



Figure 1. Gazing onto Shanghai. Photo by M. Sander.

PART I

Getting Acquainted

This ethnography explores how expatriate teenagers in Shanghai experience high international mobility. It examines their moves into and out of the city with their families, their ways of life, and the ways they make sense of the many moves and places in their lives. This first part introduces who these expatriate teenagers are. I begin by summarizing the general situation and size of the expatriate communities in Shanghai and provide illustrative examples of the daily routines of international school life for expatriate youths. I then present two peer groups and their activities, before I zoom in on the individual experiences and viewpoints of four expatriate teenagers. Finally, I explain my methodological approaches and challenges accessing the social world of expatriate youths, as well as my overall position in the field.

CHAPTER 1

Expatriates in Shanghai

The youths in this ethnography—teenagers that I have talked to and spent time with over the last few years in Shanghai—form a very heterogeneous and privileged group of migrants. This study focuses primarily on students aged fifteen to eighteen, but includes participants as young as nine. Most of these students move every three to four years, whenever one of their parents is relocated. All my subjects came to Shanghai jointly with their families. These relocations were usually arranged and (financially) supported by their parents' employers.

The metropolis of Shanghai is in part shaped by such expatriate youths, along with foreign tourists, university students, and transnational professionals, as well as Chinese citizens returning from stays abroad; all these individuals comprise an Appaduraiic ethnoscape (1996), where various cultural flows converge. As these different kinds of migrants bring and follow transnational capital and global enterprises to Shanghai, many of them become part of Shanghai's heterogeneous international community. They shape, are integrated into, and identify with its spaces and the lifestyle and consumption habits associated with it. Shanghai, one of China's most thriving cities, hosts a considerably large expatriate community. The Shanghai Statistical Bureau lists a total of 164,359 foreigners residing in Shanghai in 2011, including 37,223 Japanese, 16,805 American, and 8,040 German citizens (Shanghai Statistical Bureau 2013). According to sociologist James Farrer's (2011) conversations with consulate and chamber of commerce officials in 2006, unofficial estimates are higher. He reckons that, in 2006, "70,000 to 100,000 Japanese, 20,000 to 30,000 Americans, and 12,000 to 20,000 Germans were living in Shanghai on various types of visas" (Farrer 2011).

This community commonly labels itself "expatriate," a term that is derived from the Latin "ex patria" and refers to someone living outside their native country (Coles and Fechter 2008, 5). The term is commonly shortened to expat. In Shanghai, it is used by human resource departments to describe employees who have been posted to Shanghai by their companies. It is also commonly used to refer to foreigners with a certain upper-class lifestyle. The actors of this study consider themselves part of this community and even label themselves as "expat children." It is for this simple reason of self-ascription that I chose to work with the term "expatriates." That "this term has itself become an identity referent with a set of shared meanings understood by those who adopt the label, manifest in particular practices such as socialising in certain areas" (Butcher 2009, 1361), will become clear throughout this ethnography.

The expatriate families under discussion all enjoy a privileged status. The parents' postings to Shanghai are usually tied to high financial benefits and packages that include allowances for health insurance, travel costs, car leases, housing, and private international schools. It is difficult to pinpoint how many expatriate families come to Shanghai accompanied by under-aged children, as the Shanghai Statistical Bureau does not offer age-specific statistical data. However, just based on the student bodies from Shanghai's thirteen largest international schools (each with multiple campuses and featuring curricula in English, French, or German), I estimate that at least 16,500 students attended during the 2011–2012 academic year. Although the majority of these schools offer education beginning with kindergarten—sometimes even nursery school—there are many additional international kindergartens. The actual number of children and youths with foreign passports in Shanghai must therefore be even larger. The Shanghai municipal government does not allow Chinese nationals to enroll in international schools, thus all their students are of foreign nationality.

Since school is a major part of each expatriate youth's life, it was through these institutions that I first gained access to the actors of my study. Nevertheless, as the following chapters illustrate, ethnographic fieldwork is predominantly based on constant engagement, mutual understanding, and individuals' willingness to trust the ethnographer and to share insights into their lives.

CHAPTER 2

Going to School

It is six in the morning when the alarm goes off in my small, single-room apartment in downtown Shanghai. I get up and leave the aging high-rise close to busy Jiaojiabang road and hurry to the next metro stop. It is a cold and humid morning in February, the metro is still empty, and I am spared loud phone conversations and the throng of passengers. I exit somewhere in the city's seemingly endless outskirts and try to catch a taxi. It is already eight when I finally arrive at my school. I am 28 years old and afraid of being late for class.

I patiently wait at the entrance gate of the German and French School campus to receive a visitor's pass from the Chinese guards. I am grateful that I am allowed to observe at the German School; most of the other international schools in Shanghai were not willing to open their doors to me. Wanting to work with minors brought several challenges: getting the permission of headmasters and teachers to visit classes and securing parents' consent to record interviews often seemed impossible. When a counselor and a teacher at two different American schools voiced interest in supporting my research and introduced my project to their principals, I hoped I could spend time with their students, but these schools rejected my research request on unknown grounds. Writing to school principals or parent associations directly also proved unsuccessful, except in the case of one British school. In November 2011, they collated a list of nine students who I was able to meet for group discussions on the school premises. At the same time, I repeatedly introduced myself to teachers, psychologists, and parents at events such as fairs or talks, and was able to visit a Singaporean international school to conduct some group interviews with students from the eleventh grade of their International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The group interviews I conducted at these two schools contributed valuable perspectives to this ethnography. However, I was reminded of anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's description of "anthropology by appointment" where "access to people, to informants, is in fact often limited, regulated and timed" (Hannerz 2006, 34). I wanted to move beyond this regulated interaction and the restrictions of interviewing at schools to finally explore expatriate youths' everyday practices. But this proved even more difficult because expatriate children spend most of their days in school or at home and both these spaces are challenging to enter as an outsider. At yet another open expatriate event in early December 2010, I was able to introduce myself to the German school's headmaster, who turned out to be very supportive. Finally allowed to observe an eleventh

grade class and to interact with students on a regular basis, I started visiting them shortly before the Christmas break. Now I routinely find myself standing in line for my visitor's pass.

The last students arrive and are entering the premises, opening the automatic doors with their student ID cards. I spot sixteen-year-old Charlie, a student from "my" class in the crowd, and it calms me to see a familiar face. I am not the only one running late. We wave at each other, I point to the desk officer at the front gate, and signal that I will be inside soon. She waits for me on the stairs and we hug to say hello. Charlie is the daughter of Chinese parents, but was born and grew up in Germany until her family moved to Shanghai when she was twelve years old. Chatting on our way to the classroom, she reminisces about the last time we saw each other at Mural, a night club, and asks me about my Chinese New Year break. She stayed at her Chinese grandmother's place, which, according to her, was a bit boring, and then went to Sri Lanka.

When we arrive at the classroom, just on time, I say hello to the teacher and drop onto a chair next to the sink, outside the U-shaped arrangement of tables where the students sit. The teacher says good morning, which has no effect whatsoever on the noise level, and welcomes me to his English class. Students are to work on group projects today and they freely mingle, talk, and laugh. They are between fifteen and eighteen and are one and a half years away from graduation. Grateful for being able to get to know them and meet them on a regular basis rather than at one-time interviews, I walk over to Karina and Lara (both new this school year) and say hello to Alex and Don (an inseparable duo) before taking a seat on the new couch, to simply listen to and watch what is going on around me. I say hello to Antonia—daughter of a Chinese-German marriage, Shanghai veteran, and my key contact over the last few weeks—who seems to be lost in thought, staring at a red piece of cardboard in front of her. I ask her about her group's topic—Shakespeare on the Screen—and we start chatting. Two girls from the same group, Charlie—my partner in running late for class this morning—and Olivia, from Belgium, join in. Now everyone seems busy working on posters and presentations covering different topics about Shakespeare. Students are allowed to leave the classroom and there is a lot of movement. Meanwhile, someone has organized the "media cart" and every group takes out a computer to work on their handouts or to do research online.

I go to the little snack bar in the piazza and get a coffee. Slowly walking back to the classroom across the long hallways and up the endless stairs, I realize how I have become accustomed to this place over the past weeks since I began visiting in December 2010. The silence in the building during class now seems friendlier and the contact with students has become easier.

Back in the classroom, I look around and take some notes. As the popular website International Movie Data Base (IMDB) website is blocked in China and the school computers have no VPN or proxy installed to get

around the virtual wall, Olivia is searching for another website listing numbers and information on Shakespeare film adaptations. We start to discuss Internet blocking in China, because blocking IMDB does not seem plausible to us. Olivia mentions the typical cases of Facebook and YouTube. Antonia states that she can understand the Chinese government hindering access to these. This discussion continues for a few minutes and I notice how, at times like this, the role of the Chinese state surrounding the German “bubble” in which these students live can suddenly become apparent. Eventually, the conversation changes topic and the girls focus on their poster, again.

When a boy from the group working next to the girls looks over at their poster, his eyes squint to examine their heading. Olivia asks, with surprise in her voice: “Can you actually see anything? Your eyes are so narrow!”¹ Antonia jumps in: “Hey, are you dissing Chinese eyes?” Olivia responds: “No, I just find that fascinating.” Some mumbling goes on between the boy and his group. They ask Antonia to paint the headline for their poster and Antonia agrees to do so for 10 *kuai*. She walks over to their poster and I join, still somewhat lost in thought about the comment on the student’s eyes and the rigorous bashing of comments that might be conceived as racist. Do students draw boundaries based on the physical differences between “Asian” and “white” students? Olivia and Charlie leave the room shouting that we could find them in the empty senior classroom across the hall. When Antonia skilfully finishes writing the headline on the boys’ poster, we join the two girls.

The three teenagers sit on the couch and I seat myself on a chair. Charlie is finishing an apple, which she felt was inappropriate to eat in front of the teacher. I think about rules and the ways students’ behaviors are strictly regulated and immediately wonder if it is actually okay for me to drink coffee in class—as for instance the English teacher does. I struggle with my in-between position and, like other ethnographers working with youth (Weißköppel 2001, 75), often find myself thrown back into my own adolescence. The school setting—an environment I have not revisited since my own graduation nine years prior—particularly evokes memories of my teenage years. The whole routine still feels strangely familiar. Listening to teachers’ explanations and student discussions, scribbling into my notebook, I often get lost in the classroom situation, even finding myself thinking “I hope (s)he doesn’t ask me!” This was of course never the case. My own inner transformation back into a high school student come to an abrupt halt when teachers ask me to contribute to teaching a lesson in Ethics class (at a German school), or in a Theory of Knowledge class (at a Singaporean school). In order to gain access to the classes, I do not object, and even use the opportunity to have students produce valuable research material such as mind maps (in their ethics class) or mental maps

1 Since the students usually speak German at school, translations have been provided here.

(a slightly different exercise, used in their geography class). Afterwards, teachers in the staff room where I occasionally go to take notes, talk about students' behavior and abilities, seeming wishing to draw me to "their side." This in-betweenness of my situation is part of the reason why I have trouble positioning myself within the overall field. Being neither student nor teacher seems confusing not only to me but to the students as well. In contrast to Weißköppel, who during her research at a middle school in Germany (Realschule) rejected students' offers to use the casual German "Du" in order to keep the age difference as a form of managing distance that to her felt necessary (Weißköppel 2001, 75), I decided to meet the students on the same level, or at least to the extent that this is possible in a research situation. I therefore offered my first name (and, in the German context, the informal "Du") as a way of addressing me. However, while some students, like Antonia, relate to me on the same level from the beginning, others fall back to addressing me formally again and again. To me, it feels that their choice of address has become the battleground signifying my status and role, as well as the need to take time to establish trust, regardless of my offer of familiarity.

While Charlie finishes her apple, I ask the girls about their weekend plans. Nothing so far, except a Star Wars night at Antonia's for the weekend after. She knows the movies by heart and can almost talk along. They are planning to start at eight in the evening—after basketball practice—and watch until eight in the morning. A coffee machine and the promise of hitting each other should anyone fall asleep will help them stay up. Olivia thinks they also need "something fun" (was Lustiges), meaning hard alcohol. Antonia replies that this is impossible because her parents are home, but beer would be okay. Charlie and Olivia, however, do not like beer. Olivia looks disappointed. Charlie says that "you don't always need alcohol." Other students start coming into the room as the next class is about to begin, so we get up and return to our own classroom.

I sit down again and scribble into my notebook. "A lot of Anglicisms," I write. "Does this have something to do with Shakespeare and being in an English class? Or is it a general phenomenon among German expat kids?" Meanwhile, one student has opened his Flickr account. He and Olivia discuss a commentary someone wrote beneath a picture of Olivia's boyfriend. The question seems to be centered on determining who wrote that commentary, but I cannot really follow their discussion, due to my lack of familiarity with Flickr. When Olivia returns to her group to work on the presentation, I join in discussing their topic and ask them whether they have considered speaking about general difficulties when adapting theater plays for the screen. They have not, and Olivia immediately starts to google it. Trying to restrain myself from getting too involved, I turn to writing in my notebook and watching them work on their presentation.

Class is over. I am still not used to the absence of a school bell that was so prominent in my own school life. Students are shouting, "Are we eating

at the shop?"² I walk over to talk to Kressi and Mia. Mia inquires about my dissertation and I tell her that I am working on the overall structure, and explain the different chapters and parts to her. Mia poses questions and comments about my work and is keen to read my ethnography once it is finished or published, or even before, which leads to questions of representation, anonymity, and the consequences of my texts. Thus my ethnographic research practices, reflections, and writing have become part of the teenage students' daily lives. In other words, in a conversation such as the one I have with Mia, the practice of writing is embedded in its larger context. This conversation is just one example of how research is a practice, an engagement with the youths, as Massey concisely describes:

Here what we might have called representation is no longer a process of fixing, but an element in a continuous production; a part of it all, and itself constantly becoming. This is a position which rejects a strict separation between world and text and which understands scientific activity as being just that—an activity, a practice, an embedded engagement in the world of which it is a part. Not representation but experimentation (2005, 28).

No one who writes about real people in real life can ignore the fact that words may have consequences for the people they write about—and alter their images of Self, labeling by others, their relationships, or the politics structuring their everyday practices. Caroline Brettell and other anthropologists (1993) address this issue and ask what happens when they read what we write. What are the consequences for the researched, the ethnographer, the relationship between them, and for the writing itself? While this question was unknown to early ethnographers whose language of writing often differed from those whom they studied (Brettell 1993), it certainly causes me great concern and prompts serious contemplation. The problem of securing anonymity troubles me in particular and proves difficult in regards to maintaining my own scientific standards when describing specific locations and practices. While many students were eager to appear in "the book" with their real names, we agreed that they themselves should choose their own code names, which at least render them anonymous to outsiders. This, however, does not secure complete anonymity. My research focus on urban sensory experiences requires detailed descriptions of places that make schools and locations traceable for the informed reader. As in my conversation with Mia, I repeatedly discuss these issues with the students themselves. I also address it in conversations with teachers and principals, and the community ultimately agrees to accept the potential ramifications. I face a greater moral dilemma when it comes to

2 "The shop" refers to a small back alley close to the school campus where a few eateries and a snack kiosk can be found. Part IV, Chapter 3 analyzes this space in detail.

the fact that the students on whom my work focuses almost all know each other and no degree of anonymizing—unless I enter the realm of the fictitious—can ensure that they will not recognize their peers. Consequently, I very carefully omit all hostile or derogatory remarks that the teenagers make against their peers. Hostilities exist, but are not crucial to my work.

Daniel Goldstein (2002) comments on the impact of the ethnographer's presence as that of a future author in the field, describing how his informants in the Andes in Bolivia were continuously concerned about "the book" he would write. Goldstein argues that one can see ethnographic writing in a positive light, as a form of indigenous media, or a means of self-representation.

Even in more ordinary sorts of fieldwork contexts, in which the final product of the ethnographer/informant encounter is not a visual but a textual representation, informants may regard ethnography as a resource that they can use for their own purposes, and so seek to establish control over the ways in which they will be represented by the ethnographer (Goldstein 2002, 487).

In Goldstein's case, the informants strategically emphasized and performed certain aspects they considered important and most likely to secure financial benefits in the future, for instance by attracting NGOs. Consequently, he also experienced a lot of mistrust, because they feared his writings might highlight aspects that could endanger their initiatives.

While the teenagers in Shanghai are aware that my work will bring them no financial benefit, it still becomes obvious that they are also highly concerned about my work and how it will represent their lives.³

Mia and I change the topic and talk about a Karl Lagerfeld Photography exhibition that I went to see with a Chinese friend of mine. I know that Mia and Kressi are interested in photography and fashion. Unfortunately, I do not recall the exact address of the gallery at the Bund but I promise to look it up for them. Then I return to Karina and Lara. Lara (who is busy kissing

3 Goldstein (2002, 496) argues that, in response to mistrust, some fieldworkers end up focusing "on ritual, or politics, or other public domains of social life [...] finding that, in addition to their accessibility, these are in fact the topics that their research consultants would most prefer them to study." Likewise, one can, on the one hand, interpret the relationship between the participating teenagers and me as a trustful one in regards to my presence during nightlife and illegal activities. I am sure that, to a certain extent, my participation led to acceptance and offered the possibility for students to also casually inquire about my own life and to get to know me better. On the other hand, it soon became obvious that this invitation and willingness to trust me also had something to do with the fact that the youths liked to see their nightlife activities take center stage in my work. For them, writing about nightlife was crucial for representing their lifestyle; it was how they wanted to be represented. They were also eager to talk about nightlife activities during the interviews, while emotional difficulties associated with the move to Shanghai were, in contrast, often mentioned in passing, not elaborated upon, and seemed to provoke unease and careful wording. In short, the depiction of difficulties was rather unpopular.

her boyfriend) and Karina agree to meet me for an interview the following week. We exchange email addresses and phone numbers. Karina seems very interested, Lara a bit unmotivated. I exit the classroom and bump into Andrea, whom I met two weeks ago on a Friday night at Mural. We discuss my dissertation project and she is curious about the differences I found between students at her school and those at others schools in Shanghai. Andrea is interested in giving an interview and we arrange to meet at a café downtown in the next few days. At this moment, I see the door of “my” classroom shutting, quickly say goodbye, and silently sneak inside.

In German class, I confirm with the teacher that I may join his class today. He agrees and officially starts class by addressing the upcoming exams. The students lament as usual and then open their books. Communication analysis has already been on the lesson plan for a couple of periods. Today, we read a text on kissing. One student reads the whole article out loud. It addresses the famous study by Margaret Mead that explored the interaction between American service men and local residents in wartime Britain, focusing on the issue of kissing and the different meanings attributed to a kiss. The textbook explains that, while Americans kiss early in romantic relationships, a kiss came at a much later stage for British women in the 1940s. The students all seem very interested in the topic and the teacher encourages them to apply Watzlawick’s communication analysis in order to explain. But first he asks: “How do you flirt today?” As the text had explained that kissing was, according to Mead, only step twenty-five for British women, the girls sitting close to me count: “eye contact,” “smiling,” “talking,” “having a drink,” “exchanging phone numbers,” “adding on Facebook,” “first text message,” and “the first date.” Bjorn, who has only been in Shanghai for half a year, jumps in and, seemingly agitated, shouts: “No! First date? That’s only because they make such a big deal out of it in movies!” Other boys join in. The girls protest: “If it is important to you, you put an effort into that first date!” Alex comments critically on the romantic ideal of love at first sight and how this draws girls to the cinema. The teacher draws from some of the remarks and asks: “If we watch movies from other cultures, is that similar? How about movies from India or China?” The class discusses and Antonia describes a Chinese movie that typically ends with the first kiss in the last scene. Everybody in class now seems to talk simultaneously and I can hardly follow, let alone take notes on all the comments. Antonia, agitatedly, voices how you cannot just end a relationship after two months in China. “You are immediately considered a slut!” The class reacts by shouting “What?” Some students contradict her. “Okay, that’s how it is in my family,” Antonia adds, indirectly referring to her latest break-up. The teacher draws the attention back to the text and the corresponding exercises in the book: “Education, cultural differences, what else is there in that text?” Students comment on the different roles and role relationships, historical developments in the US and Britain, and the subconscious in Watzlawick’s theory. When the teacher asks them to take into consideration that some cultures might be even more differ-

ent than the US and England, one student brings up the example of sex before marriage: "This can get really serious." The teacher follows up and starts talking about honor killings, which according to him happen when girls adapt but their families stick to their traditions from home. I find this example clichéd, but stay in my role as the silent observer. A few students remark on how this example is particularly extreme. The teacher agrees, but holds to his opinion that "cultural conflict can lead to death." By now, I have learned that teachers use such exaggerations and provocations to trigger discussions. We move on to the next textbook exercise. The teacher uses his drama skills to underline the idea of roles and role expectations. He gives the example of a manager who seems unable to leave his manager role behind when he gets home. The students analyze that this father obviously does not realize how he is trapped in his role and that his family has a different role expectation. The students start thinking about what to do in such a case. Olivia suggests clearly stating: "Listen to me." Another student proposes to "write a letter saying 'Call me when you understand' and then leave." Olivia finds that this drastic measure should only be used when other means have failed. Xia proposes sending the father on a holiday. Kressi suggests clearly stating that "your family isn't your office."

It seems as if the students can identify perfectly with the scenario they are discussing and I wonder about the manager parents in their lives. Most of the forty-three international school students I interviewed have parents employed by foreign companies. Usually, the father's career was the primary motive behind the move to Shanghai. While all their fathers are employed, only some of the mothers work, and mostly do so part-time. Their father's jobs range from logistics to the automobile industry, while one father works as a manager for an international hotel chain and another at a university.

Class is almost over and the teacher wraps up the discussions on Watzlawick and his communication theory by pointing out that the meta-level is the key. How right he is. The meta-level is often present in my conversations and interviews with expatriate youths. Their perspectives continually impress me. It is their self-reflective voices that form the heart of this study. In particular, the members of two peers groups from the German school that I was able to spend time with, thanks to Antonia and Bjorn, provided insights into expatriate youths' lives beyond school and their reflections upon these aspects.

CHAPTER 3

Joining Two Peer Groups

A relatively youthful appearance is undoubtedly helpful when hanging around street corners with teenagers (Wulff 1995, 7).

*I was incredibly nervous of the teenagers.
I felt 12 years old again (Skelton 2001, 170).*

Joining the teenagers outside the realm of school, in particular during their nightlife activities, proved tremendously valuable in helping me to establish my position among them. These occasions helped me to contextualize the students' verbalized reflections upon their lives and to grasp their experiences and understandings of mobility, being young, and belonging to the expatriate community. These opportunities also made it possible for me to prove that I could be trusted.⁴ While teachers actively try to avoid such situations by making sure they do not frequent the same clubs or bars, my role and participation in activities gradually became accepted after months of engaging with the teenagers outside of school and sharing my own story with them.⁵ This constant negotiation of my role and proximity in the beginning, along with later finding myself placed, at least temporarily, within the group, seem typical for ethnographic work. I was happy and comfortable taking on the role of an older sister who reports from university life in Germany, as this turned out to be the aspect of my life everyone was most interested in. While the practice of listening closely is the most important part of any ethnographic project, I also experienced that sharing is vital to overcoming hierarchies and the distance that hinder the ethnographer who wants to capture youths' own perspectives and voices.

In line with these fieldwork practices, I chose a relational approach that acknowledged the ties between me and the youths I researched, and the influence of those ties on matters of access as well as on my perspective.⁶

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- 4 Students witnessed that I would not judge them for smoking marijuana and that I would not reject the offer to dance or occasionally drink with them when they raised a glass—sometimes even “to the thesis,” to encourage me to join in. They felt that I was not only doing research but enjoying sitting next to them on the couches talking about music, school, and relationships.
 - 5 Finding my role(s) meant that I not only needed to position myself between teachers and students but also among the students. While I tried not to take sides in their arguments, which sometimes went counter to my own desires and school memories of being accepted and belonging to a certain group, I inevitably established closer relationships and friendships with some of the students. This was due to a mutual interest in each other's lives.
 - 6 “A relational approach to research assumes that the patterns that are ‘found’ by researchers are products of what occurred between two or more people—the researcher and the researched. The narrative in an interview or the responses in a survey [...] are jointly constructed” (Way 2004, 171).

While Shanghai as the research site and expatriate teenagers as the main actors of my study had been set from the start, the paths I followed to understand their lives were often improvised. Coleman and Collins (2006) highlight the role the researcher's choice of focus plays, arguing that "fields are as much 'performed' as 'discovered,' framed by boundaries that shift according to the analytical and rhetorical preferences of the ethnographer and, more rarely, the informant" (Coleman and Collins 2006, 17). Thus my "field," my point of view on expatriate youths and the accounts I gathered, was influenced by my own stance, perspective, and abilities. Additionally, different gatekeepers played a crucial role in my navigation in the field, allowing or restricting access to certain sites, events, or people. It is my keen interest in students who actively explore Shanghai on their own, as well as certain key facilitators like Antonia, that finally led me to focus on and spend time with two peer groups in particular. These two groups consisted of one all-girls group and one all-boys group.⁷

3.1 Fieldwork with "the girls:" real ambitions and fake Louboutins

"The girls" are Antonia, Mia, Kressi, Charlie, Olivia, and Andrea. They were between fifteen and seventeen years old when I first met them at school. Antonia in particular played a vital role in my interactions with them, as it was her invitation to join nightlife activities that led to my forming closer contacts with the rest of the group and many others at the German school. The way she included me and openly stated "Marie is one of us" provided essential opportunities for my work. Antonia, child of a Chinese-German marriage, was born in Germany, but grew up in Shanghai and has been going to the same school all her life—this is rare among expatriate children. She is a determined, smart young woman, who has high expectations for herself and highly values intelligence and analytical minds. Other students sometimes seem to find her active and passionate participation in discussions in the classroom annoying. Antonia and I have gotten along well from the beginning and, with her generous, independent, and opin-

7 These friendships were obviously based on gender, something I had already observed when looking at the seating arrangement in the classroom. This was apparently the case in both of the eleventh grade classes at the German school I visited. Peter, one of the students, once commented on the classroom division during an interview: "Like in prison, women and men separate." Although this division was abandoned by the senior year, gender played a crucial role in the expatriate teenagers' friendships and, consequently, in my interactions with them. I often wondered about the implications of my own gender on my relationships and my overall research. While I felt that being female was beneficial to my more intimate, sometimes friendship-like interactions with the girls, I often experienced it as an obstacle (at least in the beginning) when I interacted with the boys. Niobe Way (2004, 173) and his research group inquiring adolescent boys' experiences and concepts of friendship, however, found over the course of their project that many boys preferred female interviewers.

ionated ways, she forms a key figure in my research. Mia, an ambitious and eloquent girl, and her artistic friend Kressi, are the youngest members of the group because they have both skipped a grade. They are new to the class and at first not allowed to go out as often as the others. Over the course of the school year, however, they do become permanent members of the group. Mia has a typical expat biography and has moved several times in her life. Kressi, in contrast, moved to Shanghai at an early age. She was born in Germany to Vietnamese parents with Cantonese roots and seems to have family all over the world. Charlie, born in Germany to Chinese parents and very much liked by everyone at school due to her friendly ways, and Olivia from Belgium, admired for her beauty, arrange and participate in group activities on a regular basis. Andrea, the only one of the girls attending another class, is one of the few students who lives downtown. Andrea is a quirky, creative student who likes to make people laugh and has a particular reputation for partying—especially dancing—Shanghai's nights away with Antonia.

I am lucky to have met this group and am happy to accompany them to various activities. When, for instance, in the beginning of May, the geography teacher invites me to join his class for an excursion, I arrange with "the girls" (without Charlie, who is in a different class) to join their group. The students are supposed to do photo walks through different parts of Shanghai to document elements of globalization. I meet the teacher and students at 3 p.m. at school. Andrea, Antonia, and Mia greet me when I arrive just on time and inform me that we will pick up Kressi and Olivia at home on our way downtown. However, one group only consists of two students and the teacher asks me to join them, as there has to be a minimum of three in each group for safety reasons. The girls protest. Luckily, another student shows up and I can stay in "my" group. Antonia's driver is waiting outside to take us. The girls have chosen the area of Tianzifang, a block of old Shanghainese lane houses that have been turned into small shops, cafés, and restaurants. I am glad to hang out with the girls who I know best, particularly as I had had a rough night due to food poisoning. I am also glad to join in on some expatriate luxury and hop into the big, air-conditioned van instead of the crowded metro.

We drive to two different compounds to pick up Olivia and Kressi. Although I had been to several expatriate family homes for my research on "trailing spouses" in 2007, it is the first time I really see how these two students live. Big villas surrounded by green spaces and high walls. The girls, who are naturally not startled by their friends' houses, discuss Olivia's romantic situation. Somehow, maybe due to my presence, the discussion shifts all of a sudden to foreign languages and language proficiency. Antonia shares a story from the last MUN (Model United Nations)⁸ conference,

8 MUN, Model United Nations, is a simulation of the United Nations where students critically engage with global issues. After researching and discussing current topics, the students present different (national) positions on these issues

where she met a Korean girl who grew up in Germany and England. This girl had offered to speak German with Antonia, in case English was too difficult for her. Remembering this girl's comment, Antonia becomes furious and all the girls join in. Everybody sees this remark as extremely insulting. This protest is not only a form of friendly support but is also justified, as Antonia's English is quite flawless. However, sitting among them on the back seat of the van, I silently consider how the Korean girl's comment also indirectly implies that they lack certain cosmopolitan competencies, thus calling for communal critique. Andrea's quick-witted input is requested and she contemplates aloud what the right response to such an insulting and deprecatory remark might be. We further discuss the topic of language skills and everyone shares stories about children in their community who grew up bilingually. Olivia, who speaks Flemish at home, tells us that she only learned German in fifth grade. Antonia feels she speaks neither German nor Chinese very well. Andrea shares how she gave up studying Chinese, to be immediately criticized by Antonia for it. One should expect that, after so many years in Shanghai, they should be able to speak Chinese, Antonia declares, but that they cannot because they are content to "live in the expat bubble." I notice that the bubble metaphor seems omnipresent among expatriates in Shanghai—Paul, for instance, whose story I told in the introduction, also used it. I wonder if my presence triggers such remarks. Andrea talks about the difficulties of learning Chinese. I share that, although I have taken numerous evening classes in Chinese and just resumed taking lessons a few weeks ago, I myself am also far from going beyond simple everyday topics.

The girls plan a *Lord of the Rings* night and discuss what kind of (German) candies their parents should buy. Antonia says that in no way could she send her mom shopping. She has no time for that, between owning three companies and never sleeping for more than five hours a night. Even her dad, who is a general manager, has more time. I silently guess that their *ayi* does all the grocery shopping.⁹ Upon asking about a classmate of theirs, I accidentally trigger several stories about different students and couples and feel like a whole world of gossip opens up. Who is wearing inappropriate clothes or has ended relationships in inappropriate ways, who is simply using girls, who is surprisingly getting along with whom, and who is "setting back emancipation for at least 200 years," among other topics, arise. In between all this gossip, the subject of conversation turns to me and my boyfriend, whom they met at a concert, and my former rela-

through role-playing. The majority of the international schools in Shanghai held Model UN classes. At the German school in Shanghai, a Model UN class was offered as an extracurricular activity. Some students also took part in conferences in Europe. Such high school and university-level conferences take place all over the world.

9 The Chinese term *ayi* here means "nanny" or "household help." The term *ayi*, however, can also refer to a maternal aunt and is considered a polite way for children to address women in general.

tionships and why they ended. Fieldwork means sharing. This gossip about acquaintances and first romances, as well as school grades, language skills, and career ambitions is common among the girls. On the one hand, the moral implications of listening or even participating in gossip demanded constant reflection about my role and obligations as a researcher and remained difficult for me throughout my fieldwork. On the other hand, gossip was an important element that enabled me to gain information about the students' daily lives—see Marie Gillespie's (1999) work on how gossip about soap operas among South Asian youth in London is linked to negotiating their own social networks—as well as to maintain the ongoing process of social access (Carmel 2011, 552).

After all the gossip, Andrea laughs and wonders what I must be writing about them. I sigh and tell them that I honestly do not know and that I sometimes feel they could write it better themselves. They protest and encourage me. While I am often tremendously worried about my research subjects reading my writing, this is one of the rewarding moments of working with students who are truly interested in and supportive of my work.

Meanwhile, the interaction with the Chinese driver employed by Antonia's family is limited to navigating him to the right compounds and the girls' houses. He is apparently presumed to know the way to the Tianzifang complex. When, almost an hour later, he shouts "Dao le!" ("We're here!"), all of the girls cry out that this cannot be true. We note that we ended up in Taicang Road instead of Taikang Road. The driver, without commenting and apparently used to hectic shouting and complaints—maybe even to foreigners' mispronunciations of Chinese street names—drives on and brings us to the desired destination. I get out last and am the only one to say goodbye to the driver. Antonia apologizes to everyone for her driver bringing us to the wrong location at first. No one seems to notice.

When we arrive, we head towards a café known for its delicious milkshakes, called Kommune, which offers outdoor seating in the midst of small alleys and, like all coffee shops in Tianzifang, has prices for an expat income rather than the average Shanghainese. Here, a milkshake costs around RMB 38 (€4.18).¹⁰ On the way there, Mia, Kressi, and Olivia take photos. I take photos of them taking photos, but as we all have a research agenda today, it feels okay. Drinking milkshakes, chatting, and taking pictures keeps us entertained for a while. Mia and Kressi buy some of the café's well-designed drinking glasses for their own rooms. We then leave to explore the area further with our cameras. We look at a stall offering earrings and Olivia, who always wears big earrings, buys a pair. We then stop at a piercing and tattoo studio.

Antonia flips through a folder full of tattoo images. She already has a small tattoo on her neck and is now looking for a nice image of a salamander for a second tattoo. She remembers how she discovered the best

10 According to the currency converter Oanda, the average exchange rate between August 1st 2010 and August 1st 2011 was 1 RMB to €0.11.

image so far at a place close to Olivia's home in Belgium. She does not find one she likes in this studio's catalogue, but shares that it is probably wiser to wait until she turns eighteen anyway, so that her parents cannot object. The girls discuss the ideal placement of tattoos and Andrea shares that her aunt in Germany runs a tattoo studio, stressing that she does not do the tattoos herself, anymore, but that she manages the store. I note that it seems important to stress her aunt's higher position in the business. We pass a store with ethnic clothing that I like and, in the next store, I spot a pair of trousers. Mia then takes a photo of them so I can eventually get a pair made in the same style, as this pair is too expensive for me. We stroll along the lanes, window-shopping, enjoying the shared practices of "doing fashion" (Liechty 2003); buying, trying on, or talking about clothes. These topics are familiar to me and I easily join their conversations.

All the while, the students take pictures for the photo documentation project on globalization. Their research project allows me to feel comfortable with my own research agenda. This is not the norm. Being with them sometimes feels a lot like being with friends, while at other moments my academic agenda becomes central again and my role shifts. One night, for example, when we were cooking together at Kressi's house and getting ready to go to a club downtown, I felt very much like a part of the group. Then the girls started to discuss outfits and Olivia mentioned her Louboutins (infamously high-heeled designer shoes) and everything changed. My facial expression must have revealed my inner surprise at her having such expensive stilettos at the age of sixteen. Antonia asked what I was thinking about and whether I had found something to write about. I felt a little embarrassed, as I was discovered again as the researcher, but then admitted what had shocked me. Revealing my thoughts, the girls all started laughing, leaving me confused for a moment until they all shouted that these shoes were of course only copies from one of Shanghai's many "fake markets." I realized, in that moment, that my shifting from friend to researcher, though not easy for me, was okay with "the girls." They always met my research project with interest and continuously asked me about my latest writings, findings, and ideas. While certain intimate topics gave me the feeling of having passed a threshold towards trust and acceptance, other topics were obviously triggered by my mere presence and research questions. The discussions about language skills, nationalities, and the "expatriate bubble" on the way to Tianzifang, for instance, are in strong relation to my research themes as the girls understand them. Nonetheless, these topics do not seem new to them, but seem to have been discussed many times before. Thus it is often the apparent routineness of certain conversational themes that leads me to conclude that these issues are important to them.

We step into a small shop selling knickknacks and Olivia starts talking about her situation with her ex-boyfriend who is leaving Shanghai. They have just separated and the girls wonder if she should still give him the present she has prepared for him—a slideshow with pictures of their time

in Shanghai, accompanied by “their” songs. The girls suggest she should simply ask him if he still wants it. I silently think about the difficulties of first romantic relationships that are constantly in danger of being torn apart by parental decisions to move on. The girls, on the contrary, seem quite pragmatic.

We move on, stroll through a boutique selling leather bags, and another offering all kinds of hats. Finally, we all sit down on the pavement, exhausted from all the impressions surrounding us. I take a few pictures. The girls talk about their prom next year and their ideas for a talent night that they want to propose for the next term. We then hop into a cab to meet the rest of their class and the teacher for dinner, a discussion of the excursion, and the exchange of photos at an American diner.

3.2 Fieldwork with “the boys:” repulsive moments and aesthetic jellyfish

In the beginning, the all-boys group included Bjorn, Alex, Peter, Don, Marco, and Giovanni. They were later joined by Bjorn’s brother and two students from the grade below. When I first interacted with them at school, I was, for some reason, a little bit intimidated, particularly by Alex, who is the oldest in class and who I had seen become angry at a fellow student. However, during the first interview with him, Bjorn, and Don, I find them all to be quite nice and eager to share their viewpoints. They are smoking heavily during the interview and particularly like to showcase their night-life experiences. Alex, even until the end of my fieldwork stay, sometimes accidentally uses the German polite form “Sie” to address me and our relationship remains distant, albeit friendly. Although I have never conducted a follow-up interview with Don, I have had several casual conversations with him. Bjorn and I have become closer over the months, mainly through sharing music, since we both like the same reggae artists. I conduct two individual follow-up interviews with him. The beginning of my relationship with Peter and Marco is different. We talk outside of school, at the club Mural, before I hold their initial interviews. These two boys are in a different class from the one I regularly visit. Besides a long first interview with the two of them, I conduct a follow-up interview with Peter alone in June 2012. Giovanni, although we have interacted before, is first interviewed during my short stay in September 2011 and again in June 2012. All the boys are self-reflective and interesting to talk to. They classify themselves as the peer group that goes out, drinks, consumes cannabis, feels that school is not the most important thing in life, and highly values people who are equally cool, relaxed, or—as they put it—“chilled.”

These two groups I accompany, who label each other as “the boys” or “the girls” respectively, sometimes unite their nightlife activities. Occasionally exploring the boys’ nightlife activities in the spring of 2011, without “the girls” with whom I have already built a stronger relationship, feels

strange at first. Nonetheless, I soon enjoy accompanying “the boys” to the club Mural on Friday nights. Over weeks of joining them at school, sharing dinner, partying, and discussing their lives with them, I feel increasingly comfortable around them and find their company and outlook on life enjoyable. But just when I get to this point of ease in our interaction, we come to the last time I go out with them before I have to leave Shanghai in July 2011. The school year has ended.

That summer night in July, the boys and girls at first hang out together at Mural, before the girls move on to a different club. I decide to stay behind with the boys and step outside to get some air and to see what is going on. The boys discuss going to another club called Shelter. But standing outside, talking about music, location, and the like, everyone seems to be waiting for something. Listening to the ongoing conversations, I begin to understand that a decision about the next location cannot be made without Alex, who has disappeared with a Chinese girl in the back alley. Bjorn’s brother, who joined the group recently, goes back and keeps some of the boys up to date on what is going on. I start feeling uncomfortable and I am unsure of how to behave. Are the boys bragging or joking? What is really happening back there? While I am trying to figure out my own position on the matter, an extremely drunk Chinese girl appears on the scene. Staggering on her high heels she finally opts to sit down on the stairs. I watch her as she leans back against Matthias who has come along this night and happened to sit on the stairs. Matthias, who used to be in a band with Paul—whose story I told in the introduction—and who has been extremely helpful by introducing me to students from other schools, only entered the 11th grade recently. The Chinese girl leaning back against Matthias provokes much amusement among the group. The boys joke and tease Matthias. The funny conversation and light amusement, however, suddenly change when one of the boys suggests peeing on the girl. Thinking this is a joke, I am startled when the others join in the conversation by suggesting different angles from which to undertake this disgusting and humiliating act. Shocked at this behavior by the boys whom I considered to be so mature, I intervene and openly state that I am disgusted by the idea and that I will not allow it to happen. I leave to get water and coke for everyone, telling them that they apparently need to sober up. While giving a bottle of water to the Chinese girl, I start talking to her. I try to learn her address and maneuver her toward a cab. She vomits. I then put her into a taxi and give the driver her address. Bjorn tells me off: I ruined all the fun, he says. I should stop acting like a social worker and will not be allowed to cite his interviews any longer. I know that, for the first time, I am stretching my boundaries from participating to interrupting.¹¹ I try to stay calm

11 In general, the boys’ participation in activities such as alcohol and drug consumption and skipping school challenged my position, and occasionally caused me to worry. While I decided to accept the situation at hand and not interfere, there were a few occasions when I voiced my opinion to the teenagers and ensured that people got home safely or not did not get involved in behavior that would

and stick to my opinion. He finally asks me for a sip from my drink, which I offer him jokingly, under the condition that he lets me cite his interviews, again. He agrees; crisis averted. When Alex appears back on the scene, everyone applauds, I am too tired or too cowardly to try to figure out what actually happened and the whole group moves on to Shelter, another club. Some of the boys purchase marijuana at a street barbecue stall and we sit outside, waiting for the club to stop charging at 3 a.m. After dancing only for a bit, I soon leave for my apartment, still shocked to have seen such a different side of the boys. Is this typical “adolescent” behavior, I wonder? Is this the infamous “peer pressure?” What, if anything, does all of this have to do with racism? Do we have to understand such behavior or fantasies in the light of performances of masculinity?

Soon afterward, I pack these ambivalent thoughts along with all my belongings and leave for Germany. When I return to Shanghai for follow-up visits in September 2011 and June 2012, I have great discussions with all of the boys, again. However, the experience of that night remains in the forefront on my mind. During my last follow-up visit, graduation is immanent and everyone is reminiscing about the good times they have had in Shanghai. The troublesome night at Mural and Shelter comes up, too. Stories of other nights follow, about Marco falling asleep and the other boys forgetting him in front of a club, where he later woke up minus his phone and cash. Laughter accompanies these stories. Another anecdote is shared about how someone else fell asleep and one of them stuck his penis in the sleeper’s ear. Laughter again. I am startled again by the combination of tight friendships and, at the same time, brutal practices of teasing, mobbing, and physical harassment. I become particularly interested in these more brutal aspects and hierarchies during this last stay in the summer of 2012.

“The boys” regularly meet at Alex’s place. “The girls” are not allowed to come to these gatherings and even Kressi, who has since become Bjorn’s girlfriend, has called these regular gatherings “exclusive,” so I think it impossible to join. After an interview with Peter, however, he offers to contact Alex, Bjorn, and Don to ask when they have time to record another interview. While downtown for an interview with Andrea, Peter texts me, saying I should join the other boys at an Indian restaurant in the outskirts of the city and conduct the interview there. However, it is almost an hour drive and it is impossible for me to make it on time. After texting back

be harmful to others. However, as I never involved parents or teachers, the relationship of trust remained intact despite these interventions, and I continued to trust that students, between their abilities and intellects, as well as the rules imposed by their parents, could take care of themselves. The rules imposed by parents, such as curfews, differed among students. Occasionally, some teenagers stayed at friends’ houses overnight to avoid their own parents’ strict rules. In general, clubs in Shanghai do not enforce any age-based restrictions on club entry or alcohol sales. See Chapter 2 of Part IV on nightlife practices for more details.

and forth, we agree that Peter and I will join them later, at Alex's parents' house. I am excited to join them at last for their ritual boys' evening.

At 10 p.m. I am waiting for Peter in front of a Lianhua supermarket close to the compound gate. He calls and arranges for Bjorn's brother to pick me up on his scooter. He pulls up a few minutes later, I jump on, and we ride through the dark, through the shiny new and empty lanes of the compound, passing well-trimmed lawns and big villas. Mid-way I spot Peter, headphones on, cycling on his bike. After several turns, left and right, we arrive. I jump off and open the gate for the boys to drive inside.

I follow Peter and Bjorn's brother into the house via the terrace, through the huge living room, and upstairs, into Alex's room. Here, about ten boys are lying and sitting on the couch and the big bed, smoking, drinking beer, and watching a movie. A dog greets me and, in my insecure situation, not knowing what to do, I focus on the dog and start to pet it. The TV screen shows sharks tearing something or someone apart. Cuddling the dog to keep my eyes away from the screen, I panic at the thought of being stuck watching a horror movie with a bunch of drunken and stoned teenage boys. Trying to calm myself—how grateful I am to the dog!—I soon realize, to my surprise, that we are only watching *Deep Blue*, a documentary on the earth's oceans based on very aesthetic film material that was shot for a BBC series.

Some of the guys step out onto the adjacent balcony to smoke marijuana and I get a spot on the couch between one of Antonia's friends—a former student at the school but, like me, a temporary guest of the group—and Giovanni. Antonia's friend curiously asks me why I am here or, as he rephrases it, who I came with. Simply shrugging my shoulders and mumbling something about my interview, I realize that my academic intention does not answer the question. Hardly any girls are allowed to join these gatherings and not all boys, either. When I then respond that Peter invited me, everything seems clear. No further questions asked. Peter, as I later found out in discussions with Bjorn and also some of the girls, is thought to be one of the heads of the group. He can therefore invite anyone, even me. I open a beer and try to grasp the overall mood. I realize that the interview is a stupid idea that night and decide that witnessing what is going on is more important than interrupting their "boys' night" rituals. I am startled at how relaxed (or perhaps stoned) everyone is, and how nicely they behave. Instead of the expected roughness and meanness, I find the boys lying next to each other on the bed, leaning against each other, almost hugging, watching a beautiful movie, and making loud remarks on the aesthetics of water plants and jellyfish. When the movie abruptly stops because only the first part has been downloaded, the boys want to put music on. Bjorn, Don, and Peter are calling for Antonín Dvořák's 9th symphony. The music is played at a high volume and everyone is asked to be quiet. Peter lies flat on his stomach on the bed with his head reaching over the end, nodding along with the rhythm. Bjorn moves his arms in a conductor's manner. It is a beautiful sight: ten rough boys, lying around humming along with the

melodies of Dvořák's "From the New World." They had discussed this piece for months in music class and now seem to love it. Alex expresses how he finds the oboe a beautiful instrument. An oboe solo, extremely moving indeed, has preceded his remark. After the symphony ends, two boys get ready to go get food from KFC.¹² The way in which Peter and Bjorn give them their orders allows the hierarchies to still shine through a little. We start to watch the movie *The Naked Gun 2½*. Bjorn laughs loudly at every joke. We stop the movie for some reason. The boys return with the food and some boys leave. A few of them have to go to school the next day. Giovanni also leaves. Peter enjoys his chicken wings. Don only talks about the news of the "Abistreich" cancellation (he received an email on his smart phone).¹³ We watch a little more of *The Naked Gun 2½*. Peter and Don want to leave, so I opt to join them and we share a cab. I chip in 20 RMB, and they drop me off in front of the guesthouse that I am staying in.

I enjoy "the boys" company and their outlook on life, and am particularly intrigued by their ways because their behavior and relationships toward each other are less familiar to me than those of "the girls." At the same time, the group dynamics and their behavior trouble me and I am uncertain about what is performed for me and what is really going on in their lives. As I get to know them individually, however, I become more and more familiar and less intimidated by their ways as a group. At the same time, the moments spent with the group help me to better understand the gendered experiences of being an expat teen in Shanghai, as well as to follow their individual stories.

The next chapter focuses on these personal stories and introduces four individuals: two of them, Antonia and Bjorn, as my primary contacts for "the girls" and "the boys," Arnaud, as someone from a different school, and finally Xia, as someone who is less involved in activities outside of school.

12 Kentucky Fried Chicken, the American fast-food chain usually referred to as KFC, is gaining popularity in China.

13 The German "Abistreich" is a common ritual that high school students perform right after their final examinations. The ritual usually involves disrupting the school routine with numerous practical jokes, some of which involve ridiculing teachers.

CHAPTER 4

Meeting Individuals: Four Students' Narratives of the Self

Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning (Hall 1990, 226, emphasis in the original).

In the realm of postcolonial studies, many authors (see, among others, Bhabha 1994; Hall 1990; 1994; 1996; and 1997; Brah 1996) have pointed out how the cultural construction of (collective) identities plays an important role for people living in a diaspora or in other culturally complex environments. Similarly, my fieldwork and in-depth interviews with expatriate youths reveal that growing up “on the move” and in a transient space—despite all its privileges and opportunities—demands coping with constant changes and losses. The inherent questions of belonging and cultural identity are, to use Stuart Hall’s expression, an ongoing and ever-changing process of “positioning.”

The following mind map (Figure 2) was produced by the students Mia, Kressi, and Bjorn during Ethics class at a German school in December 2010 and allows for a good overview of their own complex ideas about identity.¹⁴

Their discussions, as the map illustrates, revolve around “Prägungen” (influences), such as “Erziehung” (education), “Freunde” (friends), “Kultur” (culture) or “Heimat” (home), as well as the idea of “eigenständige Entwicklung” (independent development). The students also discuss and agree on the “veränderbar” (changeable) nature of identity, for example “durch bestimmte Ereignisse” (through certain events) in life. Furthermore, the mind map shows that the students also consider how “viel nachdenken” (much contemplating) or “philosophieren” (philosophizing) can help one to find

14 The Ethics teacher had asked me, after a few days of observation, to participate in or help teach his class. I came up with the idea of discussing the topics of “identity” and “home” with students. Although the mind map project was designed out of the necessity to maintain social access to the Ethics class, it later proved very valuable. The teenagers were asked to exchange their ideas about what the terms “Identität” (identity) or “Heimat” (home) meant to them in written form, working in small groups of three or four. These discussions were conducted in silence, with students writing their ideas on two different large sheets of paper and commenting on each other’s responses. The eight resulting mind maps highlight the students’ self-reflective ways of thinking about moving. The written thoughts about “home” in particular proved insightful, and it thus became apparent that “home” is a term laden with many associations and emotions for these international youths. The issue of “home” and the relevant mind maps are discussed in detail in Part III, Chapter 2.

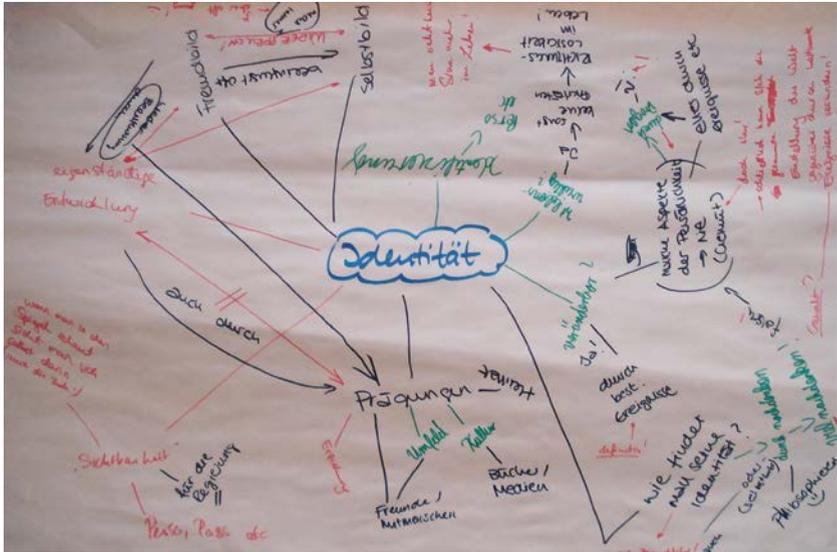


Figure 2. Mind Map on “Identität.” Drawing by three students.

one’s identity. Such ways of thinking about their own position in the world demonstrate the power of reflexivity that Anthony Giddens (1991) conceptualized as humans’ ways of forging “narratives of the self.”

The following four student portraits illustrate such “narratives or the self” and highlight expatriate students’ individual processes of cultural identity positioning. These narratives have to be seen in the context of fieldwork and the encounters between the students and myself out of which they emerged.¹⁵ However, the students gave these accounts not

15 As Nigel Rapport (2000) points out, although not linking his concept to Giddens, narrative is both an individual’s creation of his or her own self and a fieldwork technique that provides the space for important stories of the individual’s own self to unfold. If we understand the self as “an ‘unfinished project’, continually subject to being rewritten,” it is the act of narration that holds it together (ibid., 76). “Narrative [...] transforms the temporal and spatial fragmentariness of our lives, offering coherence: a sense that our lives may be, at every moment, at least partially integrated into an ongoing story” (ibid.). The narrative form thus “counteracts a sense of fragmentation, contingency, randomness [and] dislocation” (ibid.) and acts as a “modus vivendi,” a way of living, for “fieldworker and subject of study alike,” as both seek “a place cognitively to reside and make sense, a place to continue to be” in a moving world (ibid.). I experienced this in many conversations, interviews, and group discussions in which I shared such a space with the teenagers, while the informants were constantly aware that their narratives were becoming part of my anthropological endeavor and overall narrative. Writing this overall narrative in the form of this book also required reflection on my authority as author. This means that the decision to write about fieldwork situations in the present tense cannot merely be seen as a simple stylistic preference. Following the ongoing discussion on the so-called “ethnographic present” that began within the context of the writing culture debate of the 1980s (for an overview, see Hastrup 1990 and Pink 2009; Pink (2009) particularly comments on the implications of the ethnographic present on text-image relations), I understand

only to feed my story, but also to make sense of their own experiences and selves through narrative. As Nigel Rapport's (2000) approach highlights, it is through such "narrative constructions of past, present and future, of relations of sameness and difference," that the young people's "self is given content, is delineated and embodied" (ibid., 76). While all people go through such processes of negotiating their individual identities through narratives, the following four teenagers' discursive understandings of the self reveal that their identity practices are particularly shaped by their experiences with multiple moves. Their moves bring about various shifting points of reference and borders along or across which they must navigate to find their own position.

4.1 Antonia: I consider myself Shanghainese, but others see me as a foreigner

In December 2010, while I am nervously introducing my research project to the eleventh grade students at the German school, a girl in the back of the room suddenly suggests that, if I want to know more about expatriate youth culture, I should study nightlife. Indeed, in the coming days, this sixteen-year-old girl, Antonia, invites me to come along to a Friday night out at the club Mural. Antonia turns out to be a key "gate-opener" to leisure spaces and, over the course of my fieldwork often includes me in various group activities. I record a first group-interview with Antonia and her two friends Olivia and Charlie in January 2011. Later, two individual interviews follow: an extensive one in a downtown café in September 2011 and a brief one in her home in June 2012. We regularly spend time together during nightlife activities with "the girls," at dinners, or at school, and continue to meet after her move to Germany in the summer of 2012.

Antonia was born in Germany but grew up in Shanghai and, as mentioned previously, is one of the very few expat teenagers who have been at the same school all their lives. Her father is German, her mother a successful Chinese businesswoman who studied in Germany. Over the course of my fieldwork I came to know Antonia as a determined, smart young woman, who likes to feel she is in control of things and has high expecta-

that writing about fieldwork situations in the present tense has been criticized for locating the "other" in a different time frame from that of the narrator, consequently objectifying the "other." However, suggestions to reconceptualize the ethnographic present have been put forth by anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup (1990), among others. I agree that a reinvention may be useful and see the ethnographic present as a form of writing that highlights the continuous process of knowledge production, showing that fieldwork and writing are processual, selective, and subjective. I find that the present tense can also help the reader to understand the research situation and my perspective as a researcher in greater depth. The past tense, in contrast, would have communicated temporal differences between "being there" and my writing phase more clearly, but at the same time, would have evoked a false finality and authority on the insights produced.

tions for herself. She enjoys discussions and is known to other students for her vigorous debating skills, as well as for her generosity. Antonia herself often stresses how different she is from other expatriate children who only spend a few years in Shanghai.

Sitting outside in a downtown café in early September 2011, as we are trying to converse despite Shanghai's street noises, Antonia tells me that she only knows Germany from holidays and reflects upon her recent stay in Europe four weeks prior to the interview.

ANTONIA: *When I come to Germany, I have to get used to it. Every time. What I also find annoying in Germany are things like inviting people, like, they take the bill, "well, you have to pay 4.20." But I don't have twenty cents right then. Things like that. That's much more relaxed with my friends here.*¹⁶

It is Chinese custom to invite your friends and pay for everyone. Antonia and her friends sometimes also share the cost of eating out or going for a drink, but she finds practices in Germany, such as splitting the bill, particularly pedantic. Antonia generally distances herself from such cultural practices that she considers typically German and describes many incidents in Germany that she has found rather alienating. In the interview that we recorded in June 2012, Antonia also voices her concern about her upcoming move to Germany and her anxieties about being able to fit in.

While not considering herself "really German," she also talks about the experience of being perceived as a foreigner in Shanghai.

ANTONIA: *Others see me as a foreigner. They are nonetheless very nice to me, but somehow, they always see me as this exotic animal. <L> Oh! A foreigner who can speak Chinese well! It's like that. [...] Well, not always. It's not that I am being excluded or anything. But, you're not really a part of Chinese society.*¹⁷

Antonia speaks Chinese at home with her grandmother and her *ayi*. In the interview quote above she, nevertheless, describes how impossible it is to be "Chinese," as she is constantly labeled as a "foreigner" or an "exotic animal" by Chinese citizens, such as the local university students she occasionally converses with in nightlife settings. Antonia's life seems to oscil-

16 German original: ANTONIA: *Wenn ich nach Deutschland komme, muss ich mich dran gewöhnen. Immer. Was mich auch immer nervt in Deutschland ist so Sachen wie mit dem Einladen, wie, die nehmen dann die Rechnung, „ja, du musst 4,20 zahlen.“ So, ich hab gerade keine zwanzig Cent. Solche Sachen. Da ist das hier bei meinen Freunden viel entspannter.*

17 German original: ANTONIA: *Andere sehen mich als Ausländerin. Die sind dann zwar total freundlich zu mir. Aber halt irgendwie. Die sehen mich immer wie so ein exotisches Tier. <L> Oh! Eine Ausländerin die gut Chinesisch kann! Das ist so. [...] Also nicht immer. Nicht dass ich ausgeschlossen werde oder so. Aber, man ist nicht wirklich ein Teil der chinesischen Gesellschaft.*

late between two defining poles, “German” and “Chinese.” Between having a German passport and receiving a German school education, while having spent the last fourteen years in Shanghai, Antonia—along with other individuals in her life—finds that both models of cultural identity are contestable and neither seems to fit her. Furthermore, being a child of a mixed marriage and speaking both languages at home also means that difference is also present in the intimacy of the domestic sphere.¹⁸ Family life therefore does not offer a clear point of reference with which to position herself, either.

When we discuss the expatriate lifestyle in Shanghai, Antonia shares how she sees herself as part of the expatriate collective:

ANTONIA: *Actually I am also in the expat bubble. Maybe a little less than others. But I am in it anyway.*¹⁹

Antonia addresses the exclusion of Chinese locals by using the term “bubble” to describe expatriate life, a metaphor that was also used by Paul, whose experiences I laid out in the introduction. She simultaneously attributes a sense of community to her “expat bubble,”²⁰ as well as being different from not only German but also Chinese society, which she particularly notices upon every return to Shanghai after holidays in Germany.

ANTONIA: *I do notice that it is a different group of people. Although they are partly Chinese, partly Germans who've spent almost their whole life in Germany, somehow you change here. Because it's really a different group of people. As if it's a different nationality.*²¹

18 Michael Anderson (1999), who analyzes the experiences of children from bicultural marriages in Athens, Greece, illustrates how different and sometimes rivaling cultural ideas of child-rearing have to be managed in the home. Based on ethnographic material from British-Greek families, Anderson highlights the intra-familial “edges [such as] language, the body and certain aspects of social protocol” (ibid., 18) in which parents or extended family experience and express their specific Greekness or Britishness with respect to their children. Examining the ways those children dealt with differences within the family, Anderson concludes that they “generate their own conceptual spaces and identities ‘in-between’ culturally differentiated adult thoughts and actions through certain identificatory media and thereby affect not merely a role of cultural brokering but hybridized identities in their own right” (ibid., 13).

19 German original: ANTONIA: *Ich bin eigentlich auch in der Expatbubble. Vielleicht ein bisschen weniger als andere. Aber ich bin es auf jeden Fall.*

20 I will discuss this aspect of demarcation, or “the bubble,” throughout this ethnography, particularly in Part III, Chapter 2.1 on gated communities, in Part III, Chapter 3.3, on the idea of expatriateness communicated and lived in the international schools, and again in Part IV, Chapter 4, when addressing the students’ views on their lack of contact with local Chinese society.

21 German original: ANTONIA: *Ich merke schon, das ist eine andere Gruppe von Menschen. Obwohl das so, teilweise Chinesen sind, teilweise Deutsche die fast ihr ganzes Leben in Deutschland gelebt haben, irgendwie, man verändert sich hier. Denn es ist wirklich eine andere Gruppe von Menschen. Als wär es eine andere Nationalität.*

While she does not consider herself to be an integral part of the “expatriate bubble,” i.e. an isolated world of foreigners mingling in Shanghai that excludes locals, a new form of cultural identity emerges from the mixture of “Germanness” and “Chineseness” that creates her subjective experience of Shanghai—an expatriate community that is almost a “different nationality.” She sees this community to which she feels she belongs as an amalgamation, a perspective that she also applies to herself. It is this perspective that I conceptualize as transcultural. As I argue in the introduction of this book, such a transcultural perspective can shed light on the act of shifting and merging different cultural practices and positions to create new subjectivities. It can also enlighten moments of boundary-drawing and practices of making distinctions.

During our interviews, Antonia looks at the different influences on her life and tries to grasp and narrate them from just such a perspective, to demonstrate that she feels uncomfortable positioning herself as being either “German” or “Chinese.” Instead of simply making “expatriate” (or, similarly, “Third Culture Kid”) her main identity reference, she strategically claims a hybrid form of urban citizenship to express her narrative of the self: “I consider myself Shanghainese.” This positioning is not about rejecting being Chinese, German, or expat, but about embracing all these points of references in its amalgamated state. This is of course her subjective positioning and does not necessarily reflect the common discourse of being Shanghainese (*shanghairen*), which, despite the idea of migration and Westernization making up much of the discourse on Shanghai’s specific culture (*haipai*) (Farrer 2002, 88–92), is usually tied to being born in Shanghai, speaking Shanghainese, and having a Shanghai residence permit (*hukou*) (see Schoon 2007). As Antonia points out, the Chinese locals might not accept her self-identification as Shanghainese.

While drinking coffee and gazing at the passing cars, bikes, bicycles, and pedestrians on Hengshan Road, Antonia explains her close relationship to the city:

ANTONIA: *In my head Shanghai is always, I don't know, this host of many things, just all these impressions, the whole time. [...] It makes me totally hyper—every time I'm in the city of Shanghai, in this area. [...] When I came back [from Germany] to Shanghai I went shopping with my friend, but we didn't even get to the shopping part. We had something to eat and simply walked through one street and were full of energy and happy to be in Shanghai again. [...] As soon as I am in the city, or take a taxi from club to club, or go shopping... I am just, I get... Well, it doesn't seem like “Oh my God so much stuff,” but rather as if I had more energy.*²²

22 German original: ANTONIA: *Shanghai ist in meinem Kopf für mich immer so. Ich weiß nicht. So ein Haufen von vielem einfach. Einfach so, ganz viele Eindrücke die ganze Zeit. [...] Mich macht das voll hyper. Immer wenn ich sofort in der Stadt von*

Antonia speaks enthusiastically about exploring Shanghai and experiencing the urban environment. The city provides a host of impressions that energize her. Antonia feels that Shanghai is her home (see Part II, Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). To her, the urban experience of living in Shanghai is a point of identity reference that bridges the various differences in her life because, to her, the city includes all of them.

Antonia's story shows, in the words of Stuart Hall (1990, 227), that "the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference." While Antonia stresses her ways of bridging the boundaries between German, Chinese, and expatriate circles that she experiences as being tied to certain cultural practices and processes of labeling, Bjorn, the next student I present, positions himself as someone who must come to grips with the class boundaries that emerged following his family's move to Shanghai.

4.2 Bjorn: Shanghai is the best thing that can happen to you, if you're a villager

While sitting in class and listening to the teachers and students, the first thing I particularly notice about Bjorn is his rolling "r," a hint at his Bavarian background. Bjorn is sixteen years old when I first meet him at the German school in December 2010, and has only been in Shanghai since the beginning of the school year a few months earlier, when his father's job posting forced his family to relocate. He had never lived outside the small village that he grew up in and, during an early group interview with two other boys, Don and Alex, he shares that he was initially against his parents' move to China.

After December 2010, I regularly meet Bjorn at school, and during nightlife activities or school outings, where we chat or listen to reggae music on one of our MP3 players. Bjorn is particularly familiar with German reggae artists, German popular culture, and cultural practices among youths outside the expatriate community. We regularly exchange reggae music and also bond over our common experience of having grown up in a small German village, where social class differences seemed non-existent to us as children. I observe how Bjorn quickly establishes friendships with his new classmates and becomes part of the group that I come to label as "the boys." Nonetheless, in June 2012, one and a half years after our first interview, he shares in retrospect that finding out "which friends suit me

Shanghai bin, so in diesen Gegenden. [...] Also als ich zurück [aus Deutschland] in Shanghai war, war ich mit meiner Freundin shoppen und wir sind gar nicht zum Einkaufen gegangen, gekommen. Wir waren essen und sind einfach nur durch eine Straße gelaufen und waren aufgedreht und froh wieder in Shanghai zu sein. [...] Sobald ich in die Stadt komme und in der Stadt bin, oder mit dem Taxi fahre von Club zu Club oder shoppen gehe ... Ich bin einfach, ich wird ... Also es kommt mir nicht so vor „oh Gott viel Zeug,“ sondern dann so eher, als hätte ich mehr Energie.

best" has been difficult. Still, Bjorn seems to be the link between the two gendered peer groups in his class by interacting with both "the girls" and "the boys." Because I spend much more time with "the girls," it is perhaps unsurprising that Bjorn is one of the boys I feel most comfortable talking to and who becomes one of my key male informants over the course of my fieldwork.

Throughout our many conversations, it becomes clear that, Bjorn's narratives of the self (Giddens 1991) position him as someone who must come to grips with the move from a rural area with a narrow social demographic to an urban, culturally-diverse area in general, and with new social class distinctions in particular. In contrast to many of his classmates, Bjorn has just experienced his first move abroad and sometimes feels uncomfortable with the expatriate lifestyle. The move to Shanghai brought with it a certain awareness of differences in financial means and social class. He often describes his life in Germany and contrasts it to his new social circle in Shanghai. During my time in Shanghai, he often states his preferences for places like the shop (see Part IV, Chapter 3) to high-end bars and occasionally voices his annoyance about everyone in Shanghai wanting the "high life" and how he misses "acting a bit antisocial" (bisschen asozial Getue).²³ In June 2012, as we are sitting at the French café next to his school discussing what being an expat actually means, he illustrates his view:

BJORN: *Expat. Expat is a little like the senator status at Lufthansa. You are treated better. If you're a senator or a first class passenger at Lufthansa for instance, you get, for example, into this Lufthansa Lounge and you don't sit with all the others, the somehow ordinary, down there on these nasty seats. Instead, you are sitting on a massage chair, drinking your drink, eating a little caviar. That's being an expat. Being an expat is: "What does your daddy do?" "He does this and that." "Well, and what do you do here?" "I drink up all the money that my dad earns." That's an expat.*²⁴

Bjorn, by exaggerating the comforts offered by an expatriate lifestyle, emphasizes the issue of class that preoccupies him. He chooses the metaphor of flying first class to describe his expatriate life, a metaphor that, for him, is tied to class-consciousness and distinctions from the "ordinary."

23 See Part III, Chapter 3.3, "Learning and Living Expatriateness," for a detailed discussion of Bjorn's quote.

24 German original: BJORN: *Expat. Expat ist wie so ein bisschen Senator-Status bei Lufthansa. Man wird besser behandelt einfach. Wenn du Senator oder first class zum Beispiel bei Lufthansa bist oder so, dann kommst du zum Beispiel in diese Lufthansa-Lounge und hockst nicht mit allen anderen, den normalen irgendwie, da unten auf diesen ekligen Sesseln. Sondern hockst auf deinem Massage-Stuhl, trinkst da deinen Drink noch mal, isst noch ein bisschen Kaviar. So ist Expat sein. Expat sein ist: „Ja, was macht dein Daddy?“ „Ja, der arbeitet das und das.“ „Ja, und was machst du hier?“ „Ich vertrink eigentlich nur das Geld, das mein Papa verdient.“ Das ist Expat.*

Bjorn highlights the practice of making distinctions that anthropologist Jacqueline Knörr (2005) has likewise found underlying the concept of TCKs and which led her to criticize TCK identity as being an unproductive means of coping with the migration experience. Knörr, based on her study of German expatriate youths who lived in Africa, argues:

Creating a “TCK” world and ideology of difference as a result of having been brought up in an expatriate environment may well not be primarily a sign of actual third-culturedness, but of a transformation of an expatriate ideology of “natural superiority” over the local African population to a “TCK” ideology of “cultural superiority” over the “ordinary” local German population—a transformation, which neither supports a child’s (re-)integration nor its further personal development (Knörr 2005, 75).

The expatriate youths I accompanied constantly experienced how a high social standing is attributed to them due to their financial means in comparison to the local living standard, their private and international education, their many travels, and their multi-lingualism. Everybody believes they will be the makers of the future, whether this is emphasized in the MUN (Model United Nations)—where students critically engage with global issues—or in the school headmaster’s and German consul’s graduation speech (see Part V, Chapter 1).

It is thus tempting for these teenagers, as Knörr describes above, to feel superior to locals, whether in the “host” or “home” country. The TCK ideology (here, again, I agree with Knörr) channels this superiority and gives it a form of expression which helps to maintain such feelings. The TCK concept seems to leave insufficient room for reflection and often rather surfaces as a form of TCK nationalism that claims hybridity for their own TCK nationals while also essentializing others.

Although his account might be prompted in part by a desire to downplay his privileged position through self-stigmatizing, Bjorn self-reflectively contemplates and comments on the issue of status in his life, instead of using his privileged lifestyle as a major identity source. The borders he experiences between his friends in Shanghai and in Germany might be difficult to bridge, but the awareness of class is something expatriate life has taught him.

To me, comparing expatriate life to flying first class also offers another interpretation: flying can be seen as symbolic of viewing the world from above, of both observing and crossing borders. It is this disturbing class-consciousness, this awareness of his advantages—which he nevertheless deeply enjoys—that mark Bjorn’s Shanghai experience. While feeling uncomfortable with the luxury and privilege his new life brings, he simultaneously enjoys these benefits and considers his stay a positive experience. Bjorn is also aware of how his new experience has changed his outlook, his ideas about the future, and his confidence about what might be possible for him to achieve.

BJORN: *Shanghai's the best thing that can happen to you, if you're a villager. You're opened up to everything. Also to opinions. You are not stuck.*²⁵

He labels himself (or his pre-Shanghai-self) a villager (Dorfmann) who learned both new ways to live life and new possibilities after moving to the metropolis. In contrast to his peers at school, Bjorn never talks about negotiating his cultural identity in terms of questioning his "Germanness." This might be due to his upbringing in a single village in Bavaria. In contrast to the other students, the move to Shanghai has been the only one in his life. It is rather the differences between rural and urban, and the status and class consciousness, which came with the experience of moving, that startle and unsettle him.

When it comes to ways of coping with this experience of class distinction and the privileged expatriate lifestyle, Bjorn—besides gaining a reflective perspective—develops plans to counterbalance this experience by having "a few challenges." During our last interview in June 2012, just after his graduation, Bjorn tells me about his plans to study in Europe (outside Germany) starting the following year. He first wants to stay in Shanghai and take a Chinese language course with his girlfriend Kressi. Bjorn explains that he particularly dreams of making it on his own, without the help of his parents and their networks. His parents suggested sending him for a few months to Peru where he could live with a German family they know from Shanghai and intern at a German consulate.

BJORN: *I can live with them for free and work at the consulate. That would be it. I'd arrive there and would already have everything made, somehow. But that's actually not what I want. That's why I also don't want to study in Germany, because looking for an apartment will always be easy, because you can speak German. I actually like to have a few challenges. When I get it, I want to be able to say, it wasn't that easy, but now I got it. Now everything is good. And not like, I arrive, the apartment has long been rented over the Internet, I only walk in, furniture is already there, because my mom has organized everything for me. I'd find that boring. [...] [The stay in Peru] would be ready-made, really.*²⁶

25 German original: BJORN: *Shanghai ist schon das Beste was einem passieren kann, wenn man ein Dorfmann ist. Man öffnet sich so zu allem. Zu Meinungen auch. Man ist nicht festgefahren.*

26 German original: BJORN: *Ich kann bei denen wohnen umsonst, kann beim Konsulat arbeiten. Das wär schon alles. Ich käme dahin und hätte ein fertig gemachtes Nest irgendwie. Aber das ist eigentlich das, was ich nicht will. Deswegen will ich auch nicht in Deutschland studieren, weil da ist das mit Wohnungssuche immer leicht, weil da kann man Deutsch reden. Ich möchte es eigentlich mit ein bisschen trouble haben. [...] Wenn ich das hab möcht ich sagen können, ja war nicht so leicht, aber jetzt hab ich's. Jetzt ist gut. Und nicht so, ja, ich komm dahin, die Wohnung ist schon lange*

This quote again reveals how Bjorn processes his experiences of class consciousness and class difference that create one aspect of the expatriate community. His example of renting a furnished apartment via the Internet is reminiscent of expatriate packages which include services to help with renting furnished villas in Shanghai. Bjorn is looking for ways to “earn” his privileges in the future or to be treated the same way as people of a lower social standing. Having met people from many different places, he wants to continue an international education to keep broadening his perspective, but plans to do so by what he calls choosing a path “with a little trouble.”

While expatriate student Bjorn is coping with the borders of class between his friends in Germany and his friends in Shanghai, another student, Arnaud, is dealing with the messy negotiations of differences within the intimate sphere of the family and with his own in-between position.

4.3 Arnaud: When you are in-between, you can't be the best at anything

When I first meet Arnaud in June 2011, he is sixteen years old and enrolled at a French school in Shanghai. Arnaud has been introduced to me by the German school student Matthias, whom I have mentioned previously. The two know each other from jam sessions in the music room on the German-French school campus. After exchanging several text messages, Arnaud and I agree to meet downtown, at a Starbucks coffee shop on Hengshan Road. When Arnaud, with his long black hair tied back into a ponytail, his jeans, sneakers, and the obligatory headphones, shows up for the interview, I immediately like his polite and careful way of studying and answering the interview questions.

Arnaud's Chinese parents immigrated to Belgium for his father's studies and career. Arnaud was born in Belgium and is a Belgian national. After his birth, his family moved to the outskirts of Paris, where they lived until Arnaud was nine years old, at which point his family decided to move to Shanghai for a career opportunity for his father, and to be closer to a sick grandparent.

Sitting opposite me and carefully sipping his orange juice at our little corner table, Arnaud recounts his everyday routines. He particularly enjoys talking about his band, theater, and current writing projects. When discussing his moving experiences and his growing up in France and Shanghai, he comments on one aspect of his migration story that he finds difficult to cope with: the influence of his first years in France and his French education on his relationship with his parents, particularly his mother:

gemietet über Internet, ich geh da jetzt nur noch rein, die Möbel stehen schon da, weil das meine Mama für mich gemacht hat. Das fände ich halt langweilig. [...] [Der Aufenthalt in Peru] wär ein fertig gemachtes Nest, wirklich.

ARNAUD: *My parents are Chinese Chinese. They don't have, they didn't have a French education. They are Chinese educat[ed]. [...] My dad, he went to a Belgian University. And he has a bit of European culture. But it really affects me how different me and my mom are in the head, in the mind. How maybe I am open-minded in some kinds of talking, and she is not. And sometimes it can be the opposite. It makes me a bit sad, cause I feel like maybe we would have more talking, with my parents, if I was Chinese. Maybe. It is mostly this. Because I don't only have a cultural difference with friends, or just everyone around, but also with my parents. And this really made me sad for some time. Just to know that I am different from my parents. I mean <L> everyone is different from their parents, but...*

INTERVIEWER: *Yeah, but I see.*

ARNAUD: *But you have to have something from your parents. And I feel that by living in the French way, erm, sometimes I can't, I can't really stick to my parents. I gotta learn from [others], not from the parents. You know what I mean?*

INTERVIEWER: *Yeah.*

ARNAUD: *And it really makes me sad sometimes. Cause I see. I got this French friend, [...] he is a drummer [...] and when I go to his place, I see how close he is to his mom. And how long they can have a discussion. About everything and nothing. And I can't have this. I mean. Cause. Of course I can, but it is not [the same].*

I am impressed by the way in which Arnaud reflects upon his relations to his parents and expresses the emotional turmoil that goes along with conflicts and misunderstandings arising within a family that is marked by differences. Anthropologist Michael Anderson (1999, 18), in his analysis of family life in bicultural marriages in Athens, Greece, calls such differences in “language use, bodiliness, [or] social protocol,” “edges.” Although his mother and father share the same cultural upbringing, Arnaud experiences such “edges” at home, and voices his fear of alienation from his parents—particularly his mother—whom he, despite their international experiences, describes as “Chinese Chinese.” Arnaud labels his mother as “Chinese Chinese” in contrast to his own entangled cultural identity. I have not met Arnaud’s parents, but his accounts of their experiences as “reverse migrants” after their time in Belgium and France calls to mind a study by Sin Yih Teo (2011) on the flow of skilled migration between Canada and the People’s Republic of China. Teo examines how the cultural politics of identity unfold amongst Chinese immigrants in Canada in the context of increasing reverse migration and illustrates the subsequently evolving hybridized forms of cultural identification. However, Arnaud obviously sees a difference between his own and his parents hybridized forms of cultural identification. These differences, or “edges” in Anderson’s (1999) terms, have made him “sad for some time.”

Furthermore, Arnaud relates this strain on the family relations not only to cultural differences within the home, but also to his feeling “in-between” cultural identity positions in general. His comments demonstrate how difficult it is for him to position himself in terms of cultural identity because he fears he is not “good enough” to identify or be identified as “French” or “Chinese:”

- ARNAUD: *Because we always want to be best at something. And with this kind of sitting in-between, you can't. You can't be best at either one of them. You know what I mean?*
- INTERVIEWER: *Yeah.*
- ARNAUD: *You can't be.*
- INTERVIEWER: *You can be the best at the in-between. <L>*
- ARNAUD: *Yeah, Right. Yeah, but.*
- INTERVIEWER: *Yeah, but it is maybe not satisfying sometimes?*
- ARNAUD: *Yeah, well. I wanna be better than the French guy. But he has this background; he has the parents that are French. Eh, you wanna be better than the Chinese one. Same.*
- INTERVIEWER: *Yeah, he has the Chinese school system and everything.*
- ARNAUD: *Yeah. So where am I?*

In the interview, Arnaud emphasizes his feeling that he, “sitting in-between,” cannot succeed in either of the two worlds and often feels lost wondering, “Where am I?” He expresses his ambitions to be good or even best at the things he does and how he feels like he is always one step behind his peers, whose cultural identity and language are less entangled and more supported by their parents. When I try to suggest a more positive interpretation, he laughs and cannot take it seriously. In contrast to the many students I interviewed, who stress their pride and the positive outcomes of growing up bilingually or in different cultural environments, Arnaud openly shares the difficulties of his way of growing up. Only at the end of our interview, does he briefly focus on the benefits of his life story and present a more positive outlook.

Our interview demonstrates how a shared space between the ethnographer and the interviewee is opened, and how this space allows Arnaud to discuss growing up and his experience with differences and borders due to his specific upbringing. During the interview, Arnaud takes a perspective that aims to untangle and explain the various influences in his life, for instance the labeling he experiences due to his Asian phenotype and his French schooling, the differences between his and his parents’ ways, or the difference between his and his friends’ relationships with their parents. He voices how these experiences of borders make him fear alienation from his parents and provoke his feeling of “sitting in-between.” Arnaud must cope with the constantly-shifting borders in his life that seem to prevent him from finding a stable position of cultural identity that can be confirmed by others, and which lead him to speak from a position he regards as being intermediate and unsatisfying.

Arnaud handles his position in the “in-between” by finding creative outlets. When talking about his theater, literature, and band projects, Arnaud speaks with enthusiasm. His eyes shine brightly and he is proud of his success. Touring, publishing, making music—Arnaud tries to open up spaces to express himself creatively. He energetically gets involved in school plays and bands, and also writes short stories, all of which seem to be strategies for coping with his entangled world. He also dreams of a future marked by new creative, cultural, and physical spaces. Instead of staying in China or returning to France, he plans to move to Canada, to study music recording and continue his search for belonging by creatively and artistically bridging his different experiences. Xia, the final student described in this chapter, deals with problems similar to those of Arnaud. However, Xia uses educational achievement, rather than artistic expression, as his main strategy for managing the discrepancies he perceives in his life.

4.4 Xia: I'd like to be like Einstein, a citizen of the world

During the time I attend classes at the German school from December 2010 onwards, I see Xia on a regular basis and we occasionally chat. Eventually, I ask all under-age students in Xia's class for their parents' permission to do interviews. One day at school, Xia approaches me saying he might not be able to participate in an interview because his parents think he does not fit the definition of students I am studying. Due to the expatriate community's familiarity with the idea of TCKs, I had used the term to explain my research agenda about expatriate youths in a letter to parents. Interestingly, Xia's parents did not see their son as such a hybrid TCK and doubted he should participate.

Seventeen-year-old Xia is a Chinese national who was granted exceptional permission to attend a German school by the Shanghai municipal government. Born in China, Xia moved to Germany with his parents after kindergarten to start his school career in Germany. His father obtained his doctorate at a German university and started working for a German company. After four years and one move within Germany, his parents decided to return to Shanghai. Although having been trained in Chinese writing after school and on weekends, Xia experienced difficulties with the entrance test to the local Chinese schools in Shanghai, because the education system and its ways of testing were unfamiliar to him. His parents therefore applied for a special permit so that Xia could attend the German school. Xia is a very strong student academically; however, his fellow students always regard him as different.

When Xia approaches me with his parents' doubts about fitting into my research project, I explain that the term can be debated and that anyone who is interested can join. A few days later, I am happy to see that his mother has signed the permission slip. When we meet for our first inter-

view at the French café close to school, his parents' initial objections to him participating are still on our minds, and we discuss the politics of cultural identity and intergenerational conflicts.

In this first interview in spring 2011, with my voice recorder, our coffee cups, and my questionnaire between us, Xia tells me: "my parents sometimes think I don't think Chinese enough."²⁷ He underlines his statement by giving the example of a discussion he recently had with them over dinner concerning the Chinese space program. He had shared his thoughts on the usefulness of the program, which, he suggested, might as well be seen as a waste of money and resources. His parents got angry, accusing him of not being proud of China. It is on the basis of this story and accusation that we discuss his negotiations with his parents and his feelings about belonging during our interview.

INTERVIEWER: *So they practically accused you of lacking patriotism a little bit, right?*

XIA: *Basically. Well, my father, he is afraid. [He used] a description of a plant. Actually, my grandfather wrote such a poem. There is a plant that glides on the water; it has no roots. And my father fears that I am just like that, and that I will later have problems, and that I somehow won't know where the roots are.*

INTERVIEWER: *And that is why he thinks, or tries, or suggests to you that China is where your roots are. But you are skeptical if that will work?*

XIA: *Well. I think the roots are actually where the people that you like most are. And my friends I really know from school. The problem is that they are from different countries. [... it is unclear] if I will see them again in the future.*

INTERVIEWER: *Hmm. So they all actually swim a little as well?*

XIA: *Yes. <L> Or swim towards somewhere else. Yes. <L>.²⁸*

The use of aquatic plants as an image of rootlessness symbolizes Xia's parents' worries about their son's future. Xia himself does not discard this

27 German original: *Also meine Eltern denken, dass ich manchmal nicht chinesisches genug denke.*

28 German original: INTERVIEWER: *Das heißt ein bisschen werfen sie dir quasi mangelnden Patriotismus vor. Ja?* XIA: *Quasi. Also mein Vater hat zwar so, so Angst. So eine Beschreibung mit einer Pflanze. Das hat eigentlich mein Opa, so ein Gedicht, geschrieben. Und da ist eine Pflanze, die auf dem Wasser schwebt, keine Wurzel hat. Und mein Vater hat Angst, dass ich auch so bin und dann später dann damit Probleme habe und so. Und irgendwie nicht weiß, wo die Wurzeln sind, und dann, ja. INTERVIEWER: Und deswegen meint er halt, oder versucht, oder legt dir nahe, dass China sozusagen für dich deine Wurzeln sind. Aber du bist da ein bisschen skeptisch ob das so funktioniert?* XIA: *Naja. Ich denke mal die Wurzel ist eigentlich da wo die Leute sind, die du am meisten magst. Und meine Freunde habe ich ja von der Schule. Problem ist dann, dass die immer ... Dass immer, die viel aus den verschiedenen Staaten kommen. [... es ist unklar] ob ich die in Zukunft wiedersehen werde oder nicht.* INTERVIEWER: *Hmm. Das heißt die schwimmen ja eigentlich auch alle so ein bisschen?* XIA: *Ja. <L> Oder schwimmen woanders hin oder. Ja. <L>.*

image, but suggests that his “roots are where the people that you like most are.” He rejects the necessity of a fixed and essentialized feeling of belonging tied to place or nationality, and ties feelings of belonging to his friends. In contrast to Arnaud, Xia does not comment on the emotional effects that the conflict with his parents evoke. I think, however, that Xia’s parents’ fear is not only about lacking patriotism or fearing their son is rootless, but might also be similar to Arnaud’s worries of alienation. Xia, in his narrative, particularly highlights the role that the difference between the world at home and the world at school might play in this conflict. He sees his conflict with his parents as mainly arising out of their different upbringing and understanding of an ideal education, despite his father having received his PhD in Germany.²⁹

XIA: *I would say my parents are comparatively strict.*

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

XIA: *They simply do not know the German way of educating and raising children. In fact, they are quite critical of German education.*

Xia thinks that his parents have difficulties understanding aspects of his German school’s educational program, such as the encouragement to question and think critically, which he applied in the discussion of the Chinese space program. His parents misunderstand his way of arguing and interpret it as a sign of his lacking patriotism.

During our interview in June 2012, Xia describes how he manages this experience of difference in his daily routine:

XIA: *At school I speak German the whole time and at home I speak Chinese the whole time. And at school I think in German and at home in Chinese. The change is quite ... Sometimes it works well, sometimes not so much. After the holidays, to switch from Chinese to German, sometimes that doesn't work out really well.*³⁰

When I ask if or how these different worlds require him to act accordingly, Xia explains that he encounters many different contexts and situations that pose different degrees of familiarity or unease.

29 German original: XIA: *Ich würde sagen meine Eltern sind verhältnismäßig strenger. [INTERVIEWER: Ja.] Also die kennen halt nicht diese Kindererziehung wie in Deutschland. Naja. Die stehen auch dieser deutschen Erziehung ziemlich kritisch gegenüber.*

30 German original: XIA: *In der Schule spreche ich die ganze Zeit deutsch und zu Hause die ganze Zeit chinesisches. Und dabei denke ich in der Schule auf Deutsch und zu Hause auf Chinesisch. Der Wechsel ist ziemlich ... Manchmal klappt es gut, manchmal klappt es nicht so gut. [...] Nach den Ferien von Chinesisch auf Deutsch überwechseln, das ist dann manchmal nicht so gut.*

XIA: *There are many situations <x> and some situations may be alien to me. I am quite familiar with what a Chinese family is like, or how it is at a German school. But I am not familiar with what it is like for the Germans at home, or for the Chinese at school.*³¹

For Xia, managing various zones and differences during his everyday life has become normal. Steve Vertovec (1997, 294) refers to the competency in improvising from various, sometimes crisscrossing cultural and linguistic systems as “milieu moving.” Xia’s competence in “milieu moving” also brings about specific challenges. He must learn to “navigate processes of identification” with different norms and practices and “learn how to manage tensions between conformity and individuality” (Sporton, Valentine, and Nielsen 2006, 214).

Xia’s experience brings us back to the methodological discussions in the introduction. His situation is similar to that of anthropologist Danau Tanu (2011) who, as we have seen, claims that TCK literature underrepresents such ruptures in the everyday routine. Tanu describes her life as an Asian child in an international school abroad as living in “‘Western’ culture by day and ‘Asian’ culture by night” (Tanu 2011, 223). Although such milieus are not as homogeneous as Tanu’s description may suggest, students like Xia do experience ruptures when moving between them and bridging different cultural practices in their everyday routines. This is a prime example of the practice Pütz (2004, 13) calls “everyday transculturality.” Xia often reflects upon his shifting cultural frame of reference as well as his own position and acts accordingly. Such reflections exemplify Pütz’s notion of “strategic transculturality” (ibid., 28), the competency of moving reflexively within different symbolic systems (see Introduction).

At school, I observe how Xia has difficulty getting along with some of the students. They are different from him, Xia explains, because they came from Germany to China and, unlike him, did not move from China to Germany first. However, he says that he has much in common with other students whose parents have Chinese origins. Reflecting upon his relationship to his classmates, he says that it is mainly with these students that he gets along well.

XIA: *Maybe because I only moved to Germany at the age of seven, I get along much better with the Chinese people at my school, well, those who have the same culture that I have. Better than with the Chinese who are only here and with the Germans.*³²

31 German original: XIA: *Es gibt viele Situationen <x> und manche Situationen die mir vielleicht fremd sind. Mir ist es ziemlich vertraut wie es in einer chinesischen Familie so ist, oder wie in einer deutschen Schule. Aber mir ist nicht so vertraut wie es bei den Deutschen zu Hause ist, oder bei den Chinesen in der Schule.*

32 German original: XIA: *Vielleicht gerade weil ich erst mit sieben nach Deutschland gezogen bin, [...] versteh ich mich viel besser mit chinesischen Leuten an meiner*

Xia's reflections call to mind something I have overheard in conversations among a few students who refer to themselves as GBCs (German Born Chinese), an allusion to the much more common notion of ABCs (American Born Chinese). Wondering about this potential form of collective identity, I ask Xia if and why he feels more comfortable interacting with Chinese-German teenagers.

XIA: *[I feel] more comfortable in the interactions, then [things are] also less disconcerting, and also because we share quite similar experiences so that we look at some things from the same perspective. For example, we are put under much more pressure from early on. We are being spoiled in a different way. Spoiled by parents' attention. Different than maybe, I don't know, by getting gifts or something.*³³

One binding experience of these "GBC" students seems to be their parents' outlook on the importance of education and doing well in school. While the expatriate experience is a unifying framework in the construction of an expatriate identity at the international schools, as I will discuss in Part III, Chapter 3, Xia's comment shows that this community can be divided and that students with a Chinese background are sometimes regarded as a distinct sub-group. Talking about these experiences shared among students with Chinese relatives, Xia alludes to the difficulties he sometimes encounters with other students at his school. When I ask him about specifics, he does not expand upon the issue. I inquire further, and he explains:

INTERVIEWER: *So you think that is because of the different, not culture, well, but roles...*

XIA: *Perspectives.*

INTERVIEWER: *Perspective would you say? Perspective on your own life, so to speak?*

XIA: *I see that... I like it when I look at people from my perspective, but I would also like to look at things from their perspective.*³⁴

Schule, also die, die die gleiche Kultur haben wie ich. Besser als, als mit den Chinesen die nur hier sind und mit den Deutschen halt.

33 German original: XIA: *[Ich fühle mich] wohler im Umgang, dann [gibt es] weniger Befremdliches, und ziemlich auch [weil wir] die gleiche Erfahrung gemacht [haben], so dass wir manche Sachen aus der gleichen Perspektive sehen. Zum Beispiel uns wird einfach, schon seit klein auf mehr unter Druck gesetzt. Auf andere Weise verwöhnt. Verwöhnt durch Aufmerksamkeit der Eltern. Anders als durch vielleicht, ich weiß nicht, Geschenke oder so was.*

34 German original: INTERVIEWER: *Meinst du, dass es aufgrund der verschiedenen, nicht Kulturen, ja, aber Rollen ...* XIA: *Perspektiven.* INTERVIEWER: *Perspektive würdest du sagen? Perspektive so auf das eigene Leben sozusagen?* XIA: *Ich seh das. Ich finde das gut wenn ich Leute aus meiner Perspektive betrachte, aber ich würd auch gern [auf] Sachen aus deren Perspektive heraus schauen.*

In his everyday life, Xia experiences the different practices and views of students from various backgrounds, which he terms “perspectives.” He voices his desire to be able to look at things from such different “perspectives.” I argue that Xia already possesses that ability and demonstrates it on a daily basis when gliding through the different “milieus” at home and at school, in answering to German teachers, spending time with fellow expatriate students, and eating dinner with his Chinese parents. In the introduction, I conceptualize this skill of adjusting, but also of reflecting upon these changes throughout the day, as requiring a transcultural perspective. Xia’s accounts of discussions with his parents and his reflections on his position at school illustrate how taking such a perspective is not an effortless or frictionless process:

XIA: *I personally think, well, my other Chinese friends have it much better, well they integrated much better or something. They’ve had longer than me in...*

INTERVIEWER: *It is easier for them?*

XIA: *Much easier! I [moved to Germany] only at the age of seven. And there I was a foreigner, too, and had to learn everything.*

INTERVIEWER: *In other words, you mean you’ve always remained a bit of a foreigner?*

XIA: *Yes. And I also have a Chinese passport. That’s a foreigner. My parents have often warned me about that. That is relational: Because I have a Chinese passport, I know that I am legally a foreigner. And maybe will be treated like that in Germany. And that’s why I also feel like that. [...] I think it’s right for my parents to teach me that.³⁵*

Xia’s description of himself as a “foreigner”—although he is a Chinese national currently living in China—is startling. It seems as if he has taken the expatriate community as a point of reference and positions himself as part of a minority. Furthermore, he is worried about his future experiences in Germany, where he plans to study, and fears possible exclusion and discrimination due to his name, appearance, and passport. Xia elaborates further on the constraints associated with the latter:

35 German original: XIA: *Also ich persönlich finde. Also meine anderen chinesischen Freunde haben sich so viel besser, eigentlich viel besser integriert oder so. Sie sind auch schon länger als ich ...* INTERVIEWER: *Also denen fällt das leichter?* XIA: *Viel leichter! Ich hab dann halt erst mit sieben. Und da war ich auch Ausländer und musste alles lernen.* INTERVIEWER: *Das heißt du meinst du bist immer ein bisschen Ausländer geblieben?* XIA: *Ja. Und ich hab auch einen chinesischen Pass. Das ist ein Ausländer. Meine Eltern haben mich darum auch oft ermahnt. Das ist dann halt gegenseitig. Dadurch dass ich einen chinesischen Pass habe, weiß ich, dass ich legal ein Ausländer bin. Und vielleicht auch in Deutschland so behandelt werde. Und deswegen fühl ich mich auch so. [...] Ich finde es auch richtig, dass meine Eltern mir das so beigebracht haben.*

XIA: *I would love to have a world in which one would say internationality is a human right. If you could live anywhere in the world and could freely develop there. But the world simply hasn't arrived there yet. And to get by [in this world] despite globalization, despite these barriers, I have to stay realistic. [...] I just have to live in this world.*

INTERVIEWER: *And in this world the passport plays a role?*

XIA: *Yes, nationality plays a role. No matter how international you are [...] I would consider myself international. But the other people, those who see me for the first time. Employers. They see you as Chinese.*

INTERVIEWER: *You don't have a passport that says "international."*

XIA: *I'd like to be like Einstein: citizen of the world.*

INTERVIEWER: <L>

XIA: *Yes. And I once thought that if I become really good, then I'll become one eventually. That's why I put so much effort into it. If I don't achieve things I'll have fewer chances here in China. Sure. It's just like that.³⁶*

Xia's reference to Einstein is important for two reasons: first, it symbolizes his ideals about being educated, successful, and intelligent; second, it alludes to Einstein's diasporic life on the move and Xia's desire to be a *Weltbürger*, to be able to move around freely—a goal he feels the world should be moving towards. Xia experiences cultural identity not only as a position, or as a performance, but also realizes how it is relational, depending on others and on citizenship. Xia understands that, despite his own flexible and creative outlook on cultural identity and belonging—"I consider myself international"—he feels the weight and constraints of difference and being "othered." He intends to cross these borders through education and achievement.

Xia's experience growing up in Germany and Shanghai led him to understand the difficulties inherent to taking different perspectives and bridging differences. While this makes Xia aware of certain restrictions in his life, for others (as Paul explains in the introduction), boundaries cross and blur in subjective experiences of growing up on the move, making the many shifting points of identification seemingly impossible to locate.

36 German original: XIA: *Ich hätte gerne eine Welt in der man sagt Internationalität wäre ein Menschenrecht. Wenn man überall auf der Welt dann leben könnte und sich dort entfalten könnte. Aber die Welt ist einfach noch nicht so weit. Und [...] um trotz der Globalisierung, trotz dieser Barrieren dann halt noch zurechtzukommen, muss ich auch realistisch sein. [...] Ich muss dann halt in dieser Welt leben.* INTERVIEWER: *Und in dieser Welt spielt der Pass eine Rolle.* XIA: *Ja, spielt Nationalität schon eine Rolle. Egal wie international du bist. [...] Ich würde mich selbst ja als international sehen. Aber die anderen Leute, die dich zum ersten Mal sehen. Arbeitgeber. Die sehen dich als einen Chinesen an.* INTERVIEWER: *Du hast halt keinen Pass, der sagt „international.“* XIA: *Ich wär auch gern wie Einstein, Weltbürger.* INTERVIEWER: <L> XIA: *Ja. Ich hab mir auch mal gedacht wenn ich richtig gut werde, dann werd ich das vielleicht. Deswegen geb ich mir auch so viel Mühe. Wär ich schlecht dann hätt ich hier in China weniger Chancen. Klar. Das ist einfach so.*

My focus on the everyday practices of expatriate youths in the following analytical parts of this ethnography examines some of these shifting points of identification and belonging for young privileged migrants. These points include the youths' homes, schools, expatriate spaces, and leisure activities. Before I move on to these analytical parts, however, I offer some background showing how my fieldwork was conducted and how I collected the data on which the rest of this book is based.

CHAPTER 5

The Common Ground: Capturing the Heterogeneous Experiences of Expatriate Youths

EMILY: *It is such a hard question to answer that. Where are you from? [...] And you can't.*

At different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited. They become, not only what they have, at certain times, certainly been—mutually excluding categories, but also what they sometimes are—differential points along a sliding scale (Stuart Hall 1990, 228).

My introduction of expatriate youths in general, the first ethnographic descriptions of their life at school, and the interviews with several individuals that appear here have already shown how heterogeneous experiences of growing up as a young, international school student in Shanghai can be. To do justice to this heterogeneity, I continue to share many direct voices from various students and their different migration experiences throughout this ethnography.

During eleven months of fieldwork from mid-August 2010 to early July 2011,³⁷ a short stay after the summer school break in September 2011, and another two-week stay in May/June 2012, I held a total of thirty-one group and individual interviews with forty-three students.³⁸ The majority of these students were between fifteen and eighteen years old and enrolled at the German school I introduced above, or a Singaporean, British, French, or American Christian school. I additionally conducted one expert interview with a school counselor at another American school and discussed my research topic with a few teachers, but decided to use these as background information only. Similarly, six months of prior fieldwork on the adult expatriate community in Shanghai, which I conducted in 2007, provided further context for my work.³⁹ This ethnography, however, is based

37 While all these students informed my work, not all of them appear in the interviews. However, the student directory at the end of the ethnography individually introduces all the actors that appear with an alias throughout the book.

38 In addition to seventeen individual interviews, I held fourteen group discussions with thirty-nine different students. Most of the recorded individual interviews were with students who had already taken part in a group discussion. Four students only took part in individual interviews. Several students were interviewed two or three times, leading to a total of thirty-one group and individual interviews with forty-three students. All of these interactions were audio-recorded.

39 This earlier fieldwork focused on the so-called “trailing spouses”—mainly women—who accompanied their partners on a work assignment. It was the basis for my Master's thesis *Shanghai Expat! „Mitausgereiste Ehefrauen“ und ihr Shanghai-er Alltag auf Zeit. Zwischen Ohnmacht und Kreativität im transnationalen sozialen Raum*, which was submitted to the University of Bremen (Sander 2008).

on a voice-centered approach that focuses on the students' own words and perspectives because youths' own accounts of migration experiences have largely been ignored until recently (see Dobson 2009).

The questions for the group discussions and the first round of individual interviews focused on addressing issues related to moving to Shanghai and everyday activities there. Both the group discussions and the individual interviews were semi-structured. This means that, although a specific set of questions was posed, these could vary in order and emphasis to offer teenagers and myself enough flexibility to introduce and respond to other issues. This approach therefore acknowledged my own research agenda to understand specific issues from the teenagers' point of view, as well as the students' agency by providing space for them to present new topics. The second round of semi-structured interviews dealt with new issues that were either under-represented or unclear in the first round, for instance reflections upon the students' position or integration in China and the experience and meaning of specific locations in Shanghai. These were conducted at the end of the school year in spring/summer 2011 or after the break, during my return visit in September 2011. A third round of interviews with the same students focused on the topic of leaving and plans for the immediate future and was recorded during the last follow-up stay in May–June 2012. Between 2012 and 2015, further interviews with students were conducted in Germany to discuss issues of returning.

All interviews were transcribed, coded, and interpreted in the context of my field notes and theoretical foundations.⁴⁰ The program Atlas.ti ensured a systematic process.⁴¹ Throughout the interpretation, I worked

40 I transcribed all recorded interviews and group discussions, capturing all fillers, sighs, and laughter. While most of the transcripts encompass the complete interview, I occasionally summarize passages of my own contributions during the interview. The qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti proved to be a useful tool for sorting, structuring, and linking all my textual and visual materials. This software also allowed me to code my interview material based on keywords and themes. These codes either reflect my research question or are based on trends that emerged from the transcripts. Coding categories were not mutually exclusive and passages could be attributed to several themes at once. Coding required several close readings of the transcripts. The field notes captured the interview setting to help me remember my own feelings during the discussion, as well as the overall mood or context of the interviews, and to uncover the relevance of issues that were only addressed in passing. Chapters and arguments were consequently developed around prominent themes and codes in the writing process and interpreted further against the backdrop of theories, personal experiences, and the visual materials. My field notes, as reflections of my own engagement with Shanghai and my research, and as protocols documenting interviews, school days, and specific events in the community, helped me to remember the overall setting. Most of these notes are hand-written and I abstained from sorting or coding them in Atlas.ti. However, they helped me to reflect upon and interpret the interview quotes. The notes also shed light on the subjective practice of fieldwork, my own position in the field, and the production of "data." Simultaneously, these notes also provided insight into the students' everyday lives and their attitudes toward my research project.

41 For a summary of current debates on the advantages and disadvantages of computer-based qualitative data analysis, see Sérór (2005).

with the original quotes and only translated German quotes into English as a very last step in my text production. For the final translations, I omitted some fillers, repetitions, and pauses for better readability. Due to my focus on the youth's own voices, these interviews form the centerpiece of my ethnography. I also worked with various visual materials and methods to gain further perspectives on the youths' experiences.⁴² While visual mate-

42 The majority of visual material consists of pictures I took as "photo protocols" to document the atmosphere in certain places. I also resorted to "visual note taking," whenever writing notes seemed awkward, for instance at bars or at the graduation dance. On some of these occasions, taking photos even turned out to become "my job." At the graduation party, students came up and asked me to take pictures of them with their friends—the choice of motif thus no longer being mine. I directly incorporated some of my digital photography to provide further insights into the specific places the students and I moved through. Images of such places invite us to contemplate the relevance of the experience of being "there." Sara Pink notes that "photographs were important because the researcher took them when in that environment. They invited me not to know first-hand what it was like to contemplate the route ahead represented in the photo, but to imagine what it might be like. Importantly it led me to consider that the experience of it would be relevant" (Pink 2011, 438). The images I chose to display aim to support my research emphasis on the experience of the local environment and, at the same time, reflect my own position in the overall field. In addition to my own photography, I gained access and the right to use photographs that the students themselves produced. This was the case with images taken for a geography project where students had documented elements of globalization in Shanghai's urban landscape (see earlier sections on "the girls" for more details). Some students also shared their prom pictures with me. I also had access to student artworks that were displayed on campus or in year-books. These images were mostly relevant in triggering conversations with students about the production and meanings behind them. One example is Andrea's work "My time is now" (Figure 21), which I discuss in detail in Part IV, Chapter 1. Two films produced by students at the German school also found their way into my media assemblage. A film by Kressi and one of her friends was made for an awards ceremony in Germany. This film seemed more like a PR film for the school and is discussed in more detail in Part III, Chapter 3.2 (see Figures 15 and 16). A second film shot by students at the German school was shown during dinner at the graduation ball. In contrast to the first film, the second film did not highlight the overall school, but showed the group of students that graduated. This film contributed further insights into the meaning students attribute to the moment of high school graduation as well as farewell rituals (see Part V, Chapter 1). I also initiated a photo project during my last visit to Shanghai in 2012, for which I asked students to send me photos referring to the theme "home in Shanghai." The intention was to gain another perspective on the subjective experiences of home and belonging through students' own visual approaches. Few students responded, and most of those who did only did so after they had already left Shanghai. Instead of taking a photo specifically for this request, many of them browsed through their pictures and sent me one or two images that, for them, best captured the idea of feeling at home in Shanghai. These images deal with various themes and provide insights into the students' personal worlds, displaying family members, friends, pets, and locations. The fact that some were chosen after the students left Shanghai offered new insights into their subjective experiences of moving and longing for a place that was left behind. Two images, in which the German girl Mia captured her bedroom in Shanghai before moving (Figure 11) and, later, while preparing for the next move (Figure 30), are displayed in this ethnography. These images were chosen because they brilliantly illustrate the experience of home and moving by showing the physical aspect of these interconnected practices.

rials are included throughout the ethnography, five images were selected to introduce each of the book's five parts. These images aim to provide a space for each part's ethnographic and theoretical arguments to unfold.

Numerous, free, English-language magazines that circulate in Shanghai, as well as advertisements, flyers, websites, and online forums provided further insights into the lifestyles of the expatriate community.⁴³ As part of his inquiry into middle class youth culture in Nepal, anthropologist Mark Liechty (2003) read magazines targeted at Nepali teenagers as part of a "global, intertextual media assemblage that constructs its own privileged world of reality-in-images." He further writes, "it is onto this transnational public sphere, the media-assembled space of imagination, that local merchants project their dreams of a local 'youth culture'" (ibid., 219). Following Liechty's understanding, I collected media in Shanghai to understand how an expatriate culture or community is created. Liechty's concept of media assemblage as "an intricate web of linkages that promote and channel consumer desires in never-ending circuits" (ibid., 260) illuminates how media can fuel, as Brosius (2010, 37) has phrased it, "a consumer ethic that affirms and 'naturalises' cultural values and habitus of the middle class" (and, in my case, the expatriate community). The media assemblage (Liechty 2003 and Brosius 2011) functions as a methodological tool in the quest for a wider context of how expatriate communities are produced by tracing expatriates' consumption, education, work, travel, and leisure habits. The magazines and forums proved particularly helpful because their main purpose was to introduce newcomers to Shanghai to the expat lifestyle and consumption habits. In her examination of practices of the new middle class in India, Brosius pinpoints media's potential for offering an introduction or guidance: "These intertwined forms of media are crucial when it comes to their capacity to educate 'uncultured' newcomers, creating immediacy and intimacy" (2010, 36). The media assemblage facilitates understanding the community's current discourses and contextualizes my focus on expatriate teenagers.

Additionally, I collected mental maps at the end of several group discussions and during a geography class. Thirteen students at the German school, three at a British school, seventeen students from a Singaporean school, and one student from an American school were asked to record on paper their mental maps of everyday, important places in Shanghai. Mental maps, a common method in geographical research, are particularly useful for understanding everyday spatial practices. Mental mapping allows the research partner to establish a focus from his or her own perspective and thus—despite being limited by a guiding question—leaves more room for subjective experiences than interviewing alone (Ploch 1995, 24). Consequently, the drawings of students' "personal Shanghais" are subjective interpretations based on their active reflections and ways of giving spaces meaning (ibid., 25).

43 See *That's Shanghai*, *City Week-end*, *City Week-end Parents and Kids*, *Shanghai Family*, *Enjoy Shanghai*, *Time Out Shanghai*, and several others.

The various materials and methods that I employed to capture expatriate youths' experiences all illustrate the heterogeneity of the group I chose to study. Many factors influence their transient time in Shanghai, whether it is their first time abroad or their families are constantly moving. The students may need to negotiate differences within their family or between family and school, regardless of whether their parents also have migrant biographies. However, based on the theoretical understanding of transculturality as progress, practice, and perspective that I present in the introduction, we can see that these different individual experiences have several things in common. One major unifying point is the various processes of negotiating cultural identities and forms of belonging that seem to affect all youths growing up on the move; I highlighted these in the four individual narratives provided by Antonia, Bjorn, Arnaud, and Xia, as well as in Paul's story in the introduction. These five student portraits and their reflections upon their social worlds and their position within them illustrate how teenagers have myriad ways of forging, performing, and contesting their own feelings and sense of belonging. I do not aim to create a typology that fixes certain experiences into set categories, but my research does show that common ground underlies the students' diverse experiences and subjective narratives. My own transcultural perspective, my heuristic viewpoint from which I capture the various influences, connections, and practices that youths draw from in their everyday lives, reveals that mobility brings with it the shifting of various points of reference and boundaries. As Stuart Hall's quote above describes, expatriate students must find their own place of belonging somewhere within these points of reference and boundaries, be it within a peer group, the expatriate community, Shanghai itself, or to a nation, global youth culture, a privileged class, or a cosmopolitan elite. Due to the shifting places, practices, and people around them, these youths are all aware of the processes of developing ties, of arriving, of the efforts and boundaries that go into feelings of belonging and the construction and performance of cultural and collective identities. My investigation into their daily negotiations shows that, on the one hand, the construction or performance of collective identities entails the creation of cultural (and spatial) boundaries, and that these are sometimes entangled with racism, classism, sexism, or forms of fundamentalism. On the other hand, the creation of such collective cultural identities also opens up a much-needed shared space that helps the individual to cope with daily and emotional challenges when living in a culturally diverse or unknown environment. The concept of TCKs aims to foster such collective identities. My ethnographic examples, however, demonstrate that expatriate youths are often moving along borders that commonly mark collective identities and that they frequently rethink, bridge, cross, and shift these borders to find their own position, their own cultural identity. It is this common ground that I conceptualize as a "transcultural perspective."

Antonia, the child of a Chinese-German marriage, formulated her transcultural perspective as an experience of borders between being "Chi-

nese" and "German" and chose to claim Shanghai as the major source of her hybrid cultural identity. Bjorn, who grew up in a small village in Germany, particularly highlighted his awareness of class and class differences when contemplating the influence that the move to Shanghai had on his life. Arnaud, a French-educated, Belgium national whose Chinese parents moved to Europe to eventually return to Shanghai, reflected on and articulated his worries about feeling different from his parents. Chinese student Xia, enrolled at the German school, expressed his general awareness of borders between himself and his fellow students who are European nationals, particularly in regard to the constraints his Chinese passport and family background place on him. He also reflected upon the difficulties of dealing with differences between school and home.

Their accounts demonstrate that these teenagers are very interested in sharing and discussing their views, in opening up a shared space in which they can articulate their transcultural perspectives, and investigating the roles of mobility, cultural practices, and differences in their lives. The "narratives of the self" (Giddens 1991) that the expatriate youths offered during interviews were triggered by questions about home or the challenges they faced, but were often also introduced by the teenagers themselves.

These self-reflective practices of re-positioning demonstrate, as I have laid out in the introduction, that we should move away from grouping such experiences under the static TCK label and employ transcultural perspectives that allow us to understand the flexibility of youths' practices and identities, as well as their ways of drawing boundaries. Upon engaging with this theoretical framework, it becomes clear that taking a transcultural perspective is exactly what these youths do in order to process their many moves and to grasp the shifting points of identification in their lives. At first glance, these transcultural perspectives may stand in contradiction to students' everyday spatial practices of demarcation and class-consciousness that I discuss in relation to housing in Part III, Chapter 2.1 and the community of international schools in Part III, Chapter 3. However, as discussed in the introduction, mobility can evoke both a desire for stability and a desire to broaden one's point of view to manage the differences one experiences. Dwelling on the move itself does not eliminate, but rather fuels the wish to create familiar spaces, despite the next move being on the horizon. This dialectic becomes visible in more detail in the coming chapters, which zoom in on the students' everyday lives in Shanghai. While my concept of transcultural perspectives proves invaluable to understanding the experiences arising from these shifting borders and the subsequent emergence of new, subjective forms of cultural identity, it also requires a detailed ethnographic perspective that brings daily experiences to the fore, a necessity that became apparent in my introductory example of Paul's narrative, which seems rather insubstantial for lacking it. Therefore, a solid analysis of everyday practices is necessary for understanding how individuals gain transcultural perspectives and the meanings they assign to them.

Despite individual differences in how they deal with moving from one city or country to the next, the expatriate students in this ethnography all share the challenge of maintaining old ties while creating new ones in new communities. Their moves are what Giddens (1991, 112–114) calls “fateful moments,” meaning “times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were, at a crossroads in his existence” (ibid., 113). This ethnography highlights these crossroads and the changes privileged migration brings with it by recounting the move to and away from Shanghai. While writing from my point of view,⁴⁴ I understand their activities and emphasis on exploring Shanghai as a means of dealing with the difficulties the move forced them to confront, by linking everyday practices to their migration experiences. While focusing on the small-scale processes of everyday life, the next four parts therefore trace and examine the larger themes of leaving (Part II), arriving in Shanghai (Part III), living there (Part IV) and, finally, moving on (Part V).

44 My point of view, or in Gupta and Ferguson’s (1997) words, my “location,” is not a stable point of reference either. The “Location” as the fieldworker’s standpoint and position in society, as for instance German, white, female graduate student, is not something “one ascriptively has” but one “works at” (1997, 37). Location is constantly shifting: “Rather than a set of labels that pins down one’s identity and perspective, location becomes visible here as an ongoing project” (ibid.).