentials in the Chinese job market, information about overseas study, imported education methods and technologies, imageries of the destination countries, etc. In the final chapter of this thesis, I tell the story of Hannah, who left her village to study in Beijing and soon developed a dream to go abroad. The negotiations of familial support and Hannah's movement between the sociocultural fields of the urban middle class and her family's rural background bear some resemblance to the processes the urban student migrants go through. But her situation differs from theirs in two significant ways. She has two brothers, and her parents rely completely on the support of the children upon their retirement. This thesis is a story of the Chinese overseas student migration, but in the final chapter, I want to draw attention to some interesting things that happen in the sidelines of the main flows.

6. BEING THE FIRST TO GET RICH

When I set out to do this research on the familial investment in daughters' overseas education, I did not expect my field site to extend far beyond urban space. Given the high cost of overseas study and the traditional preference for investing in sons' education and career, I thought that only the daughters of urban single-child families would be able to embark on this journey. However, as a testimony to the fuzziness of rural-urban borders that are constantly crossed and redefined, the reality I encountered soon exposed the limits of my view. For the most part of my fieldwork, I ended up living, in fact, with Hannah, a young woman of rural background who has two older brothers but is the only one in the family to have received higher education. She came to Beijing to study in one of the country's best universities, and now has plans to one day study for an MBA in the UK. The practical arrangements, investment, conflicts, interests and motivations involved in her project differ considerably from those of her urban counterparts. Yet this atypical case, perhaps more clearly than any of the others, illuminates the way tensions and opportunities unfold amidst the unification of economic and symbolic markets (Bourdieu 2007), not only between China and other countries, but also between rural and urban China.

Chinese society is highly stratified in four aspects relevant to this research: family size, economic development, quality of education, and welfare services. The divisions are between regions, and between rural and urban areas. In spite of the initial plan to implement the one child policy in all regions[26], strong resistance by the rural population has forced later modifications. Due to the various exceptions and alleviations in the policy and its considerably more efficient implementation in cities, one child in urban families and two to three children, at least one of them a boy, in rural ones, have become the norm (Mueggler 2001: 292-98; Greenhalgh 1993: 245). Rural resistance to the family planning policies is linked to the lower living standards and the lack of social security system and economic opportunities in the villages. The gap is further intensified

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26 Among the dominant Han-population, national minorities enjoy preferential policies (*youhui zhengce*) in this aspect.

by differences between regions. Despite the various campaigns to spread industry and investment from the coast to the interior, the coastal areas have remained the focus of economic development since the opening of the Treaty Ports (1842) in the aftermath of the first Opium War. The direction of national and especially foreign investment to these areas has been further accelerated through the establishment of Special Economic Zones since the 1980s (Broadman and Sun 1997; Chen, Chang and Zhang 1995; Fan 2005) The uneven economic development in China today must be seen in the light of the specific conditions at the start of the reform era. To enable a rapid recovery of industry, economy and education after the turmoil of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), scarce resources were directed to a few key regions, industries, educational institutions, fields of science, technology and so forth. This policy was reflected in Deng Xiaoping's slogan 'Let some people get rich first' (*Rang yibufen ren xian fu qilai*). While the reform-era government has had some success in poverty alleviation and the raising of living standards in the rural areas, the gap between the rural and urban areas, as well as between regions, has widened (Piazza and Liang 1998; World Bank 2000). The household registration system (*hukou*) determines people's permanent residency and therefore access to services and employment elsewhere, restricting both physical and socio-economic mobility.

Yet numerous accounts show that the rural and urban worlds are far from separate, best exemplified by the presence of an enormous temporary rural labour force in Chinese cities.[27] Perhaps it thus ought not to come as a surprise that despite the apparent obstacles of having to spread the already scarce economic resources thin between a number of siblings, and the low quality of primary and secondary education, some rural students find themselves in a position where higher education abroad is within their horizon of strategies. During fieldwork, I came across several students like this, and while every person's story is unique, theirs shared some characteristics that set them apart from the main population of this research, the urban student migrants and their families. The involvement of urban parents in the project of overseas study ranged

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[27] It is impossible to know the exact number of this floating population (*liudong renkou*), but recently it has been estimated that around 211 million people of rural registration live and work in the cities. (National Population and Family Planning Commission 2010).

from being the prime planners, facilitators and decision makers, to providing emotional and/or economic support. But to these students of rural background, it was an individual project that they had to pursue at times in secret or in conflict with family members' interests.

During the year we lived together I came to know the details of Hannah's situation, and continued to follow its development through regular contact. Having been surprised and intrigued by her story, I here wish to lay it out in detail to explore the reflexive work of subject construction that involves conflict between its different elements. To do this, I will first describe Hannah's journey of becoming an educated urbanite with aspirations to enter the national, maybe even the global elite through education abroad. I then examine the web of familial obligations that she remained a part of, and the way Hannah and her family members drew from the discourses of partilineage, patriarchy, the greater filiality of daughters, and gender equality, to further their own interests and to dodge undesirable claims for support. The painfulness of these negotiations brings us back to the point of familial affect, that is enacted through, and entangled in, the exchange of care.

Crossing the fuzzy borders

At the time I met Hannah, she was a 25 year old recent graduate who lived and worked in Beijing. Hannah comes from a village in Fujian province in the southeast coast of China. Fujian is known as the main source of legal and illegal labour migration to Europe, Southeast Asia and US, but not all areas within the province are equally involved in emigration. There are villages where each household has at least one member abroad, while the village next to it might have none. The migration networks that channel information and opportunities are deeply embedded in the local economies of these migrant sending communities, and the ideas of achievement and success are so strongly linked to overseas migration that it overrides all prospects arising locally (Chin 1999; Pieke et al. 2004; Zhang 2008; Chu 2010). The Longyan prefecture at the Western border of Fujian where Hannah's home village is located, is not significantly involved in the international migration networks. Instead, temporary labour migration between villages and

urban centres is widespread. Economic opportunities in Fujian are ample in comparison to many other provinces. Fujian's proximity to Taiwan and the experimental market reform policies in its various economic and technological development zones have stimulated private enterprise, foreign investment and international trade in the area. Longyan is the main link between Xiamen (one of the five original Special Economic Zones) and the inner provinces, as well as being home to significant forestry and mining industries. The availability of opportunities does not explain why some are taken up and others are not, but it is important to note the specific characteristics of the local economy when trying to understand why Hannah's brothers' education did not take precedence over hers.

Education is an important route to socioeconomic mobility for rural families. The 'educational desire', which Kipnis (2011) has called 'a total social phenomenon' (Mauss 1990 [1925]) in his research area in rural Shandong, has greatly increased the value given to the education of children in general, including daughters. Among the factors that have contributed to the shift toward also valuing daughters' education, is the rural marriage market that currently favours women and their families. For them, marriage provides an opportunity for upward social mobility, while inflicting a considerable economic burden on the families of sons. In addition, as women now marry later than before[28], their primary attachment to the natal family lasts longer. These changes have to an extent changed the perception on the economic value of daughters, and education that can lead to a good job and a good marriage can be seen to benefit the entire family. Aside from these direct economic considerations, the general value and attention given to each child, both sons and daughters, has increased with the limitations to family size (Kipnis 2009, 2011). The emphasis on education in general and of daughters in particular varies regionally. In the inland rural regions with little investment and industry, high value is given to education, and as the parents' best strategy to old age security is to make sure their sons have the means to provide for them in the future, they often choose to support

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28 Later age for marriage has been promoted by the communist and reform era regimes with varying intensity since the 1950 Marriage Law. The current legal minima are 20 for women and 22 for men. Women in rural areas tend to marry between early and mid 20s.

the education of sons rather than daughters (Obendiek 2011). In Fujian, in contrast, and more specifically Longyan, entrepreneurial success stories are readily in display, which has downplayed the emphasis on education as the favoured route to socioeconomic mobility. Parents do not need to fear that supporting the educational aspirations of a female child will directly be followed by socioeconomic immobility of other, especially male, children. With a range of choices, a child's individual inclinations can play a bigger role in the decision making.

It is also important to note that choosing to support the education of one child, does not necessarily mean that a higher value or importance is placed upon this particular child's endeavours and success. This was apparent when we visited Hannah's family in Fujian. While accompanying other students on their hometown visits, I saw parents fussing around their returned student and showing a great deal on interest in her studies, daily struggles, career and future plans by asking concerned questions and voicing their opinions. The behaviour of Hannah's parents was markedly different. There were no discussions of her life, studies, work or future plans. When directly asked to give their opinions, the parents gave disinterested answers such as: 'she can do what she wants' or 'Everyone has their own path, I hope she will do whatever is best for her'. These statements seem to indicate a rather detached attitude, as if the parents felt that Hannah's future had only limited connection to theirs, and therefore her endeavours had no direct value to them. In a situation where parents entirely rely on their children to support them after retirement, this is not an insignificant point. While the parents' attitude might have reflected the type of interpersonal communication and dynamics in this particular family, it also followed the logic of patrilineal family system, where 'married daughter is like water thrown out' (*Jia chuqu de nü'er po chuqu de shui*).

Whether the parents' decision to support Hannah through university was without any expectation of future benefits to the rest of the family, is difficult to say. While they supported Hannah through middle school and high school, the loans that covered the considerably higher expenses of the university degree[29] were paid back by Hannah herself after graduation. To my knowledge, her parents made very few requests

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29 The yearly tuition fees for high school and university was 700 yuan and 12.000 yuan respectively.

for money after Hannah had finished the back payments. But this should not lead us simply to conclude that they did not expect Hannah to share the benefits of her education with the family. In China, it is the children's legal[30] as well as cultural duty to care for elderly parents and as sons, Hannah's brothers were the main carriers of this responsibility. It was thus not so much for the parents, as it was for the brothers to organise the care and to negotiate the share each sibling should take on. As detailed later in this chapter, Hannah was indeed in frequent conflict with her brothers about the type and amount of support she should provide for the rest of the family. These conflicts point to two interpretations of the situation: the two brothers seeing Hannah's education as a family investment, and Hannah viewing it as her personal project. Both parties somewhat acknowledged the reasoning behind the other view, which often made the negotiations subtle rather than direct arguments. Ideas of what it means to be a daughter and a son, a sister and a brother, a woman and a man, underlay these disagreements.

Hannah spent her childhood in her mother's natal village. Her parents' marriage was uxorilocal, not an uncommon arrangement between two families of which one lacks a male heir, and the other cannot afford bridewealth. After the reforms in the 1980s that decollectivised the farmland and eased off mobility restrictions, the family gradually moved to the prefectural city of Longyan. Their relocation has not been permanent, but involves a back and forth movement between the city and the village where they still have a house, allocated farmland and where their household is permanently registered. The two brothers have tried their hands in several trades, including electrical engineering, construction, transport and the restaurant business. After graduating from the village middle school, the only training they have had has been on the job. Hannah is the youngest child, and the only daughter. She went to the village primary school with her brothers, but unlike them, showed great interest in study and consistently received high marks. The primary school teacher encouraged her to pursue better quality secondary education in the city, and she managed to reach the required score level to enter a middle school in Longyan. This coincided with the gradual migration of family members to the city. Father was already working at

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30 Articles 10, 11 and 45 of the Law of protecting the rights and benefits of older persons, PRC.

the nearby coal mine and mother did housekeeping for the family that owned the mining company. The wages from these jobs, as well as the money the two brothers were now earning, increased the family income and they were able to replace the old family home in the village with a new three storey building. In this relatively stable economic situation, the family had sufficient funds to cover Hannah's school fees and board, and she was allowed to go. In time, the parents developed a good relationship with the family that employed them. Hannah told me that when she was in school, the employers always encouraged her, and sometimes gave her money. 'So we just became related like that.' This relatedness, created through exchange, was indicated by the use of kinship terms between the two families. The supportive environment and Hannah's own hard work bore result as Hannah was accepted to a key-point academic high school (*zhongdian gaozhong*) and went on to study for the college entrance exam (*gaokao*). She did exceptionally well, and was accepted to study international business in one of the country's most prestigious universities in Beijing.

Meanwhile, however, the family economy had taken a downturn. When Hannah was in high school, their new home in the village was destroyed in flooding and had to be rebuilt. Moreover, the two brothers were now in their mid-20s and had aspirations that required family funds, such as starting a small business, buying a motorbike, and most importantly, getting married. In this changed situation, Hannah's parents and the brothers were not readily supportive of her plans to go to university in the country's capital, which would involve having to find money to cover the 12.000 yuan yearly tuition fee and the monthly living expenses of around 800 yuan. At the time the parents' combined monthly income was less than 1000 yuan. Hannah recounted these tensions between interests:

> So when I wanted to go to university my brothers didn't support me. Because they thought that if my parents spend so much money on me, they will not have money to get married. How selfish they are! They only think about themselves! And my parents didn't support me at first. But my [high school] teacher was always on my side, and he helped to persuade my parents to let me go. Because if you go to university, you have

to spend about 60.000 yuan, including the meals. So my parents borrowed from other people and now I send them money, 1000 yuan almost every month. Maybe after this Spring Festival we will not be in debt anymore, and my parents will feel happier.

Hannah's teachers played an essential mediating role between her and her parents. The importance of these relationships became clear to me when we spent the Spring Festival 2009 with Hannah's family in Fujian. During this yearly visit, most of our time was spent with Hannah's immediate family or accompanying them on visits to relatives and neighbours. There were four marked exceptions to this. One of them was a visit to Hannah's high school class mate, who had left for university in Beijing at the same time as her, and just like Hannah, had now returned home for the Spring Festival. There were three other meetings she made sure to arrange.

On the first day after our arrival, mother took us to visit the 'boss' family', i.e. the owners of the coal mining company. Hannah had stressed to me that we had to make time to visit this family during our trip. We spent an hour at their home, drinking tea and answering the enthusiastic questions about Hannah's work and life in Beijing, and my impressions of China and their hometown. The family was visibly pleased and impressed by Hannah's success, of which they no doubt felt able to take partial credit for. The old couple's grandson who was also present, was ordered to practice his English with me. He had been taking private language lessons for years in preparation for his planned overseas studies. As the shy teenager and I engaged in an awkward conversation, everyone in the room listened in silence. As we were leaving, the boy's mother invited us to visit their home, where we talked about education in China and abroad with her late into the night.

Equal importance was given to meetings with the teachers who had supported Hannah's transfer from the village to better schools in the city, and then later to university in Beijing. On the first day of the New Year, the two of us visited the headmaster of the village primary school and his kindergarden teacher wife, who now also lived in Longyan. Again we were enthusiastically received, and enjoyed a cheery wine-fuelled evening of talking about Hannah's life in Beijing and taking in stride the

hustle and bustle around me, Hannah's 'foreign friend' (the only disappointment being that I was not male). Due to the various commitments during this time of the year, Hannah was unable to arrange a visit to her high school teacher. The high regard given to this relationship by both parties was indicated in the solution to the problem. On the morning we left Longyan, the high school teacher came to see us off. We met him at the train station where he was already waiting with boarding tickets he had bought for us. The Finnish chocolates I had given to Hannah's family as a Spring Festival gift, were given to the teacher. He waited for the train with us and proudly told me that he had already had one student studying in the US, maybe Hannah would be the next to go abroad.

Through their higher economic and social status, these people had facilitated Hannah's access to opportunities that were available to very few of her background. Her success in turn gave them joy and prestige, as well as social capital that could be mobilised in aid of children of friends and relatives who wished to follow the same path. These people had had confidence in the benefits Hannah would receive through education, now valuing her achievements and urging her to pursue them further. This was a notably different attitude from that of Hannah's family members, whose everyday life and concerns were quite far removed from those of the educated professionals in big cities.

Hannah's parents had not been readily convinced by the benefits investment in education would bring. In their view, this was an expensive route with no guarantees of success in the end. The stories of graduate unemployment and fierce competition had been circulating in the media since the 1990s, when the state job assignment system was dismantled and the enrolment in higher education drastically expanded (Zweig 2002). Coupled with the restructuring of the economy that had resulted in the massive lay offs of the 1990s, it had brought increased career uncertainty to those in the upper strata of the job market. As Hannah recounts, this was also a concern to her parents:

> They said, how are you going to find a job, are you going to sweep the streets? I said, maybe, but I really want to go, I like to study!

Finally the parents agreed to support Hannah, and borrowed money from friends and relatives to cover the expenses. After the second year, Hannah was able to earn enough money to support herself by having part-time jobs and working through summers. She remembers student life as prudent, much focused on diligent study and work. Unlike many other university students, first time away from their parents and recently released from the college entrance exam preparation that has dominated their teenage years, she did not date, and her social life mainly consisted of a few friends who were as serious about their studies as she was. After graduation, she landed an excellent job as a Business Development Executive at the Beijing office of an Indian company. Her initial salary was 4000 yuan, and after eighteen months in the company, it was raised to 6000 yuan. For Hannah, this success validated her aspirations, and the family's reluctant support.

> But now my parents are proud of me, I have a very good job
> and I earn a good salary. I can send money home every month.
> I say to my parents, had I not gone to university, my life would
> be so different! I would work in a restaurant. I would be so
> tired, and earn very little, just 700-800 yuan a month!

New life, new reference group

After graduation, Hannah's lifestyle changed. She moved to the affluent part of the city that is home to many young professionals, foreigners and multinational companies. This was a conscious choice, as she explained:

> If a client or a business partner invites me for a drink in the
> evening and asks where I live, I have to be able to say that it's
> somewhere around here. If I say, I live somewhere near the 4th
> or 5th Ring, maybe they will just say: oh that's too far, forget
> about it. So I pay high rent but I think it's necessary.

Hannah did not hesitate to spend money on things required to mark her status as a young white-collar professional, including a room in a Western

style apartment with an agreeable address, good quality clothes, expensive hair cut, and treating friends and business relations to dinners. But her consumption habits still differed greatly from those of other informants who were in a similar professional situation, but of an urban background. She was extremely careful with money, and knew exactly what she spent it on. She did not buy more clothes than was absolutely necessary, ate simple and inexpensive food at home, and only used taxis on work related trips. Apart from work dinners, she rarely went out, and spent her free time at home reading, watching TV or using the internet. Her social life consisted of friends whom she had met through work and who could help, collaborate or advise her on business related matters. Being very attractive and outgoing, she had many suitors, but she was not interested in dating unless the man would fit the high standards she held for a potential husband.

These actions and attitudes seemed to simultaneously purposefully link her to a new *reference group* detached from her background, as well as highlighting her continuous attachment to the original one. The concept is Oded Stark's (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Taylor 1989) whose theory of the new economics of labour migration (NELM) challenged the neoclassical view that migration is based on utility-maximising decisions made by rational individuals (Borjas 1989; Lee 1966; Ravenstein 1889; Stouffer 1940). Stark argued that migration is rather a collective enterprise that also involves non-migrants, forming transnational communities that entail both the migrants and their social networks in the places of origin. In many instances, the main reference group for the migrant, against which they evaluate their achievements and troubles, continues to be the community of origin. This view gave insight to some phenomena previously troubling migration scholars, such as why would a migrant return after having saved enough money to build a house and a family tomb, rather than staying abroad to maximise life-time earnings; or why migrants are willing to endure a degraded status in their host communities. To an extent, the NELM concepts can help us understand the temporary rural-urban labour migration in China, which is often a household strategy to ensure an alternative source of income outside the local economy. Hannah's case differs from temporary labour migrants in a sense that through higher education she wished to permanently enter a social sphere closed to people of her original

reference group, that of the national elite. The process of disengagement took place partly through the kind of purposeful action described above, and in part through spontaneous engagement with her new social environment. This of course is somewhat a simplified description of a process that involves complex affects. We will return to these complexities when examining the negotiation of obligations with family members, but for now, let us elaborate on the way Hannah engaged with the new reference group and alienated herself, as well as felt alienated, from the original one.

In Beijing Hannah had few friends of rural background, and during our numerous conversations about her suitors, she proclaimed strong disdain for the qualities that she linked to a village background: 'he is very crude, not gentle at all', 'he always thinks about money', 'the people from his home region are not very clean'. These evaluations were of young men who similarly to her had migrated from the countryside to Beijing, graduated from universities, and now had successful careers. In her own interactions with people, Hannah usually kept her village background a secret. She also told me that during her yearly visits back home, she had felt alienated from her former classmates and friends. Their life experiences seemed far removed from hers, which rendered common topics of conversation few and brought about conflicts. For example, she told me about two high school class mates, who had subsequently married each other, despite the obvious lack of romantic love between them, and about a friend who was now completely focused on the well-being and education of her young child, rather than thinking about her own education and career. Hannah had criticised these choices, which had led to arguments and ill-feeling. She now seldom contacted friends who remained in Longyan and did not arrange to meet them during our trip. Instead, we visited the high school classmate who had embarked on the same route as her, now living and working in Beijing.

Hannah's lifestyle was very much geared towards realising the life plan, the dream, she had developed after moving to the capital. After graduation, she was to work for some years to save money. Within five years or so, she would have sufficient funds to do an MBA degree in the UK. Eventually, she would run her own, successful business in China and start a charity that would focus on programmes to help the disadvantaged rural Chinese. Her determination to realise this dream was observable in

many aspects of daily life from the way she spent her time and money, to the friends she chose. Apart from furthering her career, learning new skills and developing relations that would be of use in realising her goals, she had little time and interest for anything else.

Hannah earned a monthly salary of 4000 yuan, and a yearly Spring Festival bonus of several thousand yuan. More than half of the salary was spent on rent and bills. With careful spending habits, she could limit her other expenses to around 500-1000 yuan per month. This meant moderate, but steady monthly savings. Considering that just the yearly tuition fees for an MBA in the UK currently range between 160.000 and 370.000 yuan, saving up such a sum would of course be a hopeless cause. Hannah's plan thus was that after working for a few years to save starting capital, to gain experience and to build *guanxi*, she would quickly start her own business, which would enable higher earnings. But before any of this, her first obligation was to pay back the loans taken for her education. By the Spring Festival 2009, she had done this. Soon after, she got a pay rise, now earning 6000 yuan per month. I noticed a subtle change in Hannah's attitude towards money. She became less prudent in her lifestyle, starting to buy more business clothes, taking driving lessons and flute classes. At the same time, she was constantly developing ideas for starting her own business and negotiating with potential partners. Hannah now seemed to feel that having fulfilled her obligation towards parents, she was free to focus on pursuing her own career and educational aspirations. It became clear very quickly that this idea was not shared by her brothers.

In the web of care

As Stafford (2000b) has argued, Chinese relatedness is very much tied to cycles of exchange. The idea that it is not patrilineage but exchange that is at the core of Chinese kinship, helps us understand how the urban daughter-only families can reformulate ideas of filial obligation and gender roles. Hannah's family, however, is not one of them. They have two sons who, according to the principles of patrilineal kinship, patrilocal residence and Confucian filial piety, have the responsibility to continue the family line and care for the parents. What Stafford's approach offers, is not merely an acknowledgement of the fluidity and processual nature of

relatedness, but insight into how different kinds of relationships are connected to each other, and how they become mobilised differently in specific contexts. For the latter part of this chapter, I aim to show how Hannah is still very much connected to the cycle, or rather a web, of the exchange of care (*yang*) in her family, and how she, her brothers and parents use the various discourses drawing from both older and newer symbolic resources, to advance their interests.

In her PhD thesis about siblinghood and support in rural Northwest China, Helena Obendiek (2011) shows that labour migrant siblings often support one sibling through higher education. Upon graduation the flow of support is reversed. In his description of how Hannah's education had been funded, Big brother clearly portrayed a common family effort by saying how hard they had all had to work to get enough money together and later pay off the loans. Another indication of the brothers feeling that Hannah was indebted to not only the parents, but to the brothers, became apparent during negotiations about father's retirement. On the first night of the new year, Hannah, her brothers and father sat down around the table for a discussion. During the following hours, father mostly sat quiet, while Hannah and the brothers negotiated the matter. Mother listened while continuing her housework. As this conversation was in local dialect, largely unintelligible to me, the following account heavily relies on Hannah's later explanation.

Hannah and the brothers wanted their father to retire from his job at the coal mine, because it was tiring and forced him to live at the workplace only to return home at weekends. During the previous year his health had become an added concern as the pollution around the mine had given him a bad cough. There were two issues to resolve. In the absence of any pension scheme, financial support had to be arranged. When mother had retired from her housekeeping job in the previous year, she had started working at Big brother's restaurant and lived with him on the second floor of the restaurant. Similar arrangement would be needed for father. Second brother was now a foreman at a construction company, and it was agreed that father would work as his assistant for a monthly wage of 1000 yuan. He would stay with Second brother, his wife and young daughter at their rented apartment. The second issue was the money still owed to friends and relatives for Hannah's education and the weddings of the brothers. Father had refused to retire until the loans were

paid off. Of the 5000 yuan still left, Hannah suggested that she would pay 3000, and the brothers 1000 each. The brothers were reluctant to agree, saying that they did not have money. I understood that they wanted Hannah to cover the whole sum. After a heated discussion Big brother gave in but Second brother still resisted. He did not want to take on a share of the payment, insisting that they should 'pay together'. I took this to mean that he wanted Hannah to help him pay his share. The plan was left open, as neither one of them could push the other to agree. When going to bed later, Hannah was angry, but also implied that there was not much she could do about it, other than pay the Second brother's share if he continued to resist. Second brother did not clearly state why Hannah should pay his share, nor did Hannah give me a reason why she accepted that she had no means to force him and might end up paying his share. Both thought that they had some grounds for their claims, and took the indirect strategy of refusing to comply. Enquiring about the matter some weeks later, I found out that Second brother had paid his share.

When directly asked, both brothers claimed that Hannah's education did not have any direct benefit to them, other than being proud of their sister. In practice, they often asked Hannah for money or other help through her *guanxi*. The requests ranged from relatively small sums of money to be spent on Big brother's second wedding or medicine for the parents, to investing in a car that the brothers could turn into a transport business, and to arranging a loan of 50.000 yuan for Second brother's project of buying land and building a house. After Hannah's graduation, the brothers started to expect this kind of help from her.

AK: How did your brothers get the money to get married?

Hannah: When Big brother got married, my parents had to borrow money from others. And then only one year later, he divorced! And then, last June, when Second brother got married, I had already graduated, so I gave him 2000 yuan. And when his wife had a baby, I gave another 1000 yuan. At the time he said he will pay me back later, but then he got angry with me and said that he treated me like a sister, but I don't treat him like a brother!

Both Hannah and her brothers claimed, when directly asked, that Hannah had the sole right to decide how to use her money. On several occasions, Hannah also said that once the loans for her education would have been paid off, she would be free. This view did neither stop the money requests from coming, nor the implicit acknowledgement from all three of them that the brothers' claims were not entirely ungrounded. Hannah agonised over their requests for loans precisely because she knew that they would not be willing or able to pay back, and as their sister, she would just 'have to stay silent'. She would thus try, though not always successfully, to choose and limit the kind of causes she gave money for.

Obendiek (2011) further notes that as sons bear the main responsibility of providing for parents, sisters' investment in brothers' education or careers can be seen as part of paying off the parental debt of care (*yang*). Until now, any surplus income had gone into paying back the family loans. The loans now cleared, Hannah was not the only one with ideas for new projects. Brothers brought up their plan to set up a small transport business. In the lack of capital to invest, they needed Hannah to participate. Her reluctance, as she explained to me, was due to her distrust in their ability to turn the business into a success. Brothers also started talking about buying a house in the city, asking Hannah to join the investment. Hannah in turn had waited for this moment in a hope that she would now gain freedom to pursue her own goals. In her recurrent narrative, this idea was backed with the notion of filial piety based on patrilineality. When first describing her family to me, she explained:

> In China, parents think that a girl is going to get married and go away, but the sons will always stay with them. They live together and take care of them. The daughters, when they go to visit, maybe have to buy some clothes for the parents, or give some money. But not all the time, the sons will give all the time. But if there is only a daughter and no sons, in this case the daughter should take care of the family.

Hannah here makes a clear distinction between the roles of sons and daughters and repeated it on several occasions by saying that after the clearance of debts, her help to the parents would be situational. Her narrative does not acknowledge that the unification of economic and

symbolic markets that had brought within her reach the kind of opportunities formerly unavailable to rural women, might also have caused her family to expect a stronger supporting role than what was demanded from daughters before. Hannah made her attitude clear to the family after the debts had been paid. Responding to the brothers' suggestion of joint investments, she revealed her plans of going abroad to study. She also said that she had other plans, such as getting a driver's licence, that she would need money for. Falling back on the patrilineal discourse, she reasoned that as she will marry into another family and not return to Longyan, these joint projects will not bring her any benefit. The brothers could not argue with this and gave up trying to persuade her. To her parents, Hannah said that if they ever needed money for food or clothes, they should ask her, thus specifying the form of support she would provide. She also said to her mother that if the brothers ever neglected their moral and legal duties of caring for the parents, Hannah and the parents would sue them.

When explaining to me why there were now many young women getting overseas education and having successful careers, and more specifically, why her parents had supported her education, Hannah employed the discourses of the greater filiality of daughters and gender equality. In contrast to drawing from traditional ideas, she now emphasised the change in Chinese society and people's thinking.

> One reason is that China is now much more developed than before. So we can have a good life now, not so poor anymore. Before people used to think that sons were better, especially if they lived in the village. Sons will work with them and take care of them, because they live in the same house. Daughters will marry and live with other people, maybe in the same village or nearby. But now people are not so poor anymore, very few people stay in the villages and most move to cities. So they don't worry so much anymore. And also their thinking has changed. Maybe they've seen that some sons don't take such good care of their parents. And their daughter takes good care. Because the daughter loves her parents more. The sons are always thinking that they have to marry, or they have their own families, get pressure like that. So maybe the daughter

doesn't visit so often, just once a year, but will always give them more money. They know that when they get old, their daughter will also give them money and take care of them. So maybe parents still like a son, but they also think, a daughter is acceptable.

And the one child policy has had a big effect on people's thinking. Because if you have just one child, you don't have the choice of thinking, we want a son. So people focus more on success now. When people chat, they're always talking whose daughter is very rich and like that. If someone has many sons but they're all poor, no-one will mention it. So when people have a daughter, they want her to get a good education, and in the future they hope she will be successful, and then she will also give them money. So it's money oriented, not so much about if it's a son or a daughter. Maybe it's not always so good, but society is like this. Maybe there are some people in the villages, very few people, who think a son is better, but most people think that son and daughter are just the same.

A membership in not only a patrilineal family, but in a web of reciprocal exchanges translates into various obligations toward kin and family members that extend well beyond the simplistic view of the lineage paradigm, of sons returning the care received from parents directly (their wives largely performing it in practice), and daughters transferring it to their in-laws. Yet drawing on this precise logic, Hannah managed to negotiate some freedom and control over her resources. She acquired these resources through the new kind of opportunities that have become available to a few rural women through the unification of symbolic and economic markets. But the limits of this freedom were never far. Although the idea of joint investments had been buried, brothers kept asking for Hannah's help in various other matters. Most of the time she would give in and send money, while continuing to complain and resist indirectly. For example, she did not tell the family about her pay rise. Accepting that some support from her was expected and justified, Hannah tried to retain some control over the form it would take. One of her future plans was to buy a house in Longyan, which her parents, brothers and their wives and

children could share. This way, she explained, her brothers could take better care of the parents.

In the web of affect

What complicates the familial negotiations further, are the strong emotions entangled in the affective attachments. It has long been established that decisions about migration, investment, or any other activity for that matter, are not made on the basis of rational evaluation of some objective reality, even though deliberate calculation does form a part of the process. It would also do crude injustice to the informants' experiences to portray them merely as strategising with whatever resources and cultural models are available. Hannah's dilemma of situating herself in the family's web of exchange seemed to be first and foremost emotional. Its painfulness was reflected in the interactions during our visit. Distressed, she told me about an incident when she had jokingly suggested to her mother that it was much better to have a daughter than a son because a daughter would give her money and take good care of her. But daughters are far away, sons will always stay by your side, her mother had replied, leaving Hannah feeling unappreciated and adding to the bitterness she was already feeling towards her family over their lack of support and appreciation. On our last night in Fujian she aired these feelings in an argument with her parents and Big brother. She said that her family was always thinking about money, only contacting her when they needed something, that her brothers had not supported her and that her parents did not care about her wellbeing. The discussion was mainly between Hannah and Big brother, mother and father listening in silence. As the local dialect was used, my understanding was again limited. In the aftermath, however, expressions of remorse were clear. At the end of the night Big brother said that perhaps he had not been a good brother, and needed to correct this mistake. Mother told Hannah not to worry too much about her harsh words before. Later that evening Hannah had a long conversation with her parents, during which she promised them that if the two brothers did not have money to pay off their share of the debt, she would pay. The next morning Big brother took great care in providing us with snacks and drinks for the long train journey ahead, and

when I was left alone with him for a moment at the station, he asked me to look after Hannah in Beijing, as they were all worried about her health and about the fact that she had no one there to take care of her.

In conjunction with the idea described in the previous section, of how daughters have become more appreciated in the recent years, Hannah sometimes portrayed herself as the favourite child in her narratives. When discussing the arguments about money, she conclusively responded to my questions by saying that it was not really money that was causing the arguments, but her brothers were always angry with her because their parents loved her the most. She also related childhood stories of how she was favoured by her parents, such as by being given the best part of the fish to eat. Apart from the emotional value of this narrative, it helped to explain her parents' exceptional support to her as a daughter. The importance of this narrative to Hannah was all the more visible in the distress she expressed on occasions when her family's actions and attitudes seemed to contradict it.

Finally, despite Hannah's strong determination to make the most of the opportunities she had been given, the affective attachment with her family was too meaningful for her to ignore. Numerous times she expressed sadness over not experiencing the kind of warmth with her family members that she thought families should share. After the argument during our visit, everyone seemed to be making an effort to show more concern. Her brothers and parents now telephoned more often, and in general Hannah said that there was less tension and more warmth in the relations. For her own part, she started to use explanations such as 'money is not the most important thing', 'I want my family to be close', and 'we all have to take care of each other' when I asked why she had once again agreed to send money for some purpose. During one of our conversations about her ageing parents she said that she would always make sure that her brothers would be able to take good care of them. I asked if she would still support her brothers once her parents had passed away. Yes, she responded, because money is not the most important thing and she needs a warm family. So if the brothers have some problems, as their sister she will always support them.

Conclusion

The idea of letting some people get rich first is followed by an assumption that the rest will soon follow. When this slogan was brought up by informants in different contexts, it was usually followed by an explanation that it is the responsibility of those who get rich, to use their wealth to help others still waiting their turn. Also Hannah shared this idea. When talking about her hopes for future success, she often stressed that all this would not be for herself, but for the benefit of the motherland and the fellow Chinese, especially the most disadvantaged who shared the same background with her. But first she had to get into the position to help others. What this position would be, and the specific methods and targets of her help were all clearly planned. But people around her held other ideas. To her family, they were the disadvantaged and Hannah was already in the position to offer support. The reforms in educational policies, economy and migration controls had facilitated Hannah's physical and social mobility. As she came to share the social field of the urban single-child students, she started to harbour the dream very common amongst them, going abroad to study. But in contrast to them, hers was an individual ambition, not a family project.

It is very possible that Hannah's dream of going abroad to study will never realise. Her pursuit of cosmopolitan subjectivity mainly relies on the cosmopolitan encounters in China, which include talking to her foreign flatmates, dating foreign men, passing through airports, watching news reports and films, and reading about the experiences of student migrants on the internet discussion forums. In spite of staying put, she actively engages in the cosmopolitan flows. What is more, her domestic student migration resembles in many ways the international student migration of the urban 'onlies', involving similar processes of shifting position in the power hierarchies and the reflexive work of trying to resolve the caring, the desiring and the enterprising elements of subjectivity. Hannah has in her disposal many of the same symbolic resources as the urban student migrants. Like them, she uses of the discourses of patrilineage, gender equality, and the filiality of daughters in the negotiations. To her, however, the challenge of balancing the desiring, the enterprising and the caring parts of subjectivity is greater because of the economic gap *within* her family, and the actual financial dependency

of the parents. The obligation to succeed is central to the filiality of urban singletons, whose parents do not need their actual financial support. Hannah shares their ideal of the enterprising individual, but her success is held back by the actual obligations of care she has toward her family. Material care and emotional attachments are entangled together in the constitution of family relations. Even when Hannah could argue with the patrilineal logic to evade filial obligations, the emotional costs and rewards kept her tied to these exchanges.

CONCLUSIONS

Many sociocultural, political and economic factors can be identified that give the student migration flow its shape and make it specifically Chinese. Sons and daughters go in equal numbers and rely heavily on the support of their parents. The majority of them study subjects that can offer opportunities in the Chinese economy on its route from manufacture to innovation, as well as in the global market. The experience of the student migrants is shaped by orientations that I have termed care, enterprising and desire, and the tensions that arise between them. These orientations are based on the Chinese cultural and structural context, which comes to the level of lived experience through the enactment of affect. The familial gender models are present in the way male students articulate their concerns in terms of the filial obligation to succeed, and in the way women dream about dating and marrying foreigners.

From an early age, both daughters and sons of urban single-child families learn that they have to study diligently and to 'improve themselves' to compete with their peers. They learn that education is the key to a secure and wealthy future and compete for the access into best schools in China and abroad. To their parents, they are the 'great treasure' (*dabao*); pampered, tutored, supervised and sponsored to make the most of their potential. They are encouraged to cultivate *nengli* (ability), i.e. to be *enterprising*. What differentiates them from their parents, is the sense of individual entitlement they feel. Just as their parents, they believe they must work hard to succeed, but their main strive for success is not to keep the family (including parents and future offspring) out of poverty and improving the family's position, i.e. *care*. It is the individual *desire* to be and to have. This can take the form of studying a subject that is interesting, challenging or offers good career prospects; of self-expression through consumption habits and romantic and sexual relations; and of cultivation of a cosmopolitan identity. Their cosmopolitanism is rooted in the reform era economic and political developments and sanctioned by the state, it is fuelled by the virtual and imaginary travel, and it is realised through participation in the flows of the international education market.

Contradictions are inherent in the cosmopolitan pursuit, as it encompasses the skills, competencies and connections the Chinese state seeks to benefit from, the standardised education that yields profits to institutions and brokers, and the orientation that becomes part of the student migrants' mode of existence, as they become attached and reattached to multiple spatial and sociocultural fields.

This much is true for both women and men student migrants. In the light of my research, there is no doubt about it: the only child, be it a son or a daughter, is pushed towards educational success. This is of course linked to the fact that there is no competition between siblings over family resources. Also important is the changing notion of filiality, as the urban parents are becoming less dependent on their child's material care in old age. Coupled with the symbolic change that undermines the patrilineage and its institutions, and centres on the individual, the parent-child relationship has become more mediated by reciprocity and emotional attachment than patrilineal obligation. This gives a basis for alternative models for familial attachments, which can be drawn from situationally. Successful daughters who 'love their parents more' can be just as reliable as sons to provide care in old age. What is more, they will not inflict such a financial burden on their parents when they marry. The strength of patrilineage as an ethical discourse can also be employed for both, progressive and regressive claims. For daughters, it can give more freedom to pursue their individual interests and goals while still falling back on parental support. For sons it can give a sense of privilege and status, but at the same time, it carries the burden of greater obligation.

The idealisation of independence that is so central to the cosmopolitan subjectivity, and the actual reliance on the parents results in conflicts. At the same time, the exchanges between parents and children reproduce family ties across distances. If exchange is in the core of Chinese kinship, then the parents' interferences on the pursuit of independence via money, practical care, advice, arguments, opinions, etc. do not merely reflect a conflict between old values and new social practices, but in fact uphold the core value of Chinese kinship. The continuity of this core value is seen for example in the necessity of gaining the parents' approval for marriage, a practice that otherwise may seem at odds with the current emphasis on individualism, romantic love and desire.

In the experience of the young student migrants, these models of what it is to be a son and a daughter participating in the familial cycle of support are tightly linked to the roles of a wife, a husband, a mother and a father they will soon take up. The three markets that are the locus of the majority of their concerns, desires and worries, are interconnected. That is, the education, job and marriage markets. The interconnections include the ideals of hypergamy and the gendered division of labour in which the husband provides much of the material support and the wife much of the reproductive support for the family. These models for what men and women *do*, are in line with the models of what they *are*; through appropriate social roles they fulfil their essential gender identities. The way cultural models for kinship and gender intersect the markets for education, job and marriage, has very real consequences to the female student migrants. They, along with their parents, worry that if they are too successful, they will not be able to find a 'good husband' who would fit their high standards and be willing to marry them. They are also pushed towards less demanding and risky fields in education and the job market by social pressure and discrimination. Those who enter the male dominated fields are exposed to their discriminative practices and attitudes.

What of the cosmopolitan pursuit? The high value parents now place on daughters in general, and on their education in particular, as well as the ideas of gender equality, romantic love and *nengli*, give some tools to individuals to challenge the gendered expectations and limitations. These are available to all daughters of urban single-child families. The student migrants also have their cosmopolitan resources to draw from. They can, and do, challenge their roles in four ways. First, through their personal experiences of adaptation and alienation, they are at the forefront of the unification of symbolic markets, in which ideas are introduced, circulated, devalued and revalued. Second, their cosmopolitan connections, skills and competencies can widen their field of opportunities, for example by opening access to the job and marriage markets of different countries. Third, through their spatial mobility, their positioning in various hierarchies (e.g., generation, gender, nationality, race) shift and sometimes a relative autonomy from power systems that formerly dominated their experience, follows. What is more, this shift can result in a permanent sense of autonomy, that remains even with return

and re-migration. Many women returnees felt that through the experience of migration, they became more independent, aggressive and daring to challenge the gendered social norms. Through their cosmopolitan orientation, a mode of relating to sociocultural fields, they challenged the existing gender models.

In the unification of symbolic markets, symbolic universes that were formerly separate become part of the same framework. The coexistence of the ideas of partilineage, value of daughters, filial piety, individual success, good match, romantic love and sex detached from the goal of marriage, is characteristic of the experience of the current urban youth in China. It broadens the notion of what is possible for the student migrants, but at the same time, creates tensions. It would be a mistake to assume that the student migrants are always in a position to manipulate the various ideas and resources to their benefit. As in the case of the Béarn bachelors (Bourdieu 2007), some become trapped in the symbolic transformation.

In the summer 2013 I received an email from Hannah. She was visiting her family to say goodbyes before going away. Had she managed to save enough money to go abroad to study? No. She was on her way to Guangzhou, to apprentice at a Buddhist temple, to live in seclusion for at least four years and to devote herself to the study of Buddhism. She was forfeiting her business career and had no interest in marriage or having a baby, she wrote. This was shocking news. Among all the aspiring, current and returned student migrants I had got to know during this research, Hannah had been remarkable in her ambition and determination. She wanted to succeed, become rich, marry well and educate outstanding children, and almost everything she did was geared toward realising these goals. After some reflection, however, her decision started to seem quite understandable. Over the years Hannah had continued to struggle to get ahead in her career. She changed companies several times, as she did not feel that she was given enough opportunities to develop and to move forward. Meanwhile, she worked relentlessly to find the right connections and resources to start her own business, which would be her gateway abroad. After several fallen through deals, she became discouraged and often bemoaned the difficulties she had as a young woman to get ahead in a male-dominated business. Meanwhile, the demands for support from her family never ceased. In 2010, Big brother had a car accident, which left

the family 300.000 yuan in dept. Borrowing the money and dealing with the lenders fell on Hannah. 'I hope good luck will come to me soon, so I can earn more money to help my family', she wrote to me at the time. I cannot say if these difficulties were the main reason why Hannah decided to leave her career and to devote herself to Buddhism, but there is no doubt that she felt the burden of these pressures heavy. The women's changing position and the new educational opportunities enabled Hannah to leave her village and to become an educated urbanite. She skilfully used the old and the new symbolic resources in the market to her benefit. But at the same time, just like the Béarn bachelors, she was partly caught up in this transformation, as due to her familial obligations and the male dominance still prevalent in her field of business, she constantly struggled to get ahead.

Apart from losing interest in a career in business, Hannah also lost interest in marrying and having a child. She had never had a shortage of suitors. Every year she received several marriage proposals. 'I have been proposed by four men this year, I turned them all down. I turned one of them down this afternoon', she wrote to me in 2011. She put her reluctance to date and to marry down to the lack of high quality candidates. Doubtless it was difficult to find a man who would match her ambition, diligence and determination. But Hannah was also aware of the potential of marriage and motherhood to limit the freedom to pursue her very detailed plans for future. She refused several suitors on the grounds that their current situation and future plans did not fit together with hers. In addition, she was critical of her friends who after becoming mothers had shifted their focus from their own career to the future of their child.

To my young informants, marriage was not only about making a commitment to another person, it was about starting a family. Because of this, marrying before graduating was out of the question. Moreover, to be ready to marry meant being ready to have a baby, which required certain financial stability and job security. But there was still more to it. Early on I noted the disinterest my young female informants had in talking about the prospect of motherhood. 'I'm too young to think about that', or 'I haven't thought about it' were common answers if I asked whether they would like to have a child in the future. This was somewhat surprising because at the same time, these women enjoyed making plans and fantasising about their future studies, career and marriage. Motherhood

was mainly talked about in the context of acknowledging the sacrifices the generation of their own mothers had been willing to make for their children, or talking about the stress, hard work and financial burden bringing up a child in contemporary China would involve. Becoming a 'tiger mother', devoted to raising and educating outstanding children, was not a particularly appealing prospect to the young women in this study. None of my informants explicitly stated that they did not want to have children in the future, but it was not something they viewed with excitement and anticipation comparable to overseas study, building a career, dating and getting married.

The father-son nexus has lost its centrality in the urban Chinese family, but the centre stage has been taken by the only child rather than the conjugal couple. In the child-centred family, the core value is not the continuity of the lineage nor the pure relationship (Giddens 1992) between wife and husband. It it the nurturance of the child. The current student migrants belong to the first generation who must make the transition from being the centre of the family to being the nurturing and the sacrificing parent. This has different implications for men and women. In the role of the parent, both are expected to put the well-being and the future of their child before their personal interests. The difference is that a father's contribution is more in line with his upbringing as the only child, than the mother's. Both daughters and sons have been raised to pursue individual success and self-development, but when they reach parenthood, it is the mothers who are expected to put their career on the side to take care of and to educate their child. The main contribution a father can make, in contrast, is through his personal career success.

We are yet to see what kind of parents the current generation of highly educated cosmopolitans will become. Most likely they will not simply follow the model of the sacrificing parent of the previous generation. Each student migrant will have to repeatedly resolve in her or his personal experience the questions of how to be a mother and a father, a daughter and a son, a wife and a husband, in the midst of the transformation of the gendered familial models.

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Glossary

Ai	爱	love
Bang dakuan	傍大款	to live off a rich man
Baoernai	包二奶	to keep a mistress
Baoyang	包养	to keep a mistress
Benke wenping	本科文凭	undergraduate diploma
Boshi xuewei	博士学位	PhD degree
Bu kaifang	不开放	not open-minded
Chudeng jiaoyu	初等教育	primary education
Chudeng xuexiao	初等学校	primary school
Chuji zhongdeng	初级中等	junior secondary (education)
Daxue	大学	university
Duanqi zhiye daxue	短期职业大学	short-cycle vocational college
Fada guojia	发达国家	developed countries
Gaodeng jiaoyu	高等教育	higher education
Gaoji zhongdeng	高级中等	senior secondary (education)
Gaokao	高考	university entrance examination
Gaozhong	高中	senior secondary school
Guanxi	关系	connections
Guanxin	关心	caring, concerned
Hukou	户口	registered residence
Jiandan	简单	simple
Jishu daxue	技术大学	technical college
Jishu xuexiao	技术学校	technical school
Kaifang	开放	open (open-minded)
Kaoyan	考研	entrance exam (postgraduate)
Langman de	浪漫的	romantic
Laorenyuan	老人院	elderly care home
Liudong renkou	流动人口	floating population
Nengli	能力	ability
Putong xuexiao	普通学校	Regular school

Quanli	权力	power, authority
Rencai	人才	human talent, talented person
Tuo kuan shiye	拓宽视野	broadening of vision
Shengnü	剩女	leftover women
Shuoshi xuewei	硕士学位	Master's degree
Wenhua	文化	culture, civilisation
Wenming	文明	civilisation, civilised
Xiandaihua	现代化	modernisation
Xueqian jiaoyu	学前教育	pre-school education
Xueshi xuewei	学士学位	Bachelor's degree
Yang	养	care, raise, support
You'eryuan	幼儿园	pre-school / kindergarden
Youhui zhengce	优惠政策	preferential policies
Youxiu	优秀	outstanding, excellent
Yuanzhu jiaoji	援助交际	compensated dating
Zhiye daxue	职业大学	vocational college
Zhiye xuexiao	职业学校	vocational school
Zhongdeng jiaoyu	中等教育	secondary education
Zhongdian	重点	key-point (education institution)
Zhuanke wenping	专科文凭	vocational diploma
Zhuanye daxue	专业大学	specialised college
Zhuanye xuexiao	专业学校	specialised school
Zi fei	自费	self-sponsored

PHRASES AND PROVERBS

Jia chuqu de nü'er po chuqu de shui; 家出去的女儿; 'Married daughter is like water thrown out'

Jia ji sui ji, jia gou sui gou; 嫁鸡随鸡嫁狗随; 'You marry a chicken, you follow the chicken, marry a dog, follow the dog'

Liang tian tui zoulu; 两条腿走路; 'Walk on two legs'

Sangaonü: xueli gao shouru gao zhiwei gao de nü; 三高女：学历高收入高职位高的女; 'A woman of three highs: high education, high salary, and high professional status'

Rang yibufen ren xian fu qilai; 让一部分人先富起来; 'Let some people get rich first'

Wang zi cheng long, wang nü cheng feng; 望子成龙往女成凤; 'Everyone wants their son to become a dragon and their daughter to become a phoenix'

Zhichi liuxue, guli hui guo, lai qu ziyou; 支持留学鼓励回国来去自由; 'Support overseas study, encourage people to return, give freedom to come and go'

Appendix 1

NOTES ON THE SURVEY STUDIES

The survey questionnaire included questions about the following themes: family background, education background, overseas studies, dating and marriage. I tested the survey questionnaire by sending it to 10 students I knew personally, and modified the questions on the basis of their comments. I also discussed the categorisation used in some of the questions with Huang Jianbo, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the School of Sociology and Population Studies, the Renmin University of China.

Survey at the Renmin University of China

In 2009 Renmin university had 21278 Chinese students. I handed out 1716 survey questionnaires and got 427 valid responses, which gives a response rate of 25%. The campus had 48 dormitories for Chinese students. These were all single sex, and were mostly designated for either undergraduate or graduate students. I selected a number of dormitories for each of these categories (female undergraduates, female graduates, male undergraduates, male graduates), that roughly corresponded with their proportion in the student body. At first I left the survey questionnaires at the receptions of the dormitory, with a note about the research and a return box for the forms. A week later I found that this method had brought very few responses. I then stood at the lobby of each dormitory during meal times when students go to the canteens to eat, handing out forms, explaining my research and asking students to fill in the forms and return them to the box. I had two assistants to help me with the task. This yielded a much higher response rate.

One of the survey questions was: do you have plans to go abroad to study, to which students responded either 'yes', 'no', or 'not sure'. For the purposes of this thesis, I have only used the data from the student group that had plans to go abroad, comprising roughly half of the respondents to this survey, as detailed here:

TOTAL	427		NO	171	
Male	175	41%	Male	66	37%
Female	252	59%	Female	105	42%
YES	175		NOT SURE	81	
Male	81	46%	Male	28	16%
Female	94	54%	Female	53	21%

Survey at the London School of Economics

For the survey among the Chinese students at the London School of Economics, the Data Management Unit sent out my email and a link to the online survey to the students domiciled from China (excluding Taiwan, Macao and Hong Kong). The total number of these students was 926, and I got 203 responses, giving the response rate of 22%. The proportion of female and male respondents correlated with their proportion in the Chinese student population at the LSE: 21% of the respondents were male (*n*: 42, from the total of 278 male Chinese students at the LSE); 79% of them were female (*n*:161 from the total of 648).

Appendix 2
NOTES ON THE ESDS AND HESA STATISTICS

These statistics include undergraduate and postgraduate students in the UK who are domiciled from China (excluding students domiciled from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao). The statistics for 1980, 1985 and 1990 are from the UK Data Archive (Economic and Social Data Service). The statistics for 1995, 2000 and 2010 are from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The population used for published counts of students changed in 2000/01. From 1994/95 to 1999/00 published figures counted student enrolments as at 1st December of the academic year. From 2000/01 students are counted regardless of whether they are active on 1st December of the reporting period. To aid comparability, the 1st December population has been used for all years from 1995 onwards.