contradictory educational policies and practices emerging under the name of "education for quality" (*suzhi jiaoyu*).

Bregnbæk also devotes space to the extreme dilemmas that lead some students to suicide. When the attainment of the credentials necessary to become a well-off citizen in a highly competitive society are described as necessary sacrifices that lead only to positions where one must continue to sacrifice and then raise one's own children to also sacrifice, then feelings of hopelessness can emerge. Hopelessness is just another word for aporia – lacking a path, a position from which there is no path forward. But while the condition of hopelessness is untenable, at least for some, Bregnbæk also seems to denigrate hope. Hopes are based on fantasies, such as the fantasy that going to university in the United States will lead to self-actualization. Bregnbæk brackets such hopes with Bourdieu's concept of "*illusio*, which encompasses all those 'well-founded illusions' in which people place their hopes, or discover a sense of purpose or a promise of well-being" (p. 144). This critique points to the ultimate double-bind. If hope by definition is an illusion, then what choice is there but hopelessness?

Arguably, it is the ambitious (elite) of any country who are most likely to nurture the illusion that their efforts can make a difference, at least to their own social position, and that improving their social position can somehow lead to higher levels of life satisfaction. Harbouring such hopes, they would be seemingly vulnerable to the forces that would dash them. Can hard work be sustained by anything but an illusion? Are China's top university students the only elites who are "fragile" or do all elites face similar dilemmas?

Throughout, this engaging ethnography brims with life stories of the elite members of China's "1980s" (*baling hou*) generation. Focused on youth and their existential dilemmas, it is likely to appeal to undergraduate readers from a wide variety of disciplines. While it offers entrance into the literatures on education, child rearing and youth in China, it unapologetically focuses only on the dilemmas of the successful, so other works must be assigned alongside it to give a fuller picture of Chinese youth. Though generous in her discussion of the works of other scholars, including my own, Bregnbæk misses that of her fellow Scandinavian, Børge Bakken. Where Bregnbæk makes an insightful analysis of the ambiguity of the Chinese word *guan* (simultaneously implying care, love and discipline), for example, Bakken dissects the character for education (*jiao*) to show how corporal punishment was present in the very ideograph for this concept. But this is a minor oversight. Anyone interested in what it is like to be an elite university student in contemporary China cannot afford to miss this book.

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The Pursuit of the Chinese Dream in America: Chinese Undergraduate Students at American Universities
DENNIS T. YANG
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There has been a long history of Chinese students going to the United States for higher education, dating back to the mid-19th century when Yung Wing attended Yale University. After 1949 and the Communist takeover of China though, the US

(and the entire West) was mostly closed to mainland Chinese students for 30 years. It would not be until after the Cultural Revolution and at the dawn of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening that Chinese students again began to venture to US campuses. Due to the setbacks and consequences of isolation, these students wielded great windfalls from their foreign education upon returning to China, as they were guaranteed prestigious positions in the rapidly developing and opening society. In contrast, the recent and current cohorts associated with the massive boom in Chinese filling American classrooms, dramatically rising in the early 2000s, have not seen the same returns. Upon returning to China fresh with foreign degrees, these students have actually found it difficult to find careers and have had issues of integration back into Chinese society, especially compared to the prior cohort.

In *The Pursuit of the Chinese Dream in America: Chinese Undergraduate Students at American Universities,* Dennis T. Yang attempts to answer the simple question of why Chinese students continue to venture to the US for higher education despite the evaporation of economic gains. In the research, Yang employs an in-depth and concise ethnographic analysis from the grassroots perspective, interviewing 20 students, 18 parents and 20 teachers from two different international high schools in Shanghai. While the sample size for the research is relatively small and non-generalizable, the reach of the analysis is quite deep, highlighting the author's familiarity with Chinese issues in education and society, and also maximizing the intimacy offered by ethnographic research methods.

The theoretical framework of the book's research is rooted in two sociological theoretical paradigms: the Wisconsin model of status or educational attainment and Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory. Both theories are well explored and applied by the author, but it is the latter cultural capital theory that really complements the book's subject and focus. Specifically, the Chinese concept of "face" (*mianzi*) perfectly aligns with Bourdieu's cultural capital concept, as the author illustrates how even as economic gains have begun to subside from foreign degree attainment, these kinds of degrees have now become a cultural touchstone for affluence and success for the entire family. The allure is so powerful that Yang finds that the parents and students in the study have accepted the burden from the massive costs of education abroad and even a loss of future *guanxi* in order to obtain the valued cultural capital.

While the book offers an ethnographic exploration into student, parent and teacher conceptions of education abroad and Chinese educational development, it is the parental view that often contains the most interesting and telling insight into the decision-making process and conception building. Through the interviews, Yang shows that the parents in his study are often the driving force behind the desire to go abroad, with a special desire for the US as a destination. The perceived prestige of American higher education is particularly highlighted in his study, as the parents, some of whom came from the previous generation who gained significantly from studying abroad, pushed the notion that the US has the best higher education system in the world, superior to either Canada or the UK, often citing the high international university rankings.

The book offers a nice sociological and anthropological study on current trends in higher educational development in China and conceptions of international education. However, perhaps missed is a stronger connection to the larger implications of American and Chinese relations. While the author does briefly address the connection in the closing chapter, there are considerable directions that could be further explored in this rich area of inquiry, such as student encounters with criticisms of the larger Chinese political system while on the quest for a foreign degree. Yet, the book

does provide a jumping off point for deeper research into these kinds of specific areas of inquiry. Lastly, those who are theorizing on the workings of soft power should take note of the detailed accounts of the attraction to the American higher education system for Chinese teachers, parents and students.

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China's War against the Many Faces of Poverty: Towards a New Long March
JING YANG and PUNDARIK MUKHOPADHAYA
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When assessing whether a household is deemed as poor, analysts as well as statistical agencies have traditionally focused on strictly economic factors: the level of income the household has at its disposal, or its consumption. However, there have been attempts to broaden the basis for poverty assessments in order to cover other aspects of life. For example, the Oxford Poverty and Development Initiative has produced the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for many countries and for several years. This index is designed to capture the deprivation that each poor person faces with respect to education, health and other aspects of living standards. The MPI reflects both the incidence of multidimensional poverty (the proportion of people in a population who are multidimensionally poor), and its intensity (the average number of deprivations each poor person experiences at the same time). There have also been several attempts to apply a similar framework when assessing poverty in China, and this book by Jing Yang and Pundarik Mukhopadhaya is one.

China's War against the Many Faces of Poverty: Towards a Long New March can easily be divided into two rather different parts. The first, comprising approximately one third of the book, includes an introduction to the growing literature on multidimensional poverty by covering concepts and methodology as well as applications (chapter two). Chapter three gives an overview of income destitution in China based on previous research and also discusses government attempts to combat it. Both chapters are written for relatively broad audiences, and I found chapter three particularly rewarding for readers interested in social issues in contemporary China.

The second and larger part of the book consists of three very detailed research reports (together including more than 100 tables). Chapter four measures multidimensional poverty in China at the national, rural–urban, regional, and provincial levels by using data from the 2010 China Family Panel Studies (CPS) covering 25 of China's provinces. A household's poverty status is based on its members' education, health care and standard of living. The poverty assessment also considers the household's access to social security, and the latter is found to be the single most important contributor to multidimensional poverty at the national level. This study is also reported as an article in the journal *Social Indicators Research*.

Chapter five investigates trends in multidimensional poverty for the period 2000 to 2011, based on data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey (CHNS) covering nine provinces of China. This data source has been used in almost all previous research on multidimensional poverty in China. In this chapter the definition of multidimensional poverty is based on income, education, health care and standard