

## How the Australian Society Influences the Development of a Chinese Teacher Educator's Research Practices

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### Abstract

This paper reports on a preliminary investigation into how the development of a research student from China is influenced by the conditions of the Australian society. It focuses specifically on the first six months of her life in this changed and changing context. Through analysing her self-reflections, we explore her sense of the differences in educational cultures, her progress in her studies and the improvement she's made in her scholarly capabilities. Being aware of and sensitive to the differences in research cultures, and accepting them as part of her growing knowledge makes her adaptation easier and more rewarding. This account evokes the cosmopolitan desires for mobility and mutual interconnectedness that lead to the quest for an international and a global education. However, the identity transition that comes with the move from one culture to another is hard and made demanding by all that is new and unfamiliar. Adapting to a new research culture is challenging, but not impossible. An individual's life patterns are shaped by ever-changing societal and trans-national relations.

**Key words:** Influence; Teacher educator; Life history; Self-reflection; Culture

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### INTRODUCTION

As individuals grow their development interacts with their social contexts which sometimes are stable, other

times changing, but mostly always in transition. How is a person's development influenced by the conditions of the surrounding society at a given juncture of an individual's life? More specifically, for the purpose of this paper, how is the development of a teacher-educator, Wang Jun from China influenced by the conditions of Australian society during the first six months of her life in this changed and changing context? The main purpose of this paper is to empirically explore the influence of a new culture on an international student's development of research practices, and to present possible illustrations and explanations of this influence on this Chinese teacher-educator. This paper presents in three sections: generating the evidence; theorising the evidence to get a better understanding of the issue; and then analysing the evidence with a research method of life course.

The student Wang Jun was a university teacher in China. In March 2010, she came to a university in Australia to do doctoral studies on education. This is the first time for her to come to an English-speaking country. The evidence generated for this research is Wang Jun's self-reflections. When she arrived in Australia, she noticed many differences between her home country and Australia. The reflections she wrote record her first six months' experience in Australia both in life and studies about her happiness, unhappiness, ideas on her studies and her communication with her supervisor, family, friends and students in China.

Table 1 presents 72 reflections she has written during her first six months which have been divided into six categories with themes and dates of writing each reflection: daily life (about the things happening in her everyday life), studies and research (about the problems and confusion in her studies), progress and improvement (about the achievements in her research), teaching facilities (about what she has experienced and noticed concerning teaching environment), ideas on education (about her thinking after reading some literature) and cultural difference (about the difference between Chinese culture and Australian culture). In this paper, not all these

reflections will be analysed, but only those typical ones which are needed to illustrate the issues.

**Table 1**  
**Themes and Numbers of Reflections**

Themes	Numbers	Dates
Daily life	21	01/04/2010--- 31/08/2010
Studies and research	13	07/04/2010 --- 27/08/2010
Progress and improvement	7	02/04/2010 --- 25/08/2010
Teaching facilities	5	13/04/2010 --- 11/09/2010
Ideas on education	8	04/04/2010 --- 02/08/2010
Cultural differences	18	27/04/2010 --- 06/09/2010

This section presents evidence of Wang Jun's self-reflective practice, exploring the influence of Australian society within the first six months of her arrival in the country. The evidence indicates that she was greatly influenced by a totally new society, adapting to it much better if not completely. Her identity transition was not smooth at first. This is usually the case for international students from different culture and educational backgrounds. To give up ideas formed in China over more than twenty years is not easy, but it is not impossible. This makes the immediate adaptation hard in the initial stage for international students.

When a person is involved in a new culture, the first thing that s/he is curious about is the differences between the home culture and the new culture, especially in verbal communication. When Wang Jun first came to Australia and communicated with the locals, she felt strongly that Australian English is different from American English and British English. People's use of acronyms made her feel at a loss sometimes:

One of the typical characteristics of Australians is that they use acronyms frequently. People like to use it very much, especially on campus. We can also see them in the advertisements on TV. If you are not familiar with them, you are totally at a loss, so you have to learn them from time to time. This makes me conscious of my 'otherness' and adds to my feelings of difficulty in communication and understanding. Since I am in this environment and culture, I have to learn to adapt to it, just as I learn to use the word 'bloody' properly. It is interesting, yet difficult. (08/07/2010)

Acronyms are a feature of Australians and their English. This feature increases the difficulty of her adapting to the new educational culture by widening the distance needed for communication and understanding. Wang Jun needed time and efforts to memorise what ARC, ERA, ATLC

stand for and to learn to use them correctly. The acronyms are used not only orally, but also in written Australian English. Even though it was not easy for this non-native speaker to learn them, she is interested in them. As an EFL learner, Wang Jun observed that what the native speakers take for granted is often what she found the most difficult to learn. Collocation is the case in point:

One of the differences between first language acquisition and second language acquisition is that the mother tongue learners acquire it and second language learners have to learn it. In this case, native speakers tend to take some expressions for granted, but second language learners like to ask why, because when we first learn the language we learn rules. This is called prescriptive grammar. We try to learn the way the native speakers speak.

One of the difficulties we meet with is collocation, that is the expressions native speakers take for granted. We sometimes use our way to collocate some expressions but it is not the way native speakers do it, so we call it Chinglish. The typical example is the collocation of *conference paper* and *journal article*. In my mind, there is no difference between paper and article; I use them interchangeably. Can I say conference article and journal paper? (07/05/2010)

A good way of recording one's experience is to write reflections. For part of the communication between Wang Jun and her supervisor is through emails about her reflections. Whenever Wang Jun has something happy or unhappy, something that she wants to share with someone, she wrote a reflection to her supervisor. He always gave her timely feedback to the ideas she chose to share. This process made her aware of reflective practice as a way of producing evidence.

Of course, reflections are not just the record of experiences. They are also the expressions of her outlook, ideas and perceptions towards what she learns.

Recently I spent some time reading my Master students' papers, and at the same time doing the summary of Truth and Science. A question occurred to me. What is plagiarism and what is real plagiarism? Of course, in my students' papers, they copied some of the information from books, articles and journals without citations or quotes. I asked them to paraphrase or summarise them, but they feel at a loss. When I am doing the paraphrase and summary myself, I can't help thinking whether I am a plagiarist, because I can't put all the information into my own words. If I choose some synonyms to replace them, does that mean that I am not a plagiarist? Anyway it is not my idea. If I put it in another way, can it be my idea? Who is the real plagiarist? Who can set the criteria? I am confused. (08/05/2010)

Studying in an unfamiliar culture serves to reveal taken-for-granted conventions Wang Jun hold about her own metaphoric system. This may be seen as an act of political avoidance by which the transnational solidarities of these students are articulated in terms of China being a recently "liberated territory". This gives them the confidence to package their identities with "diasporic or postnational sensibilities" (Brennan, 1997, p.44). This is partially true, because for a newcomer to an unfamiliar culture, even though China is a "liberated territory", she did not have any confidence due to her identity:

I undertook a peer-review of a journal article about "Otherness". The concept of 'otherness' impressed me. It is a very good and vivid expression. It reminded me of my position here in Australia as one of otherness. It is true that I am one of them, but I wonder who can qualify himself – or herself - as not one of them. Can most Australians regard themselves as not among otherness? I am afraid not. It is well-known from Australian history that Australia is not a country developed from its original residents like China. It is one of the typical immigration countries. The majority of the Australians now are the second, third or even fourth descendents of the people from other countries, especially from Europe. This reminded me of the occasion when we were in Canberra, fighting verbally with the pro-Tibetans. I remembered somebody shouted: "Go back to Europe!" When I heard this I realised that from their ancestors they were not the original residents here. In this sense, how to define, confine and conceptualise the concept "otherness"? I am interested in this. (17/07/2010)

The governing of race relations may involve manufacturing and managing the "limits on tolerance for ethnicity-based self-determination" (Brennan, 1997, p.15). Wang Jun has attended different kinds of seminars, and gained different benefits from them. Her experiences of the first workshop and one four months later were different:

This workshop [Writer's Shock Workshop] is very interesting. The organiser taught us how to avoid or get rid of "writing shock" by activities. She asked us to do different kinds of writing, then we had a small group discussion to exchange ideas. I learned much from it. I found in the workshop that most of the attendees are not very young. I thought half of them are around 50. One of the "old" (I am not sure) women said she fell down when she finished her proposal. As you know, I always felt that I was too old to do PhD study. After this workshop, I have confidence in myself. I don't feel old any more, even though I am not young. (07/04/2010)

This workshop was held just three weeks after Wang Jun arrived in Australia. It did not give her much about her learning but it did get rid of her worries about being too old to do PhD studies. It is always her 'mental burden' because of Chinese people's conventional idea on PhD students. This really gave her courage to study hard like other "normal" (i.e. younger) PhD students. Wang Jun found much pleasure in seminars because of their lack of closure. Tutorials were a model of versatility and virtuosity. Students had the opportunity to play expressively and concretely with the English language. Wang Jun gained improvement and progress in her language capability. In the workshop she engaged in much discussion with other students. From their praise she realised her achievements, and she learned much about the content of a workshop. As a student, nothing is more valuable than improving one's capabilities.

It is possible to actively use a range of formal and informal educational experiences to develop one's learning, especially one's net-work of friends both local and international. The easiest way for an international student to get to know local and international people is attending Bible classes. Wang Jun is not the exception, and she found it very helpful:

The majority of western people belong (or claim) to a certain church, so church is very common and popular to them. But I had never seen a church service. I was curious about it, and eager to know what they usually do during the church service. I was invited to attend the church service last Sunday. It is quite different from what I imagined.

The service was carried out in a lecture theatre, not in a church. They sang a song first to show loyalty to God, and then they listened to the pastor's lectures from the Bible. The service was a bit like a party. They had a band to accompany their singing. All the church people, except for me, were lost in the music and songs. It seemed that they devoted themselves to God, their master and father.

After the service, we had a chat for a while. They were very good to me, a newcomer. I met people from different countries. One of them became my bible teacher, and some others are friends. They advocate we are all brothers and sisters. (22/06/2010)

Wang Jun used her attendance at church service to make contact with local and international people. Even though she had seen the church service on television, the real service is different, and necessary for her to make friends. These Christians met her need for friendship.

As a foreigner, the sense of being respected is enjoyable, and makes it easy for Wang Jun to love the people and the country.

I have gone to supermarkets several times. I found that with one shopping trolley I can go anywhere with the goods I bought in any store without being inspected at the checkout every time. This means, I think, they believe in me and respect me, and apparently some people can also take the trolley home if necessary. This really brings me much convenience, because I can buy many things one time. I do not have to go to a supermarket from time to time. Once a week is enough. I can devote all my time in the weekday to my study. That is why I have made good progress in a short time. I like the atmosphere and the people here very much. (17/04/2010)

Shopping in the market is greatly respected regardless of race and identity. Convenience has saved people's time and effort. These advantages make her feel really comfortable and pleasant. Wang Jun can not help loving the people here and the country.

The flow of international students is part of the changes in population transfers, shifts in the balance of geopolitical forces, and in telecommunications. Cultural imperialism where it exists, is no longer valid. Homogenisation meets cultural resistance. The act of consuming Australian educational products involves a process of "indigenisation" (Brennan, 1997, p.52).

The diversity represented by full-fee paying international students, most of whom are from Eastern and Southern Asia is a cultural-economic engine that drives the creative tensions in Australian universities struggling over managerial and educational innovations. As university management deals with integrating students into a consumer culture they are deeply embedded in its educational culture. Managers and academics struggle with each other to identify, affirm and elaborate each

other's tradition, history, and culture that can be used as "building blocks" (Brennan, 1997, p.159). However, academically, international students, especially Asian students are labelled as "unfocused, uncreative, plagiarists and rote learners". Fortunately, not all Australians think so. Her supervisor disagrees to this label and tries to argue this claim:

It is unfair and discriminated to say that Asian students tend to be unfocused, uncreative in writing, plagiarists and rote learners. This is an obvious prejudice. I admit that some students may be like that, but not all the students. I believe this is a universal phenomenon, not only restricted to Asian students. Countless evidence shows that Chinese are really very creative, from history to now. From another perspective people also get benefit from rote learning. It is said that in America people emphasise rote learning again. They believe that rote learning can accumulate knowledge especially the early stage in education. People in the other countries generalize the individual cases. Therefore, my supervisor is applying a project called 'argumentative Chinese' to argue the issue. He has the contrary experience in supervising Chinese PhD students. That is the initiative idea of applying the project. I am a participant in the project. (25/07/2010)

People's desires were mediated by the rise of English as one of the world main languages. The former students consciously preferred to study the English language which they accepted as "an enlightened linguistic imperialism" (Brennan, 1997, p. 144). Learning English and studying in English are integral to Wang Jun's structuring of her future career trajectory via international education:

The life in Australia is quite different from what I expected. Before I came here, I imagined that the life here must be colourful, with diverse activities. I thought I would be able to meet with and talk to many local people. However, after three months, I have found there are not many such activities or opportunities. I can meet with many local people, but I cannot talk to them except for greetings. Everyday my life is almost the same. It is really a bit dull and boring. But to my surprise, when I summarised my three months' work, I found I had achieved much in my studies. That accords with a Chinese saying, "*di nei sun shi di wai bu*", which means "you lose it in this aspect, but you gain it in other aspects". But I think what I have gained is much more valuable than what I have lost, for that is the main aim of my coming here. In this sense, I do not feel life is boring any more. I get pleasure from my studies. (18/06/2010)

International students actively use their formal and informal educational experiences to develop ability to negotiate cross-cultural relations. Race and class overlap, being mutually entangled in the human bodies of international students. After presenting the evidence above we will theorising international education in the following section.

## 1. THE PRACTICE OF THEORISING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Wang Jun's international education is a result of the evocation of cosmopolitan desires for travel, migration and intercultural communication. Wang Jun's imaginings

of an overseas education grow with her English language proficiency; scholarship which compensates the costs of education; her eagerness to learn the western cultures and the necessity to get a PhD degree. However, Wang Jun is not ignorant of the governing of race relations by 'neo-conservative' interests involving producing and managing crises that put restrictions on tolerance for ethnicity diversity.

Brennan (1997, p.15) observes that "cultural mixture is intellectually and artistically creative". Australian universities are part of these zones of intellectual mixing and cultural creativity. The market openings in China for Australian university education have made this possible (Brennan, 1997, p.59).

### 1.1 Race Diversity

Race is vital in understanding the internationalisation of Australian higher education. The concept of 'otherness' continues to be a cultural-historical incentive to educational innovation in higher education. In Australia, the increasing appearance of non-European people since the late 1970s has changed the educational imagination and associated regulatory forces. The policy and pedagogical initiatives in internationalising Australian higher education may have overestimated the promises made, although the seductions of Australian multi-culture make this easier (Brennan, 1997).

However, this does not mean that for an overseas student, adaptation to Australian educational culture becomes easier. The students usually were critical of the marketing style of Australian universities. In the criticisms made, they comment upon the social and cultural aspects of universities. They criticised "the workings of universities and the ways in which culture is served up, delimited, and allowed to be" (Ibid., p.73). Australia is not a heaven for all international students even though the Australians know that they have done good for international students by supporting the ideas about a happier native preferably living in the past. In 'salvage education' the other always seems doubtfully to be in danger of disappearing at the very moment the educator arrives to provide culturally reactive pedagogy, which "consigns other to a circular logic from which they cannot escape" (Ibid., p. 89).

Wang Jun's identity is changing, or at least flexible. While her identity appeared to be 'natural', it is much more "a pastiche of learned and chosen behaviours and manners" (Ibid., p.111). While her racial or ethnic identity is fictive, it is surprisingly taken, albeit selectively as proof of the cultural-historical expectations of Anglo-Australians. Wang Jun recognises the significant diversity among international students, which challenges the impressions Anglo-Australians have of them. There is also a subtle connection within their impressions, due to so many being 'White Australians'. Brennan (1997, p.111) notes that any angst toward international students is "the



result of ignorance”, the result of “being locked into an ethnic identity that has been predefined”. The miserable discrimination against international students is not a normal, insignificant occurrence because they are “not a neutral object but are a problem of either positive or negative desires” (Ibid., p.145).

### 1.2 Globalisation

Globalisation may be defined in terms of what it means for Australian ethnic diversity. With the disappearance of old ideas on ethnicity and cultural difference, Wang Jun has exchanged her intrinsic values for the more extrinsic ones in this cosmopolitan market. Gone are the times when people could make a persuasive claim to a culture of their own. Brennan (1997, p.175) claims that “there is no longer a set of meaningful practices that can be considered the exclusive product of singularly unique way of life”. Now, cultural specificity has yielded to the international marketisation of its signs. The old duality between China and the West has been “shattered by the emancipatory globalisation of ethnic attributes” (Ibid., p.175). There is no excuse for Wang Jun to feel she is not part of the collective called Australians, because like these strangers she pays “taxes to the same authority, and stand in the same lines at international airports” (Ibid., p.124). Brennan (1997, p.124) claims that migrants “affect the cultural life of the nation and are affected by it”.

The flow of international students is part of the changes in population transfers, shifts in the balance of geopolitical forces, and in telecommunications. Cultural imperialism may be no longer valid as homogenisation meets cultural resistance. The act of consuming Australian educational products involves a process of “indigenisation” (Ibid., p.52).

Wang Jun’s international education makes it possible for her to make connections with Anglo-Australians, Australian immigrants and students from overseas. It promotes global solidarity via its huge diasporic global links. Wang Jun is now at home in a world where such connections are not only possible but increasingly necessary. This brings a new reality to Wang Jun’s elusive sense of internationalism.

Even though they are theoretically meant to be equal to all students of different races, universities in multicultural Australia mostly operate in the lingua franca of English wherever they make themselves at home. In spite of the title “university” and its connotations of being unprovincial and non-idiosyncratic, their spreading of Australian English may be seen as a kind of “global parochialism” (Ibid., p.158).

### 1.3 Cosmopolitanism

Depressingly socialism is not what it was promised to be. An absent socialism confronts a resurgent market (Brennan, 1997). Her overseas educational experiences stimulated Wang Jun’s reflections on what it means to be

Chinese, a woman, a human, a worker, a citizen of the world. For Wang Jun cosmopolitanism is taking on new meanings structured by debates about the globalising of her experiences and outlook as a teacher-educator.

Cosmopolitanism is neither a matter of being a world traveller or being post-national. It is related to ideas about “the possible death of the nation-state, transculturation (rather than assimilation), cultural hybridity and the questionable postmodernist view that consumption is an exciting, viable form of politics” (Ibid., p.2).

As an international student Wang Jun actively uses a range of formal, informal and non-formal educational experiences to develop her net-work of friends forming both local and international contacts. Her cosmopolitanism is “an existential ethical state”, a culture of “macro-interdependencies, a cluster of values”. The consequences of being an international student, by virtue of her race or upbringing mean Wang Jun is “well positioned, influential, respected in certain circles” precisely for her foreignness (Ibid., p.13). Few international students find it “hopeless to try to embrace the world” because of the limits on and the impossibility of knowing the languages and cultures so thoroughly (Ibid., p.309).

On the educational front “World English” is the lingua franca of most Australian universities penetrating China. The Chinese government promotes the dominating American dialect of the English language as a matter of policy. This includes importing students from the USA to teach in the country. Brennan (1997, p.35) observes that “American studies have achieved a new prominence and respectability in China, amply funded on both sides of the Pacific”.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 Life Course

The changing life course of an international student, Wang Jun makes it possible to investigate the influence of a new culture and society on her development. The research reported here indicates the influence of Australian society on the adaptation and academic development of a teacher-educator from China during her first six months in this country. Some of it was positive and some negative.

The data collected for this research were self-reflections of Chinese teacher-educator, Wang Jun. She had never been to an English speaking country and had no experience of life in a foreign country, so her self-reflections provide a foreigner’s insight into life experience and its changing life course. As Elder (1992) claims “life patterns are shaped by an ever-changing society”. Being able to show this connection between an individual’s life and societal change is a distinguishing characteristic of life course study. Life patterns seem to be becoming more standardised and more diversified (Hutchison, 2008).

Elder (1992, p.632) observes that life course can be approached by “specifying some cognitive and motivational links between family background and educational achievement and by identifying career contingencies”.

This account of Wang Jun's life course specifies the timing and sequencing of events in her transition from one identity as a teacher-educator in China to another, a trainee educational researcher in Australia, reflecting “models that link social origins and destinations” (Elder, 1992, p.632). In Wang Jun's life course, she must have experienced a sequence of education, from primary schooling through senior learning to higher education. Every event in her life course plays a vital role in her transition to life. Wang Jun's life course can be accounted for in terms of: kin-based models; collection of life-record data; explanatory challenges; time and timing; and interlocking lives (Elder, 1992).

Two contributions to Wang Jun's life deserve special note because of their contemporary significance to her transition to life in Australia: the path through her work experience as a teacher-educator in China and the timing of events in this transition. The effect of her work experiences and achievements play an important role in this transition. She needed to adjust and adapt to the completely different environment. In the event timing, several important events happened during this period of time.

Career contingency can be embodied by the transition of the identity from a teacher-educator in China to a research higher degree (HDR) student in Australia. This transition changed Wang Jun's life course from a “native” to a “non-native”, from a family life to a single life, and from a mother tongue to a foreign language. All these changes compose an important part of her life course.

Xie and Shauman (2003, p.1669) argue that “life transitions are interdependent across education, family, and work and that later transitions are contingent on (but not determined by) earlier transitions”. Elder (1994, p.5) notes that “overall the life course can be viewed as a multilevel phenomenon, ranging from structured pathways through social institutions to the social trajectories of individuals and developmental pathways”. Wang Jun's careers have been subject to changing conditions, and short-term transitions, and open to future transitions, which are embedded in “trajectories that give them distinctive form and meaning” (Elder, 1994, p.5). In a rapidly changing society such as China, differences in birth year expose Wang Jun to different historical worlds, with their constraints and options. Her life course reflects these different times.

The timing of lives is a temporal, age-graded perspective to social roles and events. The timing of life course events and roles tells much about “the goodness of fit between lives and work careers” (Ibid., p. 6). According to the life stage principle, the personal impact of these changes depends on where Wang Jun is in her life at the time of the change. In her middle age, Wang Jun made an

important transition which will have a great impact in her life course.

Human lives are typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across the life span. The principle of linked lives refers to “the interaction between the individual's social worlds over the life span” (Ibid., p.6). Wang Jun made plans and choices from among possible options which are about how to construct her life course. Individual differences clearly matter in this research, particularly as they “interact with changing environments to produce behavioural outcomes” (Ibid.). Making this choice was not easy for a middle-aged woman because Wang Jun needed to take into consideration her aged parents, her family, colleagues, friends and even her students.

The changes involved in transitions are not discrete and bounded; when they happen, an old phase of life slowly ends and a new phase slowly begins; airplane journey can make it seem much faster than it really is. Trajectories involve a longer view of long-term patterns of stability and change in Wang Jun's life, which has involved multiple transitions. Wang Jun did not expect her life trajectory to have a continuity of direction. Because individuals and families live their lives in multiple spheres, their lives are made up of multiple, intersecting trajectories, of which education is but one (Hutchison, 2008, p.15).

Specific events predominate in Wang Jun's life. A life event is a significant occurrence involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long-lasting effects. The term refers to the happening itself and not to the transitions that will occur because of the happening. A transition is a more gradual change that occurs with life events (Ibid., p.16).

Indeed, there is much diversity in the sequencing and timing of Wang Jun's adult life course markers, such as completing an education, beginning work, leaving home and marrying. Trajectories in her family domain have been more flexible than her work and educational trajectories (Ibid., p.23). To gain a better understanding of regularities and irregularities in her life course trajectories, this paper provides some sense of the order in which her life events and transitions occurred (Ibid.). In general, the longer Wang Jun experiences the Australian educational environments and conditions, the more likely it is that her behaviour will be affected by it (Ibid.).

Wang Jun's choices were constrained by the structural and cultural arrangements of this historical era such as finances, immigration, and job shortage. She knows that unequal opportunities also give some members of Chinese society more options than she has had. Wang Jun has a strong *self-efficacy*, or sense of personal competence, and a social *efficacy expectation*, or expectation that she can personally accomplish her goals (Ibid., p.27).

Wang Jun's transition experience has sometimes proven traumatic. Her resettlement experience has required the establishment of new social networks,

changes in socioeconomic status, but she is now a poor student not a well-paid teacher-educator, and she has the serious demands of acculturating into the Australian physical and social environment. Gender, race, social class, and age all add layers of complexity of Wang Jun's experience. Family roles have often to be renegotiated. Tensions can also develop over conflicting approaches to the acculturation process.

## 2.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective has several advantages over traditional theories of human development. It encourages greater attention to the impact of historical and social change on Wang Jun's behaviour, which is particularly important given her rapidly changing circumstances. Because it attends to biological, psychological, and social processes in the timing of Wang Jun's life, it is a good fit with a biopsychosocial perspective. Its emphasis on linked lives shines a spotlight on intergenerational relationships and the interdependence of Wang Jun's life. The life course perspective is not as deterministic, and acknowledges Wang Jun's strengths and capacity for change (Hutchison, 2008).

With attention to the diversity in life course trajectories, the life course perspective provides a good conceptual framework for culturally sensitive practice. Finally, the life course perspective lends itself well to research that looks at cumulative advantage and cumulative disadvantage, adding to our knowledge about the impact of power and privilege, and subsequently suggesting strategies for social justice.

## 2.3 Teacher-Educator in Middle Adulthood

Wang Jun is in middle years of adulthood, her midlife, or the central part of her life course. As a midlife adult she has an established family with a husband, is well established in her career, and takes responsibility for her parents. As a middle-aged leader educator Wang Jun has reached the peak of her career and filling leadership roles. Wang Jun has reached the peak of her performance in her mental abilities, especially inductive reasoning, spatial orientation, vocabulary, and verbal memory.

Identity plays a central role in stability and change of an adult personality. Identity continues to develop throughout adulthood through the processes of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process through which individuals incorporate new experiences into their existing identity. Accommodation, on the other hand, is the process through which an individual changes some aspect of identity in response to new experiences. These make some movement toward a more balanced identity style.

In contemporary life, both women and men fulfil multiple social roles in midlife. The most central roles are related to family and paid work. Relationships with

family, friends, and co-workers are an important part of Wang Jun's middle adulthood. Key relationships which are important to the well-being of Wang Jun: relationships with mother, father, siblings, extended family, spouse, friends and her Australian supervisor. As with most midlife adults, Wang Jun is involved in five or more of these types of relationships at one time or another, but the nature of the mix of relationships and their importance for personal well-being changes over time in complex ways. Wang Jun needs a variety of relationships for her psychological well-being.

## CONCLUSION

Of all the changes that have happened to higher education in the name of global restructuring, the changing patterns in the movement of students are significant. Globalisation means that those who were once considered as other or alien are increasingly in our midst. How shall local people come to terms with the alien's presence? The issue is not a matter of identity per se, but what kind of Australian identity. The white Australian identity was "a negative construction, hostile towards and exclusive of non-Europeans" (Morley & Robins, 1995, p.21).

Any new beginnings to the project of renegotiating Asia-Australia relations should include the education-culture. Therefore, differences in educational culture are an issue that an international student has to deal with. Within the new educational culture, local society has a great influence on a newcomer. The transition of several identities makes the adjustment and adaptation last longer. On the other hand, it also makes the newcomer seek to adapt and improve quickly in order to survive. Wang Jun's reflections are a genuine expression of an alien's life story in a new culture. These reflections show that the influence of a society on an international student is inevitable and makes the transition hard but not impossible.

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