

A study on the international mobility process of Chinese students studying in Japan ——Based on Bourdieu’s “Practice Theory”——

Abstract

Using Bourdieu's “Practice Theory” as a research framework, this article examines the international mobility process of Chinese students studying in Japan. The study found that the group's international mobility is influenced by both "time" and "space".

In the time dimension, international students are affected by the hysteresis effect of "habitus" in the early stage after arriving in Japan and returning to China after graduation and the result of this influence on them is often negative. It is reflected in daily necessities and interpersonal interactions. However, with the passage of time, the habitus of international students will undergo slow diachronic changes based on the new environment. During this period, the native and second habitus may clash violently with each other, or they may merge after adjustment. As a result, it is more likely for international students to return to China when the "native habitus" is maintained, and more likely to stay in Japan when it is overwritten by the "second habitus". In addition, the habitus of some international students merge in the process of international mobility, and it is easier for them to adapt to life in both countries at the same time.

In the spatial dimension, international students experience the transitions of multiple fields in the process of international mobility, which is manifested not only in the movement between countries, but also in the field of life, education and work. Importantly, along with the spatial transitions, the value of the capital held by international students will also change accordingly. The economic capital of international students may have a low value in the fields of Japan. The cultural capital is more valuable in the work field of China. And the social capital has a high value in various fields of Japan. In addition, in order to attain a better position in the field, international students can actively use

strategies after making a comprehensive judgment of their own capital and the characteristics of multiple fields: presenting favorable capital, concealing unfavorable capital, exchange of capital, selection of field.

1 Introduction

International students play an important role in the international mobility of populations in various countries. Since China's reform and opening-up, between 1978 and 2019, a total of 4.9 million people has studied abroad and completed their studies, of which nearly 730,000 did not return¹. In recent decades, China has launched many talent policies to promote the return of international students, and academia has also conducted research on the factors that affect the return of this group.

The conclusions focus on factors such as socioeconomic development level, policies, cultural adaptation, and social networks. In author's opinion, the previous researches have three shortcomings.

The first is the lack of diversity in the perspective, which ignores the fact that international students are in multiple environments concurrently, thus the conclusions are often over-simplified to a single economic or cultural factor. However, for international students who study aboard in multiple environments, they need to manage their lives and possibly work. Therefore, the group's decisions are simultaneously influenced by the combination of multiple environments.

The second is the static nature of the perspective, that is, examining only a single decision outcome of international students at the graduation point. However, the tendencies of their choices are shaped by the past and guide the actions of the present. Without understanding their life experiences, it is impossible to understand why they choose the way they do and how they might choose again.

¹ The data comes from the "2019 Statistics on Students Studying Abroad" published by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.
http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/202012/t20201214_505447.html

The third is the rational person hypothesis in the study, which argues that international students make decisions based on accurate calculations of their own future. For example, some studies argue that international students are more likely to return to China when salary levels in China rise. However, this conclusion cannot explain the behavior of some international students who do not conform to rational calculations. In fact, the decision outcomes of international students are often based on their value judgments, rather than rational calculations.

Therefore, on the one hand, this article focuses on the influence of different environments on the behavioral patterns and psychological decision-making of international students. On the other hand, it uses a dynamic and continuous perspective to examine the entire international mobility process of international students.

2 Literature Review

The following three types of theories have been frequently used in studies related to the factors influencing the return of international students.

The first category is based on an economic perspective, for example, the dual structure theory which considers that the determinants of individuals' migration choices are the changes in labor market demand resulting from the transformation of the host country's economy or industrial structure (Piore, 1980). Neoclassical economics theory of migration is based on the assumption of individual rationality and utility maximization, and argues that the income level of migrants determines their migration decisions (Dustman, Kinchikamp, 2002). Based on the principle of maximization of expected household income and minimization of risk, the new economics theory of migration argues that household factors have a positive effect in promoting return flow (Yang, 2006).

The second category is based on sociological perspectives, such as life course theory, which emphasizes the impact of individual life course stages on migration choices. Social network theory emphasizes the important role of interpersonal networks as social capital (Douglas S. Massey, 1987). The theory of transnationalism abandons the traditional

research paradigm centered on the nation-state, and argues that immigrants can make migration choices in fields that cross geographic, cultural and political boundaries (Nina Glick Schiller et al, 1995).

The third category is based on a comprehensive perspective. For example, the push-pull theory holds that the negative “push factors”, positive “pull factors” and “intervening obstacles” of the host and home countries jointly determine the direction of population migration (Lee, 1966). Among them, "push factors " and "pull factors " refer to unfavorable and favorable living conditions, respectively, and " intervening obstacles " include distance, physical barriers, differences in language and culture, and immigrants' value judgments on these factors.

Based on the above theories, Chinese scholars mainly focus on two perspectives. One is a macro perspective that emphasizes factors such as economy, education, industry, and social environment, and another is a micro perspective that emphasizes individual or family characteristics.

On the macroscopic perspective, studies such as Feng and Xian (2003) argue that the economy, education and industrial structure play a decisive role in promoting return flows. Yuan (2009) proposed the influence of the advantages and disadvantages of scientific research and teaching conditions, and national policy’s orientation; Qiu and Nie (2014) demonstrated the impact of the size of the Chinese economic, the degree of openness, and the intensity of R&D investment on return flows; Chen and Huang (2020) demonstrated the influence of the investment, allocation and management of scientific research funds on return flows; Jiang and Jiang (2021) pointed out the positive effect of the popularization of talent introduction policies and the improvement of social public services.

On the microscopic perspective, studies such as Li and Li (2005) argue that international students tend to choose to return because they can get better treatment, prestige, and interpersonal resources after returning to China. Wang (2012) emphasizes the influence of family factors, such as spouse's willingness to return and education status

of children, on the choice of return. He and Yu (2018) explore the influence of individual affective factors from the perspectives of willingness of alma mater mentor and frequency of family contact.

In conclusion, the factors affecting the return of international students can be summarized as macro factors such as economy, education, technological development level, industrial structure, social and political environment, and policies, as well as micro factors such as family connection, social networks and personal development.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

This article takes Bourdieu's "Practice Theory" as the research framework, mainly because of the consideration of "space" and "time". In the spatial dimension, international students have the experience of activities in multiple environments in different countries, and the different rules of these environments bring various meaning interpretation methods to the group, which have an impact on their behavior patterns and value judgments. Bourdieu's concept of "field" can reflect the multiplicity of the external environment of international students, and at the same time, the concepts of "habitus" and "capital" can be used to reveal the impact of these environments on international students, as well as the position and strategies of international students in different environments. And in the time dimension, by the characteristic of "habitus" that changing slowly, on the one hand, we can see the short-term impact of its hysteresis effect on international students after international mobility, and on the other hand, we can see the long-term changes in the habitus of international students according to the environment they are in. The process of change in the habitus allow us to grasp the impact of the life trajectory of international students on their current thinking and behavior patterns. The research framework is shown in Figure 1.

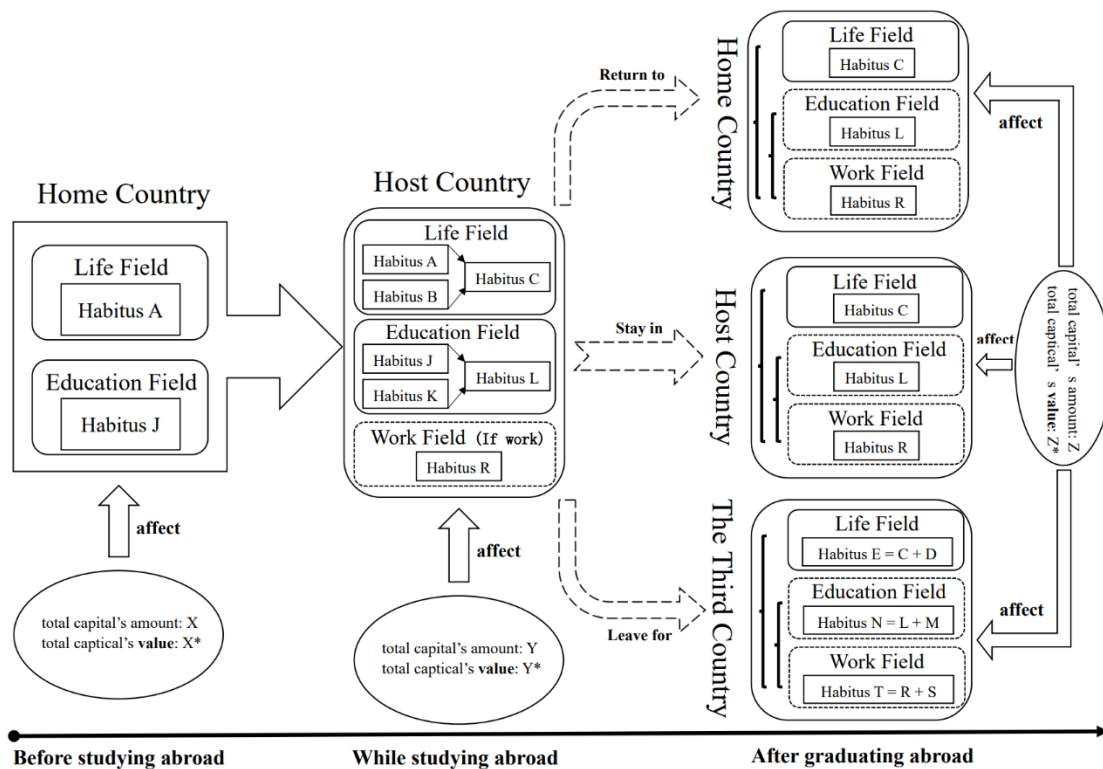


Figure 1 Research Framework

International students go through three stages: before, during and after studying abroad. Before studying abroad, they mainly carry out activities in the field of life and education in the home country. The "education field" refers to the campus environment such as high school and university, and the "life field" refers to the daily life environment outside the campus. After studying abroad, this group faces new fields of education and life, and some international students will also enter the "work field", including part-time and formal jobs. After graduation, international students may return to their home country, stay in host country, or go to a third country. In the process of relevant decision-making, the habitus and capital accumulated in the past will come into play concurrently, especially the habitus will have a subtle impact on them. In short, the international mobility of international students is a continuous and accumulative process.

Using this framework, this article, on the one hand, connects the life experiences of international students in order to dynamically analyze the international mobility process of this group. On the other hand, it specifically examines the different influences of

various environments on international students and the combined effects of these impacts on the group's international mobility process. In addition, through the investigation of the international mobility process of the group of Chinese students studying in Japan, we can also get a glimpse of the structure of Japanese society and the impact on them on the basis of grasping the common experiences of this group.

3.2 Research Objects and Methods

This article takes Chinese students studying in Japan as research objects. According to the definition of foreign students in the survey report "2020 Survey Results of the Status of Foreign Students in Japan²" by the Japan Student Services Organization³ (JASSO), Chinese students studying in Japan refer to those with Chinese nationality who hold a student visa and are receiving education at Japanese universities (including graduate schools), junior college, college of technology, vocational school, educational facilities and Japanese language educational institutions that provide preparatory courses for entering Japanese universities. In addition, according to data from JASSO, since the 21st century, the proportion of Chinese students to the total number of international students in Japan has basically remained at 40 to 60%⁴, making it the most important source of international students in Japan.

² <https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/ja/statistics/zaiseki/data/2020.html>

³ The Japan Student Services Organization is an official organization in charge of providing support for scholarships, study activities, etc. for students (including international students).

⁴ The data comes from the Survey Results of the Status of Foreign Students in Japan from 2000 to 2020. <https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/ja/statistics/zaiseki/index.html>

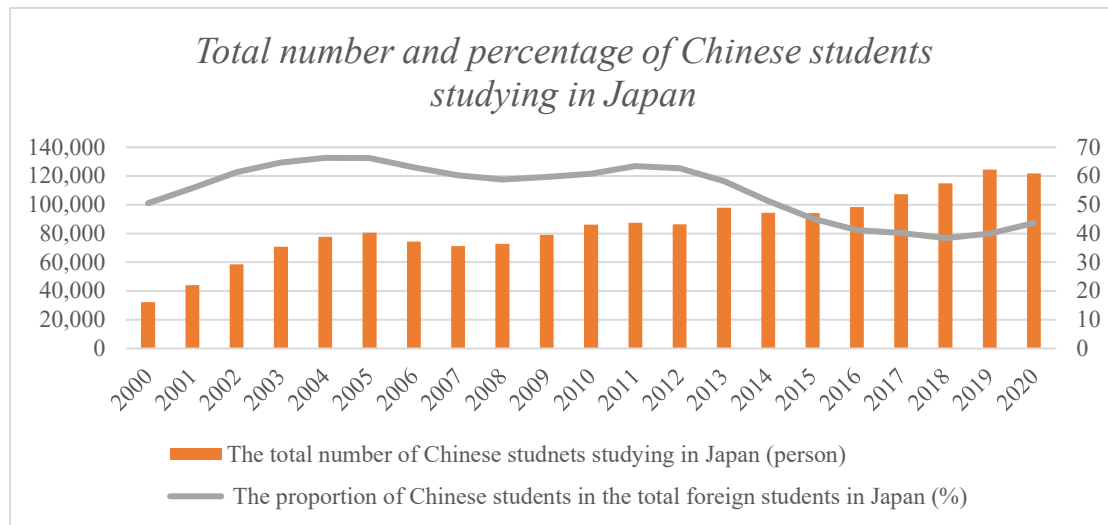


Figure 2 Total number and percentage of Chinese students studying in Japan by year

In terms of research methodology, the qualitative interview method was used because this article requires an in-depth understanding of the life experiences of the research objects. A total of 16 people were interviewed by snowballing method from April 2021 to August 2022 and 14 of them have obtained graduate diplomas from Japanese universities (including graduate schools) at the interview point. Table 1 shows the basic information of the interviewees.

Table 1 Information of Interviewees

Num	Age	Gender	Hometown (province)	Marital status	Years in Japan	Target qualification	Main source of income
A	24	Male	Jiangsu	Single	5	Bachelor	Family Funding
B	23	Female	Fujian	Single	2	Bachelor ~Master	Family Funding
C	44	Male	Jiangxi	Married	13	Bachelor ~Master	Part-time

D	31	Female	Sichuan	Married	6	Master	Family Funding
E	28	Male	Jiangsu	Single	7	Bachelor	Family Funding
F	41	Female	Heilongjiang	Married	16	Polytechnic	Part-time
G	21	Male	Jiangsu	Single	3	Bachelor	Family Funding
H	39	Male	Shandong	Married	18	Bachelor	Part-time
I	24	Male	Jiangsu	Single	6	Bachelor	Family Funding
J	24	Male	Jiangsu	Single	5	Bachelor	Family Funding
K	25	Male	Jiangsu	Single	6	Bachelor	Part-time
L	31	Female	Inner Mongolia	Married	5	Doctor	Scholarship
M	35	Female	Heilongjiang	Married	11	Doctor	Scholarship
N	30	Male	Beijing	Single	6	Bachelor ~Master	Family Funding
O	27	Male	Hubei	Single	2	Master	Family Funding
P	25	Female	Anhui	Single	3	Master	Part-time

4 Transition of Multiple Fields during the International Mobility Process

In the process of international mobility, international students mainly experience the transition in their life, education and work fields. In different fields, they face new external environments, which is accompanied by changes in available capital and status.

4.1 Life Field

With the changes in the social environment, international students face many changes in their daily necessities and interpersonal interaction. In Chinese universities, students mostly live in on-campus dormitories, and their daily needs for food, shopping, sports, and communication can be met on campus. When studying in Japan, international students generally rent off-campus, so commuting, cooking and other matters increase their time and money cost.

In terms of interpersonal interaction, Japanese society pays more attention to the sense of boundaries and distance in interpersonal relationships, and pays attention to time arrangement and personal privacy. Conversely, Chinese society, which is based on social networks of "Differential Sequence Pattern", makes Chinese people stick to each other. Therefore, certain behaviors that are regarded as warm and friendly in Chinese society are seen as out of proportion and impolite to Japanese. Many Chinese students who went to Japan in the early days were prone to encounter difficulties in interpersonal relationships due to the lack of local social networks and the large differences in the way of interpersonal communication between Chinese and Japanese.

4.2 Education Field

Most Chinese students studying in Japan receive 12 years of formal education in China and go to Japan to pursue a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree. If studying for a bachelor's degree, the international student exam organized by JASSO will generally be needed. For a master's or doctoral degree, you will need to take an entrance examination

administered by each university individually. Different from China's national unified college entrance examination and postgraduate examination, Japanese universities generally have independent internal examinations, which are generally held twice a year.

There are major differences in the curriculum systems and teaching format between Chinese and Japanese universities. The curriculum in Chinese universities is generally determined by the faculty. The content of the courses is more closely related to the major direction, leaving less room for students to choose. In contrast, in Japanese universities, students are freer to arrange their own course selection plans, and the course content is relatively more extensive.

In terms of teaching format, Chinese universities generally place students of the same major direction in fixed classes, which are smaller in size and have the same members compared to Japan, so it is easier for students to develop a close bond with each other. In Japan, on the other hand, mobile classes are generally used, where the class size is larger and the members changes from semester to semester. In addition, seminar-style courses, which consist of one faculty member and a small number of students, discuss and research specific issues, are less common in Chinese universities, especially at the undergraduate level.

In addition to the curriculum system and teaching format, Chinese and Japanese universities also have differences in the assessment of students' performance. Chinese universities pay more attention to the discipline of students. As a part of their regular grades, class attendance is often a key component of teachers' examination. As for the final assessment of course grades, Chinese universities generally take a closed-book examination. In contrast, attendance is relatively less important in Japanese universities, and course reports are used more often for final assessments. In addition, when students fail to pass the course examination, Chinese universities generally arrange for make-up examinations, while Japanese universities may require retakes.

4.3 Work Field

The problem of declining birthrate in Japanese society has intensified, and the labor

force of the appropriate age has continued to decrease, which has led to the shortage of manpower in many convenience stores, restaurants, factories and other places. Under this background, international students have become an important group of part-time workers in Japan. As long as they have a "Permission to engage in activity other than that permitted under the status of residence previously granted", they can legally work in Japan for up to 28 hours per week (releasing to 40 hours per week during winter and summer vacations). Since most of the part-time jobs for international students are in the service industry, the hiring requirements of recruiters generally include a certain level of Japanese communication skills. In addition, the Japanese service industry places a high value on service attitude, so there are certain requirements on the "emotional labor" ability of international students, but the overall requirements are not high.

In contrast, formal employment after graduation is more difficult and requires excellent comprehensive abilities if you want to get a job with higher salary and better development. Job hunting activities in Japan have a long cycle and early start, which require international students to start relevant job-hunting as early as possible, and participate in briefing sessions and internship trainings at different companies. In addition, when recruiting employees, Japanese companies pay attention not only to the individual ability of the applicant, but also to the suitability of the applicant and the company.

5 Hysteresis Effect and Diachronic Change of Habitus

5.1 Hysteresis Effect of Habitus

As a relatively stable product, habitus, often develops into a momentum. Sometimes, although the original situation that shaped it has disappeared, the habitus continues to drive the practice in subsequent times. This is what Bourdieu called the "hysteresis effect" of habitus. In this case, the relationship between the field and the habitus is often "out of aynch", and the practice is witnessed as "anachronistic" (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977a: 78-9).

5.1.1 hysteresis effect after going to Japan

Most Chinese students studying in Japan have lived in China for more than ten years before going to Japan, during which time they have acquired a complete set of habitus corresponding to the Chinese field. When they moved to Japan, the external environment has already changed, but the established thinking and behavior patterns are difficult to change in the short term.

After I arrived in Japan, my after-school life and leisure and entertainment life still followed the same pattern as I had in China. For example, the dramas I watched, the topics I followed, the things I talked about, and the social media I used were still in the Chinese circle. (L)

Sometimes the hysteresis effect of habitus can have negative consequences. This is because, although the scene in which it was supposed to play has disappeared, it still plays a role in guiding the actions of the actors.

When I first arrived in Japan, I had been treating the Japanese the same way I treated the Chinese. But over time, I found that it doesn't work on Japanese. (E)

In addition, habitus is shaped in a specific field, and the field itself has different historical stages and era backgrounds, so the Chinese students in different generations also have different patterns of habitus. In the early 2000s, when China's economic development level was low, the Chinese international students at that time seemed to be more willing to bear hardships and stand hard work. It can be reflected in many details in their daily lives and work.

We all worked so hard at that time. After coming to Japan, we had to earn

tuition fees and living expenses by ourselves. China's income 20 years ago was far less than now. It is impossible for parents to make money in China for their children to study in Japan. So, at that time, we didn't choose jobs at all, and we just thought about making money first. (F)

This phenomenon has changed in 20 years. Now, some Chinese international students whose families are financially strong do not need to work part-time to make a living. There are also some international students who work part-time, but for the purpose of experience. This reflects the generational differences in the mindset of Chinese students, that is, the transition from "self-reliance" to "family support".

The current Chinese students are completely in contrast. My niece is also studying in Japan, she has been here for four or five years, but what I saw from her was a radical change. I introduced her to a part-time job, but she came back and cried to me, "Why do I have to work if others don't? Why don't my parents pay for my tuition fees and living expenses?", which completely subverted my understanding at that time. Nowadays, children are good at enjoying life, when they come to Japan, they want to eat well and have fun, wear famous brands, and buy good cosmetics. Anyway, their concepts are different from ours at that time. (F)

When I was a student, I also worked part-time, but it was an "experiential part-time job". The money was provided by my parents, so there was not much burden. (I)

5.1.2 hysteresis effect after returning to China

The hysteresis effect occurs not only after moving from China to Japan, but also when return to China. Many international students return to China with certain patterns of thinking or behavior already shaped in Japan, which are often reflected in many details

in their daily lives and work.

If you make a phone call in Japan, Japanese may think it is a matter of urgency, so usually I don't make a phone call. Japanese are more used to sending e-mails, so I do the same. When I come back now, I'm not used to calling all of a sudden. But in China, if you can make a phone call, you won't send emails. Chinese will think it's troublesome to reply to emails, and they will think you are so serious. (L)

When I was in Japan, maybe because the Japanese way of thinking was not to cause trouble to others, sometimes I would feel embarrassed if I had to ask others to help me. After returning to China for six months, one of my problems was that I was embarrassed to talk to others at work, but now I am slowly correcting it. (A)

It can be seen that when international students return to their home countries, the hysteresis effect of habitus reoccurs, which often leads to some negative outcomes. However, although it is difficult, the diachronic change of habitus will still occur with the long-term practice of actors in specific fields.

5.2 Diachronic Change of Habitus

Habitus is a relatively stable historical product, so it is not easy to change, but this characteristic also implies another aspect, namely that it can slowly change over time. It should be noted that the hysteresis effect of habitus is different from the diachronic change, the hysteresis effect occurs only for a short period of time after moving from one field to another, and it is mainly due to the force of "inertia". Contrastingly, the diachronic change of habitus occurs over a long period of time during the practice and is a slow change.

5.2.1 conflict of habitus

Chinese students come to Japan with the "Native Habitus" shaped in the Chinese field. In the early stage of their arrival in Japan, the hysteresis effect of habitus leads to a mismatch between the group's habitus and the Japanese field. After living in Japan for a long time, the group forms new habitus based on the characteristics of the Japanese field, that is, the acquisition of "Second Habitus". The difference between the two habitus is often manifested in the form of conflict, and for some international students, this conflict cannot be reconciled. Thus, the native habitus may be maintained or overwritten by the second habitus as a result of the conflict.

The interviewee J exemplifies the power of the native habitus, even though he has lived in Japan for several years, but still maintains the thinking and behavior patterns formed in China.

Having been in Japan for a long time, I know some of their rules, but generally I don't act the way they do. After all, I feel that I am Chinese, and I grew up in China, so I can't change many things even if I want to. For example, Japanese are so polite in making friends, and many jokes are not allowed. If you want me to suddenly become so serious and always be conscious of not to say the wrong thing, then I will feel very uncomfortable. (J)

The interviewee F represents the transformation from the native habitus to the second habitus. For her, who has lived in Japan for a long time, it seems that the native habitus formed in China has been "forgotten" by the body, and replaced by the second habitus formed in Japan. Therefore, when she returned to China after many years, she had lost the habitus that corresponded to the Chinese field, which made it difficult for her to adapt to life in China. Two years after returning to China, she chose to go to Japan again.

After all, I came to Japan in my early 20s, which means I spent my youth in

Japan, so I got more used to living in Japan. I also returned back to China to stay for two years in the middle. I felt that although China has developed very fast in recent years, there is still a lot of room for development in some soft power. (F)

5.2.2 fusion of habitus

Although there are differences between the native and second habitus, there is a possibility of reconciliation of this difference. In some international students, the two habitus have been adjusted and reorganized to eventually merged.

The interviewee C traveled between China and Japan for many years due to business trips after graduation. At the beginning of his work, he often felt distressed by the differences in the workplace environment between the two countries. However, with the continuous accumulation of working and living experiences in both places, the two sets of habitus that were in conflict with each other were adjusted under his repeated practice and finally merged, which not only allow him to easily handle the work in both sides, but also allow him to enjoy the life of traveling between the two countries.

I have worked on both sides for a long time, I am familiar with the working environment in both China and Japan, and have more experience in handling work and interpersonal relationships, so now both sides are fine... In the aspect of life, I also like both sides. Life in Japan is relatively simpler, everyone is in accordance to certain rules, and there is less need to secure advantages through relationships and influence. However, in China, you may have to consider the ways of the world. For example, when you go to a government department to do something, your first reaction may be to ask for connections. This may not be very good, but on the other hand, it is precisely because of the worldly sophistication that everyone in China has a little more humane. (C)

6 Relative value of Capital and Strategies for Status Attainment

6.1 Relative Value of Capital

The value of capital is not constant, and its value often changes according to the different rules of fields.

6.1.1 economic capital

For Chinese international students, economic capital has now become a double-edged sword. Although it can solve many problems in overseas life, it can sometimes become a negative label and even produce "negative value".

I've seen someone who will spend thousands of RMB on bicycles and electric guitars that are not very useful, and even spend tens of thousands of yen on a yoyo, which I can't understand. (A)

Some international students around me will do some impolite things because they are rich. I think it might be the social circle differences, I can't play with them. (P)

The store manager said that he does not like to recruit Chinese students who look rich, because he has recruited them before, and then they are careless and irresponsible when they were working. If you say something to them, they may even lose their temper and suddenly quit. (K)

Of course, in most situations, economic capital still plays a positive role, because it can guarantee the basic survival and improve the quality of life of international students studying overseas, and has the advantage of being able to convert to other forms of capital.

6.1.2 social capital

For international students, social capital has a very high value in the life, education and work field. It not only meets the various daily needs, but also serves as an effective means to handle risks in special situations such as illness.

When I moved house, there was a lot of furniture, and it would cost a lot of money to call a moving company, but my friend drove his car to help me move to my new home, and saved a lot of work. (G)

Once I had otitis media and my eardrum sunk. I didn't know how to explain the situation to the doctor. Then at that time, I had a friend who was better in Japanese. He took me to the hospital and helped me a lot on translation, so that I could see the doctor, and fill the prescriptions normally, and get this disease cured. (A)

In addition, the social capital network of the international student group also reflects the tendency to "huddle for warmth" among the Chinese, which is reflected in the field of life, education and work.

In Osaka, there are many Chinese between Chuo District and Nishi District, especially in Namba, where the transportation is very convenient and the surrounding area is very prosperous. It is the second center of Osaka and there are many events that Chinese have held. So, if you go there, you will never feel uneasy. (N)

There must be a WeChat group in the school, where people often ask questions and trade second-hand things. And not only the school group, for example, we live in Kobe, there is also a chat group of Chinese students in Kobe,

inside there are also many local residents, we help each other from time to time, and organize some activities. (G)

When our international students choose seminar, we all want to choose the Chinese teacher. We heard from our seniors that he was quite good and the requirements are not too strict, but also not too easy, so we could learn something from the course. (J)

I did my part-time job in the restaurant owned by a Chinese, so it reduces the language barrier and makes communication much easier. (K)

6.1.3 cultural capital

Although cultural capital has high value in the field of education, especially for international students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees, and a certain amount of academic capital is a prerequisite for entering certain fields of education, which is the same in both China and Japan. However, compared to Japan, cultural capital has a higher value in the work field in China, which is often reflected in recruitment requirements.

Employment in China is based on ability, and recruiters will consider more on your education background, certificates, and achievements. Japanese companies also look at these indicators, but they pay more attention to whether you are a good fit for the company. Japanese companies will provide training for their employees, and they will also ask them to do personality tests, just to see whether the employees are in line with the company's philosophy, and whether they can contribute to the company or grow with the company. The Japanese take this very seriously, so if you are only capable, there is no guarantee that you'll be able to get into the company you want to work for. (P)

I think the difference between Japan and China is that it is easier to get a

job with a degree of polytechnic school in Japan. In China, the higher the education level, the better the job you can find, but in Japan, graduating from a polytechnic school will not affect your employment, and may even help you find a specific job. (F)

6.2 Strategies for Status Attainment

Capital is the means by which actors acquire, maintain, and improve their status in the field. In order to improve their position in the field, actors will use strategies to acquire specific capitals that have high value in the target field. In addition, they can also select the main fields of activity according to their superior capital.

6.2.1 selective visualization of capital

International students hold multiple types of capitals at the same time, but they do not present their capitals in the same way in every field. Depending on the characteristics of the field they are in, they can present the capital that is beneficial to them and conceal the capital that is detrimental to them.

The interviewee B wanted to make many Japanese friends during studying abroad. The strategy she used was to actively present her Japanese language skills to Japanese classmates. For international students, Japanese language proficiency has become an important symbolic capital in the classroom, because it is not only a manifestation of language ability, but also reflects the willingness to learn, the acceptance of Japanese culture, and the possibility of smooth conversations, etc.

I will actively speak and participate in group discussions during class, so that the Japanese students will think that my Japanese is good, and they will be willing to share their opinions with me and chat with me after class. (B)

Of course, depending on the field, capital sometimes produces "negative value" instead. In this case, international students will conceal the capital.

When I first started working part-time, I told my Japanese colleagues that I have bought my apartment, and they all said that I was very rich, and I felt that there was some sarcasm in their manner of speaking. So later when I changed workplace and told new colleagues that I rented my apartment, and I felt their attitude would be different. (I)

6.2.2 exchange of capital

The capital held by international students is different from each other, and the value of the capital varies in different fields, which provides the possibility of exchange of capital.

I bought a car shortly after I went to Japan, so I could take others out for a ride, and sometimes I would use the car to help them carry things. After a long time, I was able to make a lot of friends. (E)

I was not very good at Japanese, and when I couldn't understand some of the class materials, so I would ask my friends who were good at Japanese to read them, and then teach me again in Chinese. Then I would often invite them to dinner, or take them out to play, and make some new friends, because I came early and was more familiar with the place and people than they were. (J)

6.2.3 selection of field

When international students are in a position to choose among multiple fields, they can make rational calculations based on their own capital conditions.

According to my grades in China, I can't get an undergraduate degree in China, but I can get it in Japan. I studied Japanese in high school, and then there is a project that cooperates with a Japanese university. I can go directly to the university by participating in its interview exam. (I)

I once thought about switching to the literature major in Japan, but I went through the entrance exam questions of the famous Japanese universities and felt that those questions were too difficult for me at that time, because I had never received the systematic training in literature. Moreover, in the case of changing from engineering to liberal arts, it was very difficult for me to contact my mentor in advance to get his/her recognition, so I had no confidence. But if it was a unified postgraduate admissions exam in China, since the main test is Japanese language, then I still had a chance, so I chose to return to China. (O)

However, such behavior, based on rational judgment, may also lead to unexpected negative results.

Because the University L does not test English, but the University D needs to test English, many Chinese international students will take exams from University L, which leads to too much competition in University L, and only a few admissions for 70 or 80 people. My friend took the exam from University D, and there were only 7 students to take the test, and there was no written test at that time. She just had an interview examination and passed it easily. (P)

7 Conclusion

This paper clarifies that Chinese students, who are placed in the fields of education, life, and work as they move internationally, use strategies based on capital while being moved by their own habitus. After arriving in Japan, Chinese students encounter changes in the external environment, but lack the habitus to respond to it. This is the hysteresis effect of native habitus, which often has negative consequences. But over time, habitus undergoes gradual changes. Through long-term living experience in Japan, a second habitus is formed based on the structure of Japanese society. At that time, there may be a conflict between the native habitus and the second habitus, but depending on the different

situation, the native habitus may be maintained well, overwritten by the second habitus. It is also possible that the two habitus will merge with each other. In this process, the capital held by international students has a great impact. The higher the economic capital, the easier it is to maintain the native habitus. In addition, the influence of capital on habitus also appears in the formation pathway of the native habitus. The intergenerational gap in the native habitus is straightforward, as seen from different generations of Chinese students with large differences in economic capital.

The influence of capital is not limited to this, but the value that different forms of capital can demonstrate varies from field to field and situation to situation. Economic capital, which tends to be regarded as highly valuable anytime and anywhere, can even produce negative effects in some cases. In response, some international students take strategy to conceal their economic capital. On the other hand, there is also an economic capital utilization policy that skillfully weakened the economic character by converting the economic capital into a service that can be provided. In addition, the exchange of capital by economic capital is actively carried out among Chinese students. Not limited to individuals, there are many cases of capital exchange led by groups of Chinese students.

Social capital is essential for international students, but many international students find themselves without social capital after arriving in Japan. This is because, unlike economic and cultural capital, which can be carried around, social capital has the characteristic of being embedded in a certain space. Much of the social capital rooted in Chinese society possessed by Chinese students can be used in China, but will lose its value in Japan. Therefore, after arriving in Japan, a common problem faced by international students is how they can accumulate their own social capital locally. This research shows that the social networks of Chinese students in Japan are intertwined, and that they exert a strong power in many fields. In particular, for Chinese students who have just arrived in Japan, the social network of local Chinese people formed by academic and local ties is an important support.

Cultural capital is important from the viewpoint of investment in capital in the

process of international mobility of international students. In the first place, it can be said that for international students, the meaning of studying abroad itself is lost if they cannot obtain a degree at an overseas university. So how to get the desired degree more easily is a question that all international students are concerned with. Among them, there is interviewee whose Japanese language proficiency is not very high, but who secured credits and a degree through economic and social capital exchanges. There are also international students who decided to take entrance exams for graduate schools in China or Japan based on their capital situation and moved internationally. This is a risk countermeasure when investing in cultural capital. Another thing I would like to point out about cultural capital is that educational background appears to be of higher value in China. Coupled with this, the symbolic capital of the status of “returnee” has a great influence on the process of international mobility of Chinese students. Returnee means returning to home country after studying abroad, and there is a symbolic value attached to that status. This is because returnees are likely to be seen as global human resources with international knowledge and skills. Preferential treatment in human resource policies and the chance to find good jobs are considered to be important factors in promoting the return of many Chinese students to their home countries.

There are several shortcomings in this article. First, the macro-level differences in the fields between China and Japan are not fully grasped. Second, the formation process and mechanism of the value of a certain kind of capital in a specific field also need to be further explored. Third, there is a lack of discussion of symbolic capital.

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