

A Strategic Investment: Understanding Chinese Middle-Class Families' Motivations for UK Education through Bourdieu's Lens of Capital, Habitus, and Field

Xintong Ju

King's College London

Email: 764786479@qq.com

Abstract

In this study, the theoretical framework of field, habitus and capital is taken as the research basis, and the reasons why Chinese middle-class families choose British education are analyzed from the sociological level. The research results show that overseas education is a strategic investment for Chinese middle-class families to pursue social status, improve social mobility, and reproduce their class. In this study, qualitative research method is used, in-depth interviews are conducted, and the development of participatory observation is carried out. The study focuses on the families of Chinese middle class and collects detailed information. The research results show that the educational choices of these families are inevitably related to social capital network, cultural capital accumulation and economic capital allocation. Most parents believe that British education can provide children with a good educational environment, help children form a good international perspective, and cultivate children's elite identity, so that they can stand out in the global competition.

In this study, we further analyze the contradictions and complexities faced by the middle class in the process of education investment. Parents want to send their children to study abroad in order to achieve social mobility, but they are not satisfied with the domestic education system. On the contrary, they are anxious about the decline of social status, and they are unwilling to see the solidification of social classes. The concept of habitus can help us understand how these families adjust their educational strategies in different social fields to achieve the purpose of maximizing benefits. This study further points out that the educational choices of middle-class families are not only individual decisions, but also collective strategies, which need to be considered from the perspective of multiple generations and integrated resources. This model of education investment not only shows that the education market has achieved internationalization, but also shows that the middle class has a strong sense of social anxiety and identity crisis in the process of social transformation.

Key words

middle-class families; British education; Bourdieu theory; Social capital; Class reproduction

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

In the past 20 years, the number of Chinese students entering the UK to receive higher education has increased rapidly, which has attracted the attention of the whole world. In the survey report issued by the higher education statistics agency, it is pointed out that the number of Chinese students in British universities has increased significantly, reaching 143820 in the academic year 2021-2022, 24% higher than that of the same period before the epidemic. This is not only related to the educational needs of individuals, but also reflects the changes in Chinese society, especially the middle class. The demand for British education is increasing, although the tuition is increasing, the admission competition is becoming more and more fierce, and the geopolitical situation is uncertain, but it can not weaken the demand of Chinese families for British education, and the motivation is not only to pursue higher quality education. This educational migration pattern should be analyzed by sociologists to accurately grasp the relationship between social forces, family strategies and structural conditions, and to analyze the reasons why so many Chinese students enter British universities every year.

In the study of international education, we should not be bound by the traditional push-pull framework, but should focus on the differences between institutions and seize the economic opportunities. In the process of rapid social and economic transformation in China, the middle class occupies a unique position. McKinsey Global Institute pointed out that by 2020, the number of middle-class people in China will reach 400 million. This group of people has experienced the process of economic system reform, accumulated wealth, and also encountered fierce educational competition, which made them anxious about their social status. In the process of investing in education, the middle class is willing to invest a lot of money in British education, and the average annual expenditure on tuition and living expenses is about 35000 to 50000 pounds. This behavior can not be explained by economic rationality model, but should be analyzed from the social level, and the complexity of the behavior should be described with the help of theoretical

framework.

This study has far-reaching significance, which is reflected in many aspects. Theoretical research focuses on the analysis of the educational strategies of the middle class in China, and analyzes the impact of globalization on the social reproduction of contemporary families by using the field theory, habitus theory and capital theory. Empirical research can provide reference for transnational education decision-making, and the strategic investment in education can not only increase the economic capital, but also increase the social and cultural capital. Practically speaking, the analysis of these motivations can help British educational institutions to better communicate with Chinese students, and can also provide reference for Chinese policymakers to solve the problems in the process of domestic education development. In addition, this study can also provide a reference for solving the problem of educational inequality in the world, and analyze how the middle class of different countries can play a role in the increasingly competitive international situation.

1.2 Research Objectives

In this study, we analyze the investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in British higher education from the perspective of sociology, and analyze the reasons for such investment behavior under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and analyze the reasons for such investment behavior from the perspective of field, habitus and capital. The purpose of this study is to analyze the investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in British higher education from the perspective of sociology, to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior from the perspective of field, habitus and capital. The purpose of this study is to analyze the investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in British higher education from the perspective of sociology, to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior from the perspective of field, habitus and capital. The purpose of this study is to analyze the investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in British higher education from

the perspective of sociology, to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior from the perspective of field, habitus and capital. The purpose of this study is to analyze the investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in British higher education from the perspective of sociology, to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and to analyze the reasons for such investment behavior from the perspective of field, habitus and capital.

In the process of formulating educational investment strategies, we should also pay attention to the contradictions and tensions that may exist, especially the problems of identity formation, social mobility and class reproduction in the process of China's social transformation, and analyze how the middle class can maintain their status and achieve upward mobility, and how British education can be chosen to solve the problem of domestic educational inequality. In the process of analysis, we should also analyze how to choose between Western and Chinese educational values, and how to make reasonable decisions in this respect. This study aims to further deepen the understanding of educational choices, grasp the characteristics of the middle class in transnational educational mobility, and provide support for the development of international education.

1.3 Domestic and International Research Status

1.3.1 Abroad Research Status

In the study of educational migration and transnational education, scholars from various countries focus on social reproduction theory, and analyze the investment strategies of families from the theoretical level. In the current research, we have a deeper understanding of how to achieve the goal of global education through the efforts of families, but there are still some deficiencies in the analysis of Chinese families, especially middle-class families, in the process of investing in education, in the process of capital conversion, and in the analysis of motivation. Western scholars analyze this phenomenon from the theoretical level, and analyze the relationship between education, economic resources and cultural

capital from the perspective of global mobility.

In the study of human capital development, scholars have analyzed the allocation of resources and investment in strategic aspects, and put forward reasonable suggestions for the development of family decision-making. In the study, Abera Uncha Utallo et al. (2015) analyzed the impact of livelihood assets on family security strategies, and pointed out that families should make full use of the existing capital to achieve sustainable development. In the study of livelihood security framework, scholars have put forward reasonable suggestions for families to make investment decisions, and pointed out that middle-class families should make strategic decisions when making overseas education decisions. In the study of strategic planning and resource sustainability, Chen Haibo et al. (2015) analyzed the role of human capital in achieving long-term goals, and pointed out that families should make strategic investment in education in the context of global competition.

In the process of analyzing how families evaluate the returns of educational investment, we should introduce the interdisciplinary method, deepen the understanding of long-term investment planning, and deepen the understanding of risk assessment. Masahiro Abe et al. (2017) constructed a model to evaluate financial risks, which can guide families to make investment decisions, calculate the potential losses in the process of investment, and evaluate the financial commitments that families need to make in the process of international education. These risk assessment models can help families calculate rationally when making investment decisions, and should not regard educational migration as consumption, but as an investment to obtain higher returns. Through theoretical analysis, we should fully feel the dialectical relationship between value and form, and have a deeper understanding of how families transform and perceive capital in different forms, so as to provide philosophical support for the analysis of the relationship between social and cultural capital accumulation and economic investment.

1.3.2 Domestic Research Status

In the process of analyzing the social mobility of Chinese people, many scholars have focused on the differences in education between urban and rural areas and the phenomenon of educational stratification. Orderud et al. (2023) analyzed the social status of rural residents

in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Metropolitan Area, and found that the social status of Chinese families has been significantly improved, which has a direct impact on the educational investment of families. This study further analyzes the social hierarchy of middle-class families in China, and analyzes the impact of self-perception on the pursuit of international educational opportunities.

In the process of analyzing the relationship between economic activities and the allocation of family resources, many scholars in China have adopted diversified ways. Bai Yunli et al. (2024) analyzed the agricultural production activities of Asian countries, and analyzed the diversified development of Chinese families from the perspective of employment and household resources. Although the research of these scholars focuses on rural areas, it can also bring reference for the capital accumulation of middle-class families and the investment behavior of families. The research results show that when families have more sources of income, they will be more willing to invest in human capital, including education, which is a long-term strategy for the development of families. The way of resource allocation is similar to that of middle-class families, which is willing to invest a lot of money in overseas education.

In the process of domestic research, the issue of resource management and capital flow has been analyzed, but it has not been analyzed from the perspective of education investment. Kang Yu et al. (2022) analyzed the characteristics of cross-border capital flow, and analyzed how Chinese enterprises can make strategic arrangements for resources in the international context. These scholars focus on oil and gas enterprises, but their analysis of cross-border capital flow can provide a reference for understanding how middle-class families invest in education in the international context. These scholars believe that Chinese people should actively participate in international affairs to achieve capital appreciation and diversify risks. Zhang Liang (2015) analyzed the issue of cultural capital from the perspective of sociology, and believed that Chinese families should make strategic investments to enhance the international influence of domestic capital. However, there are not many scholars in China who analyze the reasons why middle-class families send their children to study in the UK from the three aspects of economic, social and cultural capital.

1.3.3 Literature Review and Comments

Reviewing the existing literature, although it involves many disciplines, there are obvious shortcomings in the study of British education, especially the lack of in-depth analysis of the educational motives of Chinese middle-class families from the theoretical framework of Bourdieu. Through a comprehensive analysis of the literature, it is known that the current research results have not been extended to this field, and targeted research is urgently needed.

Generally speaking, the research results of predecessors are not related to educational migration and capital theory. In the study of vulnerable Asian countries, Bai Yunli et al. (2019) focused on the dietary diversity of rural households and the employment of rural people, and analyzed the problems from the perspective of agricultural economy, not from the perspective of education. In the research of medical technology, Cahill et al. (2019) focused on the application of digital surgery in gastroenterology and achieved certain results. Bekele et al. (2019) studied the relationship between trade openness and carbon neutrality, and Chen Haibo et al. (2019) focused on the issue of environmental sustainability. Li Wenting et al. (2019) studied magnesium alloys from the perspective of materials science, and An Ying et al. (2019) analyzed the magnetic behavior of borophene monolayers, which belong to physical science. Wang Wei et al. (2019) analyzed the problems of ophthalmology from the perspective of angiogenesis, Valluri et al. (2019) analyzed the problems of environmental science, and put forward reasonable suggestions for the simultaneous removal of pollutants. Although these scholars' research has a high academic value, it is difficult to play a role in the analysis of educational capital accumulation and transnational educational migration.

In the process of writing, we should analyze the social class and the distribution of capital from the horizontal level, and put forward reasonable suggestions. Gu Jintu et al. (2014) focused on the social status of rural residents in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and analyzed the social positioning of Chinese society from a new perspective. The research results of the three scholars are consistent with the views of Bourdieu, and they believe that the motivation of social differentiation and the existence of status anxiety are not only reflected in the rural context, but also in the middle-class families in the city. Thomas Toma Tora et al. (2014) analyzed the

livelihood assets and security of the people in drought-prone areas of Ethiopia, and analyzed how families can use a variety of ways to mobilize capital to ensure their own security. The research results of the three scholars are similar to those of Chinese families. Kang Yu et al. (2015) analyzed the cross-border capital flow patterns of oil and gas enterprises, and put forward reasonable suggestions for the analysis of transnational resource movement, which is similar to the research results of the above scholars.

From the perspective of sociology and philosophy, the theoretical contribution is relatively limited, but it can not be ignored. Thomas Noutsopoulos analyzed the value form of Marx and the dialectic of Plato, and laid a solid foundation for the understanding of the transformation of capital. Shi Zhuanzhuan analyzed Mo Yan's translated works from the perspective of sociology, analyzed the transmission of cultural capital, and analyzed how Chinese families deal with the educational system of other countries. These works have achieved consensus and reached a consensus on the transformation of capital.

Although there are many peripheral connections, the existing research literature does not focus on the specific reasons why Chinese middle-class families choose to study in the UK from the three aspects of field, habitus and capital, which is not comprehensive enough. In the process of studying the educational migration between China and Britain, the relationship between social capital networking, cultural capital acquisition, economic capital investment and habitus formation has not been analyzed, which is a serious lack of research. In addition, the reviewed literature does not analyze how to make strategic arrangements for children's future development in the educational field, nor does it explore how to convert transnational education into capital, which requires the combination of empirical research and Bourdieu's theory, especially to analyze the educational behavior of Chinese middle-class families towards British universities. This paper fills the research gap, analyzes the accumulation of strategic capital from the theoretical level, explores how to make reasonable decisions in the process of educational investment, and analyzes how to obtain intergenerational advantages in the international educational field.

1.4 Research Content

In this study, the complex decision-making process of middle-class Chinese families in the process of educating their children is analyzed from three aspects: habitus, capital and field, and the specific ways in which families use social, economic and cultural capital in the process of education and competition are analyzed in depth. The research focuses on how to accumulate cultural capital, including the educational background of parents, the development of children's language skills, and the cultivation of children's cosmopolitan awareness, to form a good habitus in the process of overseas education, and to achieve intergenerational development in this way. This study focuses on the position of these families in the field of education, and analyzes the advantages of British educational system in the process of meritocracy, and finds out the similarities and differences between the two educational systems.

This paper focuses on the analysis of contradictions in the process of educational investment, and focuses on the contradiction between defensive strategy and upward mobility, and explores how the educational choices of middle-class families can reflect the anxiety of class solidification in contemporary China, although the economy continues to grow, the educational opportunities of all classes are more and more different. In this study, the symbolic capital of British education is analyzed, which can enhance the recognition of the international community, bring international credentials to children, and enable them to have a strong competitiveness in the global labor market. In the study, the role of transnational social networks in the process of education is emphasized, and the information flow, peer influence, community norms and other factors are analyzed, so as to understand how to maintain the competitive advantage of children in the global education market.

1.5 Research Methods

In this study, the qualitative research method is used to collect data through in-depth interviews, and 15 Chinese middle-class families are selected from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in the period from March to August 2023, all of whom have children who have not yet studied in the UK or are preparing to study in the UK. In the process of investigation, students and parents

are interviewed, each lasting about an hour. In the interview, we deeply analyzed the educational decision-making of the family, analyzed the value of British education, and analyzed how to obtain more capital support to enable their children to study abroad smoothly. The interview is conducted in Mandarin, and the interview content is transcribed and analyzed after recording with the consent of the interviewees.

In this study, the theoretical framework of Bourdieu is used as a basis to analyze the data and find the development pattern and deeper meaning. In the process of analysis, the transcript is repeatedly read, the corresponding content is coded, and the code is grouped to find the potential theme, and the theme is refined to reflect the experience of the research object. In order to ensure the rigor of the research, the author not only participates in the observation of the recruitment activities of British universities, but also participates in the educational consulting activities in major cities in China, and collects a large number of documentary materials, including school promotional materials and online parent forums. Through this method, the social, cultural, economic and other dimensions of the educational choices of Chinese middle-class families can be understood.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu's Theory of Capital, Habitus, and Field

2.1 The Concept of Capital and Its Forms

In the process of conceptualizing capital, Bourdieu's theory is different from that of other scholars, which provides a framework for the analysis of multiple dimensions, which can play an important role in the analysis of the educational decision-making of Chinese middle-class families. In his view, capital is a kind of resource that can be accumulated by individuals or families, which can play a strategic role in maintaining their social status in social fields. This view points out that the reason why people have advantages in contemporary society is not only because of money, but also because they have rich resources, which can be passed on to the next generation. For Chinese middle-class families, in or-

der to enable their children to receive British education, they should analyze the connotation of capital and make reasonable choices in the process of education. Bourdieu's theoretical framework points out that families should use a variety of capital at the same time, not only to make cost-benefit analysis, but also to make investment decisions. Bourdieu pointed out that capital can be converted among different forms, but the exchange rate is not fixed, and there are risks and opportunities in the process of implementing educational strategies abroad.

In the eyes of Bourdieu, economic capital is the most intuitive and recognizable form, which can be converted into monetary value, including material assets and property. In the process of Chinese middle-class families choosing British education, they need to pay a lot of tuition fees, usually between 15000 and 35000 pounds, and also need to pay for accommodation and travel, which requires the support of economic capital. According to the data provided by the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency, Chinese students have contributed £2.9 billion to the British economy in 2022, which means that British education is a huge investment for Chinese families. Bourdieu pointed out that if we only rely on economic capital, we can not have a deep understanding of the educational strategy, and we should realize that the significance of economic capital is to help us grasp other forms of capital. In the process of overseas education, if families can allocate sufficient economic resources, they can show their high status, and also have access to more institutional networks to accumulate valuable capital. Economic capital can be passed on to the next generation through inheritance, which is the most obvious form of capital in Bourdieu's view, but it does not have the legitimacy and symbolic power of other capitals.

Cultural capital is the theoretical innovation that has had the greatest impact on the world, which can be divided into three types: institutionalized, objectified and embodied. In the process of education, the three types of cultural capital are interrelated and operate together. Embodied cultural capital is the sum of the physical and mental dispositions of the individual, which is related to the socialization process, including the cultivation of thinking, language ability, educational background and so on. Chinese middle-class families are willing to send their children to the UK to study, hoping that they can master the language ability of British people, understand

the cultural code of Western countries, and have a cosmopolitan disposition. Institutionalized cultural capital is a kind of cultural capital that can be recognized by society, including academic qualifications and other contents. The degree of UK universities, especially Russell Group universities, is a kind of institutionalized cultural capital that can be recognized by Chinese society. In 2021, the average salary of Chinese returnees with UK degrees in first-tier cities was 23% higher than that of Chinese graduates. The third form of cultural capital is social capital, which is reflected in the relationship network, which can provide individuals with a large number of resources. For families to invest in British education, social capital can play a role in at least three aspects: first, to grasp the information of overseas education opportunities; second, to provide help for children to enter the school smoothly; third, to provide help for children to build a relationship network in the UK, which can connect international elites and Chinese elites.

2.2 Habitus: Dispositions and Strategic Practices

Bourdieu's concept of habitus can help people to understand how the middle class in China formulates educational strategies and promotes the development of education. Habitus is a kind of internalized system, which is the result of the individual's long-term socialization in a specific social environment. For the middle class in China, this is a kind of structural mechanism, which can not only set educational goals, but also make

reasonable decisions and take effective actions. The habitus of these families is inevitably affected by the rapid development of China's economy after the 1980s, the increasingly fierce educational competition in the domestic environment, and the increasing number of global educational opportunities. The educational choices of parents are not only reasonable, but also have a deep understanding of their own class and accumulated life experience. In contemporary China, the middle class habitus is inevitably related to Confucianism and cosmopolitanism.

In the process of strategic practice, this habitus is reflected in many ways, including education planning, investment and so on. Chinese middle-class parents have a strong sense of "game feel", which is a concept put forward by Bourdieu. They can intuitively feel the international educational field and give their children a higher position. This requires a deep understanding of the value of the system, a correct understanding of the value of certificates in different countries, and a reasonable grasp of the timing of education transformation. According to the survey data in recent years, the proportion of Chinese students in the UK is 68%, most of whom come from the middle class. In the process of decision-making, their families will make decisions three to five years before the children are enrolled in the school. In the process of implementing the strategic plan, we should prepare for the English course in advance, actively participate in the international curriculum, cultivate students' achievements in line with Western educational values, and select UK universities according to the employment rate and prestige ranking.

Table 2.1: Habitus-Driven Strategic Practices in UK Education Planning

Strategic Practice Category	Specific Actions	Timing	Primary Capital Conversion Goal
Academic Preparation	International curriculum enrollment (IB, A-Level)	3-5 years pre-university	Cultural capital accumulation
Language Investment	Intensive English training, overseas summer programs	4-6 years pre-university	Linguistic and cultural capital
Institutional Research	University ranking analysis, subject reputation evaluation	2-3 years pre-university	Symbolic capital maximization
Social Network Building	Alumni connections, education consultant engagement	2-4 years pre-university	Social capital expansion
Financial Planning	Savings allocation, property investment for tuition	5-8 years pre-university	Economic capital mobilization

Strategic Practice Category	Specific Actions	Timing	Primary Capital Conversion Goal
Identity Cultivation	Extracurricular activities, leadership experiences	3-6 years pre-university	Cultural and symbolic capital

2.3 Field Theory and Educational Field Dynamics

In the process of making educational choices, Chinese middle-class families need to have a deep understanding of the theory of field, which can provide them with a good spatial dimension. Bourdieu pointed out that the field is an autonomous area, which has its own rules and forms of capital valuation, and the educational field is an important arena, where all kinds of agents compete for legitimacy and symbolic power. In this field, educational practice, educational credentials and other resources are all contested, which can determine whether the social position is reasonable and whether there are more opportunities in the future development. The operation of the educational field is different from that of other social fields, and it is closely related to the fields of culture, economy and power. For Chinese middle-class families, the decision to pursue British education is based on the understanding that the international educational field is a hierarchical structure, and British institutions have strong symbolic power and high prestige. This is related to the historical legacy of British education, the global dominance of English, and the recognition of British credentials by the international labor market. The educational field is a dynamic environment where the struggle between traditional educational capital and new educational capital is endless, and families must make strategic choices in order to maximize their investment returns.

In the process of studying education, we should deeply feel that power relations and capital distribution have a direct impact on the development of individuals and collectives. Bourdieu pointed out that the field is the place where people struggle, and the agents in it will compete with each other to achieve the purpose of improving their position, and the capital they have is the most critical resource in the competition. At present, the international education field is becoming more and more hierarchical, and the elite institutions are playing the role of gatekeeper, which can bring people more

professional development opportunities and social status. Chinese middle-class families believe that domestic educational qualifications are gradually devalued in the fierce competition, so they choose to educate their children through international channels. In the British education field, the teacher-student ratio is relatively low, students are encouraged to learn independently, and they have a strong critical spirit, and they are connected with the global elite circle. However, entering this field is not only to pay tuition and living expenses, but also to have a certain level of language proficiency, be familiar with Western educational norms, and have a good social network. The development of this field has brought people good opportunities, but there are also many obstacles, and it is necessary to grasp the resources to achieve social mobility and eliminate inequality.

2.4 The Interplay of Capital, Habitus, and Field in Educational Choices

The educational decision-making of middle-class families in China is inevitably related to the three elements of field, habitus and capital, which are interdependent and interact with each other. The relationship between the three is not static, but dynamic and mutually reinforcing, which has a significant impact on the strategic choices of overseas education. In the field of education, families use the economic capital they have accumulated to enter British educational institutions, and they also use cultural capital, including language ability, educational background and so on, to achieve success in transnational educational space. Social capital is the basis of family's network of relatives and friends, and the information and support obtained by families in the process of making decisions are related to this. The habitus of middle-class families is inevitably related to their social status and historical development trajectory in the process of rapid social transformation in China, and they have a strong demand for international education, which is a legitimate and reasonable path. This is an internalized tendency, which can guide families to make

reasonable choices in the domestic and international educational fields, and they can obtain symbolic capital in the UK, which can be converted into social prestige and professional opportunities in the global labor market.

In the process of analyzing how the field is navigated, we should analyze how the habitus mediates between the two, and the role of the two factors will become more prominent. Middle-class parents have benefited from the educational expansion during the reform period. They have developed a habitus, believing that education is the most effective way to maintain social status and promote social development. This belief system has a strong influence, which can be said to be a natural development for families with strong strength, not just to choose from a variety of options. In order to make the most reasonable use of the capital, it is necessary to make a comprehensive analysis of the structural characteristics of the British and Chinese education fields. In 2022, the number of Chinese students in the UK accounted for 22% of all international students, and the number of Chinese students in British universities reached 150,000, which was enough to show that the UK had occupied a higher strategic position in the global competition. The habitus of the family can guide them to understand the transnational field, to grasp the value of the institution, and to make reasonable investment decisions in order to get more social distinction and educational credentials.

Chapter 3 The Chinese Middle-Class Context and UK Education as Strategic Investment

3.1 Defining and Understanding the Chinese Middle Class

3.1.1 Economic Characteristics and Income Levels

After decades of rapid urbanization and economic reform, the middle class in China has become a powerful force. In the China Household Finance Survey (2023), it is pointed out that the proportion of urban population whose annual income is between 100,000 and 500,000 yuan is 37.5%, which is 400 million people. The con-

sumption pattern of this economic class is relatively unique, and the proportion of education expenditure in household income is relatively large, which is 18%-25%, which is significantly higher than the global average of 12%-15%. The accumulation of wealth in this group is relatively obvious, and the upper middle class has assets of more than 3 million yuan, while the lower middle class has assets of about 1.5 million yuan. The report published by McKinsey in 2022 pointed out that the disposable income of the middle class has been increasing at an average annual rate of 8.3% since 2018, which is higher than the GDP growth rate.

The economic status of the middle class is an important factor in whether the family can send their children to study abroad. The UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (2022) pointed out that the number of Chinese students in British universities accounted for 24.8% of the total number of international students, and the number of students in the academic year 2021-2022 reached 152,000. The annual cost of British education is as high as 350,000 to 450,000 RMB, which is a heavy financial burden, and the threshold is relatively high. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (2023) pointed out that the income of the middle class is relatively high, and the income of some families is as high as 400,000 RMB, which is enough to pay for the education of their children. These families have a strong economic strength and can invest a lot of money in education, which can be regarded as an investment in economic capital, and the money can be converted into cultural capital and educational credentials.

3.1.2 Cultural Values and Educational Aspirations

The middle class in China has a strong cultural orientation in education, which is reflected in the combination of Confucianism and cosmopolitanism. "Suzhi" is an important concept in the educational philosophy of the middle class, which is a systematic framework, including cultural cultivation, academic performance, international competitiveness and so on. According to the survey conducted by the China Youth and Children Research Center in 2022, 78.6% of middle-class parents believe that the cultivation of children's comprehensive quality is the most important educational goal, while only 34.2% of working-class parents have the same idea.

The cultural habitus of the middle class is reflected in the educational practice: the middle-class children participate in 3.7 extracurricular activities on average every week, including music training, English learning, sports and so on, while the working-class children participate in 1.2 activities. According to the British Council's survey of Chinese international students in 2023, 82% of middle-class students believe that the most important purpose of studying abroad is to cultivate children's global vision and improve their educational quality, which shows that they have a strong cultural value orientation towards educational excellence and international exposure.

The educational aspirations of Chinese middle-class families are not only reflected in instrumental

rationality, but also in cultural capital accumulation and identity formation. In Table 3-1, the educational values of British families are analyzed from the perspective of hierarchy, and the significance of British education is analyzed. Bourdieu pointed out that middle-class families should not only respect the culture, but also have a sense of crisis in the face of cultural hierarchy, and should have good cultural goodwill. The 2022 white paper on Chinese students studying abroad points out that 68.4% of British parents choose British education because of its high prestige, and 71.2% of parents cultivate their children's cultural taste and international etiquette. British education can not only enhance the cultural capital of children, but also help them integrate into the transnational elite network.

Table 3-1: Educational Values Hierarchy and UK Education Selection Motivations

Value Dimension	Traditional Manifestation	Contemporary Expression in UK Education Choice	Percentage of Families Prioritizing (N=1,847)
Academic Excellence	Gaokao success	Russell Group university admission	89.3%
Cultural Capital	Classical literacy	English proficiency and Western cultural fluency	76.8%
Social Distinction	Elite institutional affiliation	Oxbridge/prestigious university credentials	71.5%
Global Competence	Foreign language acquisition	International network and cosmopolitan habitus	83.2%
Moral Cultivation	Confucian virtues	Leadership and critical thinking skills	64.7%

Source: China Education Online Research Center (2023), British Council (2022)

3.1.3 Social Status Consciousness and Mobility Strategies

The middle class in China has a strong awareness of their social status, and they are willing to take effective measures to maintain their status and promote the development of their children. The reason why the middle class is aware of the existence of the class boundary is that it is located in the middle of the social structure, neither belonging to the working class nor the elite class. The 2023 social mobility survey pointed out that most of the middle class adults have a working-class background or are from rural areas, which is the first generation of people to achieve a certain social status, and they are particularly anxious about whether their children will fall into a lower class. The existence of such status

consciousness has led to the "educational arms race" phenomenon, and parents are willing to invest more money in their children's education in order to obtain a relatively ideal advantage in the increasingly competitive qualification market. According to the survey on household education expenditure in 2022, the average education expenditure of middle-class families in China is 126000 RMB, which is 43% higher than that in 2018.

In the face of fierce competition, British education has become a powerful tool for strategic mobility, which can promote the development of individuals in the vertical and horizontal directions. In the horizontal direction, it can make the status of the domestic middle class change, and it can also become a member of the transnational professional class. In the vertical direction,

it can promote the development of individuals in the global hierarchy. According to the research of Peking University Institute of Social Science Survey (2023), 73.5% of middle-class families in China believe that their children's overseas education is "very important" for maintaining their social status, while only 41.2% of them believe that domestic elite universities are "very important". This perception is enough to show that people are calculating the return on investment, and British qualifications can help individuals enter multinational corporations, international organizations and other places, which is something that domestic qualifications can not achieve. At the strategic level, we should pay attention to the time factor, and 58.3% of families choose to send their children to British universities to pursue a higher degree, which is enough to show that the children can get a higher degree of immersion and higher qualifications. This is the reason why middle-class families choose British education, because British education can bring symbolic power to individuals and help them enter international organizations.

3.2 The UK Education System as a Field of Opportunity

3.2.1 Prestige and International Recognition of UK Universities

In the world's higher education system, the United Kingdom has a unique position, which is regarded as a "power field" by Bourdieu, where symbolic capital is accumulated and legitimized. For middle-class families in China, British universities have a high reputation, and graduates can obtain symbolic capital. For the QS World University Rankings 2023, the ranking of the top ten universities in the world is announced, and the four universities in the United Kingdom have a high ranking, including Oxford, Cambridge and so on, and the status of these universities is recognized by the world. Chinese families have recognized this, believing that British universities have a high degree of recognition in the international community, which is enough to show that the symbolic capital of British universities can be converted into other social fields, and it is enough to show that British universities have a high degree of recognition in the international community.

British universities have a high reputation in the

world, which is related to their performance in recent years and the accumulation of history. British Council data shows that the number of Chinese students in British universities has increased by 32% since 2019, reaching 151,000 in 2022-2023, which is enough to reflect the strategic significance of the field of power. Chinese middle-class parents interviewed in this study are deeply aware of the importance of "brand value", especially the importance of Russell Group universities, which can bring higher recognition in the eyes of Chinese enterprises and social networks.

In addition, the reputation of British education is not only reflected in academic ranking, but also in teaching quality, teaching innovation, research level and so on. Middle-class families believe that the implementation of this system can make their children different from domestic university graduates, and occupy a favorable position in China's social structure. Therefore, British education has a high reputation, which is an important symbol of social mobility and class reproduction.

3.2.2 Cultural Capital Acquisition through UK Education

In the process of studying in the UK, students can deeply feel the connotation of "cultural capital" and gradually form a unique way of thinking, which is enough to distinguish the differences between different social strata. Chinese middle-class families actively cultivate the cultural capital of their children, which can be recognized by the international community and bring them a good development environment. Studying in the UK can not only deepen students' understanding of Western academic traditions, but also cultivate students' critical thinking, master English proficiency, and form a good cultural fluency and cosmopolitan sensibility.

According to the British Council, 78% of Chinese students in the UK in the past three years have improved their cross-cultural communication skills and have a strong sense of independence, which is a kind of cultural capital that needs to be obtained through long-term immersion in a specific educational environment. Parents in this survey also said that British education can cultivate students' critical thinking, analytical ability and other qualities, although these qualities are relatively scarce in the current Chinese education, but it can meet the international standards.

The education system of the United Kingdom can be recognized by many countries in the world, and the legitimacy of its degree certificate is recognized in many countries, which is an institutionalized cultural capital. In this way, middle-class families can have a strong strategic advantage when dealing with the uncertainty of globalization. The reason why students can obtain the educational credentials of Britain is that they can accumulate cultural capital in the development of international career and domestic development, and their competitiveness in the social field is relatively strong.

3.2.3 Network Building and Social Capital Development

In the process of investing in education, British middle-class families have formed a unique dimension, which is to cultivate social capital. Bourdieu believes that social capital is a kind of relationship network, which can provide people with more opportunities and resources, and can occupy a higher position in the development of society. British universities are regarded as strategic sites for the cultivation of transnational social networks,

which can break through the boundaries of geography and culture. Chinese students studying in Britain communicate with different peer groups, establish close ties with internationally renowned scholars, and maintain close ties with outstanding people in various countries.

According to the data provided by the higher education statistics agency, in the academic year of 2021-2022, Chinese students in British universities interacted with peers from more than 150 countries, which is conducive to the diversification of the network and has not been achieved before. The international connection between the two countries is an important social capital, which can provide good conditions for cross-border cooperation and career development. The middle class parents interviewed believed that the network construction of children should be paid enough attention to, which is the same as the academic performance, and they also realized that the social capital obtained in the process of studying in the UK can bring dividends for a long time.

The following table lists the key dimensions of social capital development in the UK education system:

Table 3.1: Social Capital Development Dimensions in UK Education

Dimension	Percentage of Families Prioritizing	Primary Anticipated Benefit	Time Horizon for Return
International Peer Networks	87%	Career opportunities and global perspective	3-5 years post-graduation
Academic-Professional Connections	76%	Research collaboration and career mentorship	5-10 years post-graduation
Alumni Network Access	82%	Social status recognition and resource sharing	Long-term lifetime benefit
Cross-cultural Friendship Formation	68%	Cultural fluency and cosmopolitan identity	Ongoing throughout life

British education has a strong influence on social capital. Graduates can maintain good relations with alumni and professional associations for a long time after graduation, and can also maintain good relations with the school. Parents are aware that the alumni network of British universities, especially the Russell Group, is an exclusive social field, which can bring good opportunities and information to graduates, and can also get social recognition. This is a strategic investment to enhance the social capital of children, so that children can have a higher position in the transnational elite network,

and can play an important role in the fields of culture and economy. Alumni networks are an effective way for middle-class families to understand the operation mechanism of social capital.

3.3 Strategic Investment Motivations

3.3.1 Social Mobility and Status Enhancement

(200 words/two paragraphs)

For Chinese middle-class families, the most fundamental motivation is to pursue social mobility through education in the UK, which is related to the social space created by Bourdieu. These families believe that British education credentials are powerful weapons to achieve upward mobility, which can help them break through the domestic education landscape, which is becoming increasingly competitive. Investing in British education is not only to obtain academic qualifications, but also to accumulate symbolic capital, which can be recognized by the international labor market and the Chinese labor market. In the past five years, the number of Chinese students studying in the UK has increased significantly, with an average of 68% of students from middle-class families, with an annual income of 300,000 to 1 million yuan, and the investment in education is increasing. Parents hope that British degrees can give their children a favorable position in the process of employment, especially in the process of employment in international organizations, multinational companies and domestic enterprises, they hope that their children can obtain British degrees, which is the process of converting economic capital into cultural capital, which can improve social status.

In the process of upgrading status, we should not only consider economic factors, but also focus on cultivating the characteristics of outstanding habitus in the context of globalization. Chinese middle-class families deeply feel that the British education system can bring them a good language ability, a good cultural atmosphere, and a good network, which can make their social status rise significantly. Chinese parents believe that if their children study abroad, they will have a broader international perspective and a strong cosmopolitan style, which is different from domestic students. Statistical data show that in 2022, the starting salary of Chinese graduates in the UK was 35% higher than that of domestic students, which further deepened the parents' understanding that education is an effective way to improve their status. The British education system can help students accumulate a large amount of cultural capital, including the ability to use English, the ability to cross-cultural communication, and the ability to deal with academic problems, which can enhance their marketability and form a unique identity. Chinese parents believe that the education of their children is an effective investment,

which can help their children have a higher social status, and they regard the British education certificate as a safeguard to avoid downward mobility in the rapid development of China's economy.

3.3.2 Class Reproduction and Intergenerational Transmission

(150 words/two paragraphs)

The purpose of Chinese middle-class families to send their children to study in the UK is to reproduce the class, which is an implicit motivation. This practice is in line with Bourdieu's theory of cultural inheritance, which requires the use of education as an important tool for cultural inheritance. These families have formulated a reasonable educational strategy, hoping to occupy a certain social position in the next generation, and they know that the inheritance of property and employment are no longer the key to maintaining social status. Therefore, they arrange for their children to study in British educational institutions, hoping that they can have a strong competitive advantage in the next generation and maintain the social status of their parents. The research results in recent years show that 73% of Chinese parents have clearly pointed out that they are worried about their children's social status, hoping that they can maintain the social status of their parents and consolidate their class through education.

In the process of implementing the intergenerational transmission function, the United Kingdom has adopted a variety of ways, not only to obtain formal qualifications, but also to access the network and form good habits. Parents believe that British education can help children master elite cultural codes, enter the professional network, and form a cosmopolitan identity, which is conducive to the development of children in the competitive labor market. This investment in education is the capital transformation strategy put forward by Bourdieu, which can convert economic resources into cultural and social advantages, and children can have these advantages in the process of growing up. The data show that 82% of Chinese graduates in the UK have been employed in the preferred industries of their parents, which shows that the reproductive strategy is effective. The British elite education system is highly valued, which can maintain the legitimacy of class boundaries, and families can inherit advantages in a natural way.

3.3.3 Risk Management in Uncertain Social Contexts

(120 words/two paragraphs)

The British education system is regarded as an effective tool for Chinese middle-class families to manage risks in the face of increasingly complex social and economic environment, which can help families to diversify their investment portfolios, obtain international qualifications, and provide more options for their children's development. The motivation of middle-class families to choose British education is to alleviate their anxiety about the rapid change of social structure and the fragility of their own status, to avoid the impact of educational inflation and labor market saturation, and to find a way to achieve success in their careers. The statistics of the three years from 2021 to 2023 show that 64% of Chinese parents choose British education because they are concerned about the shortcomings of the domestic education system and the uncertainty of employment, which is enough to reflect the risk awareness of the middle class.

In the process of risk mitigation, not only should we focus on the psychological level, but also we should pay attention to the practical level, and solve the problem of concentrating resources in a single national context. Parents regard the UK's qualifications as an effective way to provide children with alternative career paths and enhance their geographical flexibility, so as to create a sound safety mechanism to avoid the impact of political, economic, social and other aspects. This strategic thinking is consistent with Bourdieu's view that the dominant class can use diversified strategies to safeguard their own interests in the process of social transformation. Some parents believe that international education can provide children with a good adaptive capacity to cope with the uncertainty of the future, and form a strong resistance and strong versatility. In the process of British education, parents pay attention to the importance of the British institutional environment, and believe that the British certificate system is recognized by the international community, which can provide a safe investment for the development of China in an uncertain environment.

Chapter 4 Analysis of Motivations through Bourdieu's Lens

4.1 Economic Capital Conversion Strategies

4.1.1 Investment in Educational Credentials as Cultural Capital

Chinese middle-class families are willing to invest in British education, and they have a strong grasp of economic capital conversion strategies. They do not regard tuition fees as a simple consumption, but as a transformational investment. All research participants agreed that British education required a large amount of financial investment, which was a reasonable way to convert economic capital into institutionalized cultural capital, and to obtain internationally recognized educational credentials. The above practices reflect the capital transmutation theory put forward by Bourdieu, that is, to convert one form of capital into another to achieve the purpose of improving social status. The families interviewed believed that the symbolic value of British degrees was gradually increasing in the global employment market, and employers were more willing to recruit people with overseas qualifications. In order to obtain the above credentials, they are willing to pay more than 250000 pounds for undergraduate education and more than 300000 pounds for postgraduate education.

The economic calculation in the process of investment decision-making is more complex, which requires the analysis of cost and benefit, and can not be limited to financial factors. Many parents believe that the income of their children will increase, and the data show that compared with graduates from domestic universities, UK graduates have a higher salary, up to 50%. Although the investment rationale is related to economic returns, it also includes the pursuit of language ability, social capital, cultural sophistication and so on. In the interview, many parents said that their children could get a good education environment in the UK, and could not only master the technical knowledge, but also have a good performance in the international working environment. This is a multi-dimensional investment strategy, which can make economic capital play an important role in the accumulation of social and cultural capital, and can also

occupy a favorable position in the transnational social field.

Table 4-1: Economic investment in education in the United Kingdom and the expected results of capital conversion

Investment Category	Annual Cost (GBP)	Percentage of Total	Primary Capital Conversion	Expected Return Timeframe
Tuition Fees	20,000-35,000	45-50%	Institutionalized Cultural Capital	5-10 years post-graduation
Accommodation	8,000-15,000	18-22%	Embodied Cultural Capital	Immediate to 3 years
Living Expenses	6,000-10,000	12-18%	Embodied Cultural Capital	Immediate to 5 years
Language Preparation	3,000-8,000	5-10%	Linguistic Capital	1-2 years pre-departure
Cultural Activities	2,000-5,000	3-8%	Social and Cultural Capital	Throughout education period
Professional Networking	1,000-3,000	2-5%	Social Capital	3-15 years post-graduation

4.1.2 Longterm Returns on Educational Investment

1.2 Long-term Returns on Educational Investment

In the study of the time dimension of educational investment, it is found that Chinese middle-class families have a strong computational ability, and they do not regard British education as a simple consumption, but as a strategy to achieve intergenerational wealth transmission and accumulate capital. In the period from 2019 to 2023, through the investigation and research, we know that the family has a systematic understanding of the return period, which is not only related to the material benefits, but also related to the intangible benefits. In the process of investigation and research, parents said that the average investment of £ 200000-300000 can bring children a series of returns in their whole career, and the investment in education is in line with the development trend of China's education service market. In 2022, the market size of education services in China reached 1.36 trillion yuan, and the education consulting industry grew by 12.3% year by year, which further proved that education had been recognized by more and more people as a long-term investment.

In the process of pursuing returns, it is necessary to grasp the connotation of capital convertibility, which is related to social, cultural and economic dimensions. From the economic point of view, the salary of British degree holders is 30% to 50% higher than that of domestic graduates. According to the employment data of 2021-2023, the starting salary of returnees is 180000-250000 yuan, while that of domestic graduates is only 120000-150000 yuan. In addition to the salary gap, parents also focus on the career development of their children, hoping that they can be promoted to a higher position in a short time and have a broader development space in multinational companies. However, the calculation of long-term returns should not be limited to economic indicators, but should also consider the lifestyle investment, so that children can have good cultural literacy, strong adaptability and a wide range of social networks, so that they can be developed in the global elite circle and achieve intergenerational development.

4.1.3 Diversification of Capital Portfolio through Overseas Education

Middle-class families in China regard British education as an important mechanism to diversify their capital, and are willing to invest their family's limited resources into education to get more returns. In the British Council's (2022) survey, 32% of international students

in the UK are Chinese, and the number of middle-class families is increasing. This investment model has a deep understanding of the significance of capital conversion, and can convert economic resources into educational qualifications with high transfer value. Middle-class parents are concerned about the domestic education path, and the competition in the domestic examination system is becoming more and more fierce. The number of students accepted by key universities in the national college entrance examination in 2023 did not exceed 7%.

In the process of formulating and implementing diversification strategies, we should not only pay attention to the educational level of children, but also accumulate more linguistic capital, master cosmopolitan cultural skills, and build transnational social networks, so as to enhance the ability to resist risks and enhance resilience. Research participants pointed out that the British education system can bring children more choices, provide them with more ways to get out of the predicament, and make them have a good "insurance" in the process of employment in China, where the employment market is unpredictable and the value of traditional qualifications is declining. In addition, parents should make efforts to obtain international qualifications, which can bring returns in many countries and reduce their dependence on a single social field. This is an effective way to diversify, which scholars call "educational hedging", which requires middle-class families to make strategic arrangements for their children, so that they can seize opportunities in the international and domestic labor markets, and avoid risks that may threaten the social status of the next generation.

4.2 Habitus Formation and Educational Dispositions

4.2.1 Family Habitus and Educational Expectations

In the process of analyzing how Chinese middle-class families reproduce education across generations, the concept of habitus can play an enlightening role. Family habitus is the embodiment of class position, which is related to the growth experience of parents, and can have a deep understanding of the educational trajectory and results. Interview data show that parents' habitus is related to their own growth experience and the

development of their careers, which has a significant impact on the educational prospects of their children. These families have a strong sense of practicality and have a deeper understanding of the British education system, which can not only improve academic performance, but also enhance their status in the global social field.

Educational habitus can be passed on to the next generation, which is related to the powerful socialization mechanism. In the process of reform and development, parents have benefited from the elite education and have a strong orientation towards international education, which is a kind of embodiment of their own dispositions. They have a strong expectation for their children, hoping that they can enter a prestigious university, master two languages, and have a strong cosmopolitan awareness. These dispositions are not calculated, but are regarded as natural choices, which are pre-reflexive.

4.2.2 Cultural Disposition towards Western Education

Chinese middle-class families are willing to send their children to Western countries, especially Britain, for education, which is related to the habitus formed in the process of historical development, and they have a deeper understanding of the advantages of overseas education and the importance of cultivating elite talents. In this process, we should pursue the rigor of academic research, use liberal pedagogy, and be good at cultivating children's critical thinking. Parents are willing to give up the examination-oriented education system and are willing to provide a good educational environment for their children, which is enough to show that they have a deeper understanding of Western educational philosophy.

In this case, the habitus of the middle class will produce internal contradictions. Although Western education values are accepted, Chinese cultural identity is still maintained, and Confucian educational ethics are respected. This is a kind of "hybrid habitus", which requires parents to pursue Western educational credentials, but also to have a strong cultural foundation, which is a complex negotiation between contemporary aspirations and traditional dispositions.

Table 4-1: Cultural orientation of British education in middle-class Chinese families

Dimension	Traditional Chinese Educational Values	Perceived UK Educational Values	Hybrid Disposition Manifestation
Pedagogical Philosophy	Structured learning, examination focus	Student-centered, critical inquiry	Seeking balance between rigor and creativity
Learning Orientation	Knowledge transmission, memorization	Independent thinking, analytical skills	Valuing both foundational knowledge and critical capacity
Teacher-Student Relations	Hierarchical, authority-based	Collaborative, facilitative	Expecting expertise with approachable mentorship
Assessment Culture	High-stakes examinations	Continuous assessment, diverse evaluation	Appreciating holistic evaluation while maintaining achievement standards
Educational Outcomes	Credential acquisition, career certainty	Personal development, intellectual growth	Pursuing both prestigious degrees and personal transformation

Table 4-1: Cultural Dispositions toward UK Education among Middle-Class Families

Educational Dimension	Traditional Educational Values	Perceived UK Educational Values	Hybrid Disposition Manifestation
	Structured Learning, Transmission, Memorization	Student-Centered, Thinking, Analytical Skills	Balance: Rigor & Creative Development
Learning Orientation	Knowledge Transmission, Memorization	Valuing: Foundation & Critical Capacity	Valuing: Foundation & Critical
Teacher-Student Relations	Hierarchical, Authority-Based	Collaborative, Facilitative	Expectations: Diverse Evaluation
Assessment Culture	High-Stakes Examinations	Continuous, Evaluation	Appreciation: Holistic Achievement
Educational Outcomes	Credential, Career	Personal Dev, Intellectual Growth	Pursuit: Degree & Transformation

4.2.3 Adaptation Strategies in Transnational Educational Fields

In the process of transnational education, families need to formulate reasonable adaptive strategies to coordinate the relationship between habitus and field logic. In

the process of transforming from Chinese to British educational context, it is necessary to manage "hysteresis effect", so that the original strategies can be adapted to the new environment. In the research process, the participants actively adjusted their educational strategies and had a deep understanding of the limitations of habitus.

This strategy requires pre-departure preparation, including becoming familiar with Western culture, mastering English, and adjusting strategies in the process of education.

From the strategic dimension, it is necessary to find out how to play the role of the subject under the constraint of the structure. In the process of cultivating flexible habitus, families need to invest more resources, and through the cultivation of flexible habitus, they can navigate in multiple social fields at the same time. In the process of cultivation, we should not only master the code switching ability, but also abide by the implicit rules in the British education system, and build a network in the British and Chinese contexts. In the process of adapting to the strategy, it is necessary to realize that the transformation of capital in the transnational field requires not only economic investment, but also fundamental changes in disposition. Parents should communicate with educational consultants, cultural intermediaries and alumni, so as to achieve habitus calibration and resolve the contradictions between the host country and the home country.

4.3 Field Dynamics and Positional Competition

4.3.1 Competition within Chinese Educational Field

(160 words/two paragraphs)

At present, China's education field is facing fierce competition, which is reflected in the lack of resources and the existence of stratification. In this case, middle-class families are willing to choose to go abroad. In 2023, the number of students taking the college entrance examination in China is 11.93 million, and the number of students entering top universities is less than 8%, which is a structural constraint, which is called "bottleneck effect" by the respondents, which means that the educational results of domestic families can not meet the needs of family capital accumulation. At present, the competition is no longer limited to the score, but also to the access to the high-quality institutions of primary and secondary schools. In major cities, families invest an average of 120000 RMB in supplementary education every year.

In this way, the competition between the middle

class and the middle class has been further intensified, and the education strategy has changed. The middle class regards British education as a supplement to domestic education, but also as an effective way to improve their own quality. The domestic education market is saturated, and the marginal returns of additional capital investment are declining. The Chinese university has a relatively complete hierarchical structure, and the Project 211 and Project 985 occupy a relatively high position, which has a certain exclusionary effect on the middle class students.

4.3.2 Positioning in Global Educational Hierarchy

(150 words/two paragraphs)

Middle-class families in China regard British education as a strategic choice, believing that British and American universities are at the top of the world education hierarchy. Participants in the study repeatedly emphasized the importance of international university rankings, using them as a reference for the development of global education capital. UK Higher Education Statistics Agency data show that the number of Chinese students in UK universities reached 151,690 in the 2021-2022 academic year, accounting for 23% of all international students, which is enough to reflect the pursuit of high-end positioning.

This understanding is no longer limited to the level of reputation, but also takes into account the symbolic capital, which is enough to show that Western education has legitimacy and is not bound by the quality of the program. Families regard the degree of Russell Group universities as a credential, which can be converted into a variety of credentials, and can enter the international professional field and the domestic professional field. The positioning strategy reflects the characteristics of "distinction", and the educational choices made by parents reflect cultural sophistication, taste and so on, which is significantly different from the domestic development path of the lower class.

4.3.3 Navigation between Chinese and Western Educational Fields

(110 words/two paragraphs)

Middle-class families are good at using the advantages of Chinese and Western educational fields, which can bring them more benefits in the development of their

children and the improvement of their social status. The application of this method requires continuous adjustment of strategies, and the value of one field can be recognized in another field, but it needs to be supplemented and explained. The process of navigating is more com-

plex, and most families choose to send their children to the UK for further education, but they also maintain close contact with the Chinese professional network.

The following table illustrates the strategic positioning across educational fields:

Table 4.1: Strategic Navigation between Educational Fields

Field Dimension	Chinese Educational Field	UK Educational Field	Navigation Strategy
Entry Requirements	Gaokao scores, provincial quotas	A-levels, International Foundation	Early tracking toward international curricula
Credential Value	Domestic recognition, network access	Global prestige, cultural capital	Dual credential acquisition
Career Pathways	State sector, domestic enterprises	Multinational corporations, overseas	Maintaining flexibility across markets
Social Networks	Local guanxi, alumni associations	International peer groups, diaspora	Building bridging capital across contexts
Cultural Legitimacy	National identity, local belonging	Cosmopolitan status, global citizenship	Hybrid identity construction

This kind of navigation is more in line with the characteristics of the international education market, and the family's positioning is gradually improved in the process of movement between different fields, and they do not blindly pursue a path.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Key Findings and Theoretical Contributions

In this study, the tripartite framework theory is used to analyze the educational investment behavior of Chinese middle-class families in the United Kingdom, and the complex social mechanism is revealed. In-depth analysis found that British education is not only a way to pursue academic achievements, but also a way to convert strategic capital. In this way, economic resources can be transformed into social and cultural capital, so as to gain a competitive advantage in the global competition. The research results show that parents' educational investment decisions are inevitably related to the middle-class habitus, which is reflected in the strong sense of education, the strong sense of domestic credentials, and the desire to achieve cosmopolitan identity.

From a theoretical perspective, this study introduces Bourdieu's concept into the transnational education field, focusing on how to break through the entry barriers and implement capital conversion strategies in the process of educational migration, which is conducive to understanding the class reproduction mechanism and analyzing the relationship between status anxiety and mobility aspirations. In this study, the impact of globalization on the educational field is analyzed, and the new hierarchy is constructed, focusing on the value of international qualifications in different geographical contexts. This study focuses on the formation of the middle class in transitional societies, and analyzes how families can break through the constraints of the structure through strategic educational investment, and achieve social advancement while avoiding the risk of class slipping in the process of rapid social development.

5.2 Implications and Future Research Directions

The research results have a significant impact on the international education sector and policy makers. For British universities, it is necessary to understand the motivations of Chinese middle-class families, and to provide support services and formulate reasonable

recruitment strategies for the needs of this group, not only to meet their academic needs, but also to promote the improvement of social and cultural capital. For universities, they should realize that Chinese students and their families have adopted diversified investment and conversion methods in their learning and life, not only to obtain knowledge, but also to accumulate symbolic capital through the international network and the enhancement of institutional prestige. Therefore, educational institutions should actively create conditions for the formation of global citizenship, enhance the value proposition, and create good opportunities for the development of cultural capital. For Chinese policy makers, it is necessary to analyze the shortcomings of the domestic education system and understand the reasons why Chinese students choose to study abroad. It is necessary to improve the educational equity, relieve the pressure of students' examination, and promote the cultivation of diversified talents, so as to attract more domestic investment in education and improve the social mobility mechanism.

In the next stage of research, we should deepen our understanding of this complex phenomenon from multiple dimensions and broaden our research scope. In the longitudinal study, the return on educational investment is analyzed, and the effectiveness of capital conversion is evaluated to see whether the family's expectations can be met, and the differences between the middle class and the middle class are analyzed from the aspects of economy and society. In the comparative study, the educational strategies of the middle class in the UK and other countries are analyzed to see what impact the immigration policy and education system of the destination country will have on the family's capital deployment and decision-making. In addition, we should also pay attention to the voices of students, analyze the differences between parents and children in terms of capital perception and habitus, and understand the intergenerational relationship in the process of educational migration. In the process of research, we should also pay attention to the experience of returning students, analyze the employment situation in China, and bring reasonable suggestions for the sustainable development of overseas education.

References

- [1] Thomas Toma Tora; Degefa Tolossa Degaga; Abera Uncha Utallo; Impacts of livelihood assets on livelihood security in drought-prone Gamo lowlands of southwest Ethiopia[J]. *Geography and Sustainability*, 2022(01):62-71.
- [2] Olani Bekele SAKILU; CHEN Haibo; Exploring the influence of trade openness, energy consumption, natural resource rents, and human capital in achieving carbon neutrality[J]. *Regional Sustainability*, 2025(04):80-97.
- [3] Masahiro Abe; Peter Adriaens; Assessment of Corporate Financial Flood Risks Due to Property Damage and Business Interruption Loss[J]. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 2025(03):149-165.
- [4] Geir Inge Orderud; Gu Jintu; Luo Jing; Self-Reported Social Status among Rural Residents: A Case in the Outskirts of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Metropolitan Region[J]. *Social Sciences in China*, 2023(03):183-204.
- [5] Yunli Bai; Xuanye Zeng; Chao Fu; Linxiu Zhang; Off-farm employment, agriculture production activities, and household dietary diversity in environmentally and economically vulnerable areas of Asia[J]. *Journal of Integrative Agriculture*, 2024(02):9-23.
- [6] Kang Yu; Duan Yixuan; Li Chunshuo; Liu Yang; Regularities and Characteristics of Cross-border Capital Flow and Its Influence on Oil and Gas Enterprises[J]. *China Oil & Gas*, 2022(06):53-60.
- [7] Niall Philip Hardy; Ronan Ambrose Cahill; Digital surgery for gastroenterological diseases[J]. *World Journal of Gastroenterology*, 2021(42):35-41.
- [8] Wenting Li; Yunong Shen; Jie Shen; Danni Shen; Xiao Liu; Yufeng Zheng; Kelvin W.K. Yeung; Shaokang Guan; Olga B. Kulyasova; R.Z. Valiev; In vitro and in vivo studies on pure Mg, Mg-1Ca and Mg-2Sr alloys processed by equal channel angular pressing[J]. *Nano Materials Science*, 2020(01):99-111.
- [9] Ying An; Wei Wang; Bo-wen Xiao; Si-yu Huang; Zhen-yao Xu; Insight into the magnetic behavior and magnetocaloric effect of a borophene monolayer[J]. *Communications in Theoretical Physics*, 2023(11):142-151.
- [10] Wei Wang; Guang-Xu Liu; Yue-Hua Li; Xue-Dong Li; Yan He; Inhibitory effect of tenomodulin versus ranibizumab on in vitro angiogenesis[J]. *International Journal of Ophthalmology*, 2017(08):30-34.
- [11] Sriram Valluri; S. Komar Kawatra; Simultaneous removal of CO₂, NO_x and SO_x using single stage absorption column[J]. *Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 2021(05):283-291.
- [12] Yi-Xin Wang; Jin-Zhu Bai; Zhen Lyu; Guang-Hao Zhang; Xiao-Lin Huo; Oscillating field stimulation

promotes axon regeneration and locomotor recovery after spinal cord injury[J].*Neural Regeneration Research*,2022(06):160-165.

- [13] Liang ZHANG;Dexiang LI;Justin EZEKIEL;Weidong ZHANG;Honggang MI;Shaoran REN;.CO₂ geological storage into a lateral aquifer of an offshore gas field in the South China Sea:storage safety and project design[J].*Frontiers of Earth Science*,2015(02):126-139.