

**“TOP” OVERSEAS TALENT AS A DISTINGUISHED SOCIAL GROUP: A
POLICY STUDY USING CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

by

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Abstract

To reverse “brain drain”, the Chinese governments have deployed various mechanisms, including preferential policies, to recruit ethnic Chinese individuals from abroad who are considered top talent urgently needed in China. This study looks at how Chinese overseas recruitment policies contribute to the construction of overseas talent as a distinguished social group, thereby entrenching stratification in the Chinese society. Theoretically, the thesis is informed by Bourdieu’s theory of social class and by Levinson *et al.*’s perspectives on policy function. The main focus is the *Thousand Talent Plan (TTP)*, which is the China’s most influential policy for recruiting top-notch talent from abroad. My study starts with a historical overview of talent policies in China, giving special attention to the social and economic context of the changes. Critical discourse analysis is then employed as a methodological approach to examine how such policies ideologically differentiate the “best from the rest.” I argue that Chinese overseas recruitment policies have the formative power to construct and impose a legitimate vision of “top” overseas talent as a distinguished social group: a minority privileged with cultural capital, advantageous economic capital, privileged social capital, and honourable symbolic capital. Study limitations and implications for policy and practice are discussed.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Yanxian Mo.

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Glossary

CCCPC = Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party of China

CDA = critical discourse analysis

DOD = Department of Defense

IT = information technology

LCA = Labour Condition Application

M.A. = Master of Arts

PhD = Doctor of Philosophy

R&D = research and development

RMB = Chinese Yuan Renminbi

SOEs = state-owned enterprises

TTP = Thousand Talent Plan

TWD = New Taiwan Dollars

U.K. = United Kingdom

U.S. = United States

WTO = World Trade Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research problematic

“Brain drain” is a term used to describe the outflow of professional workers to other countries. This phenomenon has occurred in a number of countries in Asia, including China, since the 1960s (Harvey, 2014; Tzeng, 2006). Since 1949, the Chinese government, at all level of the system, has become more and more open to having Chinese Nationals study abroad as a means to access the latest science and technology (Feng & Chen, 2011; Li, 2006). However, without effective policies or measures for bringing back these overseas students China has suffered the loss of valuable human talent to well-developed countries since 1980s, such as the United States (US), Canada, and Australia (Harvey, 2014).

In the last two decades the Chinese government has sought to reverse the trend of brain drain (Yang, 2009). Recruiting professionals from overseas has been perceived as instrumental to strengthening national competitiveness in the global economy. Since 1994, the governments have deployed various schemes to recruit highly skilled professionals from the Chinese diaspora abroad. Key policy players involved in the race for global talent include not only the central government and its ministries, but also local governments, who often take the initiative to establish their own talent repatriation schemes, independent from and in some cases ahead of central government initiatives. These talent schemes normally involve rigorous selection criteria for candidates and promise exceptionally generous financial incentives and social entitlements for those selected. Based on the statistical data published in the *International Talent Blue Book*:

*Overseas Chinese Professionals Report*¹(Wang & Miao, 2014), by 2006, the total number of students who had studied abroad was 1,067,000 and approximately 25 percent (275,000) had returned. By 2013, almost 50 percent (1,444,800) of the 3,058,600 students who had studied overseas had returned. Although there are no data examining how many individuals returned due to policy incentives, the trend of increasing returnees provides evidence for some scholars that the Chinese central government and its overseas talent policies have played a significant role in reversing “brain drain” (Harvey, 2014, p. 63).

Resentment and antagonism, however, have emerged against foreign-trained professionals due to the preferential treatment they have received (Li, 2004; Zweig, 2006). Some criticize the fact that the “so-called experts” from overseas receive far higher salaries than their domestic counterparts (Dong, 2014). Furthermore, many of the returned experts are, in fact, only “partially returned”; that is, they are not perceived as having a long-term commitment or dedication to China’s scientific and economic development (Zweig & Wang, 2013). As Zweig and Wang (2013) write,

[Policies] supporting short-term visits, whereby expatriate mainlanders received a generous financial package without fixed obligations, led local scientists to argue that high salaried scientists who contribute little to China’s long-term advancement essentially take the money and run. (p. 606)

In this case, such policies may have “more symbolic than substantive significance” (Xiang, 2011, p. 828). Some scholars also believe that the two groups are of distinct social status (Li, 2004; Xiang, 2011). Li (2004, p. 2), for example, argues that returned overseas professionals exist as “a distinguished elite class” in China because they are

¹ 《国际人才蓝皮书——海外华侨华人专业人士报告》

more likely to be in higher positions of power than the local elites.

Two terms have subsequently been coined for labeling the two “confrontational” factions: the “returning sea turtles faction” (海归派, *haigui pai*) – referring to returned overseas professionals in general – and the “land turtles faction” (土鳖派, *tubie pai*) – referring to domestic professionals (Zweig, 2006, p. 85). Notably, in the northeastern Chinese dialect, the term “land turtle” (*tubie*) refers to people who are ignorant and myopic, individuals who are generally underestimated or ridiculed by others. In contrast, since “sea turtles” (*haigui*) are listed as an endangered and protected species in China, the term connotes the rare value of returned overseas talent. Indeed, the elite status attributed to returned overseas talent could be perceived from the term.

In order to strive for a competitive edge in the global marketplace the Chinese governments continue developing policies to attract overseas talent, deemed a valuable asset to the economic development of China. Meanwhile, preferential policies for overseas talent may be leading to the rise of a separate class of “superior” professionals. In other words, this policy context provides the grounds for distinguishing individuals are groups in notable ways.

1.2 Purpose of the study and the research questions

The following study begins with the assumption that the construction of “overseas talent” has become entangled with the political inclination of the government and the evolving societal structure of the Chinese society. Overseas recruitment policies may have played a significant role in making overseas talent a distinguished social group, a mechanism of social stratification in China. The purpose of the study is to analyze how China’s

overseas recruitment policies enable the reproduction of social stratification in the age of pursuing a “knowledge economy.”² To be specific, the study probes into how overseas talent recruitment policies may have impacted social stratification and mobility within the context of national interests, dominant ideologies, and political initiatives exercised by the Chinese central government in the “global war for talent” (i.e., talent competition among nations).

The overarching research question is as follows: how does the discursive construction of ‘overseas talent’ in Chinese overseas recruitment policy mirror China’s governmental interests and participate in the reproduction of existing social stratification with Chinese society? Within this broad research question, three specific questions will be addressed:

- i. What is the historical development of overseas talent recruitment policy in China?
- ii. How has “overseas talent” been constructed in the recruitment policies for overseas Chinese professionals?
- iii. What implications do these policies have for the production and reproduction of existing social class stratification in China?

The study uses critical discourse analysis to understand how “overseas talent” is constructed in relation to the social, historical, and political contexts of the country, rendering visible related governmental ideologies and strategies. The goal of the discourse analysis is twofold: first, to obtain insights into how overseas recruitment policies may have contributed to the creation and perpetuation of social inequality; and second, to understand how the social conditioning impacts people’s international mobility from a policy perspective.

² The “knowledge economy” is defined in Chapter 2.

1.3 Definition of terms: talent and overseas talent

Talent

“Talent” is a term I use in my study as synonymous to the Chinese word “*rencai*” (人才). In the Chinese context “*rencai*” is a term that refers to a person or persons who possess skills and talent. *Rencai* was first used in the “Book of Songs” (《诗经》, *Shi Jing*) where a “luxuriant tree” (“菁菁者莪”³) is used as a metaphor for *rencai* referring to a person who has well developed skills (Cao, 2007). Yet thousands of years later there are no clear definitions for *rencai* (Xia & Zhou, 2003). Only after the establishment of the *Talents Research Association of China*⁴ in 1981 did discussions of *rencai* appear again. The most commonly accepted definition in the literature is from Ye *et. al.* (1983) and Wang (1985), who define *rencai* as a person who has his/her own expertise, special skill, ability, and can make a large contribution to society.

In English, many scholars use “talent” as the appropriate translation for the Chinese word “*rencai*” (Harvey, 2014; Brown & Tannock, 2009; Wang, 2011; Zweig *et al.*, 2004; Zhao & Zhu, 2009) in order to reference “educated and skilled individuals” (Wang, 2011, p. 49). The Chinese governments also prefer using the English word “talent” as a translation of “*rencai*” in public discourses; for example, the “*Thousand Talent Plan*” is given as the English translation of “*qian ren(cai) jihua*.” The definition of “talent” has evolved greatly over time, from being synonymous with possessions (e.g. weight, money)

³ In Chinese the phrase is as follows: “菁菁者莪，乐育材也，君子能长育人材，则天下喜乐之矣！” In English this means that *rencai* are like luxuriant trees that would be beloved and revered by others.

⁴ <http://www.zgrc.org.cn/cn/index.html>

to framing natural ability and individuals possessing talent (Tansley, 2011; The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2010). Although the meanings of “talent” and “*rencai*” are not identical, what I believe is that the meanings of these two terms are absorbing mutually. In my thesis, I use the English term “talent” to refer to individual or group “*rencai*.”

The use of the term of “talent” or “*rencai*” implies a certain social order. Drawing on McKinsey’s thesis, Beechler and Woodward (2009) consider that talent comparatively refers to a person who is “the best and the brightest” (p. 274) or at “the A level” (p. 274). Such a definition is widely recognized, particularly in situations associated with selective or competitive purposes.

Overseas talent

For Zweig *et al.* (2004), global talent refers to those who “possess new ideas, technologies and information that abets globalization, [those who] become imbued with ‘transnational human capital’, and make [themselves] more valuable to these societies” (p. 735). In other words, global talent is seen as promoting the transnational exchange of technology and capital, not only within a domestic labour market, but also across global markets (Zweig *et al.*, 2004).

In the Chinese context, overseas students have become a potential pool of global talent (Wang, 2013; Yang, 2009; Zhao & Zhu, 2009). In Chinese research literature both scholars and government agencies use “overseas talent” as synonymous to “global talent.” In China overseas students are deemed to be “a cadre of highly trained and qualified people with valuable Western-style managerial experience and entrepreneurial

skills, while simultaneously possessing local market knowledge and access to networks in the host country” (Beechler & Woodward, 2009, p. 275). For instance, the State Science and Technology Commission believes that overseas students possess the abilities needed to easily gain access to American technological skills (Zweig *et al.*, 2008). That is, overseas students are understood to leverage key skills and knowledge beyond national boundaries, all of which contributes to the economic development of China.

Over the last decade China has increased its efforts to appeal to the overseas students in the growing competition for global talent, attempting to turn them into returnees or *haigui* (海归). The common image conjured by the term *haigui* is a returnee with a “high paying job and high socioeconomic status” (Zhao & Zhu, 2009, p. 332). This trend is often seen as a force stratifying domestic graduates into inferior positions within Chinese employment hierarchies (Fan, 2010). However, this is not the experience of every returnee. In recognition of the different experiences of overseas returnees two new terms have appeared: *haiou* and *haidai* (Zhao & Zhu, 2009). The former refers to “a group of ‘half-returnees’, [those] who split their time between China and other countries” (Zhao & Zhu, 2009, p. 332), individuals who are understood to create “economic linkages between the two regions” (Basri *et al.*, 2008, p. 51). These *haiou* are regarded as “real” talented returnees, as they are able to mobilize talent on a global scale and enjoy transnational privileges. Thus they have become the most desirable among *haigui*. *Haidai*, in contrast, is a term used to describe unemployed returnees who have yet to find an employment in China. They are considered to be comparably underprivileged and often neglected by state talent schemes (Zhao & Zhu, 2009). As a Chinese individual trained abroad, such terms may come to shape my experience when I return to China.

1.4 Positionality

Positionality affects how all research is conducted. It reflects both the theoretical stance and political perception of a policy researcher (Lingard, 2009). Thus it is of great importance to briefly introduce my personal background as shapes my research interests, subjective position, and approach to understanding social problems.

I was born and raised in the city of Jiangmen, Guangdong, a city of origin for over four million overseas Chinese individuals (Xinhuanet, 2012). Thanks to the strong overseas connections in the city, I grew up with various stories surrounding emigration, igniting my interest in overseas Chinese. Since I moved to Canada for my graduate studies in 2013, I have witnessed the return of an increasing number of overseas Chinese, most of whom are highly educated students or professionals. I was intrigued by this phenomenon and hoped to explore it. It became the driving force behind my Master of Arts (M.A.) research. When I became involved in a research project on transnational experience of Chinese immigrant women in Canada (with my research supervisor Dr. Hongxia Shan), I realized that China's public policies play a very important role in mediating the transnational movement of individuals and groups. With this concern in mind, I narrowed my research focus to Chinese overseas recruitment policy.

Growing up in China my worldview was shaped by the political ideology of "building a harmonious society." The Chinese governments and media shy away from any discussion of class or conflict in order to sustain the illusion of a classless and conflict-free society. Indeed, I believed that I was living in such a harmonious society. However, my belief was challenged after I began studying in Canada and I was sensitized

to issues of social stratification. I was immersed in sociological conceptions of power relations and social equality, important terms discussed more widely in Western contexts compared to China. I quickly realized how significant and necessary it is to investigate issues in Chinese society with sensitivity to power and equality. I currently regard myself as a research student influenced by both Chinese and Western culture, which adventitiously positions me to conduct the following study.

1.5 Significance of the study

The following study aims to make contributions to academic research, practice, and policy. Academically it is one of the first studies that brings a lens attune to class inequality to the study of overseas recruitment policies in China through the methodology of critical discourse analysis. With regard to practice, a deeper understanding of the Chinese central government's ideologies and interests will perhaps influence the decisions people make about transnational movements. In terms of policy contributions, a study that critically discusses the probable effects of Chinese overseas talent policies can suggest improvements, especially in regards to the improvement of social equality.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

In the current chapter, *Chapter 1*, I have identified the research problem, formulated my research questions and purposes, defined the terms “talent” and “overseas talent” in relation to my study, articulated my positionality, and discussed the study significance. *Chapter 2* reviews the global context of talent mobility and talent competition that

informs my inquiry. It first reviews literature central to the idea of the “knowledge economy” in order to understand the social and economic conditions that drive the global war for talent. Next this thesis presents the different national talent policies or strategies of the US, India, and Taiwan. As a leading receiving country for global talent, the US governments have highly developed policies and laws on skilled immigration that address both economic issues and social impacts connected to skilled immigration. India and Taiwan, two contexts that share certain commonalities with China in terms of “brain drain,” serve as references and comparisons in considering the reversal of “brain drain.”

Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual framework that underpins my analysis. First it begins with insight into theories of social class. Next the role of policy in the study of social structures is explored, drawing attention to how policy discourse mediates between ideologies and social practices. At the end of this chapter, I summarize how these concepts are applied to my study. *Chapter 4* illustrates the methodology and research process. The chapter is divided into three sections: critical discourse analysis as methodology, choice of materials, and techniques for data analysis. *Chapter 5* presents my research findings. It first traces the historical evolution of Chinese overseas talent policies while paying close attention to the Chinese economic context. Second, it offers a critical discourse analysis of key policies to explicate how “overseas talent” is represented within and outside of policy texts and how such policies constitute social practices. Third, the selection mechanism of the *Thousand Talent Plan* is explored in order to reveal the interests of the government and the actual use of talent schemes. *Chapter 6* concludes the thesis with a summary of my research findings, limitations, and the implications of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature: the Global Context for the “War for Talent”

Global competition for talent has increasingly become a topic of interest in the fields of economics, sociology, and education. For this study I reviewed journal articles which had the terms “knowledge,” “economy,” “migration,” “diaspora,” “policy,” “strategy,” and “measure” in their titles, abstracts, and keywords. The following chapter presents a literature review on the global “war for talent,” highlighting a) how the idea of the “knowledge economy” has driven the global “war for talent,” intersecting with higher education and the ideology of meritocracy, and b) how the US, India, and Taiwan provide examples of state engagement in talent competition. At the end of this chapter I identify the research gaps and convergence in the literature, justifying my study in the Chinese context.

2.1 Contexts of the knowledge economy

2.1.1 Concepts of the knowledge economy

According to Brown and Lauder (2012), “the dominant view today is that we have entered a global knowledge economy, driven by the application of new technologies and collapsing barriers to international trade and investment, accelerating the evolutionary path from a low- to a high-skills economy” (p. 117). The idea of a knowledge economy goes under a variety of labels, such as “the knowledge industry,” “the information economy,” “postindustrial society,” or even “post-capitalist society” (Brint, 2001). For some scholars, such as Brint (2001), although the so-called knowledge economy has yet to flourish globally, concepts connected to the knowledge economy are widely discussed.

According to Brint (2001), there are three different views of the “knowledge economy” as represented by Fritz Machlup, Peter Drucker, and Stanback respectively. Machlup sees knowledge as an activity that produces “a meaningful apperception, awareness, cognizance, or consciousness” (p. 104) and/or provides information, framing products of the knowledge economy as mainly information goods and information-based services (Brint, 2001).

Drucker and his followers “focus on the application of intellect to constant renovation and growth in mature corporations” (Brint, 2001, p. 104). They do not simply look at the direct application of knowledge, but emphasize how industrial production has become more and more “knowledge-centered” (Brint, 2001, p. 106). The knowledge they refer to is that which is deemed advanced and novel, emphasizing the relationship between knowledge and economic production.

In contrast Stanback focuses on “producer services, [which] contribute to the solution of corporate needs, whether in gaining access to capital, procuring personnel, handling legal problems, or introducing new technology” (Brint, 2001, p. 108-109). Stanback frames services as equally important goods for economic production in the knowledge economy. Noyelle and Sassen extend Stanback’s perspectives to emphasize the role of “educated labor in the class structure of postindustrial societies” (Brint, 2001, p. 109). This idea is partly in accord with Bell’s framework of a post-industrial society, where “a new class of scientific and technical professionals could emerge” (Brint, 2001, p. 107).

Brint (2001) summarizes these three streams of thoughts on the “knowledge economy” and put forward his own argument. For Brint (2001), knowledge in the knowledge economy is considered to be “economically relevant” (p. 110) or even “scientific and

professional knowledge” (p. 111). However, in contrast to Bell, Brint (2001) does not privilege scientific and technical knowledge or limits “knowledge workers” to scientific-technical professionals. Rather he argues that viewing “knowledge” or “knowledge workers” as a status label is problematic. As Brint (2001) states,

I do not privilege scientific and professional knowledge as much as the earlier theorist did. Instead, [I] assume that all workers have economically valuable knowledge and that this knowledge contributes materially to their work performance and therefore to their productivity. [...] I assume further that organizations also rely on practical knowledge to create economies of interaction. (p. 113)

Brint (2001) also raises the following question: “should professionals be considered as a privileged stratum of workers?” (p. 115). As he understands it, such a question is based on “whether knowledge should be considered analogous to capital or labour” (p. 115). Thus, Brint (2001) argues the following:

Professionals should not be confused with owners or managers. They are owners only when they are independent small business people or vested partners in a professional firm. They are managers only when they have taken on administrative roles that occupy a very substantial amount of their working time – in general, this would mean more than half of their working time (Derber *et al.*, 1990). In other cases, they are clearly workers, however privileged they may be. (p. 115)

Although Brint does not explicitly answer the questions above, he positions professionals as not necessarily parallel to either capital or labour, labeling “professionals” as “workers” to evade the discussion on whether and to what extent professionals are privileged. Likewise Solimano *et al.* (2006) argue that professionals can be regarded as both

“knowledge workers” (p. 9) or “owners of intellectual capital” (p. 10). Thus professionals are understood to be entangled with capital and labour.

2.1.2 Higher education and the meritocracy

The idea of a knowledge economy drives individuals to seek advanced education (Brint, 2001; Brown & Lauder, 2012; Brown & Tannock, 2009). It is believed that the more people invest in their education the more rewards they receive in return from the labor market (Brown & Lauder, 2012). Brown and Lauder (2012) criticize the notion of a “winner-takes-all market” (p. 136), as people engaged in the same profession or managerial status do not receive the same income or career opportunities. Individuals from middle-class families and those who are advantaged in material, cultural, and social resources are largely better positioned to be “winners” (Brown, 2003; Brown & Lauder, 2012). As Brown and Lauder (2012) argue,

[S]ome individuals and families are much better placed to mobilize their material, cultural and social assets to increase their chances of winning the competition for elite credentials and jobs. The emphasis on parental choice and market competition within education serves to legitimate, as least in political terms, the huge inequalities in the quality of educational experiences. (p. 136)

A global hierarchy of “world class” universities connects to notions of competition. Many universities in the West “provide the international benchmark for academic excellence for the foreseeable future” (Brown & Lauder, 2012, p. 137). It is commonly believed that students from elite universities are more academically and occupationally successful (Brown & Lauder, 2012). Brown and Lauder (2012) argue that in addition to

academic performance, the financial background of a family is also important for a student to get access to the most prestigious universities. Richer students are more likely to be able to afford the expensive tuition required by elite universities, thereby enjoying educational advantages.

Although education in the West provides the benchmark for academic excellence, labour markets in the West serve as the “main bidder for quality jobs” (Brown & Lauder, 2012, p. 119). Based on a critical evaluation of the market and prospective employees, leading countries in the West are understood to set the benchmark for wages. To compete for the global talent, other countries, including India and China, are drawn into the same wage competition (Brown & Lauder, 2012). Thus, through flows of education and work, the competition for talent is premised on the idea of a meritocracy, endorsing “a system of education-based differentiation that legitimates the privileged status and wealth of the highly skilled and educated” (Brown & Tannock, 2009, p. 389).

The term of “meritocracy” was coined by Young (1958) to describe a phenomenon that talented professionals prerogative in society. He states:

The twentieth century had room for the word. People of power and privilege were readier than ever to believe that modern society [is ruled] not so much by the people as by the cleverest people. [It is] not an aristocracy of birth, not a plutocracy of wealth, but a true meritocracy of talent. (Young, 1958, p. xii)

Importantly, the term “meritocracy” connects to socio-economic inequality. On one hand it justifies the current unequal social structure. Meritocracy constructs and maintains its superiority by “restricting access to rewards and privileges” (Brown, 1995, p. 30), a process that leads to social exclusion. On the other hand, the term meritocracy suggests

the lopsided development of social sectors behind its formulation. According to Brown (1995), meritocracy is produced by virtue of the unequal distributions of social and economic rewards that sparks a “process of class formation and enduring patterns of social inequality” (p. 29). Brown and Tannock (2009) come up with a term “hyper-meritocracy” to depict that “the ‘best’ are disproportionately rewarded as the war for talented intellectuals devalues everything other than ‘top’ performance” (p. 384).

2.2 The global war for talent

In the pursuit of a knowledge economy human talent is becoming the focus of global competition (Kuptsch & Pang, 2006). In Brown and Lauder’s (2012) words, the current era is the “age of human capital” (p. 126), where the economy is cast as tightly connected to the “economic successes of individuals” (p. 126). While many well-developed nations, such as the US and the United Kingdom (UK), are considered to be traditionally receiving countries for global talent, India and Taiwan – generally recognized as source economies for global talent – are now experiencing a reversal of “brain drain” (Kuptsch & Pang, 2006). This section provides an overview of how global talent competition impacts state policy in the US, India, and Taiwan, highlighting the diverse and similar strategies these governments adopt.

The US, with its long history of receiving global talent through immigration, has now developed mature policies and laws to regulate skilled migrants (Martin, 2006). Although the US is a markedly different social context from China, some aspects of its talent policies can serve as references. India, one of the largest emerging economies in Asia, has lost many valuable skilled workers to Western countries, such as the US, the UK,

Canada, and Australia (Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006). More recently, return migration to India is on the rise, although there is no direct policy to attract global talent to return on a long-term basis (Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006). Similarly, Taiwan, which – as most countries in East Asia – once supplied immigrants to the US and other Western countries, is now experiencing a “brain circulation” because of its effective strategies and well-target policies for bringing back talent. These trends are understood to influence policy and global talent competition in China (Tzeng, 2006). However, in contrasting the three contexts notable differences and commonalities with China are found.

2.2.1 Skilled immigration and regulation: experience from the US

As it asserted in the official websites⁵ of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the US system for skilled immigration is employment-based. The US federal government supports skilled migration mainly under H-1B visa policy (i.e., non-immigrant visa) and immigration policies which transfer temporary workers to permanent residents.

The H-1B visa program⁶ enables the employment of foreign workers in select occupations, the Department of Defense (DOD) cooperative research and development projects, or those who serve as models of distinguished merit or ability. The program qualifies candidates in terms of their education credentials, fields of study, occupations, etc. Only when individuals find US employers to sponsor them can their H-1B visas be approved. In this case, as Martin (2006) argues, “the US employer in effect controls the border gate, not the government” (p. 96). In order to process sponsorship, US employers

⁵ <http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-first-preference-eb-1>

⁶ <http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-dod-cooperative-research-and-development-project-workers-and-fashion-models>

must submit a Labour Condition Application (LCA), which requires employers to ensure equality and harmony between the current employees and the employee-to-be within an organization. To be specific, the prospective employers must guarantee:

[To] pay the beneficiary a wage which is no less than the wage paid to similarly qualified workers or, if greater, the prevailing wage for your position in the geographic area in which you will be working; [and to] provide working conditions that will not adversely affect other similarly employed workers. (the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2015, H-1B Specialty Occupations, DOD Cooperative Research and Development Project Workers, and Fashion Models: Labour Condition Application (LCA))

As for the visa program itself, the majority of prospective skilled immigrants are expected to be “members of the professions holding advanced degrees or their equivalent or who because of their exceptional ability in the arts, sciences, or business” (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952, Act 203(b)(2)(A)). That is, they are deemed skilled workers “who are capable [...] of performing skilled labour (requiring at least 2 years training or experience), not of a temporary or seasonal nature, for which qualified workers are not available in the United States” (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952, Act 203(b)(3)(A)(i)) and professionals “who hold baccalaureate degrees and who are members of the professions” (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952, Act 203(b)(3)(A)(ii)). Thus, the power of assertion to recruit skilled migrants is largely given to US employers, thereby situating the US governments in a relatively passive position in the search for global talent.

However, the US employers do not have the absolute authority within the skilled

immigration process, as the US Department of Labour issues “Labour Certification” to regulate employers. Under the regulation, the US employers should prove:

[a] There are insufficient available, qualified, and willing U.S. workers to fill the position being offered at the prevailing wage.

[b] Hiring a foreign worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. (the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2015, Permanent Workers: Labour Certification)

These two requirements for employers prioritize local employees to ensure that employment opportunities in the local labour market are not squandered due to immigration, a consideration that aims to support local employees and maintain social stability.

Other designated categories for skilled immigration in the US concern the recruitment of global talent with extraordinary ability or achievement, outstanding professors or researchers, and multinational executives or manager⁷. “Extraordinary ability,” as defined by the government, refers to “a level of expertise indicating that the person is one of the small percentage who has risen to the very top of the field of endeavour” (the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2015, O-1 Visa: Individuals with Extraordinary Ability or Achievement: General Eligibility Criteria). An individual who is considered to be a global talent with extraordinary ability can be attested in terms of internationally recognized awards (e.g., a Nobel Prize), membership in distinguished associations, scholarly publications, or other significant contributions to the field. No US job offer or Labour Certification is required for the “extraordinary” talent to obtain immigrant status

⁷ <http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-first-preference-eb-1>

in the US. As for the categories of outstanding professors, researchers, and multinational executives or managers, an offer from a US employer is still a prerequisite although the Labour Certification is no longer required.

Thus, US employers, or even educational institutions, instead of the government, take the initiative for searching for global talent (Reiner, 2010). Reiner (2010) cites Peri's perspective that "[the] very large inflow of scientific talent to the United States, which by all accounts has been key to sustaining high rates of technological innovation, has largely been powered by the pull of America's best research institutions – not by its immigration laws" (p. 11). Rather than immigration policies in themselves, the push and pull factors for skilled immigration surround the well-developed US economy, enticing employment opportunities, or world-class education and research opportunities.

To sum up, the US federal government partner with employers in the recruitment of global talent. While US employers serve as gatekeepers to the pre-immigration process, the government serves as a regulator, monitoring the process of immigration to ensure equal opportunities are given to local and global talent, which, as will be shown below, is a factor often overlooked in other countries.

2.2.2 “Brain drain” to “brain circulation”: experience from India and Taiwan

India's networking with scientific diaspora

According to Chanda and Sreenivasan's (2006) research, before the 1990s, the bulk of skilled migration from India was centered in occupations such as engineering, science, and healthcare. During the 1990s, an increasing number of highly skilled individuals emigrated from India to industrialized countries, such as the US and the UK, pulled by

the booming information technology (IT) industries (Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006).

India does not offer explicit incentives or privileges to recruit overseas professionals (Iredale & Guo, 2001). To reverse the “brain drain” India greatly relies on its networking with scientific diaspora in the US (Basri *et al*, 2008; Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006). As Atal Bihari, the Prime Minister of India, said in a speech,

I would like to emphasize that we do not merely seek investments and asset transfer. What we seek is a broader relationship – in fact a partnership among all children of Mother India, so that our country can emerge as a major global player. [...] My government’s policy is to assist the overseas Indian community in maintaining its cultural identity and strengthening the emotional, cultural and spiritual bonds that bind them to the country of their origin. (Khadria, 2004, p. 22)

By using the term “children” to describe its diaspora and casting India as the “mother,” the Indian central government promotes patriotism as a device to emotionally attach diaspora to their homeland, a driving force for diaspora engagement.

In addition to the patriotic rhetoric, the Indian government also launches the Know India⁸ and the Study India⁹ programs to enhance the diaspora engagement. The two programs are intended to facilitate the short-term visit of overseas Indian youth and professionals by means of providing them with opportunity to learn about India in different facets (Bharte & Sharma, 2014).

In recent years, there has been a growing number of overseas Indians moving back

⁸ The Know India Program was first launched in 2004 to provide unique forums for students and young professionals of Indian origin to develop awareness on the contemporary India. For more details please see <http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=42&id=m4&idp=42&mainid=23>

⁹ The Study India Program was first introduced in 2012 to organize short-term courses (with academic, cultural and social content included) in forms of summer schools for a limited number of overseas Indian youth in the age group of 18-26 years. For more details please see <http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=386&id=m5&idp=386&mainid=23>

to India (Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006). Chanda and Sreenivasan (2006) observe that return migration to India is “sector-specific” (p. 242), with skilled immigrants in IT sectors leading the trend. According to Basri *et al.* (2008), “with the rise of the Indian IT industry and the additional push by the diaspora, many venture capital companies in the United States now require their start-up companies to have a back office in India in order to save on R&D costs” (p. 116). Such activity, also known as “outsourcing,” became popular among many leading IT companies (e.g., Intel and IBM). Gradually, highly skilled professionals in IT sectors were spurred to return to India. Chanda and Sreenivasan (2006) observe,

Riding the wave of growing reputation and visibility of Indians in the IT sector, many well-placed senior executives (of Indian origin) in big corporations who had moved to these countries in 1960s influenced outsourcing-related decisions in India’s [favor] As the networking and mentoring role of Diaspora increases, India will continue to retain the edge in outsourcing. (p. 239)

In addition, more and more venture capital companies, particularly those led by people of Indian background, actively fund companies in India (Basri *et al.*, 2008). For Xiang (2007), India is becoming a “world’s technology lab” (p. 116). As Basri *et al.* (2008) put it, politicians in India consider the migration of Indian IT professionals to the US to be a beneficial process, forming a “brain bank” (p. 47) for the home country.

The return of overseas talent to India is understood to contribute to a virtuous cycle of economic development. Business outsourcing is deemed to be an influential force attracting back skilled immigrants in IT sectors, and, in turn, boosting the Indian IT industry. This cycle further attracts more skilled immigrants to return, or even start

businesses in India (Basri *et al*, 2008; Chacko, 2007; Chanda & Sreenivasan, 2006). Together these push and pull factors heighten community building between India's overseas and local elites. Although the Indian government does not materially invest in formulating talent policies or schemes to guide the return of its diaspora, discourses of patriotism are used to facilitate their return. In other words, formal governmental policies are not the main catalyst for return migration.

Taiwan's experience in the reversal of brain drain

According to Zweig *et al.* (2008), Taiwan was the first to suffer from a “brain drain” in East Asia. However, overseas Taiwanese have started to return to the country since the 1970s due to both increasing job opportunities and the active recruitment techniques of the government and employers (Chang, 1992; Saxenian, 2002). The government's support for high-tech entrepreneurship in the 1980s and 1990s further promoted the return of overseas professionals (Zweig *et al*, 2008). Thus, the Taiwanese government is framed as playing an active role in the reversal of “brain drain.”

According to Tzeng (2006), since the 1950s, Taiwan has employed various tactics to appeal to overseas Taiwanese, particularly those who graduated from foreign universities. The incentives most frequently offered, predominantly by the government, include air travel subsidy for returned scholars, loan schemes for new businesses, networking with overseas professionals, and a variety of other tactics (Chang, 1992). In 1983, the Executive Yuan (*xingzheng yuan*) approved a program¹⁰ to increase overseas recruitment, particularly to attract individuals with technical experience and knowledge, offering

¹⁰ The Program to Strengthen the Cultivation and Recruitment on High-Level Technological Professionals (《加强培养及延揽高级科技人才方案》), which is evolved as the Program of Technical Manpower Training and Employment (《科技人才培训及运用方案》) today.

globally competitive salaries, housing subsidies, and schooling facilities for children (Chang, 1992; Iredale & Guo, 2001; Tzeng, 2006). To encourage local firms to employ overseas talent, the government also offered salary reimbursements to employers if they recruited overseas talent in the fields of technology, research and development (R&D), management, and marketing (Tzeng, 2006).

In addition to the offers above, the Taiwanese government also built its technical community by creating linkages between the industrial park of Xinzhu and Silicon Valley of the US. As Basri *et al.* (2008) describe,

A number of [Taiwanese] government agencies involved with science and technology policy opened offices in Silicon Valley and built ties with local industry associations in order to monitor industrial and technological trends for domestic producers. They recruited overseas engineers to return to [Taiwan], and provided information and contacts to overseas Chinese considering setting up technology businesses in [Taiwan]. (p. 57)

The fast expanding ties between the two regions brought about the success of the Xinzhu Industrial Park and the Taiwanese economy as a whole (Saxenian, 2002). As Brown and Lauder (2012) put it,

The combination of the knowledge and networks established in the United States by the first generation of IT entrepreneurs, coupled with the critical mass of expertise of returnee graduates, enabled Taiwan to capitalize on the possibilities of a horizontally structured industry operating across national borders. (p. 123-124)

Furthermore, it is believed that US-educated engineers provided insight into the development of IT sectors in Taiwan, enabling policymakers to reconstruct the research

environment and decentralize the IT industry (Basri *et al.*, 2008). The changing environment contributed to the development of scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, which led more US-educated high-tech Taiwanese to return or to work across two regional economies (Saxenian, 2002). Below Saxenian comments on the conditions that contributed to the return of migrants (2002):

Taiwan's [policymakers] created an environment that attracted US-educated engineers back home in growing numbers, but only after two decades of investment in the domestic environment. The elements of this environment included: a well-developed skill base and technical infrastructure, an attractive physical environment for entrepreneurs, a growing venture capital industry and close professional ties to Silicon Valley. (p. 125)

To tackle "brain drain," the Taiwanese government played actively in promoting the return and circulation of global talent, in particular, within the fields of science and technology. The government not only offered incentives for global talent and employer recruitment, but also built a transnational technical community, connecting local talent to overseas opportunities, reconstructing the domestic R&D environment. In other words, Taiwan's incentives are not merely concentrated on global talent. Rather, Taiwan's policies aimed to directly benefit global talent, employers, and the R&D environment.

2.2.3 Some discussions on talent inflows

The economic and social impacts of global talent inflows are charted within academic literature. Given the purpose of this study I outlined in the first chapter, it is necessary to

highlight the social consequences of talent inflows within societies, specifically the forms of social equality/inequality that arise.

In Taiwan, wage differentiation as an intention of its overseas recruitment policies is highlighted within the literature. As Tzeng (2006) introduces, in 2004, the Taiwanese government appealed to employers that salaries paid to overseas talent must be equal or greater than the average salaries of local employees, a policy which was monitored by the Council of Labour Affairs. The relatively higher salaries given to overseas talent is framed as a technique to attract returnees to Taiwan (Tzeng, 2006).

The US's policies, in contrast, minimize the wage and opportunity differentials among people employed in the same occupations, giving principal protection to local employees. Ruhs (2013) cites a well-known economist Alan Winters's statement,

Paying prevailing local wages on temporary foreign workers is a one-stone-two-birds measure. It is intended to protect local workers from wage erosion and, presumably, to sweeten the pill of foreign competition, while, at the same time, it serves to protect foreign workers from being "exploited." (p. 151)

From this statement, wage equality is considered as a win-win strategy that protects locals and foreign workers at the same time. Although the actual outcomes are not found in the literature, US policies by and large take into consideration the economic interests of local workers.

In the case of India, the distribution of employees across an organization structure is impacted by return migration. Returned migrants are often positioned in senior and middle-level occupations, whereas locals, who have never been abroad, are concentrated in entry-level positions (Codev-epfl & Jnu, 2013). The vast majority of returned Indian

migrants understand their foreign experience as enabling them to secure relatively higher positions in workplace (Codev-epfl & Jnu, 2013). For Kumar *et al.* (2014), returned migrants in India are sometimes framed as “symbols of ‘quality’” (p. 281). Through qualitative interviews, the majority of respondents cast the experience and knowledge of the returned migrants as an asset that enables higher positions in India society (Kumar *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the foreign experience of returned talent can be understood as a power providing privilege in the Indian labour market. From Tejada and Bhattacharya (2014) observation, the prevalent view of value within the Indian society is that a foreign degree signifies a better employment prospect, including higher earnings, which once again makes “overseas education a possible and achievable option” (p. 12) of a middle-class family. Put it another way, the “brain circulation” in India perpetuates social inequality to some extent. In view of the shared features of the India and China, such as huge populations, stratified societies and fast-growing economies (Manor, 2005), the social consequences of the India returned migration is worthy for attention.

2.3 Summary

The pursuit of the knowledge economy impacts the segmentation of knowledge. Scientific and professional knowledge is being highly valued as the most economically relevant resources for a knowledge economy, which drives the global competition for talent with economically relevant knowledge. Professionals, regarded as the owners of economically relevant knowledge, are sometimes privileged in some societies.

The idea of a meritocracy associated with a knowledge economy assumes the rise of new social hierarchies (Brown, 1995; Brown & Tannock, 2009). Policies and strategies in

the global war for talent have unintended consequences, impacting social stratification. From the literature reviewed above, while the US, India, and Taiwan are all active in recruiting global talent, only the US policy considers social impacts along with talent inflows, and attempts to curtail the impact on local labour markets within its immigration policies. In India and Taiwan, although issues of wage and opportunity inequality are addressed in some studies, none of this research connects class inequality to policy. Rather, their research interest centers on economic impacts rather than social impacts returnees have on society.

While the US, India and Taiwan experience different talent inflows, the case of the US provides contrast to Chinese policy in the maintenance of the benefits of local workers; the case of India provides implications for China in understanding the privileged position of skilled returnees due to the shared features of the two societies; and the case of Taiwan suggests possible outcomes by virtue of the policy similarities of the two contexts. In sum, the role overseas recruitment policy plays a mediating role within Chinese economic and social progress, a role that must be scrutinized. Further, it is both important and promising to explore the possible relationships between talent policies and the social stratification.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework: the Formation of Class and the Function of Government Policies

Policy analysis cannot be conducted independently from social theory (Levinson *et al.*, 2009). To understand how overseas recruitment policies participate in the reproduction of social stratification within Chinese society, this study is theoretically informed by theories with regard to social stratification and critical policy analysis. Specifically, this study draws on theories of “social class” (simply “class”) as a lens to “visible” group differences in hierarchy. Thus, how talent policies orchestrate the reproduction of social stratification will be understood through theories of “social class.”

3.1 Social class

3.1.1 The concepts: social stratification and social class

“Social stratification” normally refers to “the different ‘layers’ or strata of social groups” (p. 1) which are considered to be ranked in a society due to the inequality of social positions (Saunders, 1990). Ideally, human societies can be grouped under four types: slavery system, estate system, cast system and class system (Kerbo, 2006). Class system is the dominant social stratification system in current societies (Kerbo, 2006). In this thesis, the purpose is not to distinguish one class from another. It is rather to examine the roles that particular policies in giving rise to status groups, entrenching social stratification. Below I review the major notions of class, giving particular attention to Bourdieu’s relational construct of class.

Karl Marx and Max Weber's work constitute two traditional perspectives used to understand "class" in social stratification (Jones, 2001). The Marxist perspective views class as a group of individuals who occupy a common position due to their shared relationality to the means of production — "economic power within a particular society" (Jones, 2001, p. 161). From Marxist perspective, bourgeoisie and proletariat are two central classes in capitalist industrial societies, of which stratification can be seen as economic-based (Saunders, 1990). Economic ownership is pivotal to an analysis of Marxist "class" (Jones, 2001).

For Weber, "class" is not the only dimension of social stratification. He extends Marxian ideas of social stratification by introducing "class," "status" and "party" as three ways to analyse social stratification (Saunders, 1990). The Weberian conception sees societies being stratified as classes, status groups and parties according to economic order (wealth), social order (prestige) and political order (power), respectively (Saunders, 1990). To be specific, societies in Weberian perspective are stratified by groups of people who share common set of life-chances and circumstances, access similar material resources in marketplace, and share similar levels of prestige or social honour in a society, and religion or notions (Coser, 1977; Saunders, 1990). In other words, Weber considers that different collectivises are generated based on not only the inequality of economic relations, but also distinctions in symbolic systems (Weininger, 2005).

Pierre Bourdieu also contributes to the discussion on class. He takes up Weber's account of "class" and "status," and re-appropriates Marx's "one-dimensional" reading of capital into four forms: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Holt, 2012; Weininger, 2002, 2005; Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu does not see "class" and "status" as

alternative types of social stratification, but considers these two aspects as united for the analysis of social stratification (Weininger, 2005).

Bourdieu (1985) argues that the components for constructing a class are objectified and/or embodied. To be specific, for Bourdieu (1985),

These are, principally, economic capital (in its different kinds), cultural capital and social capital, as well as symbolic capital, commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different forms of capital are perceived and recognized as legitimate. The inadequacies of the Marxist theory of classes [is that it reduces] the social world to the economic field alone, it is forced to define social position solely in terms of position in the relations of economic production and consequently ignores positions in the different fields and sub-fields, particularly in the relations of cultural production, as well as all the oppositions that structure the social field. (p. 724-736)

Capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), “in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate [, as] a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, is a force inscribed in the objectivity for things” (p. 46). Bourdieu (1986) proposes that different capitals are interconvertible. In particular, he argues that either cultural or social capital can be transferred to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu not only sees economic capital, but also cultural, social, and symbolic capital as fundamental resources for securing a specific position within a social structure.

For Bourdieu (1985), class is a probable entity. That is, class can be realized as a “theoretical existence that [...] it is not really a class [...] in the sense of a group, a group

mobilized for struggle; at most, it might be called a probable class” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 725). Bourdieu (1985) points out that the perception of a class is evoked in both an objective and subjective sense. Objectively a class can be side linked to existing forms of capital. Contrastingly, a subjective perspective directs attention to the symbolic struggles of class consciousness and the role of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1985). He further explains:

[On] the “objective” side, [class] is socially structured because the properties attached to agents or institutions do not offer themselves independently to perception, but in combinations that are very unequally probable (and, just as animals with feathers are more likely to have wings than are animals with fur, so the possessors of a substantial cultural capital are more likely to be museum-goers than those who lack such capital); on the “subjective” side, it is structured because the schemes of perception and appreciation available for use at the moment in question, especially those that are deposited in language, are the product of previous symbolic struggles and express the state of the symbolic power relations, in a more or less transformed form. (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 727-728)

Following Bourdieu, I frame class as a theoretical existence of a social group that is ranked in certain positions within a stratified society due to members sharing a common set of economic, cultural, social, and/or symbolic capital. To put it another way, class can be also regarded as a social group of which people have common class situation in hierarchy. From Bourdieu’s (1987; 1989) perspective, the construction of class structure is based on the logic of the differentiation or distinctions in terms of “the global volume of capital they possess [and] composition of their capital” (p. 4). In other words,

formation of class is about the quality and quantity of multiple capitals accumulated in a particular field.

3.1.2 The perception of intellectuals as a new class

Based on Bourdieu's theories on capital (1986) and his conceptions of class (1985; 1987), it can be argued that knowledge is instrumental in the formation of class. Derber *et al.* (1990) advocate for this perspective, arguing that certain knowledge can be converted into class power, privilege, and status, constituting a basis for social hierarchy. Recognizing the new prerogative of knowledge, the term "new class" was coined by Mikhail Bakunin in the 1870s to delineate a new strata between the "knowledgeable" minority and the "ignorant" majority (King & Szelenyi, 2004). For King and Szelenyi (2004), intellectuals are deemed candidates for the new dominant class position, possessing power within a given society through the direct ownership of knowledge, control of wealth, and leadership within political systems (King & Szelenyi, 2004).

Although it is debated if the "new class" is indeed a class, knowledge, as a source of power rather than merely an epiphenomenon of power privileging intellectuals and particular knowledge workers is widely accepted by theorists (King & Szelenyi, 2004; Derber *et al.*, 1990). Over the last 30 years, dominant discourses have cast knowledge-intensive and skill-dependent economic growth and dependent upon scientific-technological knowledge (Burton-Jones, 2003). Under such circumstances, many believe that there is a new knowledge class mainly constituted by scientists and technologists who master scarce knowledge (Derber *et al.*, 1990; King & Szelenyi, 2004).

China experienced a prolonged class struggle until 1956 when the "socialist

transformation”¹¹ was deemed accomplished (Lu, 2010). Prior to 1956, the Chinese governments aimed to eliminate the bureaucrat-comprador class, the landlord class, and the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie (Lu, 2010). In late 1956, the government asserted that society had only two classes — the working and peasant classes (Lu, 2010).

The “Reform and Opening” policy established in 1978 created a myriad of new ownership patterns possible. Scholars, such as Lu (2010), Xu (2013), and Lin (2015), believe that the policy shift began to stratify the Chinese social structure, creating different social groups, including intellectuals (知识分子, *zhishi fenzi*) as a distinguished group. Nevertheless, the Chinese governments insist that there is no so-called “knowledge class” in Chinese society (Han, 2006; Mo, 2002; Sun, 2001). The Chinese governments determine class status in terms of economic status, targeted services, and the worldviews of a social group (Han, 2006). Based on these criteria, the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai proclaimed that intellectuals are a part of the working class, a statement later stressed by leaders of the country, such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin (Mo, 2002). During the time when the country was governed by Zhou, Deng, and Jiang, the Chinese governments insisted that intellectuals in Chinese society were those who were located in opposition to the bourgeois (in terms of economic positions), because, supposedly, they upheld proletarian beliefs and worldviews, and served the vast majority within socialist contexts (i.e., objects of service) (Han, 2006). However, the argument that intellectuals are part of the working class is gradually being challenged (Mo, 2002). Intellectuals, seen as parallel to peasants and workers, are now regarded as a major force driving social development (Sun, 2001). As documented in the *Constitution of the People’s Republic of*

¹¹ It proceeded under the leadership of Mao Zedong from 1953 to 1956 to persecute any social groups that might challenge the governance of Maoist regime. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China

*China*¹² in 2007,

中国共产党同全国各民族工人、农民、知识分子团结在一起，同各民主党派、无党派民主人士、各民族的爱国力量团结在一起。

The Communist Party of China will unite all workers, peasants, and intellectuals, and unite all the democratic parties, personages without party affiliation and the patriotic forces of all ethnic groups. (author's translation)

Indeed, government rhetoric blurs the concept of “class” when referring to intellectuals, a point which will be explored in depth below.

3.1.3 Symbolic power and the rise of a new class

Bourdieu (1985) asserts that class perception is not automatic as it relies on forms of legitimation, especially political power generated through social struggle. That is, “symbolic power” is generated by official legitimation, acting upon a probable class and reproducing and/or reinforcing power relations within a society (Bourdieu, 1985; 1989).

Bourdieu states (1989),

Symbolic power [is] a power of “world-making.” “World-making” consists, according to Nelson Goodman (1978), “in separating and reuniting, often in the same operation,” in carrying out a decomposition, an analysis, and a composition, a synthesis, often by the use of labels. Social classifications, as is the case in archaic societies where they often work through dualist oppositions (masculine/feminine, high/low, strong/weak, etc.), organize the perception of the social world and, under certain conditions, can really organize the world itself. (p. 22)

In this sense, symbolic power is the power to impose a “legitimate vision of the social

¹² 《中国共产党章程》, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2002-03/04/content_2558860.htm

world” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 732) in order to shape public recognition. Further, it is considered to be a form of power largely possessed by “a delegated agent of the State, the holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 732). For Bourdieu (1985), “politics is the site par excellence of symbolic efficacy” (p. 741) often generated through expressions of official discourse. According to Bourdieu’s works, official discourse has the power to produce “common sense” by objectifying the subjective interests and values of a particular group.

One specific form of action noted by Bourdieu (1985) is to officially name an individual or a group with titles of nobility; that is, to grant officially recognized noble identities associated with specific forms of distinction, such as educational credentials, professional titles, and so forth. In Bourdieu’s language, the given identity is “symbolic capital in an institutionalized, legal (and no longer merely legitimate) form” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 733). The legal consecration of symbolic capital is an act of “class making” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 8) producing entitlement (Bourdieu, 1985; 1987; 1989).

Wielding symbolic power is a strategic approach for class production, but it is not guaranteed. As Bourdieu (1987) argues, “one can posit that an action aimed at transforming the social world is all the more likely to succeed when it is founded in reality. [...] When it is well-founded in reality, naming involves a truly creative power” (p. 16). From this perspective, the actual existence of a class is understood to come prior to the theoretical artefacts which prove the “correct” classification. This is partly the reason why the judgements cast by authorities appear neutral; that is, they draw upon what is already deemed “objective” within public discourse.

The power of political authorities refers not only to the official legitimation of the

symbolic capital of a social group, but also to the generation of other forms of capital. King and Szelenyi (2004) find that socialist redistribution efforts are preferential to the intelligentsia, generating both social inequality and the formation of a new class. As they argue, “new class theory reveals that socialist redistribution benefited intellectuals, and was not ‘welfare’ as known in the West: it did not correct for social inequalities; rather it generated them” (King & Szelenyi, 2004, p. xxxiii). In light of these perspectives, and by building on Bourdieu’s work on symbolic power, I see the government as a significant player in naming and legitimizing particular kind of capital in labour market. With the power of government, different types of capital can be intensified and come to concentrate within a group in the top stratum of society (Xiang & Shen, 2009).

In the context of China, the government itself has pushed for income disparity among the “working class” to reflect differences between knowledgeable/skilful workers and others. For example, in the *Central Committee of CPC’s Decision on Economic System Reform*¹³ in 1984, one notable statement is:

在企业内部，要扩大工资差距，拉开档次，[...]充分体现脑力劳动和体力劳动、复杂劳动和简单劳动、熟练劳动和非熟练劳动、繁重劳动和非繁重劳动之间的差别。当前尤其要改变脑力劳动报酬偏低的情况。

Within an enterprise, the gap of incomes should be enlarged [...] in order to reflect the differences between the mental workers and manual workers, between complex labor and simple labor, between skillful workers and unskilled workers and between strenuous labor and easy labor. In current context, [employers] should particularly increase the monetary rewards for mental workers, which have been rather low. (author’s translation)

Although the government did not put forward its standard of salary for differentiating between occupations, the policy suggests that the government has acknowledged the

¹³ 《中共中央关于经济体制改革的决定》，
http://www.jconline.cn/Contents/Channel_6930/2013/1104/1010638/content_1010638.htm

importance of intellectuals and endeavours to raise their income. As has been discussed, political intervention such as this has significant implication in the distribution of social goods as well as on the reproduction of social stratification.

3.2 Policy, discourse, and practice

As explained in the last section, government policies can play a significant role in the reproduction of social structure. According to Levinson *et al.* (2009), policy functions in three ways: it “(a) defines reality, (b) orders behaviour, and (sometimes) (c) allocates resources accordingly” (p. 770). In other words, the authors consider policy as playing a role in the official creation of social order within a given domain through both the creation of normative discourse and, in some cases, the distribution of social goods.

Policy defines reality and orders behaviour. As Wen (2013) put it, “policy texts play an important role in defining, narrowing and perpetuating views of social reality” (p. 20). Levinson *et al.* (2009) makes the same point:

[T]he most immediate product of the policy process should be understood as a normative cultural discourse with positive and negative sanctions, i.e., a set of statements about how things should or must be done, with corresponding inducements or punishments. Such a discourse also crucially presupposes an implicit view of how things are — a model of the world, an operative cosmology, as it were. (Levinson *et al.*, 2009, p. 770)

Policy constructs, for instance, particular objects, and by way of defining right from wrong, fosters social commitment (Levinson *et al.*, 2009; Taylor, 1997). It supposedly provides “neutral” judgments in response to “public” interests through its authorized

voice, which serves to narrow the space for alternative views. This perspective is in line with the “policy as discourse” perspective, which frames language as power and considers how dominance and/or interests are codified and extended by those “who disproportionately wield power” (Levinson *et al.*, 2009, p. 769). As Ball (2006) asserts,

[discourses] are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. (p. 48)

In Levinson *et al.*'s (2009) words, it is a technique of governance — to officially label in order to “[limit] the common sense within the social field to which policy is addressed” (p. 774). Bourdieu (1989) also puts forward the functions of official discourse in another way:

First, it performs [...] an act of knowledge or cognition which [...] tends to assert what a person or a thing is and what it is universally [and] objectively. It is, as Kafka clearly saw, an almost divine discourse which assigns everyone an identity. In the second place, administrative discourse says, through directives, orders, prescriptions, etc., what people have to do, given what they are. Thirdly, it says what people have actually done, as in authorized accounts such as police records. In each case, official discourse imposes a point of view, [which] is instituted as legitimate point of view, that is, a point of view that everyone has to recognize at least within the boundaries of a definite society. (p. 22)

Policy sometimes allocates resources. In this respect, Levinson *et al.* (2009) draw on Harbans's definition on policy:

[Policy is] the manifest intentions of power elites for the distribution of social goods.

Such a practice of power may be more or less democratic, depending on the ways that power elites are formed and legitimated, or the ways that other social groups may participate in policy formation. (p. 772)

Within this perspective, Levinson *et al.* (2009) see “policy as practice.” They see “policy as a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts” (Levinson *et al.*, 2009, p. 770), a process that often reorders social relations and stratifies social groups. In this respect, policy is associated with social practices and that will contribute a possibility for social change (Heimans, 2012; Levinson *et al.*, 2009).

Given the above discussion, I believe that policy is produced and/or reproduced through its imbrication within social, historical, and political contexts, functioning beyond texts themselves. Policy can be summed up as “an ideologically constructed product of political forces” (Wen, 2013, p. 33), and, from my understanding, an ideological force active in the reproduction of social stratification. Policy analysis not only encourages an interpretation of how actions, objects, and practices are socially and politically shaped, and how policy discourses regulate knowledge, construct “truths,” and legitimate governance (Goodwin, 2010; Shaw, 2010), but also involves a consideration or imagination of “what its analytical assumptions are and what effects it might have” (Lingard, 2009, p. 227).

3.3 Summary

In the first section of this chapter, theories on social class were elucidated in terms of four dimensions. I firstly introduced the definitions of class by bringing in perspectives from

Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu. From my understanding, class – or a probable class – can be generated along with social division according to economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. According to theories of a “new class,” overseas talent can be framed as having the potential to form a new social class due to their predominant cultural capital. Also, I examined Bourdieu’s notion of “symbolic power,” which mainly refers to political power that makes visible and explicit both subjective reality and the reproduction of the social structures.

Drawing on conceptions of policy in the second section, I see policy as the expression of political ideology, a representation of political dominance and interests, and a practice of political force. This framework dovetails with my understanding of social class. In my analysis, I consider policy as an intervening force in the formation of class and social structures.

In my analysis on the making of overseas talent as a means to reproduce the existing social stratification, I will illustrate how policy, as a discourse, differentiates the “best from the rest” ideologically, exercising symbolic power and shaping privilege. Recognizing and amplifying the production of capital, both in economic and symbolic forms, I frame policy as participating in the formation of overseas talent as a distinguished social group that ranks in certain position in class system. Thus, for this study, I have developed a conceptual framework based on theories of class and policy to inform the analysis of how overseas recruitment policies participate in the construction of a distinguished social group, and the reproduction of social stratification in Chinese society.

Chapter 4: Research Design

4.1 Critical discourse analysis as methodology

I employ critical discourse analysis (CDA) as my methodology to answer the research questions explored in chapter one. CDA provides an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of discourses. Specifically, it seeks to “interrogate the ways in which texts and practices are shaped ideologically” (Hyatt, 2014, p. 43). One notable scholar contributing to CDA theory is Norman Fairclough, whose CDA strongly influences the design of this study. Whereas approaches for doing discourse analysis can be normally divided into “textually oriented discourse analysis” (p. 2) and contextually oriented discourse analysis, Fairclough’s CDA is known for doing both (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough, 2013). As he states, his CDA

[has tried] to transcend the division between work inspired by social theory which tends not to analyze texts, and work which focuses upon the language of texts but tends not to engage with social theoretical issues. This is not, or should not be, an ‘either/or’. On the one hand, any analysis of texts [,] which aims to be significant in social scientific terms [,] has to connect with theoretical questions about discourse (e.g. the socially ‘constructive’ effects of discourse). On the other hand, no real understanding of the social effects of discourse is possible without looking closely at what happens when people talk or write (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2-3).

My study aims to better understand the social context through delving into policy texts, which requires that analysis oscillates between linguistic systems and contextual elements, such as “power, ideologies, institutions, social identities etc.” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 178).

Fairclough's CDA bridges language studies with critical social analysis, placing a focus on how discourses intermediate between them. As Fairclough (2013) writes, CDA is used in "language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., 'political discourse') and a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective" (p. 179). Thus, CDA, on one hand, is an approach and/or procedure of doing linguistic analysis, and, on the other hand, collaborates with social theory to understand contextual elements (Fairclough, 2013).

Jørgensen and Phillips (2011) come up with five proposals underpinning Fairclough's CDA. The first proposal is that "the character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly linguistic-discursive" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 61). That is, discursive practices are understood, to some extent, to illuminate how social and cultural reproduction and change occur, a process deemed inseparable from social practices. The second argues that "discourse is both constitutive and constituted" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 62). It assumes that discourse is not only shaping the social world, but it is also being reshaped by other forms of social practices already active within the social world. The third one proposes that "language use should be empirically analyzed within its social context" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 62). From this perspective, data cannot be analyzed solely at a linguistic level; it needs to take into account social practices within a concrete societal context. The fourth proposal is that "discourse functions ideologically" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 63). Jørgensen and Phillips (2011) further explain that the production and reproduction of discursive practices are understood as having an ideological effect, which is surrounded with "subjugation of one social group to other social groups" (p. 63). The fifth proposal emphasizes that CDA is "critical research"

(Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 64). That is, CDA is a “formulation of criticism and alternatives” (van Dijk, 1985, p. 6). In particular, it critically explicates the “discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 63) that can contribute to social changes.

CDA is suitable for this study for three reasons. Firstly, in comparison to pure linguistic analysis approaches, CDA is concerned with not only language itself, but also how language influences or is influenced by the social world (Guo & Shan, 2013). Secondly, unlike traditional approaches of discourse analysis, CDA is associated with critical realism (Fairclough, 2013). It is fundamentally concerned with language and social practices, and, more importantly, provides systematic techniques for inquiry in critical ways. Thirdly, CDA is also related to constructivism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) and sees meanings as fluid (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004). In contrast to content analysis, which is considered to be oriented towards “statistical positivism” (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004, p. 17) and frames meanings as static, CDA is not merely a reflection of a pre-existing reality but contributes to constructing reality itself (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 9).

4.2 Choice of materials

The choice of research material depends on several aspects: the research questions, the researcher’s knowledge as to the relevant material within the social domain or institution of interest, and whether, and how, one can gain access to it. (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 78)

To answer the research questions, I first document historical events surrounding policy

changes. To be specific, attention is paid to political events, economic change, educational policies, and other social happenings that can provide adequate background information for the understanding of the recent development of Chinese overseas talent policies. For the second and third research questions, in particular, I focus on the analysis of the *Thousand Talent Plan* (千人计划, *Qian Ren Jihua*, hereinafter referred to as the *TTP*), which is also known as the *Recruitment Program of Global Experts*. It is the first talent recruitment plan launched directly by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party of China (CCCPC), the highest authority in China. The plan provides the policy guideline to select talented professionals. It therefore signals the country's latest and greatest interests over talent.

The *TTP*, launched in 2008, calls for China to attract 2,000 high-level overseas talented professionals to serve China in the five-to-ten years after the plan was implemented. The *TTP* is mainly designed for the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) of four platforms (平台, *pingtai*): national key innovation projects, national key disciplines and national key laboratories, central SOEs and state-owned commercial and financial institutions, and various industrial parks (mainly the high-tech development zones). By 2014, the sub-programs of the *TTP* have evolved into the *Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Long Term)*, the *Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Short Term)*, the *Recruitment Program for Entrepreneurs*, the *Recruitment Program for Foreign Experts*, the *Recruitment Program for Young Professionals*, the *Recruitment Program for Topnotch Talented Individuals and Teams*, the *Recruitment Program of Sinkiang (Tibet)*, the *Recruitment Program for Talented Professionals in Culture and Art*. Following the *TTP* as an example, many Chinese

provincial and municipal governments subsequently launched their own local plans (Wang, 2011).

The research materials closely surrounding the *TTP* are two policy documents released by the Chinese central government in 2008. The two documents are the most informative and authoritative references for the public, and provide directive guidelines for the implementation of the *TTP*. Below, table One summarizes the basic information of each policy document. By 2014, up to eight sub-programs have been promoted under the *TTP*, all of which are regarded as relevant to this research. Thus, attention will be also given to policy documents pertaining to the sub-programs. The basic information of the sub-programs is outlined in Table Two.

Table One: Information of the Main Policy Documents

Chinese Title	English Title	Year Issued	Issuing Authority	Status
《中央人才工作协调小组关于实施海外高层次人才引进计划的意见》 (《意见》)	Opinions by the Central Group for the Coordination of Talented Personnel on the Implementation of the Plan to Recruit High-level Overseas Talent (<i>Opinions</i>)	2008	Central Group for the Coordination of Talented Personnel ¹⁴	Effective
《引进海外高层次人才暂行办法》 (《办法》)	Tentative Measures for the Recruitment of High-Level Overseas Talent (<i>Measures</i>)	2008	General Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party of China (General Office, CCCPC)	Effective

¹⁴ It is headed by the Central Organization Department of the Chinese Communist Party.

Table Two: Information of Sub-programs

Chinese Title	English Title	Year Issued	Status
创新人才项目（长期）	Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Long Term)	2008	Effective
创业人才项目	Recruitment Program for Entrepreneurs	2008	Effective
创新人才项目（短期）	Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Short Term)	2010	Effective
青年人才项目	Recruitment Program for Young Professionals	2010	Effective
外国专家项目	Recruitment Program for Foreign Experts	2011	Effective
顶尖人才及创新团队项目	Recruitment Program for Topnotch Talented Individuals and Teams	2013	Effective
新疆项目、西藏项目	Recruitment Program of Sinkiang and Tibet	2014	Effective
文化艺术人才项目	Recruitment Program for Talented Professionals in Culture and Art	2014	Effective

As for “intertextuality” and “interdiscursivity,” which require an investigation on how texts and discourses “draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize and dialogue with other texts [and discourses]” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17), two documents released by the General Office, CCCPC, and the General Office of the State Council will be analyzed. The two documents (see Table Three) serve as examples of the political guidance giving rise to and continuously shaping the *TTP*.

Table Three: Information of the Directive Documents

Chinese Title	English Title	Year Issued	Issuing Authority	Status
《2002-2005全 国人才队伍建设 规划纲要》	2002-2005 Outline for National Program for Qualified Personnel Development	2002	General Office, CCCPC and the General Office of the State Council	Expired
《国家中长期人 才发展规划纲要 (2010-2020年)》	The Outline for National Medium & Long-term Program for Talent Development (2010- 2020)	2010	General Office, CCCPC and the General Office of the State Council	Effective

As noted above, the choice of these research materials depends on the accessibility of the documents and their relevance to the research questions. As Fairclough (2003) puts it, materials are chosen in ways that enable fruitful dialogue. Although they are different forms of representation and contain diverse narratives, these materials are expected to be sufficient for understanding the phenomena and answering the research questions. Thus, it is assumed that these materials represent the country's interests on overseas talent and the government's political initiatives.

4.3 Methods for analysis

Fairclough's ideas of "three stages" (description, interpretation, and explanation), "three dimensions" (text, discursive practice, and social practice) and "the three ways" (ways of acting, representing, and being) form a framework for the following analysis (Fairclough, 2001, 2003; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011).

Fairclough's (2001) three stages for doing critical discourse analysis are adopted for

the inquiry. They are “description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 91). These three stages can be cross-referenced with Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, of which the elements are text, discursive practices, and social practices (Guo & Shan, 2013). Descriptions of texts center on describing the linguistic features of the concrete text (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, or textual structure) in order to identify what discourses are drawn upon (Fairclough, 2001). The interpretation stage moves beyond a purely linguistic analysis towards the discursive practices, which focuses on is the production and consumption of texts (Fairclough, 2001; Hyatt, 2014; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). Explanation is the key for analyzing the relationship between discursive and social practice. It explicates the power relations by investigating the social determinants, ideologies, and effects of a text (Fairclough, 2001). The explanation for social practice is, in other words, contextualization, whereby it is necessary to draw on social theory in order to cast light on the wider “ideological, political and social consequences” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 87).

Fairclough (2003) sees texts as the articulation of different genres, discourses, and styles. In correspondence to these three elements, Fairclough (2003) presents three main ways discourses configure: ways of acting (genres), ways of representing (discourses) and ways of being (styles). According to this framework, my study will analyse the following three sub-questions:

- (1) In which ways are the policy texts acting?
- (2) In which ways is the policy representing or constructing the social world?
- (3) Who are the actors/players and who are not? Who is the explicit audience, and who

is the implicit?

“Intertextuality” and “interdiscursivity” are important focal techniques for analysis, both of which concern how texts draw upon other texts and how discourses draw upon other discourses (Fairclough, 2003; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). For Jørgensen and Phillips (2011), the three-dimensional model is based on the principle that “texts can never be understood or analyzed in isolation” (p. 70); that is, they can only be understood in contrast with other texts and the social context. In this respect, relevant documents, for instance, portraying national ideologies of a certain era will be referred for analysis.

In addition to identifying what is said in the texts, the unsaid assumptions are also given weight in the analysis. As Fairclough (1992) argues, “a further important point is that language is widely misperceived as transparent, so that the social and ideological ‘work’ that language does in producing, reproducing or transforming social structures, relations and identities is routinely ‘overlooked’” (p. 211). Therefore, it is of great necessity to consider what the texts purport to assume.

Finally, it is necessary to note issues of translation and how culture-specific features of language may affect further analysis. My analysis will refer to both original Chinese version text and the English translation. Any Chinese data for analysis (e.g., specific words, phrases, or even sections) will be translated into English as quotes. Translation of language is also a translation of culture (Needham & Maier, 1995). . Since languages cannot always be translated literally, I not only search for equivalent words or terms as the appropriate translation, but also “indigenise” the words or terms by explaining the meanings in the context. For instance, when translating the word “*rencai*”, I followed the dominant translation for this term “talent” used in migration studies. I however am

conscious that this term may conjure different images for in the west. I therefore contextualized my use of talent by tracing back the use of Rencai on page 5 and 6. When translating the policy texts, I also juxtaposed the Chinese texts with the English translation to allow readers bilingual in Chinese and English to judge the translation.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

This chapter is divided into two sections. First, the following chapter traces the historical development of Chinese overseas talent policies, presenting an overview of the policy contexts that gave rise to the current talent policies, and, specially, the *Thousand Talent Plan (TTP)*. Second, I will examine how official discourses in China's overseas recruitment policies participate in the making of talented returnees as a distinguished social group. I start by scrutinizing how "Chinese overseas talent" is defined in policy texts, and how "Chinese overseas talent" is identified as qualified through the *TTP*. In Fairclough's (2003) language, CDA within policy studies examine the ways policy represents and/or constructs the social world. This process involves describing the linguistic features of policy texts, unpacking the discourses they draw on. Then I focus on what the *TTP* does; particularly, what it offers for the talented professionals selected. That is, I elucidate how policies reshape overseas talent by distinguishing them from others. At the end of this section, I introduce the selection mechanism of the *TTP* to illustrate how the plan excludes the vast majority of overseas Chinese.

5.1 History of Chinese national overseas talent policies: an overview

Chinese overseas talent policies have evolved since 1949 and scholars undertaking related studies have divided this change into several stages. Zweig *et al.* (2004) trace the changes of overseas talent policies in relation to different interests and ideologies of the Chinese governments over time. In particular, they focus on how the Chinese central government made efforts to bring back overseas talent under the leadership of Deng

Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin from 1980s to 1990s. Contrastingly, Hao and Ma's (2013) study of talent policy deals specifically with national strategies on sending students abroad for academic study. Yang (2009) argues that three stages in the development of talent return policy can be mapped over the last 30 years: the restrictive stage from the 1980s to the 1990s, the semi-open stage from the 1990s to 2000, and the progressive and strategic stage from the 2000s onward. In this section, I trace the changes of Chinese overseas talent policies, including "study-abroad" policies and return policies, since the establishment of the People of Republic of China in 1949. As will be shown, this historical overview highlights China's developmental transitions and social, political, and economic revolution.

Stage One (1949-1970s):

Early in 1949, in order to retain affinity with the Soviet Union, China dispatched its domestic students to the Soviet Union and other eastern European socialist countries to study engineering and management, which is known as the prototype of "state-funded study abroad" ("公派出国留学"¹⁵) policy (Li, 2006; Ma & Hao 2013). When the political relationship between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated in 1956, China began to send its students to Western countries (Miao, 2010). The social upheaval of the *Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution* (无产阶级文化大革命) brought the "state-funded study abroad" policy to a virtual halt for six years (Miao, 2010). Although the policy was recovered in 1972, its implementation was fraught with difficulties (Feng & Chen, 2011).

¹⁵ "公派出国留学"

From the 1950s to the 1960s, up to eighteen thousands international students were sent abroad, and all students returned and entered designated fields, becoming the backbone (骨干, *gugan*) of the newly developing techno-scientific sector (Feng & Chen, 2011; Li, 2006). During this initial stage, “state-funded study abroad” policy relied on various forms of patriotism and nationalism rather than paper contracts or written agreements with students (Du, 1998).

Stage Two (1978-1980s):

In order to close the gap with the world’s advanced economics, China declared its “Reform and Opening” policy in 1978. In this context, “self-funded study abroad” (“自费出国留学”)¹⁶ was legitimated though the 1982 policy of *Tentative Provisions for Self-funded Study Abroad*.¹⁷ This policy, in particular, provided more opportunities to study abroad for Chinese students (Ma & Hao, 2013). Yet, at the same time, the government enforced its control of “state-funded study abroad” channels through legally binding agreements. The government highly endorsed this practice, in particular for professionals in the fields of engineering and applied sciences (the State Education Commission, 1986). With such a legal agreement, return and service to China become compulsory for state-funded students as soon as they complete their studies overseas. For those who never returned, the country would take further measures to restrict their family members from going abroad (Yang, 2009). For self-funded students studying abroad, the state evoked

¹⁶ “自费出国留学”

¹⁷ 《关于自费出国留学的暂行规定》, <http://www.docin.com/p-1078883.html>

messages of patriotism to attract their return (*Tentative Provisions for Self-funded Study Abroad*, 1982; Yang, 2009).

In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education issued a series of policies¹⁸ on the international cultivation of doctoral students through exchange (Feng & Chen, 2011). These policies, on the one hand, subsidized domestic doctoral students for overseas study, and, on the other hand, encourage outstanding overseas Chinese with foreign Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees to pursue postdoctoral research in Chinese research institutions. These policies illustrate that talented professionals who had obtained international education, particularly those at doctoral level from overseas, were valued within Chinese policy.

The similar tactics, such as promoting patriotism and facilitating the short-term return of students, are also found in India today.

Stage Three (1990s-2000):

The 1990s heralded in an era of dramatic and rapid improvement in information and communication technology, a period known as the *Information Age* according to Castells (1999). Differing from traditional manufacturing technology, new technology generated a ravenous demand for innovative knowledge and new talent. In order to learn knowledge connects to the latest information and communication technology from the developed world, China further relaxed its restrictions on studying abroad. However, since the 1980s, China also experienced a significant outflow of scientists and technologists to advanced Western countries (Harvey, 2014). In 1989, in particular, the return of overseas

¹⁸ 《关于 1982 年试行选拔出国攻读博士学位研究生的通知》，《关于 1986—1987 年度资助部分高等学校选派博士生与国外合作培养的通知》，《关于争取优秀留学博士回国做博士后的通知》

students even halted in the aftermath of Tiananmen crisis (Zweig & Wang, 2013). Given this challenge, China took a more humble approach towards overseas talent, while stepping up its recruitment effort. During Deng Xiaoping's "southern trip" in January 1992, he promised that overseas students of any political attitudes (or positions) could come back to China and would enjoy greater mobility than before (Zweig *et al.*, 2004).

Deng said:

希望所有出国学习的人回来。不管他们过去的政治态度怎么样，都可以回来，回来后妥善安排。这个政策不能变。告诉他们，要做出贡献，还是回国好。希望大家通力合作，为加快发展我国科技和教育事业多做实事。(Deng, 1993)

We hope all those who are studying abroad will come back. All overseas students may return and enjoy proper arrangements for their life and work, regardless of their previous political ideologies. This policy will not change. They should be told that if they want to make contributions, it would be better for them to come home. I hope that concerted efforts will be made to accelerate progress in China's scientific, technological, and educational undertakings. (Deng, 1993, author's translation)

In 1995, the strategy of "revitalizing the nation through science and education (科教兴国, *kejiao xingguo*) was put forward, which again stressed the significance of science and education for the national economy. In addition to training domestic professionals, the strategy aimed to appeal to overseas experts. The *Hundred Talent Plan* (百人计划, *Bairen Jihua*)¹⁹ *Chunhui Plan* (春晖计划, *Chun Hui Jihua*)²⁰ and the *Cheung Kong*

¹⁹ *The Hundred Talent Plan* was launched by the Chinese Academy of Science in 1994 to recruit young professionals with specificity in science and technology over from both at home and abroad.

²⁰ *The Chunhui Plan* was launched by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 1997 to sponsor Chinese overseas students to work in China on a short-term basis (normally during vocations).

Scholars Plan (长江学者计划, *Changjiang Xuezhe Jihua*)²¹ were initiated, placing priority on recruiting from abroad ethnic Chinese who were highly educated scientists or eminent academics. Research subsidies and other material assistances are promised for participants in these programs. In this stage, it is clear that of China's policy to woo back the highly educated diaspora through a combination of economic incentives and patriotic rhetoric.

Stage Four (2000-present):

In 2001, China formally joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), casting the message that global economic integration would require China to be more globally competitive (Zweig, 2006). In the same year, the *Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development*²² was released, a document which called for the adoption of a national strategy to explicitly address issues of human capital. Accordingly, the strategy of “strengthening the nation through developing human capital” (人才强国, *rencai qiangguo*) was put forward in 2002, and recruiting overseas Chinese professionals was the top priority of this strategy (Li, 2004). With the release of this policy document China became much more active in recruiting overseas talent. For example, according to the *Decision on Further Strengthening the Work on Talent*²³, recruitment targets extended

²¹ *The Cheung Kong Scholars Plan* was launched by the Chinese Ministry of Education and Li Ka Shing Foundation in 1998 to recruit academics as professors in Chinese universities, and to award those have outstanding achievement.

²² 《中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十个五年计划纲要》, <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/16/20010318/419582.html>

²³ 《关于进一步加强人才工作的决定》, http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2003-12/31/content_1256161.htm

to include “individual and team.” This focus specified “scarce high-level talented individuals or teams” could include both overseas Chinese and foreigners of non-Chinese origin (the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 2003).

In addition, since 2001, the Chinese governments increasingly attached importance to temporary return (Xiang, 2007). For example, in 2001, *the Opinions of Encouraging Overseas Students to Serve the Country in Various Ways*²⁴ was proposed, a policy document which suggests that physical return on a long-term basis was no longer essential.

The rapid development of the Chinese economy and the flexibility of state policies were largely successful in reversing the trend of “brain drain.” According to statistics from the Ministry of Education of China, during the three decades between 1978 and 2007, approximately 25 percent of the overseas Chinese students (1.21 million) returned (Yang, 2009). Most of the overseas students who are believed to be high-level professionals, however, opt to settle abroad (Yang, 2009). On the other hand, even though China enjoyed huge progress in its economic growth during this period, many believe that it was not due to the development of “a high tech industry, a knowledge-based economy or innovation and creativity, but rather a cheap labour force, inexpensive land and low-end manufacturing” (Wang, 2012, p. 2). Although China continuously advances strategies to invigorate itself in the global competition for talent, in particular top talent, this did not automatically results in the creation of an large-scale IT industry.

The *TTP*, first launched by the Chinese central government in 2008 represents China’s latest effort in a global hunt for talent from abroad. Its primary aim is to recruit

²⁴ 《关于鼓励海外留学人员以多种形式为国服务的若干意见》，see http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2002/content_61391.htm

different types of talented individuals or teams from abroad, preferably those who have the capacity for innovation and/or entrepreneurial promotion and activity, and individuals and groups who can fill management and/or research positions. The individuals and groups selected enjoy preferential policies in regards to visas, residence permits, healthcare, insurance, accommodation, tax, salaries, and to top it all off, financial subsidies up to Chinese Yuan Renminbi (RMB) 1 million *yuan* (US\$153,700) and research funding between RMB 3 and 5 million *yuan* (US\$461,100 - 768,500). While it is believed that China is greatly imitating Taiwan's strategies in the global talent competition (Tzeng, 2006), its overseas talent schemes have surpassed Taiwan's in terms of the monetary provisions. If the war for talent is essentially a "war on policy" among national governments regarding how to most effectively attract and retain global [talent]" (Harvey, 2014, p. 68), China is certainly striving for a competitive edge within policy.

5.2 Exploring Chinese overseas recruitment policy: the *Thousand Talent Plan*

5.2.1 Identifying Chinese overseas talent as an economically beneficial social group

第十条 引进的人才应在海外取得博士学位，不超过55岁，引进后每年在国内工作不少于6个月,并符合下列条件之一：（一）在国外著名高校、科研院所担任相当于教授职务的专家学者；（二）在国际知名企业和金融机构担任高级职务的专业技术人才和经营管理人才；（三）拥有自主知识产权或掌握核心技术，具有海外自主创业经验，熟悉相关产业领域和国际规则的创业人才；（四）国家急需紧缺的其他高层次创新创业人才。（《办法》，2008，“第三章引才标准与程序，”段落1）

Article Ten: Applicants should have his/her doctoral degree granted by overseas educational institutions, should be below the age of 55, and are required to have worked for no less than 6 months per year in China. In addition, applicants are required to meet at least one of the following criteria: (1) be an expert or a scholar with full professorship or the equivalent in prestigious foreign universities or Research and Development institutes; (2) hold a senior technical or managerial

positions in an internationally well-known company or financial institution; (3) be an entrepreneur holding proprietary intellectual property rights or key technologies, possess overseas entrepreneurial experience, and is well-versed in related industry and international rules; (4) be a professional with innovative or entrepreneurial expertise needed by the country. (*Measures*, 2008, “Chapter Three: Criteria and Procedure of Recruitment,” para. 1)

Above are the general requirements in the *TTP* for qualifying candidates in 2008. Although the specific requirements have shifted slightly over time with the development of each specific sub-program, as will be discussed in the following sections, the *TTP* continues to use the educational and professional background of an individual or group as the principle criteria of assessment. Next, I analyze the criteria the *TTP* posts for talent selection in order to understand how the country identifies this overseas talent.

Academic credentials

Brown *et al.* (2013) see academic credentials as both the accreditation of institutionalized cultural capital and evaluation technique to find talent. In contrast, P. Wang argues that talented people should be identified according to competencies, which cannot be adequately certified by academic degrees alone (Xia & Zhou, 2003). The question is then whether or not an academic credential helps in the recognition of talent.

In some policy statements, particularly with the preface or introduction, talent is associated with “knowledge,” “experience,” “ability,” and “attitude” rather than simply degrees or credentials. For instance, the *Outline for National Medium & Long-term Program for Talent Development* (2010-2020) defines talent as:

人才是指具有一定的专业知识或专门技能，进行创造性劳动并对社会作出贡献的人，是人力资源中能力和素质较高的劳动者。人才是我国经济社会发展的第一资源。（“序言,” 段落1）

A person who has a certain professional knowledge or expertise, has done creative work and contributed to the society. A talent has relatively high capacity and quality among the labour force. Talent resource is the primary resource for Chinese economic and social development”. (“Preface,” para. 1)

Yet, degree requirements are always overtly put forward when it moves into the criteria sections with regard to talent recruitment. The *Measures*, for instance, makes a doctoral degree the principle eligibility requirement for selecting overseas talented professionals. The same is true for other talent selection schemes. For instance, *Hundred Talent Plan* (1994) makes a doctoral degree the first criterion in the selection of overseas talent. Both the *Chunhui Plan* (1997) and the *Cheung Kong Scholars Plan* (1998) also specifically target PhD holders. Among all the sub-programs of the *TTP*, only *the Recruitment Program for Topnotch Talented Individuals and Teams* does not specify degree requirements. All the other sub-programs have clear degree requirements, although some include not only “a foreign doctoral degree,” but also “a master degree” or “a foreign degree.” For instance, for candidates who intend to apply as entrepreneurs through the *Recruitment Program for Entrepreneurs*, some of the dominant selection criteria are relaxed. The “doctoral” degree requirement stealthily disappears. The program states that a qualified candidate “should normally have an academic degree granted from overseas” (“一般应在海外取得学位”) (*Recruitment Program for Entrepreneurs*, 2015, “1. Basic Qualifications,” para. 1). However, although furtively removing the most substantial word “doctoral” between “foreign” and “degree,” as stipulated in the *Measures*, it still stresses a degree requirement.

This finding highlights the government’s interest in degrees, perhaps in response to the degree-obsessed culture of China. In particular, the higher your academic degree is,

the more points you earn during talent contest in labour market (Chen, 2006; Qin, 2003). In contemporary China, where mass higher education has been promoted, academic credential, of different types or levels, is increasingly seen as proof of one's learning experiences and academic achievements (Qin, 2003). Most employers in Chinese society, including the government itself, are disposed to referring to academic credentials as the proximate criterion to determine whether a job candidate is qualified (Qin, 2003). Over time, credentialism has been entrenched as a part of social norms that cannot be easily challenged (Qin, 2003).

The *TTP*, in applying academic credentials to identify a talent, heavily leans on Western educational institutions as an authority to define institutional cultural capital. From Bourdieu's (1985) perspective, educational credentials can be regarded as "a kind of legal rule of social perception, where 'being-perceived' guaranteed as a right" (p. 733). To succinctly state the degree requirement is to, on one hand, construct an "objective" selection mechanism, and, on the other hand, make it an individual's responsibility to acquire particular institutional capital. As Okada (2001) argues, in developing countries it is normal to see that education functions as a meritocratic mechanism, and thus academic credential serves as a weapon in constructing a meritocratic society while the country is aggressively creating "talent."

Professional fields

As China aggressively develops its economy, professionals in fields of science and technology, such as IT and biotechnology, grow in value and prevalence (Wang, 2011). In most of talent recruitment schemes, professionals in applied science and natural

science rather than social sciences or humanities are targeted (Wang *et al.*, 2011; Zhao & Zhu, 2009). Even in the *TTP*, which has the broadest coverage in terms of fields, not all types of overseas talent are considered. The *Opinions*, an advisory policy document for the *TTP*, directly expresses the government's appetency for overseas scientists and technologists:

[千人计划] 要围绕国家发展战略目标，重点引进一批能够突破关键技术、发展高新产业、带动新兴学科的战略科学家和科技领军人才。(《意见》，2008，“二、分层次组织实施海外高层次人才引进计划，”段落2)

[The *TTP*] works closely with the national developmental strategies and goals, mainly calls for strategic scientists and leading technologists who can make breakthroughs in key technologies, enhance China's high-tech industries and emerging disciplines. (*Opinions*, 2008, “Two: To implement the overseas talent recruitment plan by levels,” para. 2)

The *Measures*, a policy document for the implementation of the *TTP* in 2008, solely targets “high-level overseas innovative technological professionals” (“高层次科技创新人才”) (*Measures*, 2008, “Article 5”), “high-level managerial professionals” (“高层次经营管理人才”) (*Measures*, 2008, “Article 5”), and “entrepreneurial professionals” (“创业人才”) (*Measures*, 2008, “Chapter Three: Criteria and Procedure of Recruitment,” para. 1) in particular in technology-related fields.

As Zhao and Zhu (2009) state, “[Chinese] local governments seem to be more interested in attracting technopreneurs than [other] high-level professionals in part because technopreneurs directly contribute to local economic growth while [other] high-level professionals do not” (p. 332). The term “technopreneur” is coined to refer to “entrepreneurs [specifically] in high-tech industries or high-end services, such as the internet, IT, communication and media” (Zhao & Zhu, 2009, p. 329). Zhao and Zhu

(2009) argue that the target of overseas talent recruitment transparently stems from the country's "enterprise-led and commercial-oriented" (p. 329) ideology for national innovation. This ideology asks society to value those in applied science fields, individuals and groups assumed to be able to immediately apply their knowledge to commercial projects (Wang, 2011b; Xiang, 2011), overseas talented entrepreneurs deemed able to "cash in" on their human capital. Such talent schemes consequently exclude those who, despite globally advanced expertise, cannot directly transfer their knowledge to profitable businesses, such as high-level professionals in social science and humanities (Xiang, 2011). As Cao (2008) writes, China must understand that its propagated sustainable development cannot be achieved independently from innovative "social thinkers and public intellectuals" (p. 342).

Another reason why the government deliberately ignores social scientists is, in part, due to political sensitivities. As Cao (2008) observes, "several social scientists were arrested while they were in China conducting research on sensitive issues" (p. 342). In response, overseas social scientists often prefer to stay abroad (Cao, 2008). Nevertheless, there is suggestion of change. In 2013, social sciences and humanities were first mentioned as a field of target in the policy documents of the *TTP*. This may signal that overseas Chinese trained in social sciences and humanities are being included in Chinese overseas talent recruitment schemes. However, only the *Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Long Term)* is open for this group (*Notice on the Implementation of 2013*²⁵ "the *Thousand Talent Plan*," 2013). Furthermore, only those deemed "extremely scarce and urgently needed" ("急需紧缺") (p. 2) are eligible, and

²⁵ 《关于做好 2013 年“千人计划”有关项目申报工作的通知》

only higher educational institutions or research institutes were eligible to apply for these positions.

By 2014, up to eight sub-programs have been issued, but barriers set for social scientists and humanists have yet to be removed. In the *Notice on the Implementation of 2014*²⁶ “*Thousand Talent Plan* (2014), the government stated the following as the general requirements,

[引才]重点向高端制造、民生科技等领域倾斜，支持引进从事重大原始创新研究和有望实现重大突破的人才。在引才项目上，重点向“青年千人计划”、“外专千人计划”和“顶尖人才与创新团队”项目倾斜。在引才单位上，重点向企业倾斜。
(p.2)

[Recruitment] should tilt towards fields of high-end manufacturing, technology for livelihoods, and so forth, [and] support the recruitment targeted at talented professionals who are engaged in research on original innovation and able to make breakthroughs. In aspects of the sub-programs, [recruitment] should tilt towards “*Recruitment Program for Young Professionals*,” “*Recruitment Program for Foreign Experts*” and “*Recruitment Program for Topnotch Talented Individuals and Teams*.” In aspects of the employers, [recruitment] should tilt towards to enterprises. (p. 2)

As exemplified by this statement, social scientists are far from the targets of the *TTP*. In other words, the country’s interest and position in relation to internationally educated social scientists is quite ambivalent: while it purports to pursue a “balanced and sustainable economic and social development” (“经济社会全面协调可持续发展”) (*Opinions*, 2008, “Chapter One,” para. 1), it continually dotes on the “economic side” but downplays the “social side.”

Position

The *TTP* tries to identify talented professionals according to the professional level of

²⁶ 《关于做好 2014 年“千人计划”有关项目申报工作的通知》

their positions and the social prestige of their organizations they work for. The *Measures* employs abundance of adjectives to distinguish the comparatively higher level of the positions or organizations, such as “prestigious” (foreign universities), “senior” (positions), and “internationally well-known” (companies). It indubitably creates a mechanism which orders the selection of talented professionals, distinguishing “top talent” from “ordinary talent.” The statement on requirements for a qualified candidate for the *Recruitment Program for Young Professionals* is provides such an example:

- 2、在海外知名高校取得博士学位.....;
- 3、申报时在海外知名高校、科研机构或知名企业研发机构有正式教学或科研职位;
- 4、.....;
- 5、为所从事科研领域同龄人中的拔尖人才，有成为该领域学术或技术带头人的发展潜力..... (《青年海外高层次人才引进工作细则》，2010，“一、‘青年千人计划’引进对象和条件”)

2. Has obtained a doctorate degree granted from a prestigious university overseas [...];
3. Has formal positions on teaching or research in prestigious universities, research institutes, or research departments in enterprises at the time of application;
4. [...];
5. Is a top-notch talent among [his/her] peers; has the potential to be the foregoer in academic or technological fields [...]. (Rules for the Recruitment for Overseas Young Professionals, 2010, “One: The Targets and Requirements of the Recruitment of Yong Professionals”)

The prestige of a university is a rather abstract concept; also, the measurement for the degree of individual excellence lacks of transparency and accountability. That is, although the policy declares its requirements point-by-point, its standards remain vague for it does not provide any specific approaches to assess the levels of individual excellence or organizational prestige. As Bonini (2010) writes, “what is not explicit

cannot be questioned” (p. 503). The absence of criteria can, on one hand, prevent the requirements from being challenged in terms of its validity, and, on the other hand, preserve absolute power over the practice of evaluation and selection. Thus, such descriptions may have more symbolic than pragmatic significance. They contribute to constructing a “better” person or a relatively “superior” individual over the rest.

5.2.2 Making Chinese overseas talent as a distinguished social group

第十七条 有关职能部门制定特殊政策措施，在担任领导职务、承担重大科技项目、申请科技资金、参与国家标准制订、创新工作机制、参加院士评选、参加政府奖励等方面作出规定，为引进人才创新创业提供良好条件。第十八条 有关职能部门在居留和出入境、落户、资助、薪酬、医疗、保险、住房、税收、配偶安置、子女就学等方面制定特殊政策，妥善解决引进人才生活方面的困难和问题。（《办法》，2008，“第四章条件保障与日常服务，”段落 1-2）

Article Seventeen: The relevant functional departments develop special policies or measures to provide favorable condition conducive to the awardee’s innovation and entrepreneurship through setting regulations in terms of taking up leadership positions, undertaking major technology-related projects, applying technology-related funding, making national standards, innovating working mechanism, seeking membership of an academy, and competing for governmental awards. Article Eighteen: The relevant functional departments make special policies regarding exit and entry, residence, allowance, remuneration, medical care, insurance, housing, tax, settlement of spouses, children education, etc., properly solve the issues that may face awardees in their daily lives. (*Measures*, 2008, “Chapter Four: Guarantee of Conditions and Daily Service,” para. 1-2)

Above are the “special provisions” for an awardee guaranteed in the *TTP*. An overseas talent is believed to have both global knowledge and global networks that will bridge the home country to the developed West (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Zweig *et al.*, 2008). To attract and retain them, China uses preferential policies to target this group. The awardees will be rewarded with high pay, fast promotions, and honorary positions in China. The analysis in this section will move into the government’s production of an elite

class through an examination of the benefit package promised for overseas talent in policy texts.

Material entitlements

Offering large amounts of material benefits to the selected talented professionals is becoming its iconic strategies in the global “war for talent” in China. Some scholars believe that the income disparity is the main cause for talent mobility; therefore, in order to attract overseas talent, their salaries should be globally competitive (Sun & Wei, 2012; Wang, 2012). According to Zweig *et al.*'s (2008) research on the *Chunhui Plan* in 2000, returned overseas scholars can expect to receive five times their salaries previously received from abroad. Zweig *et al.* (2004) believe that it is rational to raise one's salary well above normal market value if his/her specialization is in short supply. As Chinese policy claims that the selected are in demand, it is deemed reasonable to offer them relatively higher remuneration. In order to attract talented professionals, governments at different levels and in different regions gradually compete through offering, or even raising, financial rewards for the top talent.

The official website of the *TTP* proclaims that the Chinese central government will offer awardees of the long-term program a one-off, start-up package of 1 million *yuan* (US\$153,700) in addition to relatively high salaries and research funding. From such policy statements, the government determines not only their allowance, tax, welfare such as health care, housing, insurance, but also salaries, which are to a great extent determined by the marketplace in market-oriented economy (Zweig *et al.*, 2008). Thus, it is believed that the overseas talented professionals, as the best and brightest, will be

priced relatively higher in the labour market. However, the government is obviously not satisfied with the rules and aims at making their salaries much higher. Thus, through monetary provisions, the westernized cultural capital overseas talent bring with them get transacted into economic capital.

As for the financial reward, it is clearly documented in the *Rules for the Recruitment for Foreign Experts* (2011),

第十二条 中央财政给予“外专千人计划”长期项目专家每人人民币100万元的一次性补助，并根据工作需要，经用人单位向从事科研工作、特别是从事基础研究的外国专家提供总计300-500万元科研经费补助。（“第十二条”）

Article Twelve: A lump sum of RMB 1 million *yuan* personal subsidies shall be granted to each talent enrolled from the nation's central budget. According to the needs for work, a total amount of RMB 3-5 million *yuan* research subsidies shall be granted, through the employer, to those engaged in scientific research, particularly those in basic science research. (“Article Twelve”)

Besides the regular financial reward of RMB 1 million *yuan* (US\$153,700), the amount of research funding is also specified in the policy. Comparing the case of Taiwan, personal subsidy given to an overseas technical professional is no more than New Taiwan Dollars (TWD) NT\$80,000 (US\$2470) per month for a PhD with eight years or above work experience (Wang, Y., 2012). Comparing the case of Taiwan, only by working in Taiwan for more than five years can an overseas technical professional obtain RMB 1 million *yuan* as subsidy in total. For the monetary entitlements, China has stepped far ahead of Taiwan for its generous starting packages, regardless of how long an awardee will serve for the country.

To recruit overseas talent, local employers are highly adept to play number games; that is, they declare the maximum amount of a possible salary and other subsidies as the headline of a recruitment advertisement. Using economist discourses has become a

customary gambit of employers engaging in the recruitment process. From the advertisements recruiting top talent, an annual salary of no less than RMB 1 million *yuan* or more is often promised:

最高 500 万年薪+500 万购房补助+1000 万科研经费，杭州电子科技大学面向海内外诚聘学科带头人！

Maximum RMB 5,000,000 *yuan* annual salary + RMB 5,000,000 *yuan* housing subsidy + RMB 10,000,000 *yuan* research funding, Hangzhou Dianzi University is recruiting leaders discipline from home and abroad

1000 万科研经费+300 万购房补贴+100 万年薪，西南大学诚聘“千人计划”等海内外优秀人才！

RMB 10,000,000 *yuan* research funding + RMB 3,000,000 *yuan* housing subsidy + RMB 1,000,000 *yuan* annual salary, Southwest University is recruiting talent (such as awardees of *TTP*) from home and abroad

Xiang (2011) also provides examples to prove that the uses of material incentives in some talent schemes are well thought out, noting the needs of people in both life and work:

[As] early as August 1993 the Shanghai municipality issued The Notification on Special Treatment on Installing Telephones, Gas and Air Conditioning for Overseas Students Who Are to Work in Shanghai. Guangzhou municipality hands out RMB 100,000 (US \$13,000) as the “golden hello” (*jianmianli*) to returnees who decide to work in Guangzhou. (p. 832)

Globally competitive salary is enticing for overseas talent; however, data shows that if China offers a so-called competitive salary, the income gap will widen between the returned talent and their local counterparts.

According to National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates in both US and China (the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014; the National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China, 2014), in 2014, the annual mean wage in the US of all

occupations was US\$47,230, while the mean wage in China was RMB 36,390 *yuan* (US\$5,592) in private sectors and RMB 56,339 *yuan* (US\$8,658) in public sectors in urban areas. Correspondingly, the annual mean wage of those employed in computer and mathematical related occupations in the US is US\$83,970, while the mean wage in China is RMB 51,044 *yuan* (US\$7,844) in the private sectors and RMB 100,797 *yuan* (US\$15,490) in the public sector. Since the annual mean wage represents the incomes of the vast majority of workers in a country, the comparison between US and China in computer and mathematical related occupations in urban areas suggests that solely raising the incomes of the high earners in China can result in widening the gap within the country. The generous economic rewards distributed to the selected talent further intensify the gap. As Xiang and Shen (2009) observe, “while these promised material and financial benefits do not always materialize, they nevertheless [render] the returnees a special social category” (p. 520).

Leadership opportunity

As stated in the *Measures*, talented returnees may have more life and career opportunities, especially when it comes to “leadership positions” or other positions where they could exercise influences “on big issues” in China.

Before the release of the *TTP*, the *2002-2005 Outline for National Program for Qualified Personnel Development* (2002) called for the country to pay close attention to the cultivation and employment of returned talent. In the policy, the need to appoint outstanding returned overseas students to leadership posts is stated:

按照充分信任、放手使用的原则，抓紧研究制定选拔优秀留学回国人员担任领导职务的具体办法，将符合条件的留学回国人员选拔到各级领导岗位，特别优秀的，可以破格任用。选拔德才素质好、有发展潜力的留学回国人员列入后备干部名单，进行重点培养。（《2002—2005 年全国人才队伍建设规划纲要》，2002，“第十四点，”段落 2）

According to the principles of “to trust completely, to employ unencumberedly,” to speed up the deliberation on specific measures with regard to selecting the outstanding returned overseas students into leadership positions, to appoint those qualified returned overseas students to leadership posts at all levels, exception can be made to those who are particularly excellent. To recruit those who are graced with virtues, talent, and huge potential as reserve cadres, and to offer important and targeted training for them. (the *2002-2005 Outline for National Program for Qualified Personnel Development*, 2002, “Point Fourteen,” para. 2)

The *Measures* also pushes relevant departments to offer returnees selected leadership opportunities. Specific practices are specified in the official website of the *TTP*:

…… [获选者] 可担任高等院校、科研院所、中央企业、国有商业金融机构一定的领导职务或专业技术职务；可担任国家重大科技专项、863、973、自然科学基金等项目负责人；……可参与国家重大项目咨询论证、重大科研计划和国家标准制订、重点工程建设等工作；担任项目负责人的，在规定的职责范围内，有权对经费使用、人员聘任等作出决定。（《创新人才项目（长期）》，2015，“2. 特殊政策待遇”，段落1）

[...][Awardees] are entitled to assume some leadership, professional, or technical positions in universities, R&D institutes, central SOEs as well as state-owned commercial and financial institutions; to serve as project principals of the National Key Scientific and Technological Projects, “863 Program”(or the National High-tech R&D Program), “973 Program”(or the National Program on Key Basic Research Project), the National Nature Science Fund Projects; [...] to participate in the consultation and demonstration of China’s major projects, the formulation of key scientific research plans and national standards, the construction of major projects, etc.; to determine the expenditure and employment within the prescribed scope of responsibilities as project principals; to be engaged in various domestic academic organizations and the election of academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering (foreign academicians) and become the candidates of a wide range of government rewards. (*The Recruitment Program for Innovative Talented Professionals (Long Term)*, 2008, “Chapter 2. (1): Enabling working conditions,” para. 1)

From the statement, those selected via the *TTP* are highly recommended for leadership

positions. While the statements are recommendations rather than guidelines, words such as “leadership,” “principal,” “major,” “key,” and “determine,” nevertheless work to distinguish the returnees as an elite group. This discourse of elitism intensifies the symbolic capital of the awardees.

According to Li (2009), because of the growing needs of globalization, overseas talented professionals, especially those who are believed to possess global expertise “in the area of international economics and finance” (p. 4), are increasingly welcomed in the Chinese policymaking process. Overseas talented professionals are expected to serve in think tanks and contribute their innovative perspectives towards the governance of China. All of which is understood to promote global exchange, meeting the country’s desire to connect with the West. Overseas talent thus becomes more and more valued and important in Chinese contemporary leadership structure. Li (2009) puts forward an example:

Returnees have also come to dominate prominent research centers in the field of China studies. This trend is most strikingly on display at the China Center for Economic Research (CCER) at Peking University, [...] 24 faculty members in 2005 [...] all of them studied abroad and all received doctoral degrees, mainly from universities in the United States. (p. 15)

The CCER is well known for its significant contribution (e.g., research reports, policy belief, etc.) to Chinese economic studies and its power and influence on China’s economic decision-making process (Li, 2009). In this regard, talented returnees play crucial roles in the control of the economic development of China. Despite stepping away from politics, talented returnees can still exercise influence on the government authority.

Although policies do not directly declare the employment of overseas talent to specific leadership posts, their recommendation stated in the *TTP* can be a rallying point for many government sectors.

Honour

Since overseas talented professionals are held in high esteem, Chinese people describe going overseas as being “coated with gold” (“镀金”) (Zweig *et al.*, 2004). It is believed that overseas Chinese have a flashy image. Talent recruitment activities are likely to magnify such an image through conferring overseas returnees with awards or honours. Based on Wang’s (2012) research, “China had conferred ‘*Friendship Awards*’ (“友谊奖”) on 1,099 foreign experts, and ‘*International Scientific and Technological Cooperation Awards*’ (“国际科学技术合作奖”) on 43 foreign experts by 2009” (p. 7). These awards are solely coined for overseas talented professionals who have come to work in China on a temporary basis and made contributions to Chinese economy. Conferring honours has become part of the talent recruitment scheme. As for the *TTP*, in 2010, the policy of *Central Group for the Coordination of Talented Personnel’s Decision for Issuing Certificate of “National Distinguished Experts”*²⁷ came out to confer the title of “*National Distinguished Experts*” (“国家特聘人才”) to each awardee of the *TTP* who will work in China on a full-time basis. As the policy states, such nationally honourable titles are used to honour individuals and groups for serving the country.

System of awards, in particular in public sectors, has a lengthy history in the Chinese

²⁷ 《中央人才工作协调小组关于颁发“国家特聘专家”证书的决定》
<http://www.caiep.org/regular/content.php?id=48226&>

context (Han, 2015). The Chinese governments grant awards and/or honours to those deemed distinguished in order to promote the “right” or the “best” social values (Han, 2015). That is, if the government intends to make an award to an individual public, it means that not only does the government recognize or appreciate that person, but also the government wants to fabricate new social norms around the country (i.e., “setting up models”) (Xiang, 2011, p. 829). These awards work as forms of symbolic capital, signalling institutional recognition of overseas talent as a distinguished group.

In order to convey the “right” message to the public, the mass media in China, the mouthpiece for the government, largely glorifies awardees (Han, 2015). Media not only advertises the *TTP*, but also exalts awardees through incorporating titles into awardees’ names, such as “*National Distinguished Expert Chen*” or “*the Thousand Talent Plan Expert Chen*,” further bolstering the honorific distinctions. Furthermore, the Chinese governments try to dispel public suspicions through the media. On the official website of the *TTP*, the life histories (both before and after being awarded) of some awardees are reported as success stories. Since 2014, the *TTP* has applied an Honour Roll to commend the awardees who have made prominent contribution to society. As a result, additional respect, awards and honours, and social prestige are given, bolstering their “special place in society” (Silver, 2002, p. 97).

Silver (2002) cites Pamm’s definition of awards and honours in the public domain as “bestowal of social rank and position (though) titular honours; admission into select societies and orders; decorations, medals, and certificates” (p. 81). Awarding honours, or using Bourdieu’s (1987; 1989) language, symbolic capital, is instrumental in reclassifying the overseas returnees as a celebrated group or a distinguished class.

5.2.3 The selection system and social exclusion

According to the *Measures*, the selection system of the *TTP* involves three phases: application and recommendation, investigation and assessment, and review and approval. Prior to the phase one of application and recommendation, applicants, those who meet the minimum requirements of each sub-program (except the *Recruitment Program for Entrepreneurs*), are connected with a Chinese organization, institution, or employer (用人单位, *yongren danwei*) and have job duties, responsibilities, salary, and other conditions negotiated. The *Measures* says:

第九条 用人单位是人才引进和使用的主体，负责提出人才需求、推荐拟引进人选、建设工作平台、安排岗位职务、落实配套政策等人才引进的具体工作。(第九条)

Article Nine: Employers are the subjects of the recruitment and use of talent that should propose requirements for talent, process recommendation for prospective talent, develop workplace environment, prepare placement, and implement related policies, and so forth. (“Article Nine”)

Thus, employers play a gatekeeper role crucial to the *TTP*. Du and Liu (2012) dissect the selection process into three phases. From the application forms of *TTP*, recommendation and the agreement between the applicant and employers serve as a part of an applicants’ eligibility (Du & Liu, 2012). Thus, employers take the control of Phase One. Phase two is the investigation and assessment of applications, a process conducted by related platforms. The mechanism of this phase is flexible that it may include a thorough background investigation, interviews, and any other approaches that seem necessary (Du & Liu, 2012). Phase three, also the strictest screening process of the selection system, is

organized by the so-called advisory committee, which is randomly constituted by experts in different fields, some of whom are awardees previously selected (Du & Liu, 2012). According to Du and Liu (2012), more than 50 percent applicants will be filtered out during the last two phases.

The three phases, in which different actors engage the selection system, seemingly represents a decentralization process. But it is worth mentioning again that the local employers under the *TTP* are mainly public institutions or SOEs monitored and regulated by government sectors or organizations. From the background information of all the 667 awardees under the *Recruitment Program for Young Professionals* (the eleventh batch),²⁸ 666 of them are working or will work for the public institutions, while one is working for an SOE. Therefore, the actors in the selection process are of the same cohort. In other words, the power of the selection mechanism is in fact circulated authority. In this sense, it is still a centralized process through which people are selected.

Zweig and Wang (2013) put forward that “with the policy now under the local CCP Committee, bureaucrats face more pressure to meet [the] commitments [of recruitment], though the quotas to which they committed are reportedly ‘soft’ and will not affect people’s careers if they are not accomplished” (p. 604). This, local employers are required to make commitments to accomplish certain talent recruitment. Since the initiative for recruitment is delegated to local employers, Zweig and Wang (2013) observe that local employers bear a heavy burden of expectation. To meet commitments, it is rational to posit that the local employers will “create” job vacancies without necessarily taking industry into account. In addition, a phenomenon Zweig and Wang (2013) found, research institutes are more likely to recommend their employees with

²⁸ <http://news.sciencenet.cn/htmlnews/2015/2/313417.shtml>

overseas background to apply for talent rewards rather than taking a long time to look for the very talented from abroad. It is considered a smart way to acquire funding from the central government for supporting scientific research, while, in the meantime, meeting the quotas assigned from local governments (Zweig & Wang, 2013). Thus, overseas talent schemes are, in fact, considered to be designed for talented professionals who have already returned rather than those remain overseas (Xiang, 2011; Zweig & Wang, 2013).

While education functions as a meritocratic mechanism (Brown & Tannock, 2009; Okada, 2001), I consider that the *TTP* is constructing a “hyper-meritocratic” system. The selection process of the *TTP* restricts the access to rewards and privileges of a vast majority, only favouring those of “top performance” or those who have positioned in the periphery of authority.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter, I first researched the policy context that gave rise to the *TTP*, then I analyzed the *TTP* and relevant policies by using CDA to look specifically at how these policies constructed Chinese overseas talent as a distinguished social group.

Despite the faltering start in the early decades after 1949, China’s overseas recruitment policy has continuously progressed. Over time, related policies have gradually shifted from being political-oriented to economic-driven (Xiang, 2011; Zhao & Zhu, 2009). Additionally, the approach for recruiting overseas talent has shifted from active to aggressive. As Zhao and Zhu (2009) argue, “China today is in a much better position to attract global talent than before” (p. 334). With regard to the incentives for them, an increasing emphasis is put on the material gains rather than the calling for

patriotism. However, while the country gradually lifts its restrictions surrounding “study abroad,” it puts in place a set of rigorous criteria for selection and exclusion to ensure that the talent it recruits is in need in the economy.

A CDA of the *TTP* and related policies enables a deeper understanding on China’s recruitment of overseas talent. As the first talent recruitment plan launched directly by the CCCPC, the *TTP* reflects China’s latest and greatest interests in overseas talent. My analysis shows that the central government applies rigorous mechanism to differentiate “the best over the rest” through the recognition of Western credentials, the economic relevance of professions, and prestige of positions in the occupational structure. From this, “talent” is not an apolitical definition, but rather is a conception attached with specific interests of the authority. Policy discourses in documents construct overseas talent as a knowledgeable, economically valuable, and global competent few by way of defining individual excellence by an authorized voice in an attempt to foster social commitment. In addition, policies play a role in allocating economic and social goods to recruited talent. To be specific, the *TTP* offers the selected talent material entitlements, leadership opportunities, and glorious honours. In this way, overseas talent are becoming a social group advantaged economically and socially. The selection system, which directs social exclusion, again works to enhance their privileged role in society. My analysis reveals that the selection mechanism of the *TTP* is a form of a closure designed to control and monitor entry. From my analysis, I argue that the Chinese overseas recruitment policies constitute overseas talent as a distinguished social group through means of legitimizing western cultural capital as the benchmark for talent, and extending their economic incentives and honours.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the race for global talent, the Chinese central government has continuously calibrated its policies to recruit overseas talent who are considered to be economically valuable to the country. Meanwhile, those policies, which are typically packaged with generous financial incentives and social entitlements, may be leading to the rise of a distinguished social group. Based on this assumption, I applied CDA as methodology to analyze how China's overseas recruitment policies play out in the reproduction of social stratification within Chinese society in the pursuit of "knowledge economy." In this chapter, I recap my research findings in relation to the research questions that I raised and discuss the limitations and implications of the findings.

6.1 Summary of analysis

The assumption that knowledge is becoming a major force for economic growth in the era of the "knowledge economy" drives the competition to attract talent in the global arena (Brint, 2001). For Brint (2001), to pursue a "knowledge economy," knowledge ought to be economically relevant; in other words, people's talents are defined according to their relevance to the economy. To win in this competition, China has deployed various mechanisms to attract overseas talent who are considered to be valuable to the economic development of China. As shown from the historical review of Chinese overseas recruitment policies, it is clear that the government's interest for overseas talent is economically driven.

Comparing the talent experiences and policies of the US, India, and Taiwan, I considered that Chinese overseas recruitment policies promote the intensification of social inequality and function to re-stratify the class structure of Chinese society. My conceptual framework extended my assumption that Chinese overseas recruitment policies function in three ways: a) to define “reality” and promote public recognition, b) to distribute economic and social goods, and c) to direct to social exclusion, thereby construct “top” overseas talent as a distinguished social group in contemporary Chinese society.

First, as Levinson *et al.* (2009) and Wen (2013) suggest, policy, where discourse functions as power, officially defines a legitimate “reality” in response to dominant interests. By focusing on the identification of Chinese overseas talent, the *TTP* depicts talent as a minority with a monopoly of scarce “global knowledge,” individuals and groups who are technologically advanced and economically valuable for the development of the country. Further, such talent are cast as having already secured high status and possess influential power in the labour market. The plan identifies both their status and power. In the language of Bourdieu (1986), the quality of their cultural capital is bolstered, already institutionalized in the form of elite credentials acquired in the West. If we take the perspectives of Derber *et al.* (1990) and King and Szelenyi (2004), both of whom see knowledge as class power, overseas talent recruitment can be understood as formulating a new social class embodied with westernized cultural capital. The overseas recruitment policies in China work to not only legitimize the cultural capital of the returnees according to the Western benchmark, but also designate their potential class position in Chinese context.

Levinson *et al.* (2009) proposes that policy functions to allocate resources. *TTP*, as a state policy that wields its power in the distribution of social, cultural, and economic goods, serves to privilege overseas talent recruited through the plan. Chinese overseas recruitment policies, I argue, serve as a new mechanism for social redistribution rather than merely a technique for talent recruitment. From Lin's (2015) viewpoint,

[the re]distribution of resources and wealth under the framework of a market-oriented socialist economy have caused the rise of new strata of people, and in this process access to political, economic, and educational power have been determining factors in one's 'making it' or not in the upper echelon of the society.
(p. 179)

In other words, redistribution in Chinese society plays a significant role in shaping the social status of different groups, which results in the reproduction of social stratification. For the overseas talent selected through the *TTP*, they are promised generous economic entitlements, principle roles in major national projects, and the honour of "*National Distinguished Experts*" as incentives. Such preferential policies provide additional access to economic, political, and symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu's theses on "social class" (1986) and "symbolic power" (1985; 1989), I argue that with the authority of the government, different types of capital come to concentrate within a group of overseas talent securing a new class position.

Finally, my examination of the *TTP* shows that the selection system is restrictive. On one hand, the plan targets a minority who have been selected through strict procedures. On the other hand, the plan targets those who have both experiences overseas and have obtained employment or will be employed in public institutions or SOEs. Given this

finding, I argue that the vast majority of individuals and groups are situated outside of the *TTP*, and only a minority of “top” overseas talent enjoy the exceptional benefits provided, aiding in the formation of a new social class.

Policies seemingly adopt a “winners-take-all” strategy to privilege the already-privileged, whereby further intensify their socio-economic inequality as a response to the ideology of meritocracy. The policy discourses impose a legitimate vision of overseas talent: a minority with economically beneficial global knowledge, occupational prestige, economic advantages, privileged promotional opportunities, and social glamour. Chinese overseas recruitment policies constitute a tool for the overseas talent to convert their internationally recognized cultural capital to advantageous forms of capitals, which are regarded as the fundamental resources for a new class position. There was no explicit data or empirical evidence to prove if a new class had been formed in Chinese context as an output of Chinese overseas recruitment policies. Yet, by using “social class” as a lens to explore social stratification, my analysis supports an argument that Chinese overseas recruitment policies construct a distinguished social group that re-stratify the social structure.

In conclusion, Chinese overseas recruitment policies not only identify overseas talent by evaluating their economically relevant cultural capital, but also construct overseas talent as a distinguished social group by proliferating their economic, social , and symbolic capital in Chinese society.

6.2 Limitations and implications

During the research process, I found that the Chinese central government is keen to equip

the selected talented professionals with capital in economic, political, and symbolic forms. I argued that Chinese overseas recruitment policies are forming overseas talent as a distinguished social group with a common class situation that reproduce the social stratification. Yet, there are two limitations to the study. First, the availability of research materials was found to be restrictive, impacting how the research questions were investigated. Policies or regulations with restricted access, such as those regarding the assessment process, are left out of the study. Second, I am aware that my analysis is highly dependent on the kinds of theories I drew upon. Following Bourdieu's theory of class, I viewed class as a probable construct, referring to social status groups sharing certain social cultural and economic advantages. People holding different views of class may object to my analysis, particularly because the limited number of people who have been supported through *TTP*. Of note, the thesis is not to prove an empirical class. It is rather to examine the roles of state policies in the formulation of class or social status groups.

Despite the above limitations, the significance of this study is noteworthy. Firstly, this study is one of the few that used class theory as a lens to unpack how symbolic power mediates the reproduction of social stratification through the phenomenon of "brain circulation." This framework contributes to the body of research and knowledge on the social impacts of return migration. Secondly, my research process points to some challenges doing research across language and culture. I have come to see that translating language across cultures requires indigenisation of language. This however is a process full of challenges. Thirdly, this study illuminates issues in practice, highlighting how transnational experiences are converted into class privileges for returnees. Individuals

and groups seeking higher class status may understand academic and/or professional achievement in the West as a shortcut to upward class mobility in China, a trend which may come to influence their transnational movement accordingly. Fourthly, in terms of policy, this study implies that China should: a) improve the accountability and transparency of its selection systems within talent schemes, and b) recalibrate its policies to promote social equity between different groups of talent. For instance, talent schemes may expand to encompass more people of different levels of educational achievement or of different professional fields. Furthermore, while talent schemes insist in employing various forms of incentives as rewards to the recruitment of overseas “top talent,” equivalent investments should be given to the cultivation of domestic “ordinary talent.”

Regarding possibilities for further research, I propose two possible research orientations that emanate from this study. The first one is to investigate the gender dimension of “brain circulation.” Notably, from the profiles of talent of the *TTP*, the majority of awardees are male. If taking it as problematic, further research can be done to examine the permeability of Chinese talent recruitment mechanism for overseas female professionals. The second possible research area can go into discover how different types of capitals transform into each other along with the people’s transnational movement. As Bourdieu (1986) argues that capitals are interconvertible, it is interesting to probe into what and how capitals are converging, intensifying and concentrating in overseas talent.

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