The Gender of Mobility:
Chinese Women Students' Self-Making through Transnational Education

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> Our family lived in basically a rural area outside Dalian. My Dad was really serious about education. When I was in primary school—well in the city, [schools] all have English classes, right? But in the country that's not the case. So my Dad took me every single night to the English teacher's house to study, then he'd come back later to pick me up…. By the time I started junior high, I'd already learned everything they'd studied in class [in the city school]… Because I got good marks, [my Dad] wanted to give me the best education possible. So he sent me off to the Attached School of Dalian University of Technology, pretty much the best junior high school in the city. That's when I left home and began my own life.[1]

1. Globally, international students constitute a sizeable mobile population, with almost 4.3 million studying outside their home country in 2011.[2] In each of 2010 and 2011 over half a million such students studied in Australia, making it the world's third-most popular destination for overseas study.[3] In 2011, more than one in five enrolments in Australian universities were by international students.[4] The People's Republic of China is the world's largest student-sending nation and the largest sending nation of students to Australia by a very wide margin, with Chinese students attracted to Australia by a range of factors including the relative availability of permanent migration opportunities.[5] And, as with students from other East Asian nations, over half the Chinese students in Australian higher education are now women (54.4 percent in 2011).[6]

2. The presence of these students fundamentally transforms the university experience for both students and academics in ways whose full implications are yet to be understood. Even in the Arts faculty where I currently teach, but far more so in Commerce and Business programs, a significant proportion of the students in our classrooms are now young people (in Arts, especially young women) who have grown up in China and travelled to Australia expressly for tertiary study. The growing presence of these students over the past decade prompts certain questions that provide a significant impetus for the study on which this article is based. Who are these students? How does it feel to move from Dalian to Melbourne, say, to study? What role might transnational mobility play in the process of identity formation at this transitional stage in young women's lives? What difference could education abroad make in these students' gendered outlooks, identifications, and life plans?

3. In this article I argue that in their focus on mobility as central to the kinds of selfhood they desire and are working toward, Chinese international students like Kang Shun, quoted above, exemplify the rise of 'portable personhood' beyond the global 'rich north.'[7] Anthony Elliott and John Urry explain that:

   > The rise of an intensively mobile society *reshapes the self* – its everyday activities [emphasis added], interpersonal relations with others, as well as connections with the wider world. In the age of advanced globalization, we witness *portable personhood* [emphasis in original]. Identity becomes not merely 'bent' towards novel forms of transportation and travel but fundamentally recast in terms of capacities for movement. Put another way, the globalization of mobility extends into the core of the self.[8]

4. A useful additional concept for this article's project of thinking through mobility's extension into the core of the self is *motility*, defined by Vincent Kaufmann, Manfred Max Bergman and Dominique Joye as 'the capacity of entities…to be mobile in social and geographic space, or as the way in which entities access

and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances.'[9] As the analysis below will demonstrate, individuals' conscious awareness and valuation of their own motility can have significant consequences for their (re)configuration of identity. Particularly relevant to the present study is Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye's argument that increasingly, social mobility—the capacity to move upward in social class—is interdependent with the individual's capacity for geographic mobility. Thus, motility can be seen as a form of capital, 'movement capital,' which is linked with and may under some circumstances be exchanged for other forms of capital, including economic capital.[10] Such observations resonate with the work of sociologist Pal Nyíri, which shows how in post-Mao China, the capacity to be geographically mobile is represented as a value definitionally connected with both national modernisation and personal success.[11] Motility's reconfiguration of *gendered* identities is particularly significant, yet often overlooked. As Karen Kelsky has observed in her extended study of 'internationalist' Japanese women in the 1990s, women's travel for education and professional development, and the concomitant potential for social mobility, challenges entrenched associations of women with family, home, tradition and the local.[12]

5. Women's educational travel can usefully be seen as an aspect of the broader process of migration's feminisation: the worldwide increase since the 1980s in the number of women travelling internationally on their own to seek career-advancement opportunities.[13] In northeast Asia, this trend is particularly marked.[14] In the case of China, it coincides with a period of massive growth in general overseas travel, which rose from virtually negligible levels in the early 1980s to 3 million departures annually by 1990 and over 70 million by 2011, as a consequence of China's economic boom and the relaxation of bureaucratic controls on travel.[15] Simultaneously with and related to the rise in women's transnational mobility, patterns of gendered social life are shifting in northeast Asian societies. With high rates of female education and labour participation and notable trends toward delayed marriage among urban women, many young women are conceptualising themselves as individualised subjects, increasingly—though certainly incompletely—drawing away from the familial obligations that have historically defined women's social identity.[16] More and more young, educated urban women see themselves as pursuing dreams of wealth, freedom and individual happiness through travel, consumption, career and a self-scripted life project.[17] As mobility capital exerts its appeal to more and more Chinese citizens, poor rural women travel to China's cities in search of factory and domestic work, and increasingly, better-off urban women take on the opportunities and risks of travelling overseas.[18] Due to the post-1978 fertility limitation policies, the current generation of Chinese daughters are largely only children, and as their family's 'only hope' are given access to parental resources that in previous generations might have been reserved for sons.[19] Full of hopes for individual self-development and worldly experience and as yet unconstrained by marriage, hundreds of thousands of young women like Kang Shun leave China every year to pursue higher education overseas. As Vanessa Fong observes in her important study of transnational Chinese students in the developed world, for such students, overseas study is often both part of a long-term family strategy of upward mobility, and a rite of passage tied to the individual's transition from adolescence to adulthood.[20] Indeed, as this article will show, these young women's perception of their own motility is among the most notable features distinguishing their sense of identity from that of their mothers' generation. This can be seen in Kang Shun's rhetorical framing of her own orientation toward her educational journey in this article's epigraph. She presents her geographic trajectory from primary school in rural Liaoning to high school in urban Dalian to university study in Melbourne—albeit propelled by the family's hopes for her, as personified in the role of her father—as the story of leaving home to build her 'own life': working on the project of her self through her educational travels.

6. This article asks how such young Chinese 'internationalist' women (to borrow Kelsky's apt term),[21] conditioned by the national-level social and historical contexts that produced them, actively re-make their selves and their life projects through their transnational education ventures. My analysis reveals that, like arguably all modern Chinese women, these students have grown up with and been shaped by a number of competing and contradictory discourses of gendered personhood. In particular, I show how the mobile self-making project of which they see overseas study as a part stands in contradiction with influential gender discourses within China that associate adult women's social role with the care of familial others

rather than the care of the self. The final section of this article offers a (necessarily speculative) discussion of how extended experiences of transnational mobility might ultimately affect such women's negotiation of that contradiction.

7. In the article I present the results of a pilot study that was carried out in Melbourne in 2012. With the aim of investigating the questions above, I conducted semi-structured interviews with fifteen female higher education students from the People's Republic of China, mainly one-on-one but some in small friendship groups, with interviews lasting between one and four hours and an average length of about 100 minutes. I conducted eight interviews in Mandarin and two in English, according to interviewees' preference.[22] Some interviews were followed up with further questions and clarifications via email. Although the interviews were in-depth, owing to the necessarily limited character of a pilot study the number of interviewees was relatively small; the aim was to lay some groundwork for a much more extensive longitudinal study over coming years. This preliminary study presents something like 'snapshots' of these fifteen young women at a particular point in time; richer contextualisation of their past experiences and unfolding experience in Australia must await the larger-scale study. It is also worth noting that since a majority of the interviewees were at a relatively early stage of their stay in Australia, their views represent more their hopes and expectations about what their stay would enable for them, than final evaluations of the overseas study experience (but see the discussion of the three later-stage students in the final section).

International education and social mobility

8. The most direct enabling factor for the dramatic rise in the numbers of students from China pursuing overseas education in recent years has been the growth in China's market economy since the 1980s, and the concomitant emergence of a newly rich class for whom the high cost of university fees in developed countries is justified by the competitive advantage that an overseas degree confers on graduates.[23] The parents of my interviewees were, for the most part, direct beneficiaries of economic reform: a majority were entrepreneurs and corporate employees, with a scattering of civil servants. Three mothers were described as 'fulltime wives' (全职太太), a neologism indicating a family able to remain comfortably well off on the husband's sole income.[24] Most of my interviewees were taking courses aimed at securing employment in the corporate sector, with a majority studying toward degrees in commerce and related areas.

9. The end of the 'iron rice bowl' system of lifetime state-assigned employment under Maoism and the development of a market economy after 1978 have led to the emergence of hyper-competitive employment markets in urban China. The best jobs are available by preference to graduates of the top-ranked (一本) universities, which in turn are fed by an extremely high-pressure schooling system where emphasis is on securing high marks in the university entrance exams (高考). For most of the young women I spoke with, memories of the stresses of intensely competitive secondary education in China remained fresh. Interviewees were also acutely conscious of the fierce competition for white-collar jobs, especially in China's largest cities, and told me that an undergraduate degree from the second-ranked Chinese universities to which their high school grades would admit them would have made a good job difficult to secure. Many saw a degree from a prestigious Australian university as the next best alternative to graduation from a top-ranked Chinese institution,[25] underlining the inherent links between international education and social stratification and mobility in China's post-reforms economy.[26]

10. Class mobility as an effect of study abroad emerged as a theme in several of our conversations. For example, Tang Shujuan, a 20-year old from Shenzhen who had been in Melbourne for nine months studying toward entry into a Commerce degree, revealed that her greatest hope in life was to use her educational qualifications to get a job that would allow her to earn enough money to give her parents a comfortable old age.[27] Her filial quest was especially urgent since Shujuan was part of the first

generation of her family to receive tertiary education, let alone attend university abroad. Her entrepreneurial parents had 'started from nothing' (白手起家) and worked hard over many years to build up a family manufacturing business that had ultimately enabled them to better their family's opportunities by providing their children with high-quality education. Meanwhile, Ma Mianmian saw her time in Australia partly as an opportunity to make useful social contacts among her classmates. She told me:

> My Dad says the academic qualification you get, and the kind of university you attend, will determine what kind of friends you have. Basically�people have researched this�your salary will be the average of the salaries of your six closest friends. So your environment decides everything, your friends are really very important.[28]

11. The piece of pop-entrepreneurial wisdom quoted by Mianmian's father explicitly frames international education as a means toward social advancement, underlining the interdependence between social and geographic mobility and the function of overseas education as a means of accumulating mobility capital that is seen as exchangeable for both social and economic capital.

'You must be strong enough': Cultivating a self-reliant cosmopolitan self through overseas study

12. In addition to increased social stratification and new opportunities for social mobility, economic reform in China also produces other effects that provide an important context for young women's international educational travel. Market capitalism creates new formations of feminine gender identity based not on family or work-unit ties but instead on labour-market value and recreational consumption.[29] In her extensive anthropological study of some of these changes, Lisa Rofel illustrates that:

> A sea-change has swept through China in the last fifteen years: to replace socialist experimentation with the 'universal human nature' imagined as the essential ingredient of cosmopolitan worldliness. This model of human nature has the desiring subject at its core: the individual who operates through sexual, material, and affective self-interest.[30]

13. Whereas socialism constructed class identity as the defining factor in citizens' social being, the public culture that emerged along with China's market economy produced the imaginary of universal human nature based on individualised desire. To simplify somewhat, the privatisation of state enterprise was paralleled by the privatisation of selfhood and the new imaginability of a 'self-animating, self-staging subject'; an entrepreneur of the self motivated by private accumulation and self-interest, open to both the opportunities and the risks of the new market economy.[31]

14. This newly available model of post-socialist selfhood exercises an allure for women as well as men. Rofel's interviews with a group of young, urban, unmarried, heterosexual working women in the late 1990s —in age, approximately the mother generation to my interviewees—revealed their desire for a 'free' cosmopolitan consumer-selfhood that they saw as standing in opposition to gendered family obligation.[32] For the younger generation that is the subject of my study, the cosmopolitan imaginary and 'deterritorialised subjectivity' that were already available to the mother generation have deepened and consolidated as a result of the immense growth in opportunities for overseas travel.[33] This produces in the daughter generation a distinctive subjectivity based on awareness of one's potential for transnational mobility and a concomitant desire—sanctioned and encouraged by parents—to build mobility capital, especially in youth. For this generation, the self-animating subject is specifically one that animates across national borders.

15. However, the new culture of post-socialism has produced contradictory effects in public discourses on gender. In contrast to the (superficially) gender-neutral ideal of the self-enterprising subject, Rofel also notes the post-Mao public-cultural (re)construction of adult women as 'naturally' focussed on the care of family.[34] Such a feminine 'nature' is thought to have been repressed by Maoist feminism, and now at last 'free' to express itself through increased gender differentiation in everyday life and self-presentation.[35] As Jing Wu observes, women thus face contradictory pressures: to 'achieve more as an individual and at

the same time perform more naturally female roles as supporters of the family, community and men.'[36] These contradictions became very apparent in my interviewees' discussions about their hopes and plans for themselves and their lives.

16. Many of the women I spoke with, like Rofel's interviewees from the preceding generation, spoke fluently of their desire to achieve free, individualised, cosmopolitan selfhood. They saw study abroad as enabling them to further their self-making projects in two ways (additional to the basic sense in which study is always, by definition, a project of self-making): through the consolidation of a cosmopolitan identity, and through the inculcation of personal independence and life skills. On the first point, Tang Shujuan said she hoped her 'field of vision would be widened' by studying overseas, while Zhou Yaqi commented: 'it's just like my Mum said: go out to see the world (见见世面); even if you don't learn anything, it's a good thing for you to come back having seen the world.'[37] Lin Song, meanwhile, remarked that in her view, pre-departure, the experience of living overseas was simply 'something you have to have, in the course of your life.'[38] Overseas study, then, promised these women an intensification of the cosmopolitan outlook that they saw as integral to the kind of personhood they wanted to embody.

17. Illustrating the continuing cultural valorisation of female self-reliance, which has been a widely promoted attribute in post-socialist public culture since the mid-1980s, interviewees also described overseas education as fostering independence.[39] Several emphasised that their parents had encouraged them to develop independence (独立) from a young age (illustrating again the role of the family in endowing daughters with the skills needed to advance their opportunities); they framed study abroad as an extension of this project. Economic and temperamental independence were seen as valuable attributes for the kind of life-projects to which these young women were aspiring: either competitive advancement in China's capitalist economy, or a life spent working overseas far from the support networks of their family's elder generations. For example Bai Shuling, a recent arrival who I interviewed in her freezing, unheated rental room on a winter's afternoon, said that she thought her time in Australia so far had made her 'more independent, and struggle for the dream':

> When I took my luggage out of the airport, then I realized, everything [must rely] on yourself. You cannot ask others. Even when you are really worried or helpless, you must be strong enough. I never regard myself as a girl. I think I should [make] my [own] decisions all the time and not worry my parents. All the things I told them are good news. They never know that this [rental room] is really cold, or what[ever].[40]

18. Shuling told me later that the specific 'dream' for which she struggled was to become managing director of a major corporation in her home city of Shanghai. For her, the capacity for autonomous self-management needed both to endure the icy winter months alone in a strange land, and, implicitly, to realise her career goal, stood in contrast to what she described as a common understanding of 'girls' as people who, 'when they have some difficulties, will resort to their friends, and [tell] them, or cry, or what[ever]. I don't do this.' In Shuling's account, then, overseas study enables her to work on forms of self-reliance that not only are implicitly valuable for her life-project of getting ahead in a competitive market economy, but that she explicitly frames as counter-conventional vis-à-vis gender norms.[41] This is a key point, to which I return below.

'At least you have your self': Self-development versus gendered social convention

19. Many interviewees emphasised their desire not just to achieve economic and temperamental independence, but specifically to fulfill a vision of themselves as unique individual subjects with life quests that placed the project of self-development front and centre. Some, like Chen Ying, strongly emphasised their pursuit of independent selfhood over romantic relationships:

> I'm a fairly independent person. In terms of love, I'll just go with the flow. I'd rather too little [love life] than too much. I think my life is very rich, I don't feel there's some great gap that I need to fill with love. I feel that as a person on my own,

there's such a lot waiting for me out there to do…. Even if I did get married or have a boyfriend, I'd still want to concentrate on myself, and my own life.[42]

20. Relatedly, Su Qi described a desire to balance family responsibilities (both filial responsibility toward her parents and care of her future child[ren]) with the project of self-cultivation through work:

> I want to be able to live independently…. I hope that at the same time as I have a family, I can also have my own independent career…. It will help me to make [personal] progress (进步), as time passes. Then looking back, one's life will have had more significance…. Even if you don't have anything else, at least you have your self.[43]

21. Wu Yingqi, by contrast, did not want to get married and expected conflict with her parents over this choice, as well as over her desire to work and live outside China. Strongly motivated by her intellectual engagement with biological science, she saw her career—which she hoped would be as a research microbiologist, perhaps in the USA—as of defining significance both for her life plan and for her personal identity. When I asked her what she most wanted to achieve in her life, she responded very precisely:

> I want to know the reason why I came to this world…. Because I study biology, and in the definition of biology, it seems that one individual is just part of a whole community, and your meaning is just within that. It makes me feel quite— [makes a pained expression]. I don't want to be a person who just follows the rules the society gave you. And I want to know what's the difference between me and other people. And I want to know where is my value.[44]

22. Yingqi's intellectual quest is for an understanding of the meaning and value of her own individual identity. And like Shuling above, she sees her pursuit of her quest as by definition placing her at odds with social norms, including those of gender ('I don't want to be a person who just follows the rules the society gave you').

'The family was the centre of their life' but 'I can just pick up and go': Constructing generational change

23. Many interviewees represented their own identities through explicit contrast with their perception of those of their mothers' generation. In considering this, it is useful to contextualise the mothers' generation's gendered experience historically. My interviewees' mothers were born between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, coming of age during the first decade of economic reform. This was a time of turbulent cultural transformations. It was the time when the discourse on 'natural' sex differences, discussed above, rose to dominance, with the concomitant (re)emergence of strongly gender-marked women's fashion cultures. Meanwhile, state feminism encouraged women to understand themselves as independent, self-focused subjects. Since 1983, the All-China Women's Federation has urged women to pursue the 'four selfs' of 'self-respect, self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-strengthening.'[45] Many women took up new roles in the privatising economy, including as partners in family businesses and as managers in the private sector, and both of these occupations were strongly represented among my interviewees' mothers.[46] But this period also witnessed an increasing gendered wage-gap and a drop in young urban married women's labour force participation, as they were encouraged back to the family to care for their young children.[47] This was the moment when the 'fulltime wife' (全职太太) —the descriptor that several of my interviewees used for their own mothers—began to emerge as a social identity. In other words, the early years of the Reforms era, like the present time, constitute a period of gendered contradiction, with new opportunities for fashioning gendered identity emerging for urban women at the same time as they were also beset by new risks in both the home and the labour market. There is thus no radical, epochal break between the social conditions and dominant discursive structures under which these mother and daughter generations have come of age. Rather, the daughters' generation is experiencing a deepening and extension of trends that were already of defining significance in their mothers' day.

24. However, despite such broad similarities between the social contexts in which these two generations came

of age, many of my interviewees rhetorically distinguished themselves from their mothers' generation by expressing the hope that they would be able to shrug off the gendered constraints that they thought hampered their mothers, especially what they understood as their mothers' generation's familial orientation and relative lack of independent selfhood. For example:

> My mother's generation would go out and earn money in order to support the family. Supporting the family was the centre of their life, whereas we have lots of different pursuits. I hope my family does well, and I hope my marriage will be good, and I hope my work life will be good too. (Tang Shujuan)

> I think if I asked my Mum, she might not have any plans about her own life. She would place more emphasis on her hopes for me in the future; or her hopes that my father will continue in good health and so on…. She would have no hopes for her own career. Or…she'd only hope for stability. But I hope that as well as stability, I can also achieve some [personal] improvement (提升). (Su Qi)

Here, generational change is constructed teleologically as an emancipatory process: for the speakers' mothers, family duty was central to gendered identity, while the speakers represent themselves as free to live singly or enlightened by the knowledge that one's life can be organised differently from the dictates of social convention.[48]

25. Notwithstanding this, as we saw above, a very similar discourse championing women's independent selfhood in opposition to familial femininity would also have been available to many women in the mothers' generation. Yet the point here is not whether my interviewees made a socio-historically *accurate* assessment of generational change. What is more important for my argument is these young women's *view of themselves* as breaking with historically entrenched gender norms in their pursuit of the ideal of independent, individualised selfhood. I propose that for these interviewees, the collective assertion that they are gender-unconventional and different from their mothers provides a means of mediating the tension between the two currently influential yet inherently contradictory discourses of gender and personhood that I outlined at the beginning of this article. To recall, these are the neoliberal-style discourse of universal, free, self-interested personhood, versus the contemporaneous discourse that constructs adult women as 'naturally' focussed on the care of family members. In the statements quoted above, the mother generation is rhetorically pressed into service as representative of the familial orientation that post-socialist public culture attributes to 'women's nature.' In their effort to embody the ideal of free, independent and self-focussed personhood, the daughters declare themselves to be different from their mothers, and to be different from conventional femininity in general. In other words, the post-socialist construction of femininity as naturally associated with family care work means that in identifying with the contemporaneous ideal of self-enterprising personhood, these young women are forced in that same moment either to adopt a consciously de-gendered position (recall Bai Shuling: 'I never regard myself as a girl'), or to actively rework the meaning of femininity (as with Zhou Yaqi, who spoke angrily about people who assume that a woman can't start a business, and said she planned to do so just to prove them wrong). In constructing a generational narrative that pivots on a clear opposition between the mothers' family-centrism and the daughters' self-centrism, the daughters attempt symbolically to resolve contradictions that actually characterise the experience of both mother and daughter generations, but of which the daughters are most keenly aware in their present life stage as unmarried young women ambitiously pursuing transnational educational ventures.

26. In her extensive study of mother-daughter relationships across twentieth-century China, Harriet Evans observes that a tendency for daughters to represent themselves as freer and more independent than their mothers is in fact common across the several generations of urban daughters born between the 1950s and the 1980s.[49] What, then, is specific about the 1990s generation's framing of its distinction from its mothers' generation? Liu Miaoru's construction of her generational difference from her mother in terms of her own potential for, and actualisation of, geographic mobility is interesting to consider here:

> To my Mum, [life] is just [about] maybe getting some degree, then get married, have children, that's Chinese women, like that! [They want] to have the complete family, the complete life. But to me, I can be alone…. Maybe one day when I

want to go…travelling, I can just pick up my things, and go. I have this courage, I think. But my Mum will consider many things, like her [own] Mum, and…others. [Whereas] I don't care…. I always say that I don't want to have family or children…. I think being alone is quite good. I can do anything I want, I don't need to worry about [other people]. [But] my Mum says, Oh someday you will get a boyfriend, blah blah blah. I don't want it…. I just ignore it…. Maybe she just thinks I am joking, but I think it seriously. From when I was a little child, I didn't want to get married…. I am hoping to spend some years travelling…. Working for some time, and travelling for some time.[50]

27. Miaoru constructs a normative feminine life course—get a degree, get married, have children—through an association both with her own mother and with 'Chinese women' in general. Her classification of this life trajectory as a property of 'Chinese women' is telling: speaking with me in Melbourne, Miaoru seems implicitly to identify herself as less 'Chinese,' more worldly, than her mother. Unlike her mother, she can live singly, and can just 'pick up her things and go'—and in fact she has of course already done this, by coming to study in Australia. Like several other interviewees, Miaoru reveals a life orientation characterised by the value she places on her independent identity over any potential marital relation, and by her imagination of self-fulfillment through transnational mobility. What she hopes to realise seems to be a form of individuality linked with freedom through travel, and set in opposition to the normative gender ideology of women's marital destiny, represented in the quote by her nagging mother. Miaoru represents her mother as not only mired in a conventional form of familial femininity, but also mired *in place*; while her construction of her own generational specificity pivots on her strong sense of her contrasting potential for mobility.[51]

'Five years of my own time': Gendered limits on self-making

28. Notwithstanding interviewees' hopes for a fulfilling life realised through an independent career, as noted above, this generation of young women faces increasing gender disparities in China's employment market—disparities that have been created by the same economic reforms which have also produced the conditions of possibility for their social and geographic mobility.[52] As Sarah Cook and Xiao-yuan Dong illustrate, while the belief that family caregiving is women's work has persisted since the Maoist era, today's private sector employers are significantly less inclined than the old state-owned enterprises to accommodate women's caregiving needs.[53] These needs are also likely to be greater than they were under the planned economy, following the privatisation of care provision for young children and the elderly. Married women workers are thus at greater risk than male workers of lost earnings due to caregiving responsibilities; they are also popularly framed as 'unreliable' due to employers' awareness of their additional caregiving duties within the family.[54]

29. Given the pervasive expectation that a woman should marry before the age of thirty and the longstanding assumption that family care work is women's work, it is almost inevitable that as ambitious, educated women progress into their mid- to-late twenties they will find themselves beset by competing pressures. The drive toward the elaboration of autonomous and mobile identity that we have seen exemplified in interviewees' discussions of their travels, careers and life goals will come into conflict with encroaching gendered expectations about the normative female life course. As we have seen, young women's overseas education projects may themselves be propelled in significant part by collective family projects: daughters being given the means to study overseas, to some extent, for the long-term advancement of the family. A certain paradox thus becomes apparent: families send daughters overseas and encourage them in the independent self-making projects that these sojourns entail; but ultimately the self-focussed subjectivity that study abroad nurtures may come into conflict with young women's *re*-absorption into family structures. In light of this paradox, in this section I examine interviewees' discussions of their plans for managing their twenties, with an emphasis on the constraints that they foresee will begin to impinge as they approach age thirty.

30. Among my interviewees, eight were sure that they wanted to get married, five said they would be happy either way but thought it likely that they would marry, and two were firmly against getting married. Among

those who wanted to get married or were unsure, the consensus was that one's late twenties—between the ages of 27 and 30, when one had secured a degree and a stable job—would be the ideal time to do so, underlining the current trend toward deferment of first marriage for women in urban China.[55] Interviewees' thoughts on marriage form an important context for their collective articulation of a narrative that frames youth as the time when one must strive with all one's might (拼) to lay the foundations for success in later life. One of this study's clearest findings is that for women, this issue is strongly gendered: the period for such striving is temporally curtailed because the majority of my interviewees, who expect to marry, assume that they will be hindered later on (both sooner and more than men) by family responsibilities, so that the period of striving is explicitly delimited as pre-marriage; that is, one's early- to mid-twenties.[56]

31. Zhou Yaqi's discussion is interesting for its explicit linking of the project of youthful striving with gendered considerations:

> If I found someone I liked, then I'd get married. But if I didn't, I wouldn't mind…. My Mum doesn't mind [whether or not I get married]. But I can tell that my Grandma and Grandpa think that once you're 25, you're an old maid (大姑娘), it's best if you can find a fiancée and get married. I don't want to. My plan is to wait until I'm 30 and look at it then…. I want to strive [拼] for several years by myself, and gain some economic independence. Because to tell the truth, for women who get married early—say at 20—their entire future life is reliant on their husband. If you do that, then in future, your married life has no security. You're reliant on your husband, and if one day he runs off, if he goes off you and takes a lover…you'd feel your entire world had collapsed. I don't want to have that feeling. What a woman needs is economic independence.

32. While the goal of Yaqi's striving in study and career development throughout her twenties is economic independence and the insulation she thinks it will bring from the gendered risks of divorce, Cai Xiaoxu has a wish for five years of her own time before marriage:

> In terms of getting married, [my thinking is] fairly traditional. But of course I hope it'll happen later rather than sooner. Because when I graduate from university, I'll be about 23, right? If I got married too soon [after that], then I wouldn't have any time of my own. I want to give myself five years of my own time. To develop my career, to do the things I want to do. So the earliest [age to get married] would be around 28 I guess…. I think that the five years after graduating from university are five years that can truly belong to yourself…. Like if you want to travel or whatever, the dreams you had when you were little—that's the time when you can realise them. Once you have your own family, your role is that of a mother. Once you have your own kids, there will be lots and lots of things you have to *care*[57] about, there's no way you'll be able to just take care of your self. But in those five years, you don't have to think about anything except what you want yourself.[58]

33. The gendered constraints on women's independent identity are very clear in Xiaoxu's construction: with marriage and the birth of a child comes the onset of the maternal role and the concomitant retreat of one's independent identity. The five years following university graduation are thus valuable for the opportunity, rare in a woman's life, to spend time 'just taking care of your self,' especially (as for Miaoru above) through leisure travel. One's twenties can be a time of mobility, but one's thirties are imagined to be a time of gendered stasis.

34. Like Yaqi above, Shuling also saw her youth as a time to strive for the establishment of a successful professional career. But Shuling's considerations were complicated by her calculation of the virtually split-second timing required for a successful young woman to find a husband in China's gender-biased marriage market, and achieve the birth of children as well as professional success in the gender-biased employment market:

> My mother…says I [should] get married, she hopes, maybe [in my] late 20s. The older you are, the harder [it is for] you [to] get married. And if you really hit the [level] of the second [in command] of a company, you know that phrase 'it's lonely at the top' (高处不胜含), it's really hard, and the men will think, oh you are too good, he cannot match you. So I think, if I can get married younger, maybe 27 or 28, and then hit my career and improve it with my partner, that will be great…. Then you can improve yourself and your relationship…. I want to have a pair [of children], one girl one boy…. At

least I should [have reached] some [stable] position. Or [otherwise] if I [get] pregnant, they won't leave the position for me. So, I should have some achievement [first].... I have to plan my career in my early twenties, work hard.... [This] is the best age. If you rest, if you play, you'll never get [success] .... I cannot waste so precious [a] time. At that time, you have the best energy. And you are not afraid of making mistakes. If you are in your forties, if you make a mistake, [what] will your children do?

Shuling constructs an ideal of egalitarian companionate marriage in which two people support each other through their shared career journey; such an ideal was described by several interviewees. In a situation where married women face structural disadvantage in the employment market, the desire for such an ideal, like the plan to avoid marriage altogether, can be seen in part as an effort by women to minimise marriage's gendered risks.

35. Another interviewee who was very aware of the potential conflicts between self-development and family demands was Wang Wenyi, the eldest of my interviewees and the only postgraduate student. She told me the story of her decision to study in Australia:

> There was a bit of an unhappy process to making this decision, actually. Because originally, I planned to work first for several years and then come over. I'd even found a job, before I graduated. But my Mum insisted: if you want to go overseas, go now. So my preparations were quite rushed, because I hadn't been planning to come so soon. In China, attitudes towards girls' marriage are still somewhat traditional. People think it's best if girls marry before thirty. So [my Mum] was worried: if you go out to work for several years, then you'll be married with a kid and you won't be able to go overseas. If you have this wish [to study overseas], it would be better to do it now and work afterwards, then when you get married it won't affect your plans.... I think we're continually making choices, throughout our entire life. And sometimes the process of choosing is quite painful.[59]

36. Wenyi told me later that she thought herself 'traditional' in her view that having a child makes a woman's life complete; she had also come to believe that due to biology, women have different psychologies to men as well as different abilities. Wenyi's discussions reveal clearly the painful tension between her desire to fulfill what she understood as her feminine destiny through marriage and childbearing, and her parallel life project of professional self-development through transnational education.

37. Collectively, the discussions quoted in this section reveal that interviewees shared the assumption that after marriage and the birth of children, a woman's focus on self-development—whether through education and career or leisure travel and consumption—stands at high risk of giving way to her responsibilities to child(ren) and family. The period of 'striving' in youth thus takes on a gendered urgency, as young women foresee the window of opportunity narrowing and ultimately closing when marriage and family responsibilities encroach by age thirty. In these ways, feminine gender interrupts mobile self-fashioning, with the pressure to carry out and to be emotionally attached to one's role as family caregiver standing in structural conflict with the post-socialist imperative to place self-advancement at the core of one's life project.

Speculations on transnational mobility and gender reflexivity

38. In light of the gendered contradictions outlined above, an obvious question concerns the effect that the experience of studying and living overseas may have on young women's responses to their own gendered predicament. Dongxiao Qin's study of an earlier cohort of Chinese women postgraduates in the USA is interesting to consider in this connection.[60] According to Qin, the overseas experience afforded many of her younger interviewees comparative resources from which to develop a reflexive critique of gender normativity in China. Socialised understandings of a woman's relationship with family, romantic and sexual relationships, marriage and her self were all remade through the experience of educational mobility. Relatedly, Kelsky notes that for the 'internationalist' Japanese women she studied in the 1990s, time overseas led them to mount a robust critique of Japanese expectations regarding the female life course.[61] While the majority of women with whom I spoke for this study had been in Australia for under a

year and so were not in a position, yet, to reflect on the effects of their Australian sojourn on their gendered self-understandings, three had been in Australia for three to five years and offered some interesting reflections on this point. Lin Song, for example, explicitly linked her increased 'tolerance' for unconventional gendered life trajectories with her experience in Australia:

> For my mother's generation, they only had one way of approaching [family and marriage]. Like my mother, she fell in love young, got married to my Dad, and had a child. It was done as a matter of course. Whereas for my generation, we come into contact with more [alternatives], so we feel we have more choices. We feel you don't necessarily have to do things that way, that it's OK to be different from others…. After I came to Australia, I realized there's more than one way to live life. It's OK if people are different. My tolerance (包容性) has increased.

39. Like the interviewees quoted above, Lin Song contrasts herself with her mother by contrasting her mother's 'matter of course' approach to marriage and children with her own looser life plans. What is especially interesting is that she directly links her more 'tolerant' stance with her experiences overseas: as a result of living away, she reflects, she has realised that there is more than one way to live. These comments echo statements made by Tang Shujuan and Liu Miaoru, who anticipated that the experience of living outside China was likely to make them less 'conventional,' 'obedient' or 'boring' in blindly following the standard feminine life-course of marriage and children.

40. Kang Shun, meanwhile, who had been in Melbourne for four and a half years at the time of interview, drew a contrast not with her mother but with her elder sister:

> I think what we've gone through [in Australia] is—like, take my sister, she's 27 this year. Basically, the family will *take care of everything* for her. Including her house and its decoration—my father picked out a lot of her furniture himself. She was already married at 20; she's never moved house by herself. But me, I'm an old hand at it by now! [laughs]…. There's a big difference.

41. Although Shun underlined later that she and her sister were temperamentally very different even before her experiences overseas, nonetheless the quote above implies that she sees certain gendered corollaries to staying in China versus studying overseas. In Shun's narrative, in China, her sister is exchanged between patrilineal households in a quasi-traditional manner that leaves little space for her own independent subjectivity to develop: married at twenty, she is passed directly from her father's care to that of her husband. Overseas, by contrast, Shun herself creates her own household, and as she related later has become adept at battling landlords and estate agents for her rights as a tenant. From this, she sees herself as having developed a critical awareness of social equity issues (fuelling her desire to study law), plus a set of independent life skills that she contrasts with the more conventional gendered situation of her sister back home.

42. Ding Fangfang, a 22-year old Bachelor of Commerce student from Beijing, who had been in Melbourne for four years, reflected quite directly on how her experience living with an Australian homestay family had impacted on her perception of the gendered division of domestic labour:

> I remember that when I was staying with my homestay, my homestay dad always appreciate[d] my homestay mum looking after such a big family. In China, [a] housewife is generally regarded as 'behind the man,' [men] call their wives '内人' [lit: the person indoors…]. Women are not treated as central [to] the family, usually the men are regarded as the family support, their career is [more] important…than anything else in the family. I think I'm influenced by my homestay [to think] that even [when] women are not earning more than men, they should not treated as [the ones who] 'should do all the house work.' I have to say that I still think a husband's career is more important than a wife's, I don't want to confess that, but I think the traditional thoughts [are] just rooted in my mind. However, at least the Australian culture taught me I should be independent, and try as hard as I can to complete my own dream. If I stayed in China, probably I wouldn't realize what is gender equality at all.[62]

43. Fangfang's discussion of her own complex gendered outlook is highly reflexive. Her reluctant confession that she cannot help but see a husband's career as of primary importance sits alongside a critical stance toward the old-style Chinese association of women with the domestic sphere; a critique that she thinks

has been enabled by her observation of a different system in her Australian homestay family. These respondents' reflections on the relativity of gender norms lend weight to the idea that overseas study may produce in young Chinese women a more reflexive awareness of, hence increased tendency to critique, gendered power relations in China (and perhaps in general).[63] A far larger, longitudinal study is needed to test this hypothesis. But speculatively, it is possible that their extended overseas stay will turn out to afford these young Chinese women useful resources to negotiate the central gendered contradiction I have identified in this paper; that is, between the allure of self-enterprising personhood and the expectation that women reorient toward family care work following marriage.

Conclusion

44. The young, well-resourced urban women of China's female knowledge diaspora find themselves at the point of intersection of multiple contradictory discourses on gendered personhood in China today.[64] As their discussions show, a neoliberal-style discourse of competitive self-advancement speaks to ambitious and well-resourced young women as much as to men, and many of them see 'free,' individualised, mobile selfhood as desirable and possibly achievable. On the other hand, post-socialist public culture promulgates a discourse on women's 'naturally' static, family-oriented disposition, an association that is materially reinforced by sexist employment policies and the state's retreat from social care. For young women, these two models stand in fundamental conflict, so that the self-making enterprise of which my interviewees' transnational education project forms a part is beset at a basic level by gendered contradiction, and their accumulation of mobility capital comes with a gendered deadline. This article has examined how young women articulate such a contradiction to their own situation, especially through their construction of generational difference from their mothers, in order both to make sense of their situation and to *make themselves* in and through the discursive resources available.[65] The generational distinction that emerged most clearly from my interviewees' discussions was a contrast between their mothers' perceived family-centrism and their own perceived relative self-centrism. I have suggested that this narrative may, in part, represent interviewees' symbolic negotiation of the main gendered contradiction outlined above. In my own analysis, I have emphasised a different generational distinction: the daughter generation's divergent identity stemming from their awareness of their own capacity for geographic (hence social) mobility. The imaginary and practices of motility and portable personhood were everywhere evident in interviewees' discussions of the experience, significance and desirability of travel. Whether an extended period of life overseas is able to live up to its promise of advancing young Chinese women's cosmopolitanising projects, and whether such experience may afford helpful resources for negotiating the gendered contradictions identified in this article in the longer term, are questions that await further study.

Notes

[1] All interviewee names are pseudonyms. Kang Shun, 22 year-old female Arts student at a large university in Melbourne, who later enrolled in a graduate law degree in Sydney.

[2] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD publishing, 2013, p. 304, online: http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2013 (eng)--FINAL 20 June 2013.pdf, accessed 3 April 2014.

[3] Australian Education International, 'International Student Data 2012,' 2013, online: https://aei.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Pages/InternationalStudentData2012.aspx, accessed 13 March 2013; OECD, *Education at a Glance 2012*, p. 354.

[4] Australian Education International, 'Research snapshot: onshore higher education international students as a proportion of all onshore students by university, 2011,' 2012, online: https://aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/International%20students%20in%20Australian%20unis%202011.pdf, accessed 13 March 2013.

[5] OECD, 'Foreign/ International students enrolled,' *OECD Stat Extracts*, 2012, online: http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RFOREIGN#, accessed 13 March 2012; Australian Education International, 'International Student Numbers 2012,' 2013, online: https://aei.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/International%20Student%20Numbers%202012.pdf, accessed 13 March 2013; Molly Yang, 'What attracts mainland Chinese students to Australian higher education,' *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development*, vol. 4, no. 2 (September 2007): 1–12; Ghim Thye Tan, 'The Transnational Migration Strategies of Chinese and Indian Students in Australia,' Ph.D. thesis, University of Adelaide, 2012.

[6] Australian Education International, 'International Students from China (Higher Education),' data transmitted in private correspondence with AEI, 1 March 2012; Youna Kim, *Transnational Migration, Media and Identity of Asian Women: Diasporic Daughters*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 1; Karen Kelsky, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*, Durham and London: Duke University Press: 2001, p. 2.

[7] Anthony Elliott and John Urry, *Mobile Lives*, New York and London: Routledge: 2010, p. 3.

[8] Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, p. 3.

[9] Vincent Kaufmann, Manfred Max Bergman and Dominique Joye, 'Motility: mobility as capital,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2004): 745–56, p. 750.

[10] Kaufmann Bergman and Joye 'Motility,' pp. 752, 754.

[11] Pal Nyíri, *Mobility and Cultural Authority in Contemporary China*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2010.

[12] Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, p. 16.

[13] Adele Jones, 'A silent but mighty river: the costs of women's economic migration,' *Signs*, vol. 33, no. 4 (2008): 761–69; Christina Ho, 'Women crossing borders: the changing identities of professional Chinese migrant women in Australia,' *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2006): 1–16.

[14] Kim, *Transnational Migration*; Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*.

[15] Chen Fuyi 陈福义, 'Thoughts on the development of inbound and outbound travel to and from China' (中国出入境旅游发展思路), *Journal of Hunan Business College* (湖南商学院学报), vol. 13, no. 5 (2006): 40–44; Zhongguo Wang 中国网 [Chinaweb], 'Bureau Chief Zhao Qiwei: 70, 250, 000 outbound travellers from China in 2011' (邵琪伟局长　2011年中国出境旅游人数7025万人次), 2012, online: http://www.china.com.cn/travel/txt/2012-01/21/content_24461318.htm, accessed 30 August 2012.

[16] Youna Kim (ed.), *Women and the Media in Asia: The Precarious Self*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; Yunxiang Yan, *The Individualization of Chinese Society*, New York: Berg, 2010, pp. 133–54; Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, pp. 88–91. This is certainly not to argue that the process of women's 'individualisation' is either absolute or identical with that which has been theorised in Euro-American contexts. See Andrew Kipnis's discussion of these complexities in Kipnis, 'Introduction: Chinese modernity and the individual psyche, in *Chinese Modernity and the Individual Psyche*, ed. Kipnas, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, pp. 1–16.

[17] Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*, Durham: Duke University Press: 2007.

[18] Ngai Pun, *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005; Hairong Yan, *New Masters, New Servants: Migration, Development, and Women Workers in China*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008; Helen Forbes-Mewett, 'International education preparation: minimising risk and furthering security,' *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* , vol. 48, no. 1 (2011): 61–92.

[19] Vanessa L. Fong, 'China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters,' *American Anthropologist*, vol. 104, no. 4 (2002): 1098–109.

[20] Vanessa L. Fong, *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2011, pp. 38–39 and 73–74.

[21] Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, pp. 5–6.

[22] Interviews that were conducted in Mandarin were translated into English by the author.

[23] David S.G. Goodman (ed.), *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008; Fei Guo, 'Demographic structure and international student mobility: an investigation of Chinese students in Australia,' *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* , vol. 19, no. 1 (2010): 143–56.

[24] Wanning Sun, 'Men, women and the maid: at home with the new rich,' in *The New Rich in China*, ed. Goodman, pp. 213–28.

[25] Cf. Helen Forbes-Mewett, Chris Nyland and Sijun Shao, 'International student security: a view from Beijing,' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2010): 355–73.

[26] Kim, *Transnational Migration*, p. 31.

[27] I give background information on each interviewee (age, home city or province, course of study, and length of time in Australia at the time of interview) the first time she is cited.

[28] Ma Mianmian, 19, Dongyang in Zhejiang, 3 months in Melbourne, Commerce prep. program.

[29] Yan, *The Individualization*; Kim, *Transnational Migration*; Minglu Chen, 'Entrepreneurial women: personal wealth, local politics and tradition,' in *The New Rich in China*, ed. Goodman, pp. 112–25; Jing Wu, 'Post-socialist articulation of gender positions: contested public sphere of reality dating shows,' in *Women and the Media*, ed. Kim, pp. 220–36.

[30] Rofel, *Desiring China*, p. 3.

[31] Aihwa Ong and Li Zhang. 'Introduction: privatizing China: powers of the self, socialism from afar,' in *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar*, ed. Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008, pp. 1–19, p. 1; Lisa Hoffman, 'Autonomous choices and patriotic professionalism: on governmentality in late-socialist China,' *Economy and Society*, vol. 35, no. 4 (2006): 550–70.

[32] Rofel, *Desiring China*, pp. 111–34.

[33] Mayfair Mei–hui Yang, 'Mass media and transnational subjectivity in Shanghai: notes on (re)cosmopolitanism in a Chinese metropolis,' in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 189–210: p. 204.

[34] Rofel, *Other Modernities*, pp. 217–56. See also Vanessa L. Fong, Cong Zhang, Sang won Kim, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Niobe Way, Xinyin Chen, Zuhong Lu and Huihua Dang, 'Gender role expectations and Chinese mothers' aspirations for their toddler daughters' future independence and excellence,' in *Chinese Modernity and the Individual Psyche*, ed. Kipnis, pp. 89–117.

[35] Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience and Self-perception in Twentieth-century China*, London and New York: Hong Kong University Press and Zed Books, 1995, pp. 153–55.

[36] Wu, 'Post-socialist articulation,' p. 221.

[37] Zhou Yaqi, 20, Shenyang, prep program in Actuarial Studies, 18 months in Melbourne.

[38] Lin Song, 22, Nanjing, Bachelor of Arts, in Melbourne three and a half years.

[39] Croll, *Changing Identities*, pp. 155–58; Fong et al, 'Gender role expectations.'

[40] Bai Shuling, 19, from Shanghai, Commerce prep program, in Melbourne four months.

[41] Fong et al., 'Gender role expectations.'

[42] Chen Ying, 20, Qinhuangdao, Commerce prep program, in Melbourne 9 months.

[43] Su Qi, 18, Beijing, prep program for Commerce or Arts, in Melbourne 9 months.

[44] Wu Yingqi, 19, Zhengzhou, prep program for Science, in Melbourne 4 months.

[45] Fong et al., 'Gender role expectations,' p. 91.

[46] Gail Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 68–69; Chen, 'Entrepreneurial women.'

[47] Hershatter, *Women*, pp. 64–78; Sarah Cook and Xiao-yuan Dong. 'Harsh choices: Chinese women's paid work and unpaid care responsibilities under economic reform,' *Development and Change*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2011): 947–65.

[48] Harriet Evans, *The Subject of Gender: Daughters and Mothers in Urban China*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.

[49] Evans, *The Subject of Gender*, p. 201.

[50] Liu Miaoru, 19, Nanning, prep program toward entry into Arts or Architecture, in Melbourne 4 months.

[51] Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives*, p. 36.

[52] Chen, 'Entrepreneurial women'; Kim, *Transnational Migration*, pp. 60–63; Fenglian Du and Xiao-yuan Dong. 'Why do women have longer durations of unemployment than men in post-restructuring urban China?' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 33 (2009): 233–52.

[53] Cook and Dong, 'Harsh choices.'

[54] Croll, *Changing Identities*, pp. 117–24.

[55] 'Beijing's average marriage age rises to 27,' *China Daily*, 27 February 2012, online: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-02/27/content_14704461.htm, accessed 28 May 2012; Renee Haines, 'Getting married later in life is a modern trend' *China Daily*, 21 February 2011, online: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2011-02/21/content_12048369.htm, accessed 28 May 2012.

[56] Can Qin, 'Globalisation as lived reality: the expectations, experiences and strategies of Chinese international students in Australia.' Ph.D. thesis, La Trobe University, School of Sociology, Politics and Anthropology, 2012, pp. 55–57.

[57] Here and throughout, italicised English words were spoken in English by the interviewee.

[58] Cai Xiaoxu, 19, Fujian province, Commerce prep program, in Melbourne 9 months.

[59] Wang Wenyi, 24, Nanning, Master of Accounting, in Melbourne 4 months.

[60] Dongxiao Qin, *Crossing Borders: International Women Students in American Higher Education*, Lanham: University Press of America, 2009, pp. 125–27.

[61] Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 85–132.

[62] Email response from Ding Fangfang, original in English with Chinese phrase.

[63] This would constitute a notable difference from Matsui's conclusions in the late 1980s. Her study of women students from China and Japan enrolled at an American university found no tendency to develop a critique of Chinese patriarchy on the part of the Chinese women, which contrasted markedly with the responses of the Japanese students who experienced their time in the USA as an awakening to gender inequalities in Japan. This difference is attributed in part to Matsui's Chinese interviewees having come of age under a version of Maoist feminism, which notably distinguishes them from the women I interviewed for this study some twenty-five years later. Machiko Matsui, 'Gender role perceptions of Japanese and Chinese female students in American universities,' *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1995): 356–78.

[64] Wu, 'Post-socialist articulation'. The contradiction between women's being encouraged into projects of independent self-making and their association with the domestic sphere is not a new one: it has fundamentally shaped Chinese women's history over the past century, with different inflections at different moments. Space constraints preclude a full elaboration of this structural continuity; it will provide material for a separate paper.

[65] Stuart Hall, 'On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall,' ed. Lawrence Grossberg, in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*. ed. David Morley and Kuan-hsing Chen, London and New York: Routledge: 1996, pp. 131–50.

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