Introduction

GAO NENG seemed an unlikely candidate for study abroad in 1999, when I first met her in the northeastern Chinese coastal city of Dalian when she was 13.[1] She was the only child of factory workers, each of whom earned just under 1,000 yuan (US$121) per month.[2] Her family lived in a one-bedroom apartment and could not afford the luxuries that some other Dalian families had, such as a cell phone, microwave oven, computer, car, or air conditioner. I visited Gao Neng in Dalian again in 2002, when she was 16 and attending a college prep high school. I talked with her and her parents over the phone at least once a year before and after that. In all this time I never heard them mention any plans for her to study abroad.

I arrived in Dalian again in 2004, when Gao Neng was 18. I hoped to visit her and some of her former classmates. But when I called her home phone, her parents told me they had spent 60,000 yuan (US$7,255) of their life savings and had borrowed money from relatives to send their daughter to Ireland, where she was attending English-language classes while working as a salesclerk. They hoped she would learn enough English to qualify for admission to a college in Ireland and save enough money from work to pay tuition there and to repay their relatives' loans. When I visited Gao Neng in Ireland a month later, she told me that she was almost as surprised as I was that she was able to study abroad. She learned only after she had taken her college entrance exam that her parents had begun the process of applying for a visa for her to study in Ireland without even telling her. They wanted her to give the Chinese college entrance

exam her best shot and hoped she could get into a good college in China and save them the expense of sending her abroad. But when Gao Neng failed to get into any four-year college in China, she was delighted to learn that her parents were already preparing to send her to Ireland. "I thought my family was too poor, so I didn't dare mention my dream of study abroad to them, but my Ma understood my heart too well," she told me.

I was similarly surprised by the study-abroad trajectories of other Chinese youth I first met in Chinese schools and homes in Dalian in the late 1990s, when I was trying to learn what life was like for the first generation born after China's one-child policy began in 1979. I found that adolescent singletons (only children) were facing unprecedented levels of parental pressure and competition in the educational system and the job market. Every child was expected to become a winner in a pyramidal socioeconomic system that allowed only a small minority to win. Singletons were the sole focus of parents' financial and emotional investment, and they were expected to eventually get work that paid enough to enable them to become the main providers of funds for their elderly parents' retirement, nursing care, and medical expenses. Chinese singletons of both genders and all kinds of aptitudes and socioeconomic statuses were therefore raised with the kind of heavy parental investment, high expectations, consumption demands, and educational aspirations common among children of highly educated professionals in developed countries, even though opportunities for higher education and white-collar work were more limited in China than in developed countries. After publishing these findings in *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy* in 2004, I returned to Dalian, eager to continue following the lives of the singletons I had gotten to know. I wanted to see what would happen next as they started college or careers. I learned, however, that many of them had left for Australia, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, North America, or Singapore.

I had not expected so many of them to study abroad. To get a student visa to enter a developed country, a Chinese citizen has to show embassy officers proof of sufficient funds to pay for tuition and living expenses without working. The junior high school, college prep high school, and vocational high school where I first met most of the Chinese citizens in my study were academically and socioeconomically average by urban Dalian standards.[3] Few of them seemed wealthy

enough to pay for study abroad or were high-achieving enough to qualify for scholarships abroad. Most Dalian residents I knew had no close relatives abroad and had never been outside China. When I first met them in the late 1990s, few of them knew how to use the Internet, much less how to use it to research study-abroad options. Among respondents to my 1999 survey, 87 percent ($N = 2,193$) indicated that they had no computer at home, and 18 percent ($N = 2,195$) indicated that their families had no phone of any kind.[4] (N is the number of respondents who answered a specific question on the survey I administered to 2,273 teenagers in 1999 or the resurvey I administered to 1,365 of the 1999 survey respondents in 2008–2010; N is different for each question because some respondents answered some survey questions but not others.)

Yet, when I taught English conversation to the 2,273 students who completed my 1999 survey and asked them to raise their hands if they would like to study abroad someday, the vast majority raised their hands. Many asked me about how they might get opportunities to study abroad and what life abroad was like for Chinese citizens. I tried to answer their questions as best as I could, based on what I knew about the experiences of Chinese citizens in the United States and on research I did on the Internet about international student experiences in other developed countries. Those students especially interested in study abroad were disproportionately represented among those I got to know well, because my English-language proficiency and knowledge about life abroad were part of the reason they befriended me in the first place. Still, I could tell that interest in study abroad was not limited to them. Even when waiting at bus stops, riding the bus, or shopping or waiting in lines at stores, I often overheard conversations about study abroad among strangers who were not paying attention to me and probably did not know that I was not a Chinese citizen.

By 2010, 20 percent of the 1,365 1999 survey respondents I resurveyed had studied abroad, and an additional 11 percent had gone abroad solely for tourism, work, business, or other purposes.[5] They joined a growing wave of transnational students from China. Xiang Biao and Wei Shen analyzed statistics published by the Chinese Ministry of Education and found that 179,800 Chinese citizens went abroad to study in 2008 alone, making China the source of the largest proportion of transnational students in the world.[6] Even among

the 619 respondents to the longer version of my 2008–2010 surveys who had never been abroad, 64 percent indicated on the most recent survey they completed between 2008 and 2010 that they would like to someday go abroad for study, work, and/or immigration.[7]

In retrospect, I realize that I had underestimated the extent to which obstacles to study abroad could be overcome by a confluence of four factors: (1) the heavily concentrated financial resources that would be invested in Chinese singletons by their parents and some of their aunts, uncles, and grandparents; (2) the rapid increase in urban Chinese families' incomes and the value of their assets (especially housing) that would occur as a result of China's rapid economic growth and rural to urban migration; (3) the expansion of international education infrastructure (such as foreign-language schools in China and abroad, homestay programs abroad, partnerships between study-abroad brokers [*zhongjie*] in China and schools in developed countries, and international student recruitment programs and websites run by these brokers and schools) that would result from developed countries' increased interest in developing countries like China as growing markets for educational services; and (4) the eagerness to study abroad that was already widespread among Dalian teenagers at the time I started my research in the late 1990s. I had assumed that study abroad was unlikely even for those who seemed to desire it most. I was not entirely wrong. The desires of some of those who had seemed the most knowledgeable about and interested in study abroad as teenagers waned as they learned more about the risks and sacrifices that study abroad entailed and as they found reasonably satisfactory opportunities in China. However, I was surprised to learn that some others who had seemed less knowledgeable about, less financially capable of, and less interested in study abroad actually did end up leaving China to study in other countries.

I kept in touch with 92 of the survey respondents with whom I was closest after they graduated from the schools where I conducted my initial survey and participant observation. When some of them and their friends and cousins left China to study in Australia, Britain, Ireland, Japan, and the United States, I followed them to those countries, at first thinking that what I observed of their experiences would just be a minor part of the larger story of the transition from adolescence to young adulthood that I would tell about their cohort, all of whom I was determined to track for the rest of their lives. But as more and more of them started studying abroad and as I started

hearing even from many of those who stayed in China that they were planning to study abroad and that many of their friends and cousins were studying abroad, I realized that study abroad was becoming more common for their generation than I ever imagined it could be. I therefore spent the first decade of the twenty-first century following these students on their journeys abroad, trying to figure out why they chose to study abroad despite the obstacles, what they experienced abroad, how their experiences changed them, and how they decided whether to stay abroad or return to China.

This book reveals what I learned about the motivations, experiences, and perspectives of transnational Chinese students who studied at colleges, universities, and language schools in developed countries and who hoped that such education would increase their access to social and cultural citizenship in the developed world—and sometimes to legal citizenship in developed countries—while also trying to maintain their social, cultural, and legal citizenship in China. I look at how they won and lost various kinds of freedom through the process of study abroad and at how and why they decided to stay abroad or return to China. I follow them on their journeys from China to developed countries, and in some cases back again, and explore how the process of study abroad transformed them, leading them to redefine what they considered paradise and where they could find it.

The Developed World as One Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson argued that nationalism emerged once people were able to see themselves as part of an "imagined community" resulting from the emergence of a shared language, print capitalism, and, most important, the educational pilgrimages that ambitious youth made to national centers.[8] In describing how Chinese leaders encouraged Chinese citizens to imagine themselves as part of a transnational Confucian community of East and Southeast Asians, Aihwa Ong suggested that Anderson's idea of imagined communities could also apply to "imaginaries . . . brought together by the reconfigurations of global capitalism."[9] Arjun Appadurai argued that the speed and ubiquity of global cultural flows have broken down national boundaries in unprecedented ways, causing people worldwide to "no longer see their lives as mere outcomes of the givenness of things, but often as the ironic compromise between what they could

imagine and what social life will permit."[10] Building on these ideas, I argue that the increasingly globalized nature of the media, language, and educational pilgrimages available to young Chinese citizens in cities like Dalian encourages them to aspire to belong to an imagined developed world community composed of mobile, wealthy, well-educated, and well-connected people worldwide.[11]

Transnational students play a key role in the building and maintenance of this imagined developed world community. They are a rapidly growing sector of the student population in developed countries[12] and have also been highly influential as agents of globalization in their home countries[13] and in their host countries.[14] As Anderson noted, "There was, to be sure, always a double aspect to the choreography of the great religious pilgrimages: a vast horde of illiterate vernacular-speakers provided the dense, physical reality of the ceremonial passage; while a small segment of literate bilingual adepts drawn from each vernacular community performed the unifying rites, interpreting to their respective followings the meaning of their collective motion."[15] So it was in Dalian, as in other cities in China and the rest of the developing world from where a minority was drawn to study in developed countries, where they would learn to interpret the imagined community of the developed world for their home communities. Many Chinese citizens wanted to become part of that minority. They believed that pilgrimages to developed countries would not only help them become citizens of the developed world but also facilitate efforts to make China part of the developed world. Ideally, developed world citizenship would add to rather than replace their Chinese citizenship. Many transnational Chinese students told me that, after they secured social, cultural, and/or legal citizenship in a developed country, they would channel developed countries' cultural and economic capital into China by working in transnational businesses and organizations that would help to transform China into a developed country. Chinese citizens dreamed that their pursuit of developed world citizenship would enable them to eventually help remake China in the image of the developed world paradise they imagined they would find abroad.

Chinese citizens in my study often experienced and discussed the developed world as if it were one imagined community, sharing one culture, system, and citizenship status. They contrasted how things were done in China (*zhongguo*) by Chinese people (*zhongguoren*) with how things were done in "foreign [mostly developed] countries" (*waiguo*) by "foreigners" (*waiguoren*), as though all the foreign coun-

tries were part of one single country and all the foreigners shared the same nationality. They sometimes mistook the products or customs of one developed country for another. They believed that credentials, experience, and social, cultural, or legal citizenship gained in any developed country could open the door to any other developed country, and they assumed that developed countries set the standards by which success everywhere was measured.

Many Chinese citizens who wanted to study abroad were not determined to study in one particular developed country but rather willing to study in whichever developed country seemed most likely to grant them a visa at the time they applied. Some told me that they wanted to study in a developed country but had no idea which one would be best for them. They asked me for advice about which country they should choose. Others were trying to decide between two, three, or more of their favorite developed countries. Many did have some preferences for studying in particular developed countries based on factors such as how much they liked the cultures, environments, and climates of those countries, how many of their friends and relatives were already in those countries or interested in going with them to those countries, how prestigious and easily transferable to other countries those countries' skills, knowledge, educational credentials, and work experiences would be, how easy it would be in those countries for them to get low-skilled work while they were students and professional work once they graduated, and how likely those countries were to grant them permanent residency rights or legal citizenship if they wanted it. But those who could not get visas to enter their top-choice developed country were quite willing to settle for the developed country that was their next choice, fifth choice, or even last choice. Even while they were living in a developed country, they still sometimes referred to that country as "abroad" (*waiguo*) instead of by its name (e.g., Australia, Britain, Ireland, Japan, the United States). Some who were dissatisfied with the first developed country they studied in ended up moving to a different developed country in search of better opportunities. They talked about such moves between developed countries the same way they talked about moving from one city in China to another and not in the way they talked about the much more life-changing and potentially permanent move they made from China to a developed country.

Chinese citizens' tendency to elide differences between different developed countries derived partly from inadequate knowledge

about those countries and the differences between them, in the same way that Orientalist discourses derived partly from inadequate knowledge about non-Western countries and the differences between them.[16] But the Chinese concept of *waiguo* was not just a form of reverse Orientalism. It was also based on recognition of real similarities between different developed countries' cultures, laws, political economies, and ways of integrating and not integrating transnational migrants like themselves. These similarities resulted from the strong alliances those countries shared, which enabled people, goods, media, ideas, money, capital, credentials, skills, and jobs to flow quickly and easily between them, and particularly between those countries' elite (whom Chinese citizens in my study hoped to join). As Saskia Sassen argued, large cities with strong transnational linkages tend to produce denationalized elite who sometimes share greater affinities with their counterparts in the globalized cities of other countries than with the nonelite of their own countries.[17] These denationalized elite formed an imagined community of the developed world that had some of the characteristics a country might have.

Individuals and countries that were part of the developed world shared with each other common economic systems, cultural understandings, business practices, academic canons, standards for educational credentials, interests in movies, TV shows, sports, and music, Internet communities, and a lingua franca (English, which most college-educated citizens of non-Anglophone developed countries such as Japan, France, Germany, and Spain could also speak). These were also shared by some Chinese citizens living in China or abroad as social and cultural citizens of the developed world, but not by the majority of Chinese citizens.

Most transnational corporations were based in developed countries, and it was easier for their employees to transfer from a branch in one developed country to a branch in another developed country than it was for Chinese citizens working in Chinese branches of transnational corporations to transfer to branches of those same corporations in developed countries. People doing the same job in different developed countries were likely to have similar salaries and standards of living, but those doing the same job in China were likely to have much lower salaries and standards of living. Employers and universities in developed countries valued education and work experience acquired in other developed countries more highly than education and work experience acquired in China.

Borders between Anglophone countries were even more porous, as were borders between European Union (EU) countries. Political and military alliances between subgroups of developed countries (and sometimes a few of the most developed of the developing countries) have also been formalized through international organizations such as the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Group of 8 (G8), the Commonwealth of Nations, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Most developed countries are politically and militarily allied with each other and are understood to be under the protection of the US military. China, on the contrary, has no political or military alliances with any developed countries. It is no wonder, then, that Chinese citizens looking (mostly from the outside) at this exclusive but internally coherent imagined community of developed countries and developed world citizens would talk about it as though it were all one country.[18]

In this book I portray the imagined community of the developed world as it was seen through the eyes of the Chinese citizens in my study. I therefore focus on what the developed countries had in common and how they differed from China rather than on how they differed from each other. Although I recognize that the differences between different developed countries (and between different neighborhoods, cities, towns, regions, subcultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic classes within each developed country) are significant, descriptions of such differences are mostly beyond the scope of this book. Chinese citizens did talk with each other and with me about differences they perceived between developed countries. But it was hard for me to figure out which of those perceived differences were due to real, systematic differences between those countries, which were due to differences between different kinds of places (e.g., rural versus urban, affluent versus impoverished) within each country, which were due to differences between the kinds of Chinese citizens who went to each country, and which were due to stereotypes that exaggerated small or nonexistent differences between countries.[19]

Therefore, although I do describe a few unique policies and historical developments in particular developed countries when they are necessary for contextualizing the opportunities and constraints faced by Chinese citizens in those countries, I do not generalize about each developed country and how it differs from other developed countries. Nor do I assess the fairness and accuracy of the generalizations

that Chinese citizens made about those countries and their citizens. Many of their comments seemed like overgeneralizations about entire countries based on a few experiences that they had in particular settings with particular individuals in those countries. I cannot tell how or how much their generalizations differ from what I would find if I did a systematic study of each phenomenon among the entire population of each country, because I did not do that kind of study in any of the countries discussed in this book. My goal is not to present fair and accurate generalizations about "what developed countries are really like" (a task beyond the scope of this, and probably any, book) but rather to present a portrait of how transnational Chinese students in my study subjectively experienced their interactions with those countries and how these subjective experiences transformed the way they thought about the developed world, China, and their own hopes, goals, and concerns. I focus on aspects of the experience of study abroad that seemed pervasive across the experiences of many Chinese citizens studying in many different countries. Despite the diversity of personalities, perspectives, and socioeconomic and academic backgrounds among Chinese citizens in my study, most had a lot in common when it came to their motivations for and experiences of study abroad. Despite the diversity of policies, cultures, and socioeconomic conditions among the countries in which they studied (and the subcultures, neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions within each country), these countries were all part of the developed world and operated by the rules of the global neoliberal system, and as such they shared many commonalities with regard to how they interacted with transnational Chinese students. These commonalities are the focus of this book.

Developed Countries and Developed World Citizenship

Chinese citizens sometimes talk about how "foreign countries are like paradise" (*waiguo jiuxiang tiantang*).[20] I heard them make this comparison when they looked at photos that friends and relatives took abroad of pristine beaches and bright blue skies that seemed far less polluted than what they saw in their own Chinese cities, when those friends and relatives told them about things they had abroad that most Chinese citizens wanted but could not get (such as cars, large houses, and salaries that were many times more than what most Chi-

nese citizens earned), and while they watched movies and TV shows from abroad (such as *Growing Pains*, *True Lies*, and *Home Alone*) and marveled at the fun, exciting lives that characters in developed countries seemed to enjoy amid luxurious material surroundings. Some used this comparison to explain why Chinese citizens who went abroad decided not to return to China. "Of course someone who has seen paradise wouldn't want to come back to hell," a 56-year-old retired factory worker told me and her friend while the three of us were having lunch at a restaurant in China. She was trying to console her friend, a 51-year-old businesswoman, who had started crying when she talked about how her daughter had left China to attend college in Japan at age 19 and was still reluctant to leave her office job there to return to China at age 27.

Some Chinese citizens who were studying abroad or had returned from abroad compared the developed countries they studied in to paradise sincerely, but others made it ironically, contrasting the disappointing developed country they studied in with the paradise that they imagined all developed countries were. Many believed that paradise could be found in China as well. Like Li Zhang, who heard Chinese citizens describe their expensive private homes as their "private paradise,"[21] I sometimes heard Chinese citizens using the term *paradise* to describe places in China (such as particularly prestigious and luxurious hotels, restaurants, universities, and homes) that could be considered part of the developed world.

As a term that refers to an imagined community of elite individuals worldwide, most of whom live in societies characterized by a combination of high per capita gross domestic product (GDP), power, and prestige, rather than to any specific geographic area, race, ethnicity, or nation-state, *developed world* seems to be the English phrase that best captures popular Chinese ideas about the kind of paradise Chinese citizens associate with affluent lifestyles in China and the Chinese term *waiguo* (which literally means "outside the country," "abroad," or "foreign countries"). The term *foreign countries* (*waiguo*) usually referred to Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, the United States, and the Western European countries. Chinese citizens said that developing countries were also "foreign countries" (*waiguo*) when asked about them, and they understood that *waiguo* referred to all foreign countries, not just developed foreign countries, when they saw it in a textbook, legal document, or my survey. In casual conversations, however, they used *waiguo* to refer primarily to developed countries,

preferring to refer to developed countries by their names (e.g., Mexico, Cuba, Vietnam) rather than generalizing about them. Chinese citizens often talk about how China is a "poor" (*qiong*), "backward" (*luohou*) "developing country" (*fazhanzhong guojia*) that needs to "develop" (*fazhan*) and "modernize" (*xiandaihua*) in order to "catch up to" (*ganshang*) "wealthy/developed countries" (*fada guojia*), which are also known as "advanced countries" (*xianjin guojia*) or simply as "foreign countries" (*waiguo*). They assume that citizens of the developed world have "high quality" (*gao suzhi*), whereas citizens of the developing world do not. Chinese educational, economic, and fertility limitation policies were explicitly intended to raise the "quality" (*suzhi*) of the Chinese population so that China could become part of the developed world.[22]

Chinese citizens' classification of a country's level of development did not depend entirely on objective standards such as per capita GDP. They rarely talked about countries they considered less developed than China. When talking about developed countries (*fada guojia*), they never mentioned countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, or the Bahamas, each of which has a per capita GDP similar to those of developed countries but lack the power, prestige, and geopolitical alliances of those countries.

Although the term *foreigner* (*waiguoren*) was most commonly used to describe racially white citizens of Western developed countries, it was also sometimes used to describe nonwhite citizens of Western and non-Western developed countries. Immigrants from developing countries (including China) were usually described in terms of their national origins regardless of their legal citizenship status or where they were living. Nonwhite citizens of developed countries who did not have clearly identifiable origins in particular developing countries were sometimes described just as foreigners (*waiguoren*) and other times with racial categories, depending on context. I was occasionally described as a foreigner (*waiguoren*) by Chinese citizens who wanted to emphasize my developed country citizenship. More commonly I was described as a "Chinese person" (*zhonguoren*), "ethnically Chinese person" (*huaren*), "Chinese descendant" (*huayi*), or "Chinese American" (*meiji huaren*).

Chinese citizens in my study wanted to become part of the developed world by acquiring social, cultural, and sometimes legal citizenship in the developed world. Most nonimpoverished citizens of developed countries who do not have criminal records are part of the

developed world. As with any kind of citizenship, developed world citizenship has social, cultural, and legal aspects that are connected but not inseparable. Building on the work of others who have examined what citizenship categories mean for transnational people,[23] I draw distinctions between legal, social, and cultural citizenship in my discussions of the kinds of rights, freedoms, and opportunities that Chinese citizens tried to acquire abroad. I use the term *legal citizenship* to refer to a set of legal rights based on how one is classified by documents such as passports and residency cards, the terms of which are defined and enforced by local, national, and international legal systems. I use the term *social citizenship* to refer to a status that gives one access to certain standards of living, education, health, income, mobility, prestige, and comfort. I use the term *cultural citizenship* to refer to a status of belonging to a community in ways that are felt by the individual and recognized by others.

Most aspects of citizenship are not things that one either has or does not have but rather fuzzy statuses that an individual can have more or less of at any given moment. The boundaries between those who have a certain kind of social and cultural citizenship and those who do not are subject to more contestation and interpretation than the boundaries between those who have a certain kind of legal citizenship and those who do not. But even legal citizenship can mean different things for different individuals. Legal permanent residency status grants an immigrant most (but not all) of the legal rights that full legal citizens have, whereas children, prisoners, those who face discrimination because of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, and those with records of criminal convictions or severe mental illnesses or disabilities can have some but not all of the legal rights possessed by others with identical citizenship documents. As James Holston pointed out, even those who share the same legal citizenship status can have unequal access to legal rights in a system of "differentiated citizenship."[24]

Although social, cultural, and legal citizenship can be acquired and used independently from each other, they can also affect, supplement, and sometimes even substitute for each other. One can be a full legal citizen of the developed world only if one has legal citizenship in a developed country, but one can be a social and cultural citizen of the developed world even without legal citizenship in any developed country. Legal citizenship and physical residence play a large role in determining whether one is part of the developed world or

the developing world, but they are not the only relevant factors. In a world of global cultural flows, interconnected political economies, and increasingly mobile people, it is possible to be part of the developing world even while living in a developed country, or to be part of the developed world even while living in a developing country. Citizens of the developed world can enjoy developed world rights in almost any country, even if they are not legal citizens of any developed country. Wealthy, well-educated, and well-connected Chinese citizens living in China, with the same wealth, prestige, and ability to travel freely between China and developed countries that most middle-class citizens of developed countries have, can be considered part of the developed world. On the other hand, legal citizens of developed countries who are poor, suffer discrimination, or have been convicted of crimes are often excluded from the developed world even though they live in developed countries.

Like the Chinese migrants described by Julie Chu and by Frank Pieke and his collaborators, Chinese citizens in my study saw going abroad not only as a physical journey but also as a journey from one category of personhood to another.[25] What they wanted most was the prestige, comfort, geographic mobility, and high standard of living enjoyed by cultural and social citizens of the developed world. Legal citizenship in a developed country was valued not for its own sake but as a means to this end.

As Andrew Kipnis pointed out, legal citizenship in a developed country can provide an instant set of developed world capabilities and freedoms even to those who do not have the incomes, careers, or education that would entitle them to full social or cultural citizenship in the developed world.[26] Legal citizens of developing countries who are social and cultural citizens of the developed world face some of the same obstacles that nonelite legal citizens of developing countries face when they try to get visas or permanent residency rights abroad. But some can use their developed world prestige, wealth, skills, knowledge, education, credentials, and social networks to get around those obstacles. Even legal citizens of developing countries who lack permanent residency rights in a developed country can use their social and cultural citizenship in the developed world to gain some, if not all, of the same legal, cultural, and social rights that citizens of developed countries have. Legal citizens of developing countries who have large amounts of money to invest or skills and credentials that are in high demand worldwide can quickly and easily get visas

to most countries they want to visit while enjoying salaries and living standards comparable to what they would have in developed countries, even while they are living in developing countries.

Social and cultural citizenship in a developed country can also facilitate one's application for permanent residency or legal citizenship there. Permanent residency documents confer most of the same rights that full legal citizenship does while also allowing the holder to retain all the rights associated with legal citizenship in other countries. Those who have full legal citizenship rights in one country and legal permanent residency rights in one or more other countries thus have flexible legal as well as social and cultural citizenship, which allows them to move quickly and freely between countries and systems, seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages wherever they appear. "Flexible citizenship" of the kind described by Aihwa Ong[27] can offer an especially wide range of the freedoms and capabilities that Amartya Sen considered the most important determinant of human well-being.[28]

Although legal citizenship in a developed country can help an individual to attain the freedoms and capabilities associated with developed world citizenship, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for attainment of those freedoms and capabilities.[29] Writing about twentieth-century societies in which the deterritorialization of individuals was less common than it has become in the global neoliberal system of the twenty-first century, Thomas Humphrey Marshall and others who have built on his work described "civil" and "political" citizenship (both of which are part of my concept of legal citizenship) as necessary (though insufficient) foundations for social and cultural citizenship.[30] As processes of globalization and transnational migration have accelerated, however, scholars of citizenship have increasingly seen legal citizenship as a useful but not always necessary facilitator for social and cultural citizenship, which increasingly transnational processes of neoliberalization often allow to operate independently of legal citizenship.[31] Ong defined cultural citizenship as "a dual process of self-making and being-made . . . in shifting fields of power that include the nation-state and the wider world."[32] Building on Ong's definition, I argue that cultural citizenship processes can transcend national boundaries, as individuals are made and make themselves in the context not only of the societies in which they live and hold legal citizenship but also of the global neoliberal system, which assumes that all who acquire developed world discipline, skills, and affluence can become social

and cultural citizens of the developed world, regardless of where they live or what is written on their passports. At the same time, even those with legal citizenship and residency in a developed country can be denied developed world social and cultural citizenship, as is the case for those who have criminal records, are impoverished, or suffer discrimination.[33] Those unable or unwilling to become full legal citizens of a developed country could still obtain a more limited kind of legal citizenship in that country by acquiring documents (such as the US green card) that grant permanent residency rights in that country without requiring that they give up legal citizenship rights in any other country. Even full legal citizens of a developed country are not guaranteed social and cultural citizenship in the developed world. Even someone without any kind of legal citizenship in any developed country can still attain social and cultural citizenship comparable to or even better than the social and cultural citizenship of most legal citizens of developed countries by getting degrees from prestigious colleges and universities of the developed world and by getting work (in any developed or developing country) that provides them with levels of income, prestige, and mobility comparable to those enjoyed by professionals and businesspeople in developed countries. Regardless of whether they live in China or abroad and whether they have passports issued by China or by a developed country, those who have developed world social and cultural citizenship can have capabilities and freedoms similar to those of most citizens and residents of developed countries.

I use the term *developed countries* to refer to nation-states, such as Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, the United States, and most countries of Western Europe, that consistently place at the top of per capita GDP rankings and recognize each other as political and military allies. On the other hand, I use the term *developed world* to refer not to any specific ethnicity, geographic region, or nation-state but rather to an imagined global community of affluent, powerful, and prestigious people. The developed world consists of a global neoliberal community defined more by the wealth, mutual recognition, and cultural and social citizenship of its members than by legal citizenship or geographic or national boundaries. The developed world is a loosely organized and flexibly bounded but increasingly powerful, exclusive, and united formation of individuals worldwide; most of these individuals are residents and legal citizens of developed countries, but some of them are residents and legal citizens of developing countries. The global neoliberal system disproportionately draws

support from and favors the perspectives of the developed world, which has disproportionate social, cultural, economic, military, and political power.

Ever since I began doing research in China, I have struggled to find English words that adequately describe the goals toward which the Chinese citizens I met were striving, which I now call the developed world, developed world citizenship, and developed countries. At first I used the term *First World*,[34] a phrase coined by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952, when he drew an analogy between the nonindustrialized countries and the "third estate" (*tiers état*), which in prerevolutionary France referred to commoners who could be contrasted with the clergymen (the "first estate") and the nobility (the "second estate").[35] During the Cold War, the term *Third World* referred to regions that were not aligned with either the capitalist bloc ("First World") or the socialist bloc ("Second World"). I stopped using First World and Third World, however, because these terms seemed increasingly outdated as the Cold War receded further into the past. Similarly, I started out using Immanuel Wallerstein's distinction between "core regions" and "peripheral regions" but found that his emphasis on regions was increasingly inadequate for addressing the deterritorializable citizenship statuses granted by the global neoliberal system that grew out of the capitalist world system he described.[36]

I also tried using the term *wealthier societies* but stopped once I realized that wealth was not the only factor that determined membership in the developed world.[37] If wealth were all that mattered, then Chinese citizens in my study would be talking about and trying to study in countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, or the Bahamas, all of which have per capita incomes similar to those of developed countries. My surveys, interviews, and participant observation, however, all suggested that those countries were rarely mentioned by Chinese citizens in my study and were never considered places to attend school.

I have used, and continue to use, the term *Western countries* when discussing Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and North America. I am careful, however, to use that term only when emphasizing cultural, geographic, and linguistic similarities and alliances between those countries. I avoid conflating "Western" with "developed" because "Western" does not fit Asian developed countries such as Singapore and Japan.