

Chinese international business graduates: A career dilemma: Repatriate or stay?

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Abstract

This paper examines the mobility paths taken by Chinese coursework graduates who studied abroad chiefly in business (Chinese ‘foreign’ graduates) and the consequences for their careers. A model is developed that focuses on the two major interconnected paths of repatriating and remaining abroad, and looks at the influence of pull–push forces. The model suggests the career consequences for repatriates, and their reactions to re-entry to China, in contrast to the career consequences for stayers and their reactions to the host country. The career capital the business graduates acquired while studying is developed. Adverse career consequences and reactions may lead to further mobility, including re-expatriation abroad by repatriates and repatriation by stayers. Overall, Chinese foreign business graduates may be caught in a dilemma when selecting the best path for their career and lifestyle. Implications for future research and management of Chinese foreign business graduates in host countries and China are assessed.

Keywords: chinese foreign students, chinese international students, chinese repatriates, chinese stayers abroad, chinese international business students

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Mainland Chinese students usually form the largest source of foreign university students (Li, 2010; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Institute of International Education [IEE], 2013; Kwon, 2013) and most often study in ‘Western’ countries of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Western Europe (Tremblay, 2005; Jiang, 2011). Australian universities have the highest percentage of foreign university students in all countries, at about 18–20% (Tremblay, 2005; Hawthorne, 2010; Cen & Cai, 2012; Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Chinese students provide the largest proportion, rising from over 25% in 2010 to 40% in 2013 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011; Australian Education International [AEI], 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Students from mainland China (excluding Hong Kong) who studied in Australia are an important source of future residents and employees. They claim one of the reasons they chose Australia for study is to gain permanent residence and China forms the largest origin nation of foreign students transferring to permanent residence in Australia (Tremblay, 2005; Hugo, 2008, 2010; Hawthorne, 2010; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011; Cen & Cai, 2012); in 2009, 38% transferred (Hawthorne, 2010). The aim of this conceptual analysis is to advance understanding of the mobility of Chinese foreign students post graduation and the consequences for their career. The focus is on mainland Chinese coursework business students who graduated from universities abroad, in this paper labelled ‘Chinese foreign graduates’, or ‘Chinese Oz graduates’ if they graduated exclusively from Australian universities.

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Chinese foreign graduates are potentially an important source of employees for businesses. In Australia, most Chinese students complete undergraduate (about 40%) or postgraduate (about 21%) coursework degrees (AEI, 2013b), most often in business, and to a lesser extent in related professions such as computer science (Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012). This is similar to other countries (Zhang & Zhou, 2010; Zweig & Han, 2010; Archer & Cheng, 2012; IEE, 2013). China is Australia's most important trading partner, and Australian firms are increasingly doing business with China (Korporaal, 2012). Yet, they face a shortage of employees with suitable competencies for the work (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Tremblay, 2005; Henderson, 2011; Hao, 2012; Menzies & McDonnell, 2012; Pyke, 2013), as do firms in the United Kingdom (Archer & Cheng, 2012). Scholars argue that Chinese Oz graduates can help fill that gap and provide a pool of talent to support Australian firms wanting to conduct business in China, and Chinese firms wanting to do business in Australia (Tremblay, 2005; Henderson, 2011; Hao, 2012; Korporaal, 2012; Menzies & McDonnell, 2012; Pyke, 2013); similar roles are available in firms in other foreign countries (IBM Business Consulting Services, 2006; Dietz, Orr, & Xing, 2008; Archer & Cheng, 2012; Cremer & Ramasamy, 2005).

This paper provides a conceptual analysis and integrated model to advance knowledge of the mobility paths that Chinese foreign students take after graduating. The majority of earlier research focussed on Chinese foreign students before graduation and investigated what motivates People's Republic of China (PRC) students to study abroad, and what are the challenges they face once there (e.g., Pang & Appleton, 2004; Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Szelenyi, 2006; Barnes, 2007; Chen, 2008; Cho, Roberts, & Roberts, 2008; Pan & Wong, 2011; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011; Li, 2013; Geddie, 2013; Kwon, 2013; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013; Zeithammer & Kellogg, 2013). Unlike past research, first, this analysis focuses on Chinese foreign students after they graduate and examines the course of their careers – career development often being the major reason for their study abroad (e.g., Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Wadhwa, Saxenian, Freeman, Gereffi, & Salkever, 2009a; Dimmock & Leong, 2010; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011; Hao & Welch, 2012; Wang, 2012).

Second, the analysis focuses on Chinese coursework graduates in business. Much earlier research on Chinese foreign graduates addressed research students (e.g., Szelenyi, 2006; Chen, 2008; Cho, Roberts, & Roberts, 2008; Yang & Qiu, 2010; Korn, 2012; Gaulé & Piacentini, 2013; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013) and academic researchers and scientists (e.g., Guo & Iredale, 2003; Keren, Guo, & Ping, 2003; Zweig, Changgui, & Rosen, 2004; Rosen & Zweig, 2005; Zweig, 2006; Hugo, 2010; Yang & Qiu, 2010; Pan & Wong, 2011). Research students are more likely to become academics or research scholars and have good career opportunities abroad and high stay rates (e.g., Cho, Roberts, & Roberts, 2008; Hawthorne, 2010; Gaulé & Piacentini, 2013). By contrast, coursework business graduates form a source for business, which has been found to be the most prevalent occupation for Chinese coursework graduates, at least in the United Kingdom and Australia (Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Archer & Cheng, 2012). Empirical evidence cited is from samples (46 studies) of Chinese coursework graduates (entirely coursework 35%; majority 52%; minority 13%) who had graduated in business (entirely in business 30%; majority 30%; minority 39%).

Finally, prior research into PRC students and graduates has often focused on a single stage of mobility (cf. Tharenou & Seet, 2014), although the stages are connected. For example, when repatriation proved unsuccessful for their career, Chinese Oz graduates considered re-expatriating back to Australia (Li & Yang, 2013). Unlike past research, building on Tharenou and Seet's (2014) review of the causes and consequences of repatriation, this paper develops an integrated model including the important stage of staying abroad. The model comprises a set of linked paths (repatriation, staying, re-expatriation) from which graduates choose, and such that success in one stage can affect the choice of another. The extra contributions within the present paper from Tharenou and Seet (2014), as well as the new contributions to the literature in general, are: (a) the development of an original integrated model combining stages of mobility, (b) development of the career competencies formed, (c) inclusion

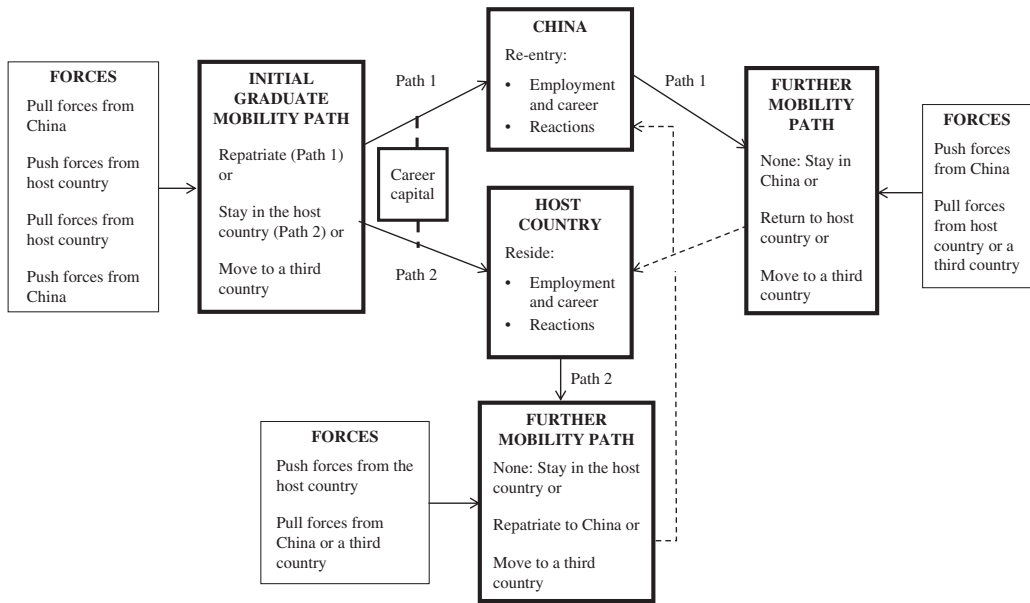


FIGURE 1. INTEGRATORY FRAMEWORK EXPLAINING MOBILITY PATHS FOR CHINESE FOREIGN BUSINESS GRADUATES

of the causes and consequences of staying abroad and its links to other stages for the first time and (d) the focus on business graduates rather than Chinese foreign graduates in general.

OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL

I first provide an overview of the model (Figure 1) conceptualizing the paths that Chinese graduates from foreign universities take after graduating, and the reasons for their choice.

The cornerstone of the model is that Chinese foreign graduates decide between two major paths post graduation: either to repatriate (Path 1) or to remain abroad (Path 2). The return rate (i.e., Path 1) for all Chinese students who graduated abroad steadily increased from 14–23% (2000–2004) to about 30% (2005–2007) to 40–47% (2008–2010) and up to 55% by 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics of P.R. China, 2012). The rate varies by country. On the available evidence, for 1978 to 1999, the average return rate was close to half for some countries (45%, Australia; 48%, France; 47%, United Kingdom), about a third for others (37% Canada, Germany, Japan) and a low 14% from the United States (Tremblay, 2005). The stay rate (Path 2; rate of residing in the host country permanently; i.e., for over a year) is rarely given. For Oz graduates it was 40% (Birrell, 2006). Most Chinese foreign graduates are self-financed (IEE, 2013; 93%, Jiang, 2011) and so can choose if they wish not to repatriate.

A third mobility option (Figure 1) is moving to a third country. Third-country moves by Chinese foreign graduates have been little researched, but are likely made by a very small portion (e.g., 7 and 8% Dimmock & Leong, 2010; Archer & Cheng, 2012; Pyke, 2013); an exception is the intent to move to a third country for the third of Bai’s (2008) Chinese studying in New Zealand. The model omits other paths, which are unlikely for young Chinese foreign graduates, such as a transnational path, whereby they live and work both in China and the host country and move between them (cf. Saxenian, 2002; Wang, Zweig, & Lin, 2011).

The model (Figure 1) proposes the forces that prompt Chinese foreign graduates to choose Path 1 (to repatriate) or Path 2 (to remain in the host country). Push–pull theory (Toren, 1976) is germane to explain repatriating or staying. Individuals move to a country because they are attracted by its positive aspects and are driven from their country of residence by its negative aspects (Toren, 1976). I extend push–pull theory's explanation of moving countries by including an adaptation of March and Simon's (1958) inducements-contributions theory. They explained leaving a job from the perspective of push–pull forces because of the perceived desirability of leaving (e.g., the push of job dissatisfaction) and perceived ease of leaving (e.g., the pull of the availability of external job alternatives). Extending push–pull theory's explanation of leaving a country (Toren, 1976) by adapting March and Simon's (1958) theory, Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) theorized that leaving a country is the result of either or both: (1) the perceived ease of leaving, that is, *pull* factors, which are usually external job alternatives (e.g., the perceived economic alternatives China offers; Chinese government incentives for return) and (2) the perceived desirability of leaving, that is, *push* factors, the most common of which is dissatisfaction (e.g., dissatisfaction with the host country; lack of assimilation into the host country). Overall, from adapted push–pull theory (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010), repatriation can be explained by attractive forces within China that pull graduates back home and make return easy, combined with deterrent forces within the host country that push them away and make repatriation desirable. Staying abroad can be explained by attractive forces within the host country that make staying easy and incline foreign graduates to remain to reside, combined with deterrent forces within China that push graduates away and make repatriation undesirable.

Whether they repatriate or stay abroad, Chinese foreign graduates acquire competencies while studying abroad (Figure 1). For Chinese and foreign employers, the possession of particular competencies influences their recruitment of Chinese foreign business graduates in China (Henderson, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012; Menzies & McDonnell, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; AEI, 2013d) and for Australian employers their recruitment in Australia (Jackling, 2007; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Cen & Cai, 2012). Positive competencies or strengths resulted in hire and negative competencies or weaknesses deterred hire.

Studies of the competencies Chinese foreign graduates develop have not been underpinned by theory and are chiefly descriptive. Developed from a competency-based approach, career capital theory (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) has explained that people succeed in their career by developing three distinct, complementary and interdependent ways of knowing, or competencies (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995; Inkson & Arthur, 2001): (1) *knowing-how*, which refers to how employees perform their job and arises from career-relevant skills, expertise, job-related knowledge and abilities; (2) *knowing-who*, which refers to an employee's networks of interpersonal relationships, career-relevant relationships and personal connections (intra-firm, inter-firm, professional, social) and resources available as a result; and (3) *knowing-why*, or motivation and personal meaning, which refers to why people work, and arises from their awareness of their values, interests, desires, motivations, identity and beliefs. From views of Chinese employers and foreign employers (most often Australian) of business graduates and of graduates themselves, study abroad develops the three types of knowing competencies (Henderson, 2011; Cai, 2012; Cen & Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; AEI, 2013d).

DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) developed the three types of 'knowing' competencies from the firm-based competencies of know-how, networks and culture. Their definition of the three forms of knowing as competencies conforms with the definition of competencies in general, which are capabilities or abilities most often comprising (1) cognitive intelligence competencies, such as expertise, knowledge and systems thinking; (2) social intelligence competencies, such as social awareness and relationship management; and (3) emotional intelligence competencies, such as self-awareness and self-management (see Boyatzis's, 2009 review). Competencies arise from collections of knowledge,

skills, experience, abilities and other characteristics such as traits, motives, self-image, social roles, skills, specific actions or behaviours, and environmental factors that are needed for effective job performance (e.g., Boyatzis, 1982; Campion, Fink, Ruggeberg, Carr, Phillips, & Odman, 2011).

Possessing their new career capital or competencies, repatriating Chinese foreign graduates re-enter China to live (Path 1, Figure 1). Re-entry is a transitional phase during which natives return to their home country to live (cf. Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). As Chinese have often studied abroad for career development, an indicative measure of how they fare on re-entry proposed in the model is their gaining of employment and career progress.

A further part of considering the employment outcomes for a repatriate is that Chinese foreign graduates are more likely to be hired for particular jobs. Person–environment (PE) fit is an ‘umbrella’, overriding construct covering types of compatibility between an individual and a work environment when their characteristics are well-matched (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). The term PE fit covers several specific types of fit of the person with a: vocation, job, organization, group or supervisor (see reviews by Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Chinese foreign business graduates may be more likely to be hired on repatriation when their competencies (e.g., cross-cultural competence) match the work environment (e.g., the international sections of home firms). The two types of PE fit that appear most relevant to being hired are person–organization fit and person–job fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). Should a Chinese foreign graduate’s competencies (e.g., bilingual ability, cross-cultural competence, capability for developing international networks) match the values and goals of the organization (e.g., international growth) or the demands of the job (e.g., dealing with foreign clients), he or she may be more likely to be hired.

Re-entry has not only career outcomes of gaining employment and career progress but also generates affective and cognitive reactions (Szkudlarek, 2010). Most common are reverse culture shock and cross-cultural readjustment (Szkudlarek, 2010). Moreover, returning graduates will not necessarily remain in China and may move again, perhaps linked to their reactions on return. Re-expatriation occurs when, after initial re-entry, graduates leave China to live in another country, either the country from which they returned (Tharenou & Seet, 2014) or a third country. Both result in a move to Path 2 (Figure 1).

By contrast, rather than choosing to repatriate, graduates may take Path 2 and reside abroad (Figure 1). As host-country residents, Chinese foreign graduates will seek employment and career progress. Their quest may not always be successful if the experience of skilled migrants (including from the PRC, Salaff, Greve, & Ping, 2002; Tung, 2007) is any indicator, as they can suffer higher unemployment and underemployment than locals (see Syed’s, 2008, review). Stayers also experience affective reactions to residing in the host country (Figure 1), which are likely to differ from the reactions repatriates have to re-entry of culture shock and cross-cultural readjustment. Culture shock and cross-cultural readjustment are most likely for stayers when they are students initially entering the host country and to have been managed to a large extent during their years of study. By contrast, reactions for stayers to residing abroad are more likely to relate to their employment and assimilation.

The career outcomes for stayers, and their reactions, may affect whether they subsequently repatriate or move to a third country (Path 2). Repatriation after an initial decision to stay means graduates enter Path 1.

In sum, repatriating or staying could result in positive and/or negative career outcomes and reactions for Chinese foreign graduates, which could lead to further mobility. Because of the potential consequences each has for the other, Paths 1 and 2 are interconnected. Graduates who are seeking the best future may face a dilemma over their initial choice of path, or later when they realize their first choice had not eventuated as expected or desired.

COMPONENTS OF THE MODEL

An analysis of each component of the model in regard to the available evidence now follows.

Why repatriate (Path 1) or stay to reside abroad (Path 2)

In explaining why Chinese foreign graduates in general repatriate, Tharenou and Seet (2014) concluded that it was more often owing to the forces pulling them home and making return easier than forces pushing them away from the host country and making staying undesirable.

The most often cited of the major forces repatriated Chinese foreign business graduates said pulled them home were the career, professional and economic opportunities in China, especially relative to the host country (Ip, 2006; Shen, 2008; James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Gill, 2010; Zweig & Han, 2010; Wadhwa, Jain, Saxenian, Gereffi, & Wang, 2011; Hao & Welch, 2012; Li, 2013; Wang, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013). Repatriation was also often encouraged by government incentives, especially high salaries, a household allowance and children's entry to key schools (e.g., Ip, 2006; Zweig, Chung, & Vanhonacker, 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a, 2011; Li & Yang, 2013), as well as allowing repatriates to live in first-tier cities (*hokou*, Ip, 2006; Hao & Welch, 2012). Less often but appreciably, repatriated Chinese foreign business graduates were pulled home by parents, family and friends (Ip, 2006; Shen, 2008; James & Otsuka, 2009b; Wadhwa et al., 2009a, 2011; Wadhwa, Saxenian, Freeman, & Salkever, 2009b; Li, 2013; Wang, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013). They were also pulled at times by the Chinese cultural environment and a desire to serve their country (Saxenian, 2002; Pang & Appleton, 2004; Ip, 2006; Wang, 2012).

Negative forces in the host country also push Chinese foreign business graduates to repatriate and make the host country undesirable (Path 1, Figure 1). Tharenou and Seet's (2014) review revealed that repatriating Chinese foreign business graduates were most frequently pushed from the host country by job and career-related dissatisfaction, unemployment and underemployment, and hiring bias and discrimination, which made working in the host country less attractive than in China (e.g., Wadhwa et al., 2009a, 2009b; Gill, 2010; Liu-Farrer, 2011; Li & Yang, 2013). Less often but still importantly, Chinese foreign business graduates were pushed to return because of issues with cultural assimilation such as language and communication difficulties and feelings of not belonging and isolation (Ip, 2006; Tung, 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Liu-Farrer, 2011; Wang, 2012).

Path 2 focuses on Chinese foreign graduates pulled to stay in the host country. Tharenou and Seet (2014) concluded that they were likely to stay owing to positive forces of benefits and when the costs of leaving (the sacrifices to be made) exceeded the benefits expected from return to China. Chinese foreign business students and graduates were less likely to repatriate or to consider it when the host country offered better career and economic opportunities than China and a good work environment (Pang & Appleton, 2004; Tung, 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a, 2011; Dimmock & Leong, 2010; Counsell, 2011; Wang, 2012) and a better quality of life and living environment, including a good education and future for their children and family (Pang & Appleton, 2004; Tung, 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a, 2009b; Counsell, 2011; Li, 2013). In addition, Chinese business students and graduates intended to stay after graduation to gain work experience in the host country before later repatriating (Bai, 2008; James & Otsuka, 2009b; Archer & Cheng, 2012; Counsell, 2011; Jiang, 2011; Li, 2013).

Chinese foreign business graduates may also be deterred from repatriating by forces in China (Figure 1). Although too few studies have been conducted to support explanations, deterrents have included the gap in compensation in and outside of China and the lack of career opportunities and support upon return (Wang, 2012), the complexity of personal relationships (Hao, 2012), dissatisfaction with the social and political system (Pang & Appleton, 2004) and dissatisfaction with employment incentives and support (Curtis & Lu, 2004). Despite their relevance,

deterrents in China are under-researched. Research therefore needs to address the research question (RQ):

RQ1: (a) To what extent do push forces from China deter Chinese foreign business graduates repatriating? Which are most influential? (b) What is the relative importance of China push forces decreasing repatriation compared with host-country pull forces?

Career capital Chinese graduates develop from studying abroad

Chinese foreign graduates will develop career competencies of knowing-how, knowing-who and knowing-why, as summarized in Table 1. Although graduates will have residual areas of weakness, positive competencies will more often outnumber negative ones. Competencies will generally be considered for graduates overall, but are noted separately for stayers or repatriates when employers particularly point out their applicability to one group over the other.

Knowing-how competencies

Studying abroad substantially improves knowing-how competencies (Table 1). Chinese foreign business students and graduates have been found to consistently develop professional skills and knowledge, including managerial skills and advanced practices, the latter especially recognized in repatriates by employers (Ip, 2006; Jiang, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013). They also develop English language written and oral/spoken/presentation skills (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Ip, 2006; Gill, 2010; Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; Pyke, 2013; AEI, 2013d) and effective communication skills (Jiang, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012).

Apart from professional know-how, Chinese foreign business graduates also develop cross-cultural competence, combining understanding and knowledge of the Chinese culture, system and way of doing things with familiarity, knowledge and understanding of the host culture and business (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Shen, 2008; Gill, 2010; Cai, 2012). They also acquire: (a) understanding of, and the skills needed to deal with, cultural differences in business (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Gill, 2010; Cai, 2012); (b) international experience, exposure and perspective, especially an understanding of Western culture (Hao, 2012; Pyke, 2013; AEI, 2013d); and (c) knowledge of international business practices, foreign markets and channels (Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; AEI, 2013d). They have also developed the theoretical underpinnings of their practical competencies and problem-solving skills (Jiang, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012).

Nevertheless, Chinese foreign graduates in business have several weaknesses. Too few have good written and oral English language proficiency (Kim, 2004; Pang & Appleton, 2004; Li, 2013; Wilson & Xiang, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013), especially noted by Australian employers of stayers (Birrell & Healy, 2008a; James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Cen & Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012). Whether stayers or repatriates, they often have little or no relevant work experience, as noted by employers in both China and the host country (James & Otsuka, 2009b; Cai, 2012; AEI, 2013d; Li & Yang, 2013), although repatriates from the United States may have (Hao, 2012). According to Chinese employers, business graduate repatriates are unfamiliar with the communication style needed to work in Chinese organizations (Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013), and are out of touch, lack local knowledge and understanding of the business culture and environment, and have a disrupted understanding of local Chinese markets, government policies and regulations (Jiang, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013).

Knowing-who competencies

Chinese foreign business graduates will develop some knowing-who competencies, but these are likely to be limited (Table 1). Most of the interactions they have studying abroad are with other Chinese

TABLE 1. CAREER CAPITAL DEVELOPED BY CHINESE COURSEWORK BUSINESS GRADUATES WHO GAINED THEIR DEGREES ABROAD

<i>Positive competencies: Strengths</i>	<i>Negative competencies: Weaknesses</i>
	<i>Knowing-how competence</i>
Professional skills and knowledge, including managerial skills and advanced techniques	Lack of relevant work experience
English language skills	Insufficient English language proficiency
Cross-cultural competence: combining understanding of Chinese culture, system, ways with familiarity with host culture and settings; skills for dealing with cultural differences in business	Lack familiarity with communication style used for working in organizations in China
International experience and perspective, with understanding of Western culture, knowledge of international business	Out of touch with China, lack current local knowledge of business culture, disrupted understanding (e.g., of markets, regulations)
Theoretical understanding combined with practical application and problem-solving	
	<i>Knowing-who competence</i>
Capability for forming international links, networks, connections and social contacts	Weak local contacts and networks in China (<i>guanxi</i>) and lack of capability to build them
Capability to facilitate communication with and negotiation between Chinese managers and host-country/overseas business partners and clients, to engage with people different from themselves	Insufficient capability to network in international Western community and communicate with clients
	Lack familiarity with Chinese styles of communication
	<i>Knowing-why competence</i>
Capability to think differently: more critical, creative	Unrealistic expectations on return
Independent, deeper learning style; ability to learn new areas quickly and adapt	Lack capability for independent learning and initiative
Self-confidence and initiative with clients	
Ability to work independently and as part of a team	

students (e.g., 70%, Pyke, 2013) and less often with host-country students (37%) and business contacts (29%), and with whom they have had difficulty interacting (Kim, 2004; Pang & Appleton, 2004; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Wilson & Xiang, 2012; Kwon, 2013; Pyke, 2013). However, they have developed some international links, networks, connections and social contacts, more often than nationals who had not studied abroad (Jiang, 2011; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Li, 2013), thus developing capability in that context. In the few studies performed, Chinese employers claimed repatriates had developed the ability to facilitate communication between host-country and Chinese managers, to communicate and negotiate with business partners and clients abroad, and to engage and interact with people different from themselves (Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012).

Chinese foreign business graduates also have weaknesses in knowing-who competencies (Table 1). Not surprisingly, their few interactions with host locals meant that those who repatriated lacked the capability for networking in the international Western community, with some unable to communicate with overseas clients (45%, Pang & Appleton, 2004; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Wilson & Xiang, 2012; Kwon, 2013; Pyke, 2013; AEI, 2013d). Their absence for some years from China meant they had weak local contacts and networks, and a lack of *guanxi* to facilitate work in Chinese organizations (Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; Anderson, McGrath, & Butcher, 2014).

Knowing-why competencies

In contrast to the lack of growth in their knowing-who competencies, the knowing-why competencies of Chinese foreign graduates studying abroad improve substantially, especially their motivation and mindset. This has been attributed in part to the style of teaching in Western countries, which is more interactive, applied and participative, as well as being more student oriented and less teacher directed than in China (e.g., Bai, 2008; Briguglio & Smith, 2012). Chinese foreign business graduates, as noted by graduates and employers, have developed (Table 1): (a) a capacity to think differently than in China – more critically and creatively (Jaw, Wang, Ling, & Chang, 2006; Gill, 2010; Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; Li, 2013; Li & Yang, 2013; Pyke, 2013); (b) an independent and deeper learning style and an ability to learn new areas quickly (Pang & Appleton, 2004; Wadhwa et al., 2009b; Gill, 2010; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Li, 2013; Wilson & Xiang, 2012); (c) self-confidence, including when dealing with Chinese back home, and an increased capacity to take the initiative (Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Li, 2013; Pyke, 2013); (d) an ability to work both independently and as part of a team (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; AEI, 2013d); and (e) flexibility and capability to adapt and adjust (Cai, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013). Chinese foreign business graduates possessed few weak knowing-why competencies, although occasionally they lacked the capability for independent learning and initiative (Curtis & Lu, 2004; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Cen & Cai, 2012) and repatriates often had unrealistic expectations about pay (Tung, 2007; Zweig & Han, 2010; Li & Yang, 2013; AEI, 2013d).

In sum, Chinese foreign graduates have developed professional, cross-cultural and international know-how; know-why of motivation and mindset; and know-who to facilitate the contacts needed. Nevertheless, they also have weaknesses in their professional and international know-how, and in know-who. Much of the research into competencies has been descriptive and reliant on Australian studies. Research is therefore needed to test:

RR2: What are the major positive and negative knowing-how, knowing-who and knowing-why competencies Chinese foreign business graduates develop by studying abroad, how do they differ for repatriates and stayers and do they differ by host country?

RR3: (a) To what extent do competencies link to gaining employment and career progress for repatriates and stayers? And which ones do so?

Path 1: How do Chinese who graduated abroad fare on re-entry into China?

Repatriates' employment and career progress in China on re-entry

Equipped with their new competencies, repatriating Chinese foreign graduates seek work. Results of systematic large-scale studies, which at times used objective data, show that on the whole repatriates fare well. Evidence supporting them having difficulty finding employment on return is chiefly anecdotal (Bai, 2008; Li, 2013; Li & Yang, 2013). On re-entry, Chinese foreign business graduates found jobs (Zweig & Han, 2010; Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; Pyke, 2013; AEI, 2013d), at a high incidence (e.g., 82%, AEI, 2013d), most often within 2–3 months (73–80%, Zweig & Han, 2010; Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012), and occasionally before returning (26% from Canada, 52% from Japan, Zweig & Han, 2010). The jobs advanced their career: (a) with a promotion and/or salary increase (36%, Pyke, 2013) and greater starting salaries than locals (Archer & Cheng, 2012); (b) with advancement to senior management (Wadhwa et al., 2009a) or at high hierarchical or managerial levels for 36–86% (e.g., Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; Wang, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; Pyke, 2013); and (c) most often in, or close to, their area of study (e.g., 88%, AEI, 2013d; 86%, Jiang, 2011).

Apart from Chinese foreign business graduates gaining jobs and good ones at that on return to China, they are also more likely to gain particular kinds of employment that fit their international and cross-cultural competencies, findings gleaned chiefly from qualitative *ad hoc* descriptions. Person–organization fit is a type of PE fit and is the compatibility between personal and organizational characteristics, especially values and goals (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). In support of hiring for person–organization fit, repatriating Chinese Oz graduates were more likely to gain employment in the international department of a firm and in Australian firms operating in China due to their having an international outlook (Pyke, 2013). Chinese foreign business graduates were more likely than nationals to secure jobs in China in an international environment (Gill, 2010), in foreign firms (Jiang, 2011) and in host-country firms (Shen, 2008) because of their foreign language and bilingual ability, different and more lateral ways of thinking, dual-country experience and understanding of business culture.

Person–job fit is another type of PE fit, usually defined as the fit between abilities and job demands where an employee's skills, knowledge and abilities and other qualities correspond with a job's requirements (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). In support of hiring for person–job fit, Chinese Oz business graduates were more likely to gain jobs in China when knowledge of international standards or practices or laws was needed, know-how that they had developed abroad (Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012; Pyke, 2013). Australian firms managing subsidiaries in China hired Chinese foreign graduates as managers owing to their understanding of both Chinese culture and context and the global, Western business world (Menzies & McDonnell, 2012). Chinese companies hired Chinese foreign business graduates for their foreign language ability because firms had many foreign clients (Jiang, 2011) and certain jobs had international requirements, especially the development and expansion of overseas markets and business, and meetings and negotiations with foreign clients (Jiang, 2011; Hao, 2012). Studies on PE fit have been conducted on an *ad hoc* basis rather than systematically. Direct tests are needed:

RQ4: To what extent are Chinese foreign business graduates more likely to be hired when their international and cross-cultural competencies fit job demands or organizational goals and more than nationals who did not study abroad?

Reaction to re-entry to China

Chinese foreign graduates may react strongly when re-entering China after having lived abroad for some years (Ip, 2006). Reverse culture shock is the initial emotional reaction to the loss of the familiar symbols of one's emotional and cultural environment on returning to the different environment of

one's home country (Oberg, 1960; Szkudlarek, 2010). The reaction is caused by unanticipated, mostly negative experiences in which repatriates must adjust anew to their home environment (Oberg, 1960; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Repatriates may also suffer longer-term adjustment problems. Re-entry to the home country entails cross-cultural adjustment through becoming comfortable again with: (a) nonwork or daily life, that is, cultural (re)adjustment; (b) interpersonal exchanges with work colleagues and other nationals, that is, interaction (re)adjustment; and (c) the position's requirements, that is, work (re)adjustment (Black, 1988).

From relatively *ad hoc* descriptions of their re-entry, on average about half of Chinese foreign business graduates appeared to suffer reverse culture shock (e.g., Chen, Yuang, Jiang, Yu, & Huang, 2003; Shen, 2008; Wadhwa, 2009a, 2009b; Gill, 2010; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012). Research needs to directly test for reverse culture shock.

They also suffer longer-term cross-cultural maladjustment, especially interaction maladjustment. Repatriating Chinese foreign business graduates report poor adjustment to interactions with locals and colleagues (e.g., Qu, 2003; Ip, 2006; Gill, 2010; Hao & Welch, 2012). Indeed their initial reverse culture shock is linked to unexpected, unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships and interactions with colleagues and locals from: differences in modes of communication, ways of thinking and work ethic; marginalization of repatriates and negative perceptions of their national identity ("overseas Chinese"); red tape; complex social relationships; and *guanxi* or needing social connections to get things done (Chen et al., 2003; Qu, 2003; Ip, 2006; Gill, 2010; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012).

The lack of cross-cultural adjustment of repatriating Chinese business graduates to work was less severe than to interpersonal exchanges with colleagues. The majority was satisfied with their jobs (77%; Ip, 2006; Zweig & Han, 2010; Jiang, 2011; AEI, 2013d) and organizations (Wang, 2012) and well-adjusted to their position and workplace practices (Gill, 2010; AEI, 2013d). However, others were dissatisfied, especially with compensation (Wang, 2012), perceiving their pay as low and inequitable (Ip, 2006).

Chinese foreign business graduates who repatriated also varied in their adjustment to nonwork aspects of their lives. Some adjusted well to daily life, while others had problems with the lifestyle, their children's education, excessive bureaucracy and the quality of health care (Zweig et al., 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Hao & Welch, 2012). Their initial reverse culture shock was also linked to a second major factor, the negative lifestyle, which included crowding, traffic, pollution, lack of respect for personal space, competitive pressures, long working hours and a fast-paced work life (Shen, 2008; Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Gill, 2010; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012). Much evidence for reverse cultural shock and cross-cultural maladjustment is anecdotal and obtained from unsystematic tests. Direct tests are needed using validated measures and a theoretical basis.

RQ5: On average, what proportion of Chinese business graduate repatriates suffers reverse culture shock, what are its causes, and how long does it take to abate?

RQ6: To what extent do Chinese foreign business graduates who repatriate experience longer-term problems with cross-cultural readjustment to nonwork, work and interactions? How long do the problems last? What are the major causes?

End of Path 1: Stay in China or move again?

A small share of Chinese foreign graduates who have repatriated is likely not to remain but to move country again (e.g., 16%, Wadhwa et al., 2009a). Some repatriates consider moving to a third country (Huang, 2008; Dimmock & Leong, 2010; Pyke, 2013); but most often (20–40%) they intend to or are considering re-expatriating to their original host country (Tung, 2007; Huang, 2008; Wadhwa et al., 2009a). Chinese graduates who repatriated from the Netherlands were the second most likely nationality to return there to live permanently (Bijwaard, 2010). Yet, little research has explained the

re-expatriation of Chinese foreign graduates. They appear to have kept their options open for a return to the host country, for example, by having gained foreign citizenship or residence (Ip, 2006; 33%, Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Pyke, 2013). A sizeable portion of Chinese Oz graduates who repatriated returned to Australia as skilled migrants (Hawthorne, 2006, 2007; Hugo, 2008; Birrell & Healy, 2008b; Khoo, McDonald, & Hugo, 2009).

RQ7: To what extent do Chinese foreign graduates who repatriated re-expatriate and what proportion returns to the original host country versus moving to a third country? Does the re-expatriation scenario include prearranged options for return and what are they?

What causes re-expatriation? Likely negative reactions to re-entry, especially if on-going (Li & Yang, 2013). Poor cross-cultural adjustment is related to intention to leave a country (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). Unmet expectations can lead to distress, diminishing commitment to the home country (cf. Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998), and appear to have led to dissatisfaction with employment in the Chinese job market and re-expatriation back to Australia and New Zealand (Li & Yang, 2013). Not only is the chance of re-expatriating affected by negative reactions to re-entry, but repatriates' characteristics are also relevant, including length of time spent abroad (greater chance for those who had lived abroad longer) and education level (greater chance for those with undergraduate degrees than PhDs) (Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; Pyke, 2013). Attractive forces in the original host country or a third country may kindle thoughts of re-expatriation, especially if push factors in China are strong. As evidence is sparse, causes of re-expatriation require examination.

RQ8: To what extent do push forces in China, including negative reactions to return, and pull forces from the host country lead to re-expatriation to the host country for repatriated Chinese foreign graduates? Which push and pull forces are most relevant?

Path 2: How do Chinese foreign graduates fare when remaining in the host country?

Stayers' employment and career progress from residing in the host country

Chinese foreign graduates who remain abroad to live, or return back abroad after repatriating, need employment. Existing research comprises either large-scale quantitative studies or small-sample qualitative studies. Chinese Oz business graduates have been found to have more difficulty finding a job, or one that utilizes their skills, and in their own profession than host-country locals and graduates from most other nationalities (James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Hawthorne, 2010; Cen & Cai, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013), even after living in Australia for a decade (Hawthorne, 2010). For example, Chinese Oz graduates in accounting who stayed were rarely offered interviews (mean of 12% of applications) after many job applications and gained jobs at low and unskilled or semi-skilled levels, not in their profession, and not fulltime when in a mainstream firm in their profession (James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b), similar to what happens to Chinese foreign graduates in accounting in New Zealand (Kim, 2004). However, there is insufficient comparative research to assess whether employment outcomes and career advancement opportunities for Chinese foreign graduates are less favourable in Australia than in other countries or in some particular occupations than others. Chinese foreign graduates (most frequently business graduates) who stayed to reside in the United Kingdom earned greater starting salaries and salary levels on average than comparable Chinese graduates who had not studied abroad and those who repatriated, but still earned lower salaries than the four other comparative countries (Archer & Cheng, 2012). Chinese foreign graduates also had jobs with fewer management responsibilities than the average for UK graduates from other countries.

RQ9: Comparing across host nations and occupations, to what extent are Chinese foreign business graduates staying abroad unemployed or underemployed (skill underutilization) post graduation? Which nations or occupations, if any, are the most affected and why?

Australian employers have regarded Chinese Oz business graduates as having deficient competencies, especially lacking English language proficiency and other generic professional skills that they expect, and as a result do not hire them (Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Cen & Cai, 2012). By comparison with international graduates of many other Asian and subcontinent countries, Chinese Oz business students and graduates usually had the poorest, or comparably as poor, English language scores on standardized tests (Birrell, 2006; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Hawthorne, 2010). Their English language proficiency was more often deficient at the end of their degrees for those who gained permanent residence than for the total pool of foreign students, including for accountants (Birrell, 2006; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Hawthorne, 2010). Furthermore, there may be an unsatisfactory fit between the competencies of Chinese foreign business graduates who stay and job demands and organizational goals indicated in the hiring of accountants in New Zealand (Kim, 2004). More research is required to explain what causes the poor employment outcomes of Chinese foreign business graduates who stay:

RQ10: What factors are related to the unemployment and underemployment of Chinese foreign graduates who stay abroad? Are competencies key factors and if so which ones?

RQ11: To what extent are Chinese foreign business graduate stayers more likely to gain jobs where their competencies fit the job's demands and organization's goals?

Reaction to residing in the host country

The career outcomes of Chinese foreign business graduates who remain abroad are likely to be an influential determinant of their reactions to residing in the host country. There has been no systematic research into reactions. Chinese Oz and NZ business graduates have been found in part to self-blame and attribute their poor employment outcomes to their: (a) poor English language skills (e.g., heavy accent, poor grammar); (b) lack of familiarity with and understanding of the host-country culture; (c) little or no relevant host-country work experience; and (d) lack of high school education in the host country (Kim, 2004; James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Cen & Cai, 2012).

Despite deficiencies in such predominantly 'know-how' competencies, about a third to a half of Chinese Oz and other foreign business graduates who stayed believed they had been discriminated against in recruitment, and that biased and unfair hiring practices had affected them and other Chinese (Kim, 2004; James & Otsuka, 2009a; Li, 2013; Li & Yang, 2013). Their reaction was dissatisfaction with living in the host country (Cen & Cai, 2012). Quotes from interviews of Chinese Oz and NZ graduates in accounting suggested that they viewed discriminatory hiring practices as due in part to their dissimilarity from locals and clients owing to differences in culture and thinking, personality, accent and language proficiency, leisure pursuits and not attending high school in the host country (e.g., Kim, 2004; James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b). Little research has probed systemic social factors as possible causes of hiring bias against Chinese foreign graduates, with insufficient research conducted on stayers' reactions. Research is required to examine:

RQ12: What reactions do Chinese foreign graduates have to residing in the host country? How relatively important are reactions to employment versus to other areas (e.g., lifestyle)?

RQ13: To what extent do subjective 'social' factors such as ethnic and cultural dissimilarity explain hiring bias against Chinese foreign business graduates, and beyond merit-based factors?

End of Path 2: Stay in the host country or move again?

Employment outcomes and their reactions are likely to influence whether Chinese foreign graduates who had decided to remain choose to move again (Figure 1). Push forces in the host country may cause a further move. From mostly anecdotal interview evidence of small samples of Chinese Oz and NZ

business graduates, unsuccessful job searches and employment outcomes led to dissatisfaction (Cen & Cai, 2012; Anderson, McGrath, & Butcher, 2014), which in turn led stayers to consider a variety of alternatives (James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Cen & Cai, 2012) including repatriating (James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Cen & Cai, 2012; Anderson, McGrath, & Butcher, 2014) or moving to a third country (Kim, 2004; Dimmock & Leong, 2010; Pyke, 2013). With no systematic study of further mobility or what causes it, including pull forces from China or a third country, using validated scales, research needs to examine:

RQ14: To what extent does dissatisfaction with employment in the host country cause repatriation or movement to a third country by Chinese foreign business graduates?

RQ15: To what extent do push forces from the host country and/or pull forces from China or a third country lead Chinese foreign graduates who initially stayed to repatriate or move to a third country? Which push and pull forces are most influential?

DISCUSSION

This analysis suggests that Chinese coursework business graduates who studied abroad may be uncertain about which mobility path will afford them the best career outcome. If they repatriate, they are likely to gain a good job and advance their career, but may find reintegration into and readjustment to China difficult. Should they stay abroad, for example in Australia, they may be one of the rare ones who gain a good job and career. But they are most likely not to, despite the probability of a good quality of life. Although the consequences of moving to a third country are likely unknown, Chinese foreign graduates might adopt this course to gain the best possible career and lifestyle outcomes; or they may try a transnational path – moving between China and a host country intermittently to extract the best for their career and quality of life. In all, the analysis suggests a dilemma for a Chinese foreign business graduate choosing the mobility path that offers the best outcome.

Theoretical implications and future research

There is support for the integrated model for Chinese foreign graduates by which they consider mobility options. An insight gained from this analysis is that they can choose between paths of repatriation or staying in the host country as repatriation rates and stay rates support that either is possible. To a lesser extent, they may move to a third country after graduation. Yet, graduates rarely appear to consider all three options (Figure 1) simultaneously (Bai, 2008; Dimmock & Leong, 2010). Research needs to examine:

RQ16: To what extent do Chinese foreign graduates consider all mobility path options when deciding which post-graduation path to take? How do they decide, and to what extent is career development an influential criterion relative to other factors?

The relative magnitude of push and pull forces from China and the host country helps to explain which mobility path is taken (e.g., Wadhwa et al., 2011) in the model. Repatriation is explained by strong pull forces from China accompanied to a lesser extent by push forces from the host country. Chinese foreign business graduates are more likely to choose repatriation when attractive forces in China that make the move easy pull them home: substantial career and economic alternatives, incentives from government support, family relationships and friends and national cultural familiarity and identity. The factors increase the ease with which a Chinese foreign graduate can repatriate through providing a good job, support for return, reunion with family and a familiar national culture. Repatriation also arises when positive forces are combined with some undesirable aspects of the host

country especially dissatisfaction with career outcomes through underemployment and bias and dissatisfying cultural conditions such as a lack of cultural assimilation and sense of belonging. Such conditions make living and working in the host country difficult and undesirable, fostering repatriation. Overall, repatriation arises from the perceived ease of leaving, through particular pull factors, and perceived desirability of leaving, through particular push factors, supporting an extended push–pull theory including an inducements-contribution perspective (March & Simon, 1958; Toren, 1976; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

Choosing to stay to reside abroad is explained by positive pull forces within the host country that make staying easy combined with deterrent forces within China that make repatriation undesirable (Toren, 1976; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Chinese foreign business graduates who choose to stay do so because of the pull of career and lifestyle benefits in the host country that make staying easier: better career and economic opportunities than in China, a good work environment, the chance to gain work experience in the host country, and a better quality of life and living environment for their children and family. Repatriating would therefore result in substantial sacrifices. Staying to reside abroad is likely to result not only from pull forces in the host country but its combination with unattractive aspects of life in China including lifestyle and interpersonal factors, resulting in the costs of repatriating being likely to exceed benefits expected in China.

If neither repatriating nor residing in the host country are ultimately attractive to the graduate, if push forces arise in either, and if attractive pull forces occur in a third country, Chinese foreign business graduates may choose the option of moving to a third country.

It is not clear whether Chinese graduates adopt a rational cognitive decision-making approach to assessing the expected benefits over the costs to decide which path they will take. Research needs to determine how the decision-making process occurs.

RQ17: To what extent do Chinese foreign graduates use a rational cognitive decision-making approach to select the mobility path with the best potential to optimize their career? Do the opinions of knowledgeable others add to the influence of cognitions?

Whatever path they choose, Chinese foreign graduates take with them new competencies they have developed. This analysis has demonstrated that Chinese foreign graduates develop particular knowing-how, knowing-why and knowing-who competencies, which affect their hire, supporting a career capital theory explanation (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Insight is gained through this analysis into the major positive and negative ‘knowing’ competencies developed by Chinese foreign business graduates from studying abroad (given in Table 1):

- (a) Substantial knowing-why capital (different thinking capability, more effective learning style, self-confidence, ability for team and independent work).
- (b) Considerable knowing-how capital (professional skills and knowledge, English language proficiency, cross-cultural competence, international experience and perspective), still with some deficiencies (insufficient work experience and English language skills, out of touch with China).
- (c) Somewhat less knowing-who capital (some capability for forming international links and for facilitating communication with host-country clients but weak capability for developing local China contacts and insufficient networking capability).

The greater the positive competencies Chinese foreign business graduates develop and the fewer weaknesses, the more likely they are to be hired for jobs and good jobs providing career progress. They are likely to be hired where their cross-cultural and international competencies match the requirements of jobs (e.g., international standards, dealing with foreign clients) and objectives of organizations (e.g., expansion of overseas markets and business). In particular, stayers may not have as favourable employment outcomes as repatriates. Weaknesses in their competencies appear to be key merit-based

factors in the unemployment and underemployment of Chinese foreign graduates who stay abroad. Yet, employers in host countries may not make a purely merit-based assessment of a candidate's strengths and weaknesses, and other factors, such as bias through dissimilarity (e.g., Kim, 2004; James & Otsuka, 2009a; Li, 2013; Li & Yang, 2013), may affect hire. Earlier, research questions were proposed to address such issues (RQ10, RQ13).

Whichever initial path is taken to repatriate or to stay, the analysis has demonstrated that the choice may not result in successful career outcomes and/or positive reactions. For stayers, there may be negative career outcomes and reactions that result in later repatriation or moves to third countries. Even for repatriates, though career outcomes may be favourable, they may have difficulty adjusting to China, which could lead to re-expatriation. It is not clear how an unsuccessful experience as a repatriate or stayer encourages further moves, if any. Research needs to move beyond repatriating and staying and explain further such mobility.

RQ18: To what extent do Chinese foreign graduates decide to move again after initially repatriating or staying abroad? What is the range of mobility options considered?

RQ19: To what extent are Chinese foreign graduates aware of the potential for success or failure of each mobility option and do they take it into account when choosing?

RQ20: What causes further mobility, including to a third country, and do causes differ for repatriates and stayers? Are push forces more influential than destination pull forces?

Limitations

There are several limitations to this analysis. Some variables have been omitted: family and personality may be important to the mobility of Chinese foreign graduates. Research needs to examine the influence of family background (e.g., one-child family, relatives abroad) and personality (e.g., introvert vs. extrovert) on the choice of mobility path. A limitation is that there is no assessment of how the push–pull forces may arise in different situations so ignoring the possibility that Chinese international students may also encounter personal and/or situational (e.g., family) factors.

The evidence available has largely been gathered in certain Western countries. More studies appear to have been conducted in Australia (e.g., Birrell & Healy, 2008a; James & Otsuka, 2009a, 2009b; Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Cen & Cai, 2012; Hao, 2012; Hao & Welch, 2012; Pyke, 2013; AEI, 2013d) than in other countries, probably owing to its reliance on international students, especially Chinese, for funding (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett, & Hartel, 2013). Some findings may therefore be biased. Country differences may be relevant; for example, Chinese and Finnish employers in China reported differences in the strengths and weaknesses of the competencies developed by Chinese foreign business graduates, depending on whether they had returned from the United States (best), Australia (still good) or the United Kingdom (worst) (Hao, 2012). Research needs to examine the relationship between competencies and employment outcomes across countries and compare country differences according to relevant situational factors.

The samples underlying the empirical results were chiefly of PRC coursework graduates who studied business degrees abroad; hence, the results may not apply to non-business graduates, requiring research to test the general applicability of the model. Moreover, they were not pure samples, for example, with at times the inclusion of small numbers of Chinese other than PRC graduates or of research students. At times it was difficult to discern the exact makeup of the samples. Such imprecision reduces the rigour of the results. Moreover, results for those studying undergraduate and postgraduate coursework degrees were combined, despite the two groups differing on a range of factors relevant to choice of mobility path (e.g., age, experience, personal/family conditions and expectations, opportunities for employment). Future research requires samples purely of graduates of a business-related course with results analysed separately for undergraduates and postgraduates and other student types.

The results from the empirical studies cited were at times descriptive and not clear on the relative importance of variables. Qualitative data from interviews were often from very small samples; it was difficult to determine the questions asked; and responses were analysed with non-standardized approaches using selective quotes. Often frequencies were not given with which to assess the influencing factors found or the competencies identified. Quantitative data were most often analysed as frequencies from single items from surveys rather than from validated multi-item scales. There was rarely an examination of the relationship between independent variables (e.g., push and pull forces or competencies) and dependent variables (e.g., repatriate vs. stay, career advancement) and assessment of relative importance. Similarly, at times, very small samples of employers were interviewed to assess graduates' competencies, with no testing of a direct link to the hiring of stayers versus locals or of repatriates versus locals. Future research deriving qualitative data from interviews needs to provide an analysis of content from identified questions using recognized methods of analysis from a sufficient sample size. In relation to quantitative data, a multivariate assessment of the relative importance of independent variables for dependent variables and of direct, mediator (e.g., competencies) and interactive effects should be conducted using validated scales.

Implications for management in host countries and China

Certain human resource practices appear particularly relevant to the management of Chinese foreign business graduates who stay to work in the host country. Identity-conscious approaches to diversity management imply that, in addition to individual merit, demographic group identity such as ethnicity is taken into consideration by the makers of organizational human resource decisions (Konrad & Linnhan, 1995). Such approaches not only take steps to eliminate bias from decision procedures, but they supplement them with identity-conscious practices (Kulik & Li, in press). For Chinese stayers, recruitment and selection needs to be merit based and to apply Chinese-specific interventions strategies designed to directly eliminate discrimination; for example (Kulik & Li, in press), by training recruiters to be aware of bias and self-monitor, or to use a Chinese or independent evaluator alongside the recruiter to review all Chinese applicants for discrimination in the decisions made.

For recruitment for some jobs and organizations in the host country, being a Chinese foreign business graduate may help appointment because of the competencies needed. If management needs to recruit talent to help drive a China focus, they may seek Chinese foreign business graduates for their cross-cultural and international know-how, know-who and know-why. To enhance job performance, management needs to place Chinese foreign graduates to give a fit between their competencies and job demands and organizational goals.

Identity-conscious training after hire in the host country is clearly useful for Chinese hires and their managers. Training and development can be used to develop high potential Chinese talent, to ameliorate some of the weaknesses in their competencies (Table 1), and to develop competencies that meet employers' expectations. Table 2 summarizes the professional skills employers expect of Chinese foreign graduates in the context of the competencies they possess, gleaned from the views of Chinese (Henderson, 2011; Hao, 2012; Li & Yang, 2013; AEI, 2013d) and Finnish employers (Cai, 2012) of repatriates, and of Australian employers of stayers (Jackling, 2007; Birrell & Healy, 2008a; Cen & Cai, 2012). Table 2 shows some disparities between the competencies possessed and expected. From the disparities, the focus of training for Chinese foreign graduates should be on developing: English language skills, including presentational; communication style; report analysis and writing; practical skills; knowledge of current Chinese culture and practices; and skills for interacting with clients.

Certain human resource practices also appear particularly relevant to the management of Chinese foreign business graduates who repatriate to China. Realistic job previews during recruitment and selection would help ameliorate the likelihood that the repatriate will have unrealistic expectations

TABLE 2. EXPECTED PROFESSIONAL SKILLS BY EMPLOYERS OF CHINESE FOREIGN BUSINESS GRADUATES AND THEIR ACTUAL COMPETENCIES

<i>Professional skills expected by employers of Chinese foreign business graduates</i>	<i>Career competencies of Chinese foreign graduates developed studying abroad</i>
	<i>Knowing-how competence</i>
Proposal and report writing and analyses for business	Quality educational qualifications but limited development of generic skills
Technical professional skills and knowledge, including some advanced skills and knowledge of international rules	Technical professional skills and knowledge, including some advanced skills and knowledge of international rules
Good English language skills, including oral and presentational, strong communication skills and style	Improved English written and verbal skills and communication skills but still limited and at times poor English language skills and communication skills and style
Practical experience, problem-solving skills, local work experience	Some improved practical skills and abilities but lack relevant local work experience
International exposure and experience; combining understanding of Chinese culture, influences and organizational practices and of Western culture; deployment of cultural knowledge	Cross-cultural competence and international exposure and perspective, but may be out of touch with China and lack sufficient understanding of current Chinese culture, system, business environment and understanding of the host-country culture
Collaboration and teamwork	Ability to work as member of a team
	<i>Knowing-who competence</i>
Skills for communicating and interacting with clients; developing and dealing with client relationships	Chinese and Australian links, networks and contacts; can communicate with foreign clients and facilitate communication between host country employees and locals, but lack local contacts and networks
	<i>Knowing-why competence</i>
Initiative, innovation, independence, effective learning style	Initiative, independence, self-confidence, effective learning style/of new things

about compensation, the nature of the work and work conditions and career and professional opportunities (Tung, 2007; Zweig & Han, 2010; AEI, 2013d). Realistic job previews and appropriate compensation are needed to reduce the likelihood of repatriates job hopping (Jiang, 2011; Li & Yang, 2013; AEI, 2013d). Induction processes and training and development need to be used to assist with the reverse culture shock arising from lifestyle factors and difficulties in interacting with colleagues. Similarly, careful placement is required to match the repatriates' competencies with job demands and organizational objectives, taking advantage of their international competencies. Training and development of repatriates is also needed to assist them to improve their communication style and skills for working in organizations in China, for upgrading their current local knowledge of business culture and systems in China and their disrupted understanding of the business environment, and to develop their capability for building networks. Opportunities need to be provided for repatriates to develop local contacts and networks in China.

Finally, in both the host country and China, training managers to better supervise Chinese foreign graduates, whether stayers or repatriates, is needed. The supervisory style needs to help reduce the challenges faced by stayers, including their perceived cultural distance from colleagues and lack of inclusion (e.g., Ip, 2006; Tung, 2007; Wadhwa et al., 2009a; Liu-Farrer, 2011) or repatriates, including their interaction problems with colleagues owing to differences in communication modes, ways of thinking and work ethic. For both host-country and Chinese supervisors, a participative style,

fostering interaction through teamwork and collaboration, and implementing supportive peer relationships, is desirable.

In conclusion, Chinese coursework business students gain their degrees abroad because they expect to make a return on their investment through career development. Although they develop new career capital of benefit to them and their employers, both negative and positive outcomes for their career and lifestyle are linked to the mobility path they take after graduation. Graduates need to be knowledgeable about the possible consequences of the path they take when making their decision, while employers need to implement effective human resource practices to reap the benefit of this plentiful and valuable source of talent.

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