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**Chinese-language Cyberspace:  
Overseas Chinese Cyber Nationalism  
and Migrant Identity**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the multi-faceted online nationalism manifested by Chinese overseas transnational migrants. It establishes the relationship between migrant nationalism and identity by interrogating the roles that the internet plays in the migrant identity construction process in the New Zealand context.

The research arises from the contention between the political and cultural explanations of the highly noticeable displays of nationalism by the overseas Chinese. Transcending national borders and time-zones, the internet is a quintessential medium enabling migrants to strengthen ties with the homeland, and to voice their allegiance to China. The internet therefore opens up new grounds and innovative angles to re-evaluate how transnational media influences migrant nationalism and identity construction.

My analysis is based on data from a multi-method approach encompassing qualitative content analysis of user-generated online texts, an online survey to ascertain the prevalence of nationalism and internet use preferences, and semi-structured in-depth interviews to get migrant netizens perspectives and perceptions of their lived experience.

Findings from the research show that the multi-dimensional overseas Chinese cyber nationalism is much more wide-spread among Chinese migrant netizens than widely assumed, and the identification with China is prevalent. The Chinese-language cyberspace as a transnational social field provides space for migrant netizens to create an imagined Cyber China and enables them to live parallel lives in the online and the physical worlds simultaneously. The constant tension exerted by the twin forces of

Cyber China and migrant lived reality engender an ongoing renegotiation of identity. For many, it is a contest between acquired “kiwiness” and inherited / reconstructed “Chineseness”. Findings suggest that Cyber China fosters a sense of being “authentic but privileged Chinese” among migrant netizens, whereas the lived experience in the host country and online ethnic media discourse often gives rise to “a sense of insecurity” amongst migrants. This research argues that overseas Chinese cyber nationalism is an assertive form of identity claims expressed during the migrant netizens’ pursuit for a new and secure overseas Chinese identity. It is a mechanism that they employ, though not always consciously, to reassure themselves that they are supported by their homeland on the one hand and empowered by ethnic solidarity on the other.

This current research has made both empirical and theoretical contributions to the studies of transnationalism and overseas Chinese nationalism. Empirically, a new dimension has been added by the presentation of evidence that online homeland media is a crucial factor comprising the transnational Chinese-language cyberspace. On the theoretical front, re-evaluating the current discussions on transnationalism, this research argues that migrant identity is situational. What type of identity is articulated by migrants largely depends on whether such an identity claim can provide a sense of security to them in particular situations. In reconsidering the nature of online nationalism, the research provides an alternative nuanced understanding of transnational migrant identity construction.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **List of Publication and Presentations Generated from This PhD Research**

During the course of my PhD research, parts of my findings were publicly presented at a number of international and national conferences. All the submissions were peer-reviewed before acceptance. I benefitted from the scholarly feedback and was able to improve my thesis accordingly. Below is a list.

### **Peer-reviewed Journal Article**

Yin, Hang. 2013. "Chinese-language Cyberspace, Homeland Media and Ethnic Media: A Contested Space for Being Chinese". *New Media & Society*. First published on September 24, 2013. DOI: 10.1177/1461444813505363.

### **Peer-reviewed Conference Proceedings**

Yin, Hang. 2012. "Online Homeland Media and Chinese Migrant Netizens in New Zealand: The Construction of Being "Authentic Chinese"." In *Proceedings of the 1st Annual International Conference on Journalism & Mass Communication (JMComm)*, edited by Keith Kenney, 70-78. Singapore: GSTF JMComm. DOI: 10.5176/2301-3729\_JMComm12.28.

### **International Conference Papers**

Yin, Hang. 2011. "Red, Yellow, Blue: Dimensions of Overseas Chinese Cyber Nationalism." Paper presented at NZASIA International Conference. Palmerston North, 2-4 July.

Yin, Hang. 2012. "The New Media and Chinese Migrant Netizens: Socialisation, Integration, and Parallel Lives." Paper presented at Pathways to Metropolis in the 21st Century International Conference. Auckland, 24-26 October.

Yin, Hang. 2013. "Cyber China and Parallel Lives: Internet Use by Chinese Migrant Netizens in New Zealand." Paper presented at Crises, 'Creative Destruction' and the Global Power and Communication Orders: International Association For Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Conference. Dublin, 25-29 June.





## Chapter One: Introduction

On Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2008, about 4000 Chinese migrants gathered on the Aotea Square in Auckland CBD. The atmosphere is one of patriotic fervour. Waving Chinese national flags and chanting the Chinese national anthem, these migrants presented their intense nationalistic sentiments towards their pervious homeland. The aim, as expressed in their slogans and placards, was to support the Beijing Olympic Games and to protect the “sacred flame” of the Olympic torch relay, which had caused demonstrations and controversies around the world.<sup>1</sup> However, the fact was that the “sacred flame” never even came to New Zealand soil – the closest Olympic torch relay activities actually took place some 2000 kilometres away in Sydney, Australia. This large scale manifestation of nationalism among Chinese migrants in Auckland caused some concern among the local residents and aroused local mainstream media attention in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> In fact, due to the organiser’s effort to de-politicise the event, the gathering can be described as a cheerful feast for Chinese migrants to express their affections for China; it was rather peaceful apart from a minor clash between pro-China migrants and pro-Tibet independence activists.

However, the scene in cyberspace was very different. The level of Chinese nationalism displayed online was fervent and sometimes extreme. During the months leading to the Beijing Olympics, postings calling for the protection of China’s

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, New York Times’ report on the controversies caused by the torch relay. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/world/europe/07torch.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/world/europe/07torch.html?_r=0) .

<sup>2</sup> See reports in New Zealand local mainstream media. <http://tvnz.co.nz/content/1746418>, <http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411749/1747034> , [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10505378](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10505378).

sovereignty and the solidarity of the Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*) overwhelmed various New Zealand-based Chinese-language online forums. In fact, the cyber nationalism among Chinese migrants is generally bolder and much more assertive than the manifestations of street nationalism in the host country. Cyber discourse typically includes political aspiration for a stronger and united China, condemning independence movements in Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. It presents chauvinistic sentiments based on essentialised Chinese ethnicity and the perceived superiority of Chinese culture. It often involves the fanatical protection of China's image as a rising world power.

International literature on nationalism among migrants has been a topic attracting considerable academic attention. What is intriguing about the phenomenon is that despite their status as permanent residents or citizens in the host country, migrants are found to engage in "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1992) through political participation in their home countries (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). With the development of the internet in the last twenty years, some scholars point out that the internet has been used as a space where nationalism thrives, especially for nations with large overseas diasporas (Eriksen 2007). This has made cyberspace a significant site for investigating migrant nationalism and identity construction.

The main aim of this PhD research is to provide a deep understanding of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, and to explore the role that the internet plays in the nationalism and identity construction of Chinese migrants in New Zealand. I shall examine this question by exploring different dimensions of migrant nationalism manifested in the Chinese-language cyberspace. Such an approach allows me to move beyond many of the existing studies which tend to treat migrant nationalism as strictly

political (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller 2005; Ong 2008).

Incorporating various notions of nationalism based on existing literature – the political, the cultural, the ethnic, the essentialist and so on, it is possible for me to elucidate the relations between migrant nationalism and identity construction of Chinese migrants. In doing so, this research not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism and identity construction among migrants, but also enriches the knowledge pertaining to the Chinese transnational migrants in New Zealand empirically.

Cyber nationalism of Chinese migrants is multi-dimensional and varies from individual to individual, and from situation to situation. For instance, while many migrants manifested political nationalism, asserting China's sovereignty during the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands between China and Japan, the same group called for ethnic solidarity in face of natural disasters such as the 2011 Christchurch earthquake which claimed a significant number of Chinese victims. Furthermore, perceived discrimination in the host country can cause both nationalism based on the essentialised notion of Chinese ethnicity and stimulate political aspirations for a stronger China. Therefore, the investigation of such a complex phenomenon requires an exploratory research design. A qualitative multi-method approach is employed so that I can analyse online manifestations of the multi-dimensional migrant nationalism, while at the same time delve into the lived experience of migrants themselves, further exploring their perceptions of their nationalistic feelings from their own perspectives.

Chinese-language cyberspace is a deterritorialised platform for Chinese migrant netizens to participate in transnational activities. Synthesising online objective manifestations and migrant subjective perspectives, this thesis will illustrate the role

of the internet as a transnational social field in the identity construction of Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand. In this sense, the internet allows this research to provide a nuanced understanding of identity construction as a driving force of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism.

## **1.1 Research Background and Context**

### *Overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism*

The resurgence of Chinese nationalism since the 1990s has attracted much academic and media attention in recent years (Gries 2005; Hughes 2006; He and Guo 2000).

While Western critics and media are quick to condemn Chinese nationalism as irrational, chauvinistic, and aggressive (Osnos 2008; Yang and Zheng 2012; Xin 2010), much scholarly effort has been made to explain the phenomenon, usually from a political studies point of view. Some attribute nationalism to the need for the Chinese government to legitimise its rule after the bankruptcy of communist ideology after the Cultural Revolution (Christensen 1996). Others, though, while agreeing with this notion of government sponsored nationalism to an extent, also point out that such a top-down analysis gives too little credit for popular participation. Some scholars further highlight the fact that popular Chinese nationalism has taken a new form that is difficult for the Chinese government to harness (Gries 2004; Hughes 2000; Liu 2006).

What has been largely overlooked in this academic discussion is nationalism manifested amongst Chinese migrants who reside outside China. With the internet, it is now much easier for Chinese migrants around the world to participate in transnational activities concerning their homeland. As Hughes cogently argues, with

cyberspace, nationalism has taken the form of transnational campaigns for action to defend the motherland among overseas Chinese (Hughes 2000).

Residing in various host countries such as New Zealand, Chinese migrants are different from their counterparts in China whose nationalism is sometimes seen as the result of restricted and superficial encounter with the West and Western media (Zhao 1998; Zhang 1998). Chinese migrants in New Zealand have generally enjoyed the lived experience of one of the most democratic and free countries in the world and are well-informed by the liberal worldview of the West. Nonetheless, they are no less nationalistic than their peers in China, and sometimes Chinese migrants are even more articulate and assertive in their display of nationalistic sentiments. In fact, some scholars have noticed that nationalistic information is often disseminated from overseas Chinese population to China via the internet (Hughes 2000; Wu 2007). So far, there is a gap in the current literature as to the content of and the reasons for such assertive nationalism among Chinese migrants.

#### *Chinese-language media and migrant identity construction*

Media have been identified as a powerful factor in the formation and sustenance of identity among Chinese migrants (Suryadinata 1997; Sun 2006). In New Zealand, the development of Chinese-language media have been evolving along and interacting with Chinese migrant identity. The identity of Chinese migrants in New Zealand has gone through three phases since the first Chinese arrived in the country in the mid-19th century – the “sojourners phase” from 1860s to the late 1940s, the “model minority phase” from 1950s to 1970s, and the phase of “emergent multiple identities”, starting from late 1980s to present (Ip and Pang 2005).

During the first “sojourners phase”, the sentiment of “fallen leaves returning to the ground” (*luoye guigen*) was widely shared among the early Chinese migrants who were keen on earning some money and returning to China. Even though the Chinese population in New Zealand was small, with only 2,147 Chinese as shown in the census (Ip 1995, 173), Chinese-language print media flourished robustly during that time (Ng and Murphy 1997, 272; Ip 2006; Sedgwick 1985). Reflecting the sojourners identity of Chinese migrants, the content of the newspaper was overwhelmingly focused on Chinese news (Ip 2006). What is more important is that these newspapers also helped to construct a solidary Chinese identity among these early migrants (Ip 2006; Sedgwick 1985).

Similar patterns of the mutual impact between identity of Chinese migrants and Chinese-language media can be found in the “model minority phase”, when the Chinese in New Zealand were mostly assimilated and identified themselves as New Zealanders. As opposed to earlier Chinese-language newspapers which exclusively focused on China, the few newspapers that remained reported mostly on New Zealand and the local Chinese community. The newspapers fostered a strong sense of belonging to the host country before publications ceased totally in the early 1970s, when the Chinese-language media went into a dormant period with the decline of Chinese literacy competence amongst the local-born population (Ip 2006; Ng and Murphy 1997).

From the late 1980s, large numbers of new Chinese migrants came to New Zealand, which significantly changed the demographic profile of the Chinese population in the country. Consequently, New Zealand witnessed the mushrooming of Chinese-language media in almost all forms possible – print, radio, television, and online

media since the 1990s (Ip 2006; Li 2009, 57). These new Chinese migrants tend to identify with both the home and the host countries – developing multiple and sometimes hybrid identities (Ip and Pang 2005). The multiplicity of the Chinese-language media best exemplifies the multiple and transnational nature of the ongoing identity construction of the Chinese migrants (Voci 2006).

Empirical studies mentioned above established the closely intertwining relationship between the Chinese-language media and identity construction of Chinese migrants in New Zealand, yet little research has so far been done to fully explore the interaction between the internet and migrant identity construction. While many studies have been conducted to investigate how ethnic online media in the host country have influenced migrant integration and identity construction, few have addressed the growing momentum of online media based in China with regard to their influence on overseas Chinese. With the phenomenal development in communication technology, migrants now have unprecedented easy access to online media based in China, which has been growing fast and is an integral part of the Chinese-language cyberspace. After all, when local media in New Zealand cannot meet their needs, the Chinese migrants can always resort to home-grown media in China through the internet (Ip 2006).

Therefore, to fully explore the potential of the internet as transnational media requires one to incorporate the analysis of homeland media. By looking into the Chinese-language cyberspace encompassing both online homeland and ethnic media, this research contributes significantly to a deep and holistic understanding of the relationship between the internet and identity construction of Chinese migrants.



## **1.2 New Chinese Migrant Netizens and Overseas Chinese Cyber Nationalism**

The targeted research cohort is new Chinese migrants. In this section, I will discuss the significance of researching this particular group. At the same time, key terms are explained and operational definitions are provided. This helps to define the scope of this current study and explains the aim and objectives of the research.

### *The “transnationals” – new Chinese migrant netizens*

The Chinese population in New Zealand is diverse in terms of place of origin, language, religion, political affiliation, as well as culture. This research specifically targets the so-called “new Chinese migrants” from the People’s Republic of China (henceforth China) who immigrated to New Zealand since late 1980s. Several reasons make this particular cohort a significant research target.

Firstly, the China-born Chinese population has increased significantly since 1986 when New Zealand changed its immigration policy. The policy, for the first time in New Zealand’s history, adopted immigrant selection criteria based on personal merit such as health, education, and occupation and discarded the previous criteria based on race and country of origin (Lidgard, Bedford, and Goodwin 1998; Ip 1995). Due to the policy change, an unprecedented number of migrants from China – among many other “non-traditional” sources countries of Asia – came to New Zealand, and significantly changed the ethnic composition of the country’s population. The number of China-born migrants increased from 4,944 to 78,114 between 1986 and 2006 (Table 1.1). According to the 2006 census, 1.9 per cent of New Zealand’s total

population was born in mainland China.<sup>3</sup> This percentage of China-born migrants in the total population is higher than any other OECD country (Collins 2011). In terms of absolute number, China has become one of the largest source countries for New Zealand's overall immigrant intake (number of permanent residency approvals), only second to Great Britain, which has always been the largest source country (Liu 2011).

Table 1. 1: New Zealand Residents Born in China (PRC), 1986-2006

Year	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
<b>China-born population</b>	4,944	9,222	19,521	38,949	78,114
<b>Total NZ Population</b>	3,307,084	3,434,950	3,681,546	3,820,749	4,143,279
<b>Percentage</b>	0.15%	0.27%	0.53%	1.02%	1.89%

*Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2006 Census of Population and Dwelling; 2001 Census: People Born Overseas; 1996 Census of Population and Dwelling.*

This cohort of new Chinese migrants is fundamentally different from their predecessors who immigrated to New Zealand in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and who are usually referred to as “old settlers” (Ip 1995). The early Chinese migrants came to New Zealand as gold-miners from the war devastated and impoverished Southern China in 1860s (Ng 1999). Similar to their counterparts who migrated to North America and Europe, these early migrants can be best described as sojourners, with the aim of earning some money and returning to China, (Ip 1995; Hing 1994; Siu 1952). Eventually, some of these early Chinese migrants did not go back to China and instead took up permanent residence in New Zealand, working as shopkeepers or

<sup>3</sup> The New Zealand census scheduled in 2011 was postponed due to the Christchurch earthquake. The latest census was conducted in 2013, and data were not yet available when this thesis was written. However, based on population projection, the number of China-born migrants is estimated to be much higher than it was in 2006 due to immigration [http://www.stats.govt.nz/tools\\_and\\_services/nzdotstat/population-projections-tables.aspx#national](http://www.stats.govt.nz/tools_and_services/nzdotstat/population-projections-tables.aspx#national).

market gardeners (Ng 1999). From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1980s, very few Chinese immigrated to New Zealand due to its very restrictive immigration policies towards Chinese,<sup>4</sup> and the local Chinese community remained small and stable (Ip 1995). After generations, these “settlers” were largely assimilated into New Zealand, at the cost of losing their Chinese cultural heritage. The lack of new arrivals from China not only cut the links with the homeland, but also impeded the inflow of genuine Chinese culture and led to the loss of language skills among the old settlers – many do not even have a basic command of Chinese language (Ip 2006, 182). Echoing studies on migrant Chinese in other part of the world, the Chinese old settlers in New Zealand were also a law-abiding, high-achieving group, maintaining their status of “model minority” (Ip 1995, 1996; Ip and Pang 2005; Osajima 2005).

In contrast, the new Chinese migrants are mostly young and highly-educated – many are middle-class professionals or business entrepreneurs. Their transferable skills and internationally recognised qualifications contribute to their high mobility. Like many new migrant groups in various host countries, these new Chinese migrants are neither “sojourners” nor “settlers”, but “transnationals” maintaining multi-local ties with the host and the home countries (Ip and Friesen 2001; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). These transnational Chinese migrants not only physically travel between the home and the host countries frequently, they also participate in transnational political, economic, and cultural activities. Furthermore, compared to their largely assimilated, low-profile “model minority” predecessors, the new Chinese migrants are more articulate and assertive (Ip 1995). Sometimes their high-profile actions put them under the limelight

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<sup>4</sup> Arguably, the most notorious example was the 1881 Anti-Chinese Act, which required a 10-pound poll tax for every Chinese coming into New Zealand. The tax was later raised to 100 pounds in 1896. Due to a series of restrictive immigration policies, the already small Chinese population dwindled from 5,004 in 1881 to 2,147 in 1916. See (Ip 1995, 166-73).

and cause concerns among the local mainstream population. One such example was the pro-Beijing Olympics demonstration as described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

Their recent immigration experience also means that these new migrants' memory of the previous homeland, i.e. China, is still vivid and fresh (Sun 2002). Their cultural background and language skills encourage them to consume Chinese culture with ease through transnational media. For these transnational migrants, the media landscape is much larger compared with that enjoyed by their predecessors. As such, this mostly young, articulate, and tech-savvy cohort makes a relevant and very important research subject in the investigation of Chinese migrant identity formation in New Zealand.

*Chinese migrant netizens* in this research are defined as immigrants from China who have lived in New Zealand for at least twelve months at the time of this study and access the internet at the place they live.<sup>5</sup> This group includes Chinese citizens who hold student or work visas, Chinese citizens who are permanent residents in New Zealand, and New Zealand citizens who originally immigrated from China.

#### *Overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism*

Scholars have furnished a great diversity of understandings of nationalism. It has been discussed as modern, primordial, perennial, cultural, political, and as socially constructed among other notions (Gellner 1997, 2006; Anderson 2006a; Eriksen 1993; Hobsbawm 1992; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983;

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<sup>5</sup> According to International Organisation of Migration under the United Nation, migrant is defined as "an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the courses, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate". See <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/key-migration-terms-1.html#Migrant>.

Hutchinson 2003; Smith 2010; Hastings 1997). Chinese nationalism is a complex phenomenon. In Gries' view, a comprehensive understanding of Chinese nationalism listens to all voices (Gries 2004). Therefore, an operational definition is needed to guide this current study. Details of the existing literature on nationalism and the development of this operational definition are discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.

For this research, *nationalism* is first and foremost a set of belief, practices, and identity claims which are historically rooted and are used to maintain sovereignty, unity and identity for a population whose members, through collective imagining, consider themselves as belonging to a community called the Nation. Its manifestations encompass political, cultural, as well as primordial and essentialist ethnic claims. Based on this definition of nationalism, *overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism* in this research refers to nationalism that is articulated in cyberspace by Chinese migrant netizens who reside outside China.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the research is to provide a deep understanding of nationalism manifested online by overseas Chinese, and to explore the relationship between nationalism and migrant identity construction by investigating the roles that the internet plays in the identity construction process. The assumption that the internet is a potent information tool which could transform societies is a common belief held by both scholars who study it and the netizens who regularly use it. Using the internet as an angle and site of researching Chinese migrants, this research seeks to elucidate the relationship

between the three parties, namely the overseas Chinese netizens, the Chinese-language cyberspace, and the identity construction of Chinese migrant netizens. In order to achieve this aim, specific objectives are outlined in the three themes below.

*Cyber nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens*

This research seeks to explore the predominant nationalistic sentiment routinely displayed in overseas Chinese-language websites by migrant netizens. Some scholars point out the importance of the every-day endemic modern nationalism. The often “invisible” and “hidden” nature of banal nationalism – the unwaved flags for instance – makes it even more powerful because it remains largely unchallenged and exists almost at a subliminal level (Billig 1995). Furthermore, identity and the sense of belonging are articulated only when the connection to a collective – in this case the Nation – is threatened (Yuval-Davis 2003). However, despite the fact that connections between the migrant and the homeland have become stronger than ever due to the links and networks enabled by the internet, Chinese nationalism has increasingly become “visible” and assertive in the Chinese-language cyberspace. In this part of the research, the specific objectives are as follows,

- To uncover the themes and dimensions of migrant nationalism from their online nationalistic discourses,
- To identify the hot-button issues and events that trigger overseas Chinese nationalism among migrants,
- To indicate the prevalence of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism among Chinese migrants,
- To explore what, if anything, distinguishes overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism from Chinese nationalism in general,
- To determine the factors shaping online manifestations of migrant nationalism.

*Migrant use of the internet*

This research also explores how Chinese migrant netizens use the internet and the role of the Chinese-language cyberspace in the everyday life of Chinese migrants, in particular, the efficacy of new media in the formation of migrant identity and in the migrant integration process. Traditional forms of Chinese-language media in New Zealand, i.e. print media, television and radio, have been found to build a “virtual Chinatown” for Chinese migrants (Li 2009). Similarly, the internet is also a potent factor in the construction of the virtual homeland for migrants who are, on the one hand, “neither here nor there”, existing in a limbo where news and information from home serves as a balm to nostalgia. On the other hand, with the hyper-connectedness provided by the internet, migrants can live “both here and there”, inhabiting the transnational cyberspace where they articulate their passion for the homeland and their grievances and aspirations in the host society. Specific objectives under this theme are,

- To chart the internet use pattern and preferences of Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand,
- To identify the reasons for internet use patterns and preferences,
- To map the connections between Chinese migrant netizens vis-à-vis the homeland and the host country enabled by the internet,
- To explore the influences of internet use on Chinese migrant netizens’ everyday life, with special attention paid to migrant integration process,
- To explore the role that the transnational Chinese-language cyberspace plays in constructing virtual collectives online.

*Chinese-language cyberspace and migrant identity*

Having established that internet use has significant impact on the daily life of Chinese migrants, the research will move on to investigate the relationship between the

Chinese-language cyber space and migrant identity construction. Transcending geographic borders, the deterritorialised Chinese-language cyberspace forms a transnational social field, encompassing both homeland media in China and ethnic media in New Zealand. The internet has significantly changed the “mediascape” (Appadurai 1996) for transnational Chinese migrants. The transnational social field enabled by the internet provides possibilities for migrants to participate in transnational identity politics. Specific objectives with regard to migrant identity constructs are,

- To explore the identity(-ies) manifested in Chinese-language cyberspace by migrant netizens,
- To illustrate the influence of the internet as a transnational social field on the identity construction of Chinese migrants,

Through the critical study of interactions between migrant netizens, Chinese-language cyberspace and identity construction, this research provides useful insights into the ways in which Chinese migrant netizens think and talk about their homeland and their host country in an online context. It investigates the connections between migrants’ sense of identity and expressions of nationalism online. The results also show how the focus of loyalty and the target of frustration can change with the migration experience.

## **1.4 Overview of Chapters**

Using the Chinese-language cyberspace as a lens, this PhD research offers a contribution to the understanding of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism by examining its prevalence among migrant netizens, its discursive dimensions, and its relationship with migrant identity construction and the internet. The thesis consists of



eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter Two** provides a critical review of the current theoretical as well as empirical research on nationalism, transnationalism, and media studies with regard to internet and migrant identity. Based on the review, a theoretical framework is established to guide this current research and an operational definition of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is provided.

Informed by ethnographic and phenomenological research approaches, a multi-method approach is employed in this research to provide a holistic understanding of the topic. **Chapter Three** discusses the methodological bases as well as the specific methods used in this PhD study. Qualitative content analysis is employed to analyse user-generated online texts. For this qualitative research, online survey is employed to generate complementary and indicative data which help to illustrate the extent to which nationalism and internet use patterns are shared among migrant netizens. Furthermore, semi-structured in-depth interviews are employed to obtain first person accounts of migrant netizens' perspectives of their lived experience.

The second part of the thesis contains four chapters which report the findings of this study. **Chapter Four**, using data from the online survey, presents the prevalence of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism among migrant netizens. It also discusses migrant netizens' frequent use of Chinese-language cyberspace. In **Chapter Five**, three dimensions of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism are identified and analysed in detail. A perceived insecure identity is found to be a significant driver of nationalism among these migrant netizens. Then, to explore into their identity construction, **Chapter Six** provides an analysis of migrant uses of the internet. Using Chinese-language cyberspace is found to impede the migrant integration process in

the host country, while at the same time, it helps migrant netizens to create an imagined Cyber China, allowing them to lead parallel lives. **Chapter Seven** then goes on to investigate the influence of Cyber China and parallel lives on migrant identity construction. The findings point to a particular Chinese migrant identity – a self-perceived “authentic yet privileged” Chinese identity.

The last part, **Chapter Eight**, synthesises the findings from part two and provides theoretical discussions. Chinese-language cyberspace as a transnational social field enables the imagination of Cyber China, fosters a strong Chinese identity, and assists migrant practical adaptation rather than genuine cultural integration. Overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is an articulate form of expression during the quest for a secure and particular identity by Chinese migrant netizens. The chapter also discusses the empirical and theoretical contributions of this research, and points out some future research directions for the possible studies on the media-migrant nexus.

In the following chapter, I will provide a critical review of the existing literature on nationalism, transnationalism, and migrant use of media. Based on the review, I shall develop the operational definition of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism. The theoretical framework guiding this research will also be established.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

As stated in the previous chapter, this research explores cyber nationalism and the identity of Chinese migrant netizens using New Zealand data. The theoretical framework is therefore laid upon theories from three interconnected areas, namely nationalism, transnationalism, and media studies. In this chapter, existing literature in the above mentioned areas is revisited. By connecting and critically reviewing the existent research in these areas, this chapter attempts to situate the theories of nationalism, transnationalism and migrant identity in the context of the fast developing new digital media.

Nationalism is a topic researched in various disciplines ranging from history, sociology, political studies to literature, anthropology and philosophy. This chapter will outline the perspectives that have been used to conceptualise nationalism, while highlighting the major paradigms in researching nationalism – modernism, perennialism, primordialism, and ethno-symbolism. Theories highly relevant to this research will be discussed in detail. This means that the review will focus on the literature discussing nationalism as modern or historically rooted, as political or cultural, and as socially constructed or biologically determined. Those theories that are not directly related to this research, for instance theories about self-determination and state building, will also be touched upon as they have offered me the understanding that nationalism is a multi-faceted concept and cannot be covered exhaustively by any single approach. Based on the existing literature, I try to develop

a ‘hybrid version’ of analytical framework which directs the interpretation of nationalism and its manifestations in this research.

I will also briefly discuss the development of nationalism which, once seen to be a declining and dying force by many intellectuals, has returned with renewed vigour in the past several decades and has caught scholarly attention. A majority of the current studies focus on nationalism in the trend of globalisation (Held 2002; Castles 2000; Mann 1997; Hutchinson 2003). While some scholars see that globalisation has resulted in the nation state losing its capacity to act independently, others argue that the strengthening of ‘global interaction networks’ does not necessarily lead to the ending of nation state influences (Mann 1997). Yet, other scholars studying issues arising from global migration – ethnicity, nationality, citizenship etc. – argue that the nation state model cannot provide a sufficient basis for understanding the sense of belonging in the age of globalisation and migration’ (Castles 2000). David Held (2002) also points out that the more globalised world requires a new cosmopolitanism which recognises the contribution of national cultures as well as diaspora and hybridity. These new ways of looking at nation and nationalism in the context of globalisation are thought-provoking. They have informed my approach to this current investigation of identities and national belongings of transnational migrants in the current trend of globalisation.

This leads to the next section of a review of the literature on transnationalism. The concept of transnationalism in migration studies was first developed by social anthropologists in the 1990s. It refers to migrants maintaining social, cultural, economic relations with multiple locales (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994, 8). Transnationalism, arguably the most visible manifestation of globalisation,

has provided a framework in which this research is conducted. Theories such as “transnational social field” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), “transnational social space” (Pries 1999), “transnational habitus” (Guarnizo 1997), reconstruction of locality (Goldring 1999), and transformative networks (Vertovec 1999) also serve as the primary building blocks for this research.

The last part of this review will focus on the literature of media and migrants, especially with regard to the role that media play in the identity formation of Chinese migrants. The internet, intrinsically transnational, is seen by some scholars as a tool for the dissemination of Chinese nationalism, largely within China proper or from China to the Chinese diasporas (Wu 2007). Others have discussed its role in the formation of overseas Chinese identities (Chan 2006, 2005; Ong 2008). Many of the studies on the internet and migration focus on the political implications of the Internet (Ong 2005b; Zhou 2009; Kalathil and Boas 2003). These studies have informed me in the query of the internet as both a tool and a site for the understanding of nationalism and identity formation of overseas Chinese. A missing point in the current scholarship has been a catalyst in my current research on cyber nationalism and the identity of the overseas Chinese. Most of the studies were heavily based on observations of the Internet in its early form – as compared to the concept of Web 2.0, which is characterised by user-generated content and hyper-connected social networks. Little has yet been done to explore the role of the internet in nationalism and the identity formation of Chinese migrants in the age of Web 2.0.

## **2.1 Nationalism and Migrants**

In this section, I provide a review of the current literature on nationalism. In their edited volume putting together the most influential works on nationalism, Spencer and

Wollman (2005) accentuate the very complexity of this research area – different paradigms, approaches, definitions, and forms of nationalism, as well as its origins. This part of the review focuses on the theories that are most relevant to my research – different definitions and paradigms, whilst acknowledging those that are not directly related whenever appropriate. In doing so, this research tries to integrate various definitions and types of nationalism and propose a working definition of nationalism as part of the analytical framework for this study.

### **2.1.1 Nationalism Differentiated**

There are two contending underlying assumptions in the scholarship of nationalism: one asserts that nationalism is essentially a political project in the aim of achieving an independent state; the other believes that nationalism is cultural at the core with the construction of historically rooted and distinctive collective identities as its objective (Hutchinson 1994). Whether nationalism should be considered “cultural” or “political” has been one of the persistent debates in the scholarship of nationalism (Spencer and Wollman 2005, 3; Smith 2010). Other highly contending ideas about nationalism concern whether nationalism is modern or historically rooted, and whether nationalism is socially constructed or is based on objective biological characteristics. John Hutchinson rightly points out the core of these contending thoughts when discussing the nationalism debate between

“on the one side, those who regard nationalism and the nation as peculiarly modern, essentially political, an invented phenomenon, and one which is likely to fade with internationalization; and, on the other side, those who argue that both nationalism and the nation are embedded in history, have as their central concern the problem of

identity, are a directive force resistant to easy manipulation, and are here to stay as permanent features of our modern world.” (Hutchinson 1994, xiii)

Hutchinson’s summary of the current scholarship of nationalism provides a valuable framework for this research. Building upon the contending concepts – political vs. cultural/ethnic, modern vs. historically rooted, and constructed/invented vs. biological/essentialist – this research sets out to investigate overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism and identity within a framework integrating the major theories in the area.

### **2.1.2 Modern and Political Phenomenon**

Ernest Gellner, one of the most prolific writers on nationalism with a modernist view, holds that nationalism is a modern and political concept. Gellner (2006) asserts that nationalism is

“primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind”  
(Gellner 2006, 1).

Gellner bases his argument on three fundamental stages in the history of mankind: the pre-agrarian, the agrarian, and the industrial. He believes that nationalism is closely related to modernity, specifically, the transition to industrialism and modernism from agrarian society. An agrarian society was economically static and culturally diverse,

and the cultural diversity went with economic specialisations. Cultural differences served to fix people in their professions which were usually inherited through generations.

In contrast, an industrial society requires cultural homogeneity to meet the economic needs for sustained and perpetual growth as well as continuous improvement, which in turn require commitment to innovation and a changing occupational structure. In other words, people in industrial societies need to shift from one activity to another, from one occupation to another more frequently. To use Gellner's words, people "cannot generally rest in the same niches all their lives; and they can only seldom rest in them, so to speak, over generations. Positions are seldom (for this and other reasons) transmitted from father to son" (Gellner 2006, 24). Hence, a "universal high culture" is needed to provide universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication which, through education and training, enable people to function in new activities and occupations. In the process of the production of a homogeneous high (literate, training sustained) culture, an educational system is the prerequisite, and an educational system requires a state to protect it. And most importantly, it is argued that the demand for such a state is nationalism. Nations are an expression of the "high culture" in the industrial society supported by a standardised, compulsory, mass education system. Nations support industrialism by providing a mobile, literate workforce, and industrialism encourages nationalism.

It is thus clear that, following Gellner's line of reasoning, the passion driving nationalism does not derive from the atavistic forces of blood or territory, but rather, it is a sociological necessity of the industrial society, emerging in the transition to industrialism, and therefore, nationalism is modern.



Another modernist, John Breuilly, considers nationalism as a strictly political and modern phenomenon and rejects that cultural identity is a defining characteristic of nationalism. He treats nationalism as a form of politics and primarily opposition politics, and locates nationalism in modernity where politics plays a central role in the making of the modern nation-state. For Breuilly, nationalism is used to “refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist argument” (Breuilly 1982, 3). Such nationalist argument is considered a political doctrine built upon three assertions: the existence of a nation with an explicit and peculiar character, the priority of the interests and values of the nation over all others, and the independence of the nation which requires political sovereignty (Breuilly 1982, 3).

Similar to Gellner’s thesis, Breuilly’s nationalism is also rather instrumental – the concept of nationalism is limited to a purely political usage. Nationalism is treated as a political argument through which people can be mobilised, diverse interests of social groups coordinated, and their political actions for a sovereign state legitimated. All these are done to seize or retain power in the modern state. The emergence of the modern state is the key in this proposition because the focus of nationalist mobilisation is the control of the state power and its resources.

While Gellner and Breuilly provide political accounts of nation and nationalism as a top-down, elite-driven, and rational, Michael Mann gives an analysis stressing the role of “turbulent, passionate, popular political movements” (Mann 1995, 44). Focusing on Europe after 1800, Mann, like other modernists, asserts that nations and nationalism primarily developed in response to the development of the modern state.

He contends that nationalism is based primarily on political institutions and rejects the materialist and cultural theories of nationalism (Mann 1995).

Mann proposes two aspects of nationalism – the moderate and the aggressive. He argues that both aspects originated and developed in response to the drive for democracy. Moderate or mild nationalism developed when representative institutions were institutionalised gradually over time. Failure to do so would generate exclusionist nationalism which is much more aggressive, able to commit atrocities against “outsiders” of the nation regardless of whether they live within the national boundaries (Mann 1995, 62).

The above modernist scholars have proposed some of the most influential explanation of the origin and definition of nationalism. However, there are some important issues and phenomena concerning nationalism that they choose to ignore. Gellner’s thesis only sees nationalism when national consciousness and nationalist sentiment rise to the level where political legitimacy is a necessity through nationalist movement. Following this line of reasoning, nationalism would be non-existent when there is no manifestation of nationalist movement. This analysis fails to address the intense popular emotional aspects of nationalism. Gellner admits that some measure of such emotional loyalty to a group is a perennial part of human life, but refuses to consider it as nationalism. Instead, seeing nationalism as strictly political and modern, he uses patriotism to refer to the historically rooted emotional aspects and contends that “nationalism is a very distinctive species of patriotism, and one which becomes pervasive and dominant only under certain social conditions, which in fact prevail in the modern world, and nowhere else” (Gellner 2006, 138).

For Breuilly, any idea of cultural identity is rejected in the definition of nationalism, which is not about identity, solidarity, authenticity, or the homeland, but political goals in the modern state – saving political power. Nationalism is considered as merely instrumental in achieving political goals. As such, nationalism can only be discussed in modern conditions. Since Breuilly's thesis is based on rational analysis, it is also difficult to discuss the emotional aspects of nationalism, which he chooses not to be included in his analysis. As Breuilly admits,

“people do yearn for communal membership, do have a strong sense of us and them, of territories as homelands, of belonging to culturally defined and bounded worlds which give their lives meaning.

Ultimately, much of this is beyond rational analysis and, I believe, the explanatory powers of the historian” (Breuilly 1982, 401).

To sum up, the above modernist scholars regard nationalism as modern and political, and as such it requires a rational explanation. This renders their analyses instrumental, offering a closure of argument, and it also disqualifies other alternative approaches which can offers cultural, historically rooted, popular based accounts of nationalism.

### **2.1.3 Cultural and Social Construct**

Other scholars in the research of nationalism share the view that nationalism is a modern concept, but believe that nationalism is primarily cultural. One of the most prominent figures supporting the cultural explanation of nationalism is Benedict Anderson. From an anthropological perspective, Anderson proposes a social constructionist view that nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism are cultural

artefacts of a particular kind created towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He argues that

“the creation of these artefacts ... was the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces; ... once created, they became ‘modular’, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (Anderson 2006a, 4).

While Anderson and Gellner share the constructionist view, Gellner’s approach is much more instrumental, limiting him to the analysis of nationalism based on rational explanation of modernity, capitalism and industrialism. In contrast, Anderson’s thesis focuses more on the intense emotional, psychological and cultural aspects, which frees him from the frame of instrumental approach. Emphasising the imagining process, symbols, and meaning in the making of the nation, Anderson is able to provide a new angle to approach the origin and dispersion of nationalism. Nationalism, to Anderson, should be grouped with “kinship” and “religion” rather than with “liberalism” or “fascism”, and nation is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson 2006a, 6).

According to Anderson, nationalism takes over the imaginings of religious communities and dynastic realms, transforming “fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning” (Anderson 2006a, 11). Since the Middle ages, religious communities had declined continuously due to the demotion of Latin – “the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred

languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized” (Anderson 2006a, 19). The religious communities hence lost confidence in the sacredness of their languages and membership in the community. Meanwhile, the monarch’s status of being divine rulers of people also diminished gradually. The perception of time changed, and a modern conception of time was created, the “homogeneous, empty time” which presents simultaneity to unconnected people who reside across differentiated spaces yet occupying the same time – living in a simultaneous “meanwhile”.

This modern perception of time means that although people will never know more than a handful of their fellow-members, they have confidence in other members’ steady, anonymous and simultaneous activity – “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. Anderson contends that “the idea of sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (Anderson 2006a, 26).

This change, Anderson argues, was closely connected to the invention and spread of print press and industrial capitalism. Capitalism, aiming at creating viable mass markets for print press, assembled previously diverse dialects into more homogeneous languages, bridging elite clerical Latin and various popular vernaculars. Print capitalism created unified fields of communications in between Latin – the previous main administrative language – and numerous spoken vernaculars. The vernacular languages then became administrative languages. And through print press, people who used to speak different dialects were now able to understand each other and started to recognise that they to a particular group defined by a common language. Put

it simply, the convergence of industrial capitalism and print press made it possible for the imagining of the national community.

It is important to point out that although language is considered essential his analysis, Anderson cautions that,

“It is a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them – as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” (Anderson 2006a, 133).

The function of language is to disseminate ideas and unify people with imagined connections. As a result, a shared sense of belonging to the nation was formed. The nation, in this sense, is an imagined artefact which gives the sense of identity.

#### **2.1.4 Ethnic and Historical Rootedness**

Different from the modernist paradigm discussed in the previous section, another group of scholars believe that nations have existed in every period of history and many existed from time immemorial (Renan 1996; Armstrong 1982; Hastings 1997). This perspective is called perennialism – “the historical antiquity of the type of social and political organisation known as the ‘nation’, its immemorial or perennial character” (Smith 1998, 161). It is argued that there is little difference between ethnicity and nationality. For instance, John Armstrong (1982) asserts that nation as a group identity is just an equivalent of pre-modern ethnic identity in the modern era.

Scholars with this perspective consider nations as developed versions of ethnic communities, or as collective cultural identities co-existing with ethnic communities through human history, although they share the modernist view that nationalism as ideology and political movement is modern (Hastings 1997; Armstrong 1982).

Adrian Hastings contends that “the defining origin of the nation, like that of every other great reality of modern western experience, located in an age a good deal further back than most modernist historians feel safe to handle, that of the shaping of medieval society” (Hastings 1997, 34) Hastings points out that nations come from ethnicities, which is defined as “a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language. It constitutes the major distinguishing element in all pre-national societies, but may survive as a strong subdivision with a loyalty of its own within established nations” (Hastings 1997, 3). Although formed from one or more ethnicities, Hastings argues that a nation is a community with much more self-consciousness than an ethnicity, and is normally identified by a literature of its own.

Hastings differentiates nationalism as a political theory and nationalism as a practice. While the as a political theory nationalism is a modern phenomenon, as a practice it existed as a powerful reality long before modernity in certain places. Nationalism, Hastings argues,

“derives from the belief that one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at any cost through creation or extension of its own nation-state... It arises chiefly where and when a particular ethnicity or nation feels itself threatened in regard to its own proper character, extent or importance, either by

external attack or by the state system of which it has hitherto formed part” (Hastings 1997, 4).

It is clear that while Gellner and Hobsbawm are reluctant to establish the relationship between ethnicity and nation because not every ethnicity became a nation and nationalism is an inevitable consequence of industrialisation and capitalism (Hobsbawm 1992; Gellner 2006), Hastings sees ethnicity as the cornerstone of the nation:

“ethnicities naturally turn into nations or integral elements within nations at the point when their specific vernacular moves from an oral to written usage to the extent that it is being regularly employed for the production of a literature” (Hastings 1997).

For Hastings, the reason that some ethnicities did not turn into nations is because their vernacular fails to become a language with an extensive living literature of its own. Once that threshold was crossed, ethnicities turned into nations; if not, the transformation to nation would not occur.

Thomas Eriksen, though not a perennialist, contends that national identities are very similar to ethnic identities, developed in relation to “others”. He points out that nationalism and ethnicity are kindred concepts, and in fact, most of nationalisms are ethnic in character. Analytically, the only distinction between the two lies in the notion that nationalist ideology is ethnic ideology demanding a state on behalf of the ethnic group; however, in practice, the distinction is usually blurred and problematic (Eriksen 2010).



Another major paradigm, ethno-symbolism, mostly promoted by Anthony Smith, also links nationalism with ethnic cultures (Smith 1991, 1998, 1999; Hutchinson 1994, 2000). Smith acknowledges the modernity of nationalism – the ideology, movement and symbolism, but at the same time observes that nations, as communities of sentiments, very much rest on ethnic cultures which predate the modern period. He proposes that nationalism should be analysed over long periods of time (*la longue durée*), focusing on pre-modern ethnic *ties* and *sentiments* and *ethnies* – a named population whose members were connected to each other through shared beliefs about ancestry, shared historical memories, a common cultural framework, and with association with a particular territory called the “homeland”. These, Smith argues, have influenced and sometimes laid the basis for subsequent nations and nationalisms (Smith 1991, 1998, 1999, 2010).

Based on such perspectives, Smith proposes the definition of the nation as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1991, 14). And subsequently, nationalism is defined as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith 1991, 73).

Although this definition of nationalism seems rather modernist, it is inherently different from many of the aforementioned modernist Western civic model of nationalism. Smith points out that this non-Western, ethnic concept puts emphasis on a community of birth and native culture – the nation is first and foremost a community of people sharing common descent. Smith argues,

“Whereas the Western concept laid down that an individual had to belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged, the non-Western or ethnic concept allowed no such latitude. Whether you stayed in your community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctable, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were for ever stamped by it”

(Smith 1991, 11)

However, one should not confound this notion of ethnic nationalism with that of primordialism, which assumes that the group identity is a given.

Primordialists claim that there exist certain irrational attachment to the nation based on blood, race, language, religion and territory (Geertz 1973; Shils 1957; Issacs 1975; Van den Berghe 1978, 1995). In contrast to the modernist instrumental perspective, it deals essentially with sentiments and affections in the group identity.

Edward Shils sees that there is a significant “relational quality” that can only be described as primordial because of the ineffable significance attributed to the tie of blood (Shils 1957, 142). For Clifford Geertz, these primordial identities are “natural” and “given”, and they are ineffable, beyond the explanation or analysis by referring to social interaction.

“By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the ‘givens’ – or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed ‘givens’ of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond

them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves” (Geertz 1973, 259).

For another primordialist, Pierre van den Berghe, human sociality rests on biological relatedness, and nations as well as ethnic groups, can be traced to the mechanism of genetic reproductive drives of individuals and their strategies of nepotism to maximise their gene pools. Van den Berghe believes that cultural symbols such as language and religion are used as markers of biological affinity, and myths of ethnic origins correspond to real biological origins, which is the reason why unrelated people consider unknown co-ethnics as kin (Van den Berghe 1978, 1995).

So far, this chapter has presented an analytical critique of the major theories on nationalism. The complexity of the concept is self-evident in the contending views on whether nationalism is “modern” or “historically rooted”, “political” or “cultural”, “given” or “imagined”. Nonetheless, in the complexity of practices and theories, these perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and can be sometimes complementary. For instance, when discussing civic and ethnic model of nationalism, Smith points out that at the core of every nationalism there are both civic and ethnic elements varying in degrees and different in forms. “Sometimes civic and territorial elements predominate; and other times

it is the ethnic and vernacular components that are emphasized” (Smith 1991, 13).

These aforementioned theories are used to help shape the operational definition of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism in this research. Because my study analyses the popular manifestations and practices of nationalism and identity among Chinese migrant netizens – as opposed to nationalism in the eyes of academics – the definition does not concern much with its modernity/antiquity or state-building movement. Rather, this research emphasises the ethic, cultural and emotional aspects of nationalism; it concerns more with identity and sentiment. For this research, *nationalism is first and foremost a set of belief, practices, and identity claims which are historically rooted and are used to maintain sovereignty, unity and identity for a population whose members, through collective imagining, consider themselves belong to a community called the nation*. Its manifestations encompass political, cultural, as well as primordial ethnic claims.

- Politically, nationalism concerns with the sovereignty and unity of the nation over a historical territory – the homeland.
- Culturally, nationalism is identity claims and practices rooted in a shared history and culture, a common language, as well as “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).
- Primordial ethnic claims are sentiments or consciousness of belonging to the nation based on perceived ties of kinship, myths of ancestry, presumed blood ties and physical appearance (colour of skin, eyes, hair and so on), promoting solidarity among the members of the nation.

This operational definition of nationalism has been used to guide the design of this research, as well as the analysis of data collected subsequently.

### **2.1.5 Migrant Nationalism**

Since the migrant Chinese is the cohort investigated in this research, it is essential to establish connections between migrants and nationalism at this stage. When exploring the interaction of migration and nationalism, Benedict Anderson first used the term “long-distance nationalism” to discuss the distinct feature of migrant nationalists who reside comfortably in the country of settlement while maintaining attachment to their country of origin. In addition, Anderson (1992, 1994) points out that such attachment can be far more intense than their loyalty to the host society to which they may be bind with the act of citizenship or residency, and more importantly, these migrant nationalists may feel no tension between that long-distance attachment and their fondness for the host country.

Long-distance nationalism is similar to the classic notion of nationalism in that both of them claim that “there is a nation that consists of a people who shared a common history, identity, and territory” (Glick Schiller 2005, 571). The difference of the two lies in the relationship between the members and the national territory – in long-distance nationalism, geographic borders of the nation do not delimit membership, neither does citizenship.

However, Glick Schiller distinguishes what she calls long-distance nationalism from the more general identification that has come to mark the term *diaspora*. For her, the notion of long-distance nationalism is strictly political and active. It is a combination of identification and political project, and it involves the “active politics of long-

distance nationalists who establish sets of practices designed to influence the political situation within a territory that they still call home” (Glick Schiller 2005, 571). In contrast, diasporic identifications and belonging often exist in the realm of imagination. People with this kind of belonging and identities do not necessarily organise political projects in relationship to a homeland state, but may instead organise common cultural or social projects promoting the interest of the diasporic population.

Glick Schiller’s notion of long-distance nationalism seems to be too narrowly defined, especially when the migrant community is at the centre of the discussion. To start with, to exclude identifications and belonging in the realm of imagination is to assert that only real actions and movements qualify for nationalism. In other words, it downplays nationalism as a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation. Anderson, on the other hand, proposes that nationalism be treated “as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’, rather than with ‘liberalism’ or ‘fascism’” (Anderson 2006a, 5) – that is to understand nationalism as a relationship between members of the collective, or a system of belief. Admittedly, nationalist actions and movements are the most prominent manifestations of nationalism among migrants. However, nationalism should be seen as the driving force behind such actions and movements rather than simply the physical externalisation of the nationalist emotion and sentiment. By not confining to actions and movements, the discussion of nationalism among migrants will allow us to understand the “not-so-prominent” but equally potent aspects of daily nationalism of the migrant population. In this sense, nationalism can be seen as being latent, ready to be evoked and to drive the mass scale actions and movements in reaction to external stimuli. Furthermore, to define nationalism as only encompassing political projects is to negate the role that cultural and social projects

play in the nationalism of migrant population. This would be suggesting, similar to the first point I raised, that when there is no organising of political projects, there is no nationalism among these migrants. I would like to reiterate the stance that this study takes after synthesising the theories presented in the previous section – that nationalism should be seen as a continuous project that does not appear or disappear depending on whether there is a political project, an action or a movement; rather, it is an ongoing process that sometimes can be seen as dormant and at other times manifests itself more prominently due to either internal or external stimuli.

Hence, this study adopts the concept of *overseas Chinese nationalism* rather than using the established and narrowly defined long-distance nationalism in the attempt to incorporate the cultural and social projects and the emotion and sentiment that the concept of long-distance nationalism conveniently ignores to address.

### **2.1.6 Nationalism in the Era of Globalisation and Transnationalism**

In the discussion of nationalism, especially nationalism among migrant populations, in the current era, an aspect that one must take into consideration is the process of globalisation. The future of nationalism appears to be more uncertain than ever under the twin pressures of globalization and transnational identity politics (Özkirimli 2003).

The crucial question is what is the thrust of nationalism in the current world where transnational phenomena have rendered state borders weaker and more permeable?

And what kind of identity has been constructed to support the nationalistic sentiments?

This is especially important in the trend of globalisation and transnational-migration.

Recently, some scholars have proposed that the world has entered a new period of history engendered by globalisation (Castles 2000; Giddens 1990), in which the

nation and nation-state has ceased to be the primary political and cultural reference point (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001). This proposition poses new questions for the scholarship of nationalism. To some, it even raises the question whether nationalism and national identities will continue to exist.

According to Guibernau (2001), the identity of nations has been recast. Advances in technology and communications have intensified the contacts between the world's populations to such an extent that time and space have been compressed to form human populations into one world, transforming our sense of the 'local' (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001). For the dominant population in a society, "internal" others such as migrants are substituting "external" enemies of other nations for purposes of collective differentiation; the increasing visibility of migrants results in the homogeneous national cultures being pluralised and hybridised. Thus, globalisation is transforming the nation-state and subsequently weakening nationalism.

However, contending theories propose that rather than a recent product, globalisation has long historical roots and "brings with it a sense of unpredictable threat that in turn has often resulted in the crystallization and articulation of ethnic and national differences" (Hutchinson 2003, 73).

The major problem that has resulted in this debate is the different definitions and viewpoints that the two schools of scholars have taken when discussing the term 'globalisation'. On the one hand, Guibernau has overly focused on the cooperation aspects of globalisation, emphasising that great development in technology and communications has brought with them an increased contact between peoples. Nation-state boundaries have been rendered weak. States are unable to manage world



affairs by themselves but need to seek consensus through multilateral and multinational organisations, world bodies such as the UN, the WTO and the EU, to name just a few, obviously by way of cooperation. This observation of international cooperation is to some extent correct, but it fails to recognise that growing encounters also means growing conflicts of interests. And it is obvious that such conflicts of interests cannot always be solved through cooperation. When economic interests are at stake, negative nationalistic sentiment can be easily directed towards other nation-states.

On the other hand, Hutchinson's concept of contacts between peoples due to globalisation mostly refers to conflicts. He rightly points out that, at the macro-level, the major world actors remain nation-states, but failed to cover the micro-level which I define as contact between communities and peoples. Hutchinson asserts that globalisation as a historical phenomenon is not simply secular but includes religion and warfare which encourage differences. He argues that the current religious revival does not threaten the nation-state system but can reinforce it because religion has become ethnicised. The problem with this claim is that ethnicity is not necessarily bound by the boundaries of nation-states, nor by citizenship. The ethnicised religion may well spread across state borders and become 'global' rather than 'national' as Hutchinson has indicated. Another point is that Hutchinson conveniently overlooks the micro level of globalisation which is characterised by the intensified movement of people and information and the increasing interactions between peoples. More often than not, such interactions bring about understanding as well as conflicts.

In real life, the fact is that nationalism seems to remain strong among national as well as migrant populations. A new perspective is needed when examining globalisation

and the transnational phenomenon. It needs to cover both cooperation/understanding and conflicts, and to encompass both macro and micro level of interactions. Such a perspective is of particular importance when we try to understand migrants in terms of their nationalism and identity.

## **2.2 Transnationalism, Cyberspace, and Migrant Identity**

As mentioned briefly in the previous section, the current trend in transnationalism and globalisation does not mean the end of nationalism. Migrant nationalism remains a real and salient issue in the academic discussions of transnational migration.

### **2.2.1 Transnationalism, Identity, and Nationalism**

Given the ongoing debate amongst different schools of academics on what transnationalism really is, a broad survey of the current literature is needed. In this section, I will discuss some of the most widely considered influential works in the current evolving and dynamic scholarship of transnationalism.

The concept of transnationalism in migration studies was first put forward by social anthropologists in the 1990s. The term refers to ‘the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.’ (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994, 8)

Transnationalism, for these scholars, is used to emphasise the process of the building of social fields by migrants that crosses geographic, cultural and political borders.

However, the term “transnationalism” has been used in various ways since its emergence. Vertovec (1999) points out that transnationalism has been grounded upon distinct conceptual premises. Thus, transnationalism can be broadly defined in six categories, most of which are inspirational and thought-provoking. In the following

section, I will first give an introduction to the six categories. And then I will deliberate how the five of them, apart from economic factors, will lay a foundation for my research on the cyber nationalism and identity of overseas Chinese.

The six categories defined by Vertovec are:

1. *Social morphology*. Transnationalism denotes the “dense and highly active networks spanning vast spaces are transforming many kinds of social, cultural, economic and political relationships” (Vertovec 1999, 2) .
2. *Type of consciousness*. This refers particularly to “diaspora consciousness” characterised by dual or multiple identifications of migrants. “While some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a, 11).
3. *Mode of cultural reproduction*. As processes of cultural inter-penetration and blending, transnationalism has resulted in the production of hybrid cultural phenomena manifesting “new ethnicities” (Barlow 2007).
4. *Avenue for capital movement*. This refers to the economic aspects of transnationalism which includes not only the “Big Players” such as transnational corporations (Castells 1998; Sklair 1995), but also transnational migrants who transfer remittance in between the home and host countries (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994).

5. *Site of political engagement.* International nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) are the major actors in this political aspect of transnationalism at the macro-level (Castells 2003). While at micro-level, there are empirical evidences showing that members of diasporas also participate in political activities in their home countries (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994).

6. *(Re)construction of “place” or locality.* Transnationalism has changed people’s relations to space by creating “social fields” or “social spaces” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a; Goldring 1998; Castells 1996) that connect actors in more than one country. Some analysts have proposed that transnationalism has resulted in the emergence of new “translocalities” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998).

This research on cyber nationalism of overseas Chinese can be firmly situated into the current scholarship of transnationalism according to the above mentioned theories, most of which will help construct the theoretical framework for my study.

To start with, Vertovec’s first category of transnationalism as a social morphology has inspired me to see the internet, inherently transnational, as having great transforming power. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson claim that “something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 9). Similar to this notion, there is an ongoing debate on whether the internet has formed a cyber public sphere (Papacharissi 2002; Poster 1997; Cammaerts and Audenhove 2005; Dean 2003).

Though there is no consensus reached, it is obvious that the transforming power of the Internet should not be overlooked. Scholars also assert that transnationalism has enabled the creation of forms of identity that “do not rest on an appropriation of space

where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 9). This influential observation is an essential part of the theoretical framework within which the role of the de-territorialised internet in the formation of identity can be explored.

Secondly, the notion that transnationalism has raised the “diaspora consciousness” characterised by dual or multiple identifications of migrants has also laid a theoretical foundation for my research on the internet. Transnational connection increases the migrants’ awareness of being at once “here” and “there”, “home away from home”. In this sense, as a global network, the World Wide Web may have the similar power as other transnational networks which, according to James Clifford, make migrants dwelling “here” (the host country) assume a solidarity and connection over “there” (the home country). It is arguable that for migrants it is exactly the connection with elsewhere in the world that makes a difference “here” in the diaspora (Clifford 1992). Hence, the transnational phenomena have resulted in dual or multiple identifications. The current cyberspace is characterised by its hyper-connectedness and the user-generated content, or what is called the Web 2.0 (O’Reilly 2005). The Internet has the potential to provide not only the transnational link to more than one nation, but also a platform for the articulation of dual or multiple identifications of migrants. Therefore, the above theories of “diaspora consciousness” and multiple identifications are highly relevant to this research which investigates the potential of the Internet in shaping migrants’ identities.

Thirdly, the choice of using the Internet as the site of investigation for this research is inspired by the notion of transnationalism as a mode of cultural reproduction.

Vertovec points out that “an increasingly significant channel for the flow of cultural

phenomena and the transformation of identity is through global media and communications” (Vertovec 1999, 450). Appadurai and Brckenridge further contend that “complex flows of media images and messages perhaps create the greatest disjunctures for diasporic populations, since in the electronic media in particular, the politics of desire and imagination are always in contest with politics of heritage and nostalgia” (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989, iii). Numerous studies had previously focused on traditional broadcasting media such as radio, television, and later on the expansion of satellite and the cable networks (Morley and Robins 1995; Shohat and Stam 1996). The above theories and empirical studies have led to my enquiry to determine how far the Internet fits the description of the medium of “microelectronic transnationalism” (Spivak 1989, 276) through which contents can be consumed transnationally and actively in multiple and complex ways. Can the Internet serve as a significant channel for the flow of transnational cultural products – video, music, text, etc. – which cater the specific needs of migrants?

What is more, according to scholars like Alger (1997) and Castells (1996), technology development has resulted in rapid and far-reaching forms of political activities including mobilisation of support, enhancement of public participation, political organisation and so on. More importantly, a great number of such political activities are now undertaken transnationally. Apart from INGOs which operate in macro-level transnational politics, migrants in diasporas also undertake such transnational political activities. Some scholars argue that “awareness of their precarious situation may also propel members of diasporas to advance legal and civic causes and to be active in human rights and social justice issues” (Cohen 1995, 13). Furthermore, there have been contending perspectives on the nature of diasporic politics. While Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that hybrid, diasporic “third space” standpoints are anti-

essentialist and subversive of dominant hegemonies of race and nation, Mary Kaldor (1996) claims there are both presence of cosmopolitan anti-nationalists and reactionary ethno-nationalists in diasporas. Empirical studies have also been conducted and some scholars contend that transnational political engagement is “far from being extensive”, and is only “regularly undertaken by a small minority” (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003). However, these scholars have limited their observations to the “physical forms” of home country political participation, including membership in political parties, financial donations to political parties, involvement in electoral campaigns, membership in civic hometown associations and charity organisations. What is important is that in the current information age, political support can well be expressed and undertaken in ways which are intangible and have no “physical form” through the internet.

The above analysis points to the fact that the role played by the Internet in transnational cultural and political activities should be included in the scholarship of transnationalism and needs more careful scrutiny.

Last but not least, the hyper-connectedness of the internet also fits well into Vertovec’s notion of “transnationalism as the (re)construction of ‘place’ or locality”, though “space” would be a much better term than Vertovec’s “place” which usually denotes physical localities.<sup>6</sup> “Space does not only refer to physical features ... Space is thus different from place in that it encompasses or spans various territorial locations. It includes two or more places” (Faist 2000, 45-46). Appadurai rightly asserts that people are facing increasing difficulties of relating to, or even producing “locality”

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<sup>6</sup> A place is a space with a name, and with the Internet, no proper name can be found for this open and almost infinite space which spans over and across state borders.

resulted from transnationalism characterised by “the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement” and by “the steady erosion of the relationship, principally due to the force and form of electronic mediation, between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods” (Appadurai 1996, 189). When Appadurai’s influential argument was published in 1996, the internet was still in its infancy compared to what people are experiencing in cyberspace now. The electronic mediation he refers to is mostly broadcasting media such as television and radio. What I would point out, and is worth more academic attention now, is that the Internet has changed the traditional meaning of electronic media. The internet as a shared virtual space (probably very *real* to many) is revolutionarily different from traditional media in that it does not necessarily follow the “few-to-many” dissemination pattern of its precedents. Does the Internet, similar to Appadurai’s ‘electronic media’, cause the erosion of the relationship and the disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement? Or does it, on the contrary, strengthen the sense of locality? These are some of the questions need to be addressed under the overarching thesis of transnationalism.

### **2.2.2 Transnational “Social Fields” and the Internet**

In fact, the last category of transnationalism defined by Vertovec – the (re)construction of place or locality – is of particular importance to this current study on Chinese migrant netizens’ nationalism and identity. This is because nationalism, as discussed in the previous section, is strongly associated with the territorial claims to the homeland; locality is hence an essential subject in this investigation. The concept of “transnational social fields” and “transnational social spaces” – an important branch of theoretical development in transnationalism – would contribute significantly to the interpretation and theorisation of how the internet has helped



fostering nationalism and identity among transnational migrant netizens. Though different in the exact wording, these concepts – “transnational social fields”, (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a; Portes 1999; Levitt 2001; Goldring 1998) “transnational social space”, (Faist 2000; Pries 2001) and “transnational habitus” (Guarnizo 1997) – shed lights on this research in terms of new approaches that can be used when exploring identities of the transnational Chinese migrants.

“Transnational social fields” is a concept which proposes an unbounded terrain in which practices and interpersonal relationships of the transnational migrants span specific geographic, cultural and political borders (Glick Schiller 2004, 455). It is further defined as,

“a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed... a powerful tool for conceptualizing potential array of social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1009).

Similar to the notion of the “transnational social field” is the concept of “transnational social space”, which uses the geographic metaphor to emphasise the multi-locality nature of transnational phenomena. This approach moves beyond the “container theory of society” (Beck 2000) and penetrates the boundary of the nation-state to construct a singular new social space (Faist 2000; Pries 2001). Social spaces can be defined as, according to Pries (1999, 18),

“relatively dense and durable configurations of social practices, artifacts and symbol systems that span different geographic spaces in at

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least two nation-states without constituting a new ‘deterritorialized’ nation-state or being the prolongation of one of these nation-states” (see also Guarnizo and Smith 1998, 9).

Faist further defines transnational social spaces as ties – “relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the border of sovereign states” (Faist and Özveren 2004, 3). According to Faist, these spaces have to consist of combinations of ties that cut across the borders of at least two nation-states to be transnational.

The most advanced aspect of “transnational social field” and “transnational social space” is, as Levitt and Glick Schiller point out, that they explicitly challenge “nation-state container” theory that tends to treat nation-state as the norm and its boundaries as a given unit in social analysis (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1006).

Guarnizo goes one step further and proposes the production of a “transnational habitus” and a “transnational social formation”. According to him, being a transnational

“implies becoming habituated to living more or less comfortably in a world that encompasses more than one *national* structure of institutional and power arrangements, social understandings, and dominant political and public cultures. The translocality of transnational migrants generates a set of multiple identities... In effect, these discrepancies express what I call a transnational habitus, that is, a particular set of dualistic dispositions that inclines migrants to act and react to specific situations ... The transnational habitus results from the

migration process itself, which has spread people's lives across national border and becomes like a second nature" (Guarnizo 1997, 310-311).

The internet, being the site of investigation of this research, to a large extent reflects Guarnizo's notion of transnational habitus. This is because, on the one hand, the numerous user-generated contents on the internet resemble Guarnizo's "transnational social formation". The netizens in host countries are now entitled to a tool which they can use actively in changing/shaping what there is in cyberspace. On the other hand, if we consider Appadurai's theory, then the internet as the new media has also the potential to (re)shape migrants' identities. When the above theories are connected, they reveal a largely untouched area of study in which the role of the internet in the shaping of migrants' identities as well as how far the Internet can be considered a part of "transnational habitus" should be explored.

Under these theories, *simultaneity* is a concept that closely corresponds to the hyper-connectedness of the internet. The concept of simultaneity emphasises the simultaneous engagement of migrants located in a transnational social field (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a) encompassing both the home and the host societies. According to Levitt and Glick Schiller, migrant incorporation into the host country and connections to the homeland or other networks can occur at the same time (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Theoretical as well as empirical studies have shown that through transnational economic, social, cultural and political participation, migrants can now live "both here and there", maintaining and building their ties with the home and the host countries simultaneously (Ip 2011c; Sinclair and Cunningham 2000; Sun 2002; Portes 1996; Vertovec 2004). The concept incorporates both the

migrants' *ways of being* as well as their *ways of belonging* in social fields.

According to Levitt and Glick Schiller,

“ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions... In contrast ways of belonging refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1010).

Being means that individual migrants can be embedded in a social field but not necessarily identify with the labels or politics of the field, whereas belonging exhibits both awareness and action of the identity signified. Empirically, this means that migrant netizens can choose to “be” or to “belong” when participating in the online social fields. In other words, the identity of migrant netizens who use the internet to form transnational connections cannot be determined by simply drawing on the fact that they participate in the cyber transnational social spaces. The simultaneity made possible by the internet needs further scrutiny – whether migrant netizens manifest ways of being or ways of belonging is a much more salient indicator for the interpretation of their identity.

Some studies have already pointed out the ambiguous feelings of migrants resulted from such simultaneity. When engaging in transnational social fields and creating a life of simultaneity, migrants can also be caught between here and there, resulting in a status of liminality (Chan 2005; Ip 2011a). *Liminality*, the transitional process in cultural rites of passage from detachment/separation to reincorporation, highlights the phase of ambiguity, of marginal and transitional state, and of in-between places and

cultures (Di Stefano 2002). As Victor Turner (1969, 95) who first puts forward the term, points out, the “liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial”.

Although the concept of liminality seems to be in contradiction to the situation of simultaneity, empirical evidence supports that migrants’ participation in transnational social fields encompassing both the host and the home countries can lead to ambiguous feelings of their identity transition. Studying the internet and diasporic discourse of nationalism among Chinese migrants in Singapore in the early 2000s, Chan finds that the internet “opens up liminal spaces from which migrants can resist, challenge, and speak against regimes of truth imposed on them by their homeland and the host society” (Chan 2005, 336). This is an indication that simultaneity can make belonging and being more complicated, creating uncertainties of places and identities for migrants who participate in transnational social fields.

Given the complexity of simultaneity and liminality, it seems that the identities nurtured by the participation in transnational social fields are not necessarily hybrid and hyphenated as many theorists of transnationalism often claim them to be. Instead, home and host country identities can be in the form of coexistence and sometimes quite independent of each other. Some scholars have proposed that migrant identity should be seen as a process in which migrants interact with various social fields both transnational and local. Migrant identities are hence always fluid and in transition; depending on different time and contexts, migrants can choose to belong to the host country and simultaneously engage in transnational connections, or to swing in between the two ends (Ip 2011a).

However, while the internet provides migrants with unprecedented connections to their homeland, this post-modernist view, emphasising the hybridity and fluidity, need to be re-evaluated and further explored. Whether the constant connection enabled by cyberspace helps to anchor migrants' homeland identity or to foster a hybrid identity requires more academic attention. The new technology has opened new grounds for the understanding of migrant identity, especially its formative influences, and the impact of the new media is one of these.

### **2.3 Media, Migrants, Identity and Nationalism**

Media have long been recognised as a potent factor in national and cultural identity construction. As mentioned previously, Anderson (2006a) argues that print capitalism unified people in the “imagined community” of the nation-state, forging a sense of nationhood and a collective national identity. A common public and mass culture is critical in the construction of national identity, and the public system of education and mass media are recognised as agencies of popular socialisation (Smith 1991, 11). With the intensified process of globalisation started in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, media play an important role in the re-configuration of the imagination of the nation-state and the cultural and national identity (Morley and Robins 1995; Tomlinson 1999; Appadurai 1996; Kellner 1995; Sahin and Aksoy 1993; Fernandes 2000). The advancement in communications and transportation technologies has not only ushered in a significantly increased trans-border flow of capital and cultural products, but also the massive and unprecedented transnational movement of people (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995; Levitt 2003; Vertovec 2002; Portes 1996). These transnational migrants carry with them a collective memory of their homeland to the

host country (Sun 2002). What is more, while “settling down” in their new home,<sup>7</sup> migrants maintain their ties with the homeland through transnational economic, social, cultural and political participations enabled by the new information and communications technologies ranging from more traditional telephony to satellite TV, and most recently, the internet (Bernal 2005; Vertovec 2004; Sun 2002; Sinclair and Cunningham 2000; Hiller and Franz 2004; Parham 2004). In this phenomenon, transnational media – the content as well as the consumption of them – have become powerful force in the construction of the identity of transnational migrants.

In this section, I will first discuss the existing literature on media and migrants which has mostly focused on the influences of ethnic media on migrant integration and socialisation in the host society. Then I will point out the increasing importance of homeland media readily accessible to migrants through the internet. The last part will focus on the few existing studies specifically investigating Chinese cyber nationalism.

### **2.3.1 Ethnic Media and Migrants**

Existing literature of the media influence on migrants has largely focused on different forms of ethnic media. *Ethnic media* have been defined by scholars as media *by* and *for* ethnics in a host country with content in ethnic languages<sup>8</sup> (Viswanath and Arora 2000; Shi 2009; Georgiou 2001; Jeffres 1999; Johnson 2000). As such, ethnic media are defined as those produced by “ethnic communities in the host country to serve

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<sup>7</sup> According to recent development in the theories of transnationalism, the labels such as “settler” and “returnee” are only temporary indicators of migrant status. Given the high mobility of Chinese migrants, it is likely that they will continue to move transnationally instead of permanently settling down in the host country or returning to the home country. See (Liu 2010; Ip 2011c).

<sup>8</sup> Some scholars do not see ethnic language as the necessity for ethnic media. Based on her study of English-language and bilingual Latina magazines published in the U. S., Johnson argues that language should be omitted as a focus in the study of ethnic media because ethnic media can thrive without the native language. See (Johnson 2000).

ethnics' cultural, political, economic and everyday needs" (Shi 2009, 599).

Previous studies have identified the roles of ethnic media in facilitating migrant integration/adaptation process (Zhou and Cai 2002; Lin and Song 2006; Zubrzycki 1958) and in preserving the cultural identity of migrants (Jeffres 1999; Johnson 2000; Zhang and Hao 1999). Viswanath and Arora (2000) argue that ethnic news media have an "assimilatory function", focusing on the involvement of migrants in host country politics and on the relationship between the home and host countries (Viswanath and Arora 2000, 54). Researching Chinese-language media in the United States, Zhou and Cai (2002) point out that ethnic media connect migrants to the host society, keep migrants informed about the local events, and provide migrants with a detailed roadmap for them to "navigate unknown and foreign territories" (Zhou and Cai 2002, 435).

Other studies have shown that apart from the assimilative/integrative functions, ethnic media also play an important role in cultural transmission and the preservation of the cultural identity of ethnic groups (Jeffres 1999; Johnson 2000; Zhang and Hao 1999). Johnson's research on Latina magazines in the U. S. finds that a notable amount of content in these magazines has pluralism functions – preservation and transmission of ethnic culture and identity, promotion of ethnic pride, presentation of symbolic ethnicity and unification of subgroups, respite from mainstream media, and cultural transmission to non-ethnic groups (Johnson 2000, 246). Johnson argues that evidence shows ethnic media serve dual functions of assimilative and pluralistic expressions. The argument echoes Viswanath and Arora's (2000) proposition that ethnic media is likely to perform a cultural transmission function.

With the development of transnational electronic media, some scholars point out that



the term “ethnic media” should also include those media outlets produced not only *in* the host country, but also those based elsewhere – in the home country or other diasporas – catering for diasporic migrant consumers (Shi 2009). For instance, the U.S. edition of the Hong Kong based *Sing Tao Daily* sees Chinese migrants in America as its target group, facilitating their access for the homeland (i.e. Hong Kong) as well as local American news for Chinese language readers; the London based TVBS-Europe broadcasts through satellite TV over several European countries where migrants can enjoy TV dramas in their native language; similarly, the Wenxuecity.com is based in the U. S. while aiming at providing “the overseas Chinese with in-depth updated local, national, and worldwide community focused contents...”<sup>9</sup> This intended readership is therefore general and global, illustrating the fact that ethnic media could be produced at any location while targeting specifically diasporic audiences.

Some media scholars rightly call for a nuanced analysis of ethnic media given the media’s heterogeneous nature of places of origin, location specific content, distribution pattern as well as ownership status (Georgiou 2001; Jeffres 1999; Lin and Song 2006; Zhou and Cai 2002; Shi 2009). Lin and Song argue that since globalisation is experienced in local context, it is essential to study culturally relevant and locally vital “geo-ethnic stories” to better understand the roles of ethnic media in immigrant communities. (Lin and Song 2006, 364)

Whether the purpose is to facilitate acculturation or to promote pluralism, one notable

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<sup>9</sup> Wenxuecity.com is a Chinese-language websites for overseas Chinese. Based in the United States, the website does not have its own news reporting staff, but collects news, gossips, and opinion articles mostly concerning China. The website also hosts online forums and blogs. Because it contains politically sensitive words, the website is censored in China, and is not accessible to the mainland netizens. See <http://docs.wenxuecity.com/aboutus/>.

characteristic of ethnic media, as far as migrant identity is concerned, is that they constantly remind migrants of their position and “ethnic minority” identity in the host society by picking up the ethnic and racial labels in the host mainstream society. Shi rightly points out in her study on ethnic media use of Chinese migrant women in the U. S. that ethnic media – the Chinese language newspapers in this case – “pick up the identity labels prescribed by the dominant ideology and pass them on to the minority readers *without* consciously questioning the cultural meanings of these labels ... ironically subject immigrants to mainstream control” (Shi 2009, 606).

Since 1990s, Scholars have already noticed the changes of ethnic media brought about by the modern means of communication. Viswanath and Arora (2000) point out that the recent migrants are able to maintain their ties to the home country more easily than the early migrants due to the technological development in communications. Zhang and Hao (1999) conducted a descriptive survey on the early electronic Chinese publications in the late 1990s when the online media had just begun to sprout in cyberspace. They argue that

“in the age of cyberspace, the role of ethnic media in fortifying the cultural traits of ethnic immigrants is expected to be further strengthened. As a result, ethnic groups are more likely to be assimilated into the mainstream culture without losing their own cultural roots and ethnic identity” (Zhang and Hao 1999, 21).

Melkote and Liu (2000) find that Chinese ethnic internet use creates a “pluralistic integration” for Chinese students and scholars in the US. Their research suggests that the dependency on the Chinese ethnic internet among these students and scholars is in positive correlation with the behaviour acculturation and the level of Chinese values

sustained, but in negative correlation with American value acculturation. While maintaining their Chinese values such as respect for culture and tradition, and for elders and modesty, these netizens integrate with the host society in their behaviours – dressing, eating, drinking and shopping, but not in the values such as those related to parent-children relationship, sexual matters, health and physical appearance, and religion. Arguably, the “pluralistic integration” effect of the ethnic internet therefore contributes to superficially integrated behaviours but accentuates ethnic particularity of migrants in the host society.

As shown above, the influence of media on ethnic immigrants has been extensively researched. The foci have been put on the media’s roles in facilitating acculturation/adaptation and in preserving ethnic culture and ethnic identity, how different forms of media, i.e. the press, radio, television, and recently cyberspace, have been able to exert different impacts on the formation of migrant identity and ethnic community, and increasingly, how geographic location as an important factor could be included in the examination of media influence on migrants.

Such research seems to be extensive and comprehensive for the understanding of the media influence on migrants, particularly in the pre- and early digital era. However, it is important to point out that most research is subject to its own temporal limitation – limitation caused by the time at which the research is conducted. The development in digital technology, such as internet connection speed and online content volume, is exponential in the past decade. For instance, video chatting over Skype and Social Networking Sites such as Facebook and Sina Weibo were far less popular and even non-existent five years ago when the above mentioned research was conducted. These changes necessitate a re-evaluation of the current scholarship on the influence of the

internet on migrants. A potentially significant factor so far neglected is the possible role of the “homeland media” – media based in the home country without specifically targeting, yet easily accessible to, overseas migrants through the internet. The following section discusses the reasons why the influence of online homeland media on migrant population requires more academic attention in the current digital era.

### **2.3.2 Online Homeland Media – An Overlooked Site**

This largely under-researched area is most likely caused by the fact that traditionally homeland media had not been able to exert timely and direct influence on migrants and their communities. Thus, homeland media have been considered peripheral and have been overlooked by scholars in both media and migration studies.

In terms of time and volume, before instant and continuous connection is enabled by the internet, the information flow suffered greatly from the barriers set by the physical distance between the homeland and the host country. Before the advent of electronic media, only a small amount of information from the homeland was able to reach its diasporic audiences, and it often took a long time. The transmission was usually done through newsletters or the back issues of publications brought to the host country by newly arrived migrants or posted by families and friends in the home country. This incidental and lengthy process causes a temporal gap between the diaspora and the homeland – what was covered in the news that the overseas migrants got could have already folded in the interim of the slow transmission. Another problem is that transmitted in such a manner, the information that reached migrants depends largely on the interest of the people who brought homeland publications into the host country – politics, sports, entertainment, for instance. Hence, the homeland information that the diasporic audiences received was fragmented and inconsistent at best.

Arguably, what the diasporic audiences got in the pre-internet days was not the homeland media, but only piecemeal and patchy parts, or a snapshot of their content. Thus, in the pre-digital era, homeland media lack the means of exerting continuous and consistent influence on migrants and their communities.

However, the situation has changed greatly with the technological advancement in ICTs. Migrants nowadays have increasingly easy access through the internet to the “genuine” homeland media. In her research on Chinese media in New Zealand, Manying Ip (2006, 185) rightly points out that, if the locally host country produced Chinese-language content is considered not satisfactory by the new Chinese migrants, they will choose to access homegrown or international materials on the internet since many of them are regular users of the internet in the country of origin.

The most distinctive characteristic that differentiates homeland media from ethnic media is that they are the mainstream media in the home country. While, as discussed previously, ethnic media are location specific, facilitate migrant acculturation and adaptation, and tend to instil migrants with prescribed cultural hierarchy and ethnic ranking in the host country, homeland media would not have such functions due to their mainstream nature in their own territory. As such, these homeland-based mainstream media outlets do not position themselves as services catering for diasporic audiences.<sup>10</sup> What influence these media have on diasporic audiences, as far as

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<sup>10</sup> In China, CCTV4 (China Central Television Channel 4), otherwise known as CCTV International is an exceptional case. CCTV4 provides a variety of content including news and current affairs, music, documentaries, sports, cartoons, and dramas, tailored for Chinese audiences outside mainland China. It is official, state-run, free satellite broadcasting in Chinese language with three channels – Asia, America, and Europe. CCTV4 is an exception in China’s mainstream media because it is specially designed to cater for Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and other overseas Chinese, and it contains a large portion of propaganda in its content in the aim of constructing the “United Front”.

diasporic identity is concerned, is thus becoming increasingly salient and relevant in the identity construction of migrants when access to them is just a click away on the computer. Chinese online homeland mainstream media is hence imperative in the exploration of Chinese migrant identity and nationalism. This is due to several characteristics of the Chinese homeland media. Firstly, aiming primarily at domestic consumption, homeland media do not particularly target overseas Chinese audiences; the identity narratives of media content is indiscriminately produced for every Chinese, seen collectively as a largely homogenous group. To migrant audiences who frequent online homeland media, the impact of the Chinese identity narratives on their identity formation will be potent and highly significant.

Secondly, to state the obvious, as China is perceived by the PRC migrants as the origin of Chinese culture, the homeland media are the sources of genuine and authentic culture, untouched and unspoiled by external factors such as host country influences.<sup>11</sup> This authentic culture could be transmitted to diasporic audiences, intentionally or otherwise, to foster a stronger Chinese cultural identity through homeland media consumption. Finally, it is well established among media scholars and practitioners that Chinese government exerts strict controls over media as part of their efforts to shape a universal worldview and ideology among Chinese audiences (MacKinnon 2008; Han 2011; Qian 2008; Zheng 2008). The political discourses in the homeland media may help to promote patriotism and nationalism among diasporic audiences (Nyiri 2001); and long distance patriotism in turn impacts on the identity

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<sup>11</sup> The external influence from the host society can make adaptations to the “original culture”. For instance, the highly popular Auckland Lantern Festival, though inspired by the Chinese Lantern Festival, has been adjusted to include elements from other cultures of New Zealand’s multi-ethnic scene. The festival has become a multicultural celebration under New Zealand’s summer skies, rather than an occasion marking the completion of the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year.

and sense of belonging of Chinese migrants.

Based on the above observations, the homeland media should be properly investigated for its possible impact on migrant identity, especially in the current digital era when the internet allows extensive homeland media consumption.

### **2.3.3 The Internet and Chinese Nationalism**

Only a few existing studies have looked into Chinese nationalism on the internet, or Chinese Cyber nationalism, and given the current resurgence of nationalism among Chinese migrants around the world in recent years (Wu 2007), one can assert that the topic of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is under-researched.

In the studies of overseas Chinese, media has been identified as a major ‘pillar’ for the formation and sustenance of collective Chinese identity outside China (Sun 2005; Suryadinata 1997). Many scholars have studied the power of Chinese language media in the construction of a virtual homeland amongst migrant communities. Recently, the potent power of the internet as the “new media” has increasingly shifted scholars’ attention to cyberspace. One of the reasons that it has caught scholars’ attention is that the internet provides free public spaces for transnational subjects to have their voice in a global context, which is rather difficult to achieve with traditional media. More importantly, cyberspace is not only a medium which merely disseminates information in a top-down, few-to-many fashion with the rise of user-generated content using Web 2.0 applications, it has become a sphere where transnational subjects can articulate their own feelings of belonging, their identities, and their nationalism in an interactive manner. While using the internet, they do so with a clear awareness that they have the

power to reach a wide audience, with minimum institutional control, and at a much lower cost and considerably greater speed.

In her article on the media and the Chinese diaspora, Sun points out that the Chinese transnational mediasphere deserves more academic attention, especially in the current situation of intensified globalisation and the increasing impact of the export of Chinese nationalism from the People's Republic of China (Sun 2005). Similar to Sun's notion of export nationalism, other researchers consider Chinese nationalism as part of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda to legitimize its rule and to define domestic and foreign affairs (Ong 2005a; Zhao 2004; Gries 2004).

The concept of Chinese nationalism being primarily a government-sponsored ideology is contested by scholars who believe that Chinese nationalism is spontaneous. Based on case studies of nationalism manifested online during several major China-related events, Wu defines Chinese Cyber nationalism as "a non-government sponsored ideology and movement", stating that it has "originated, existed, and developed in China's online sphere over the past decade" (Wu 2007). Some scholars further assert that Chinese nationalism has taken a new form, which is in fact beyond official sponsorship and promotion. This online nationalism is in fact difficult to be harnessed by the government (Gries 2004; Hughes 2000).

Some other scholars also argue that overseas Chinese nationalism is a political project, though not necessarily state-sponsored. In her study of huaren.org,<sup>12</sup> Ong (2008)

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<sup>12</sup> Huaren.org was set up during the 1998 anti-Chinese violent riots in Indonesia by a Malaysian Chinese migrant in New Zealand. The founder later linked up with overseas Chinese professionals from Canada, Australia, and the United States and together they established the World Huaren Federation (WHF). Huaren.org later became the official website of WHF. The website originally reported the riots in Indonesia extensively in English.



contends that overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is a political discourse put forward by elitist overseas Chinese with the aim of lumping all the ethnic Chinese together. She further asserts that the nationalism articulated in cyberspace by certain ethnic Chinese is undesirable and even dangerous for their counterpart in other diasporas. The reason is ethnic Chinese around the world are undoubtedly diverse populations who have different perceptions of identity and who feel differently about national belonging – for instance, people would refer to themselves as Malaysian Chinese rather than Chinese Malaysians. In Southeast Asian countries in particular, Ong points out that any political suggestion of diasporic Chinese sentiment or Chinese nationalism is avoided since it implies disloyalty to the host country.

However, the above mentioned investigations of Chinese nationalism as state-sponsored ideology does not adequately address the fact that many overseas Chinese display strong nationalistic sentiments Even though they are less exposed to the propaganda of the communist party state when compared to their co-ethnics in China. And although Ong has provided insightful explanations to overseas Chinese nationalism as an elitist political project, absent from her analysis is the spontaneous popular sentiment manifested by the migrant population. One example of such events of global visibility was the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. During the event, Chinese nationalism was manifested by migrants both as a political project against Tibet independence and as the emotional attachment to, affections for and pride in the homeland.

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It now offers some background information about overseas Chinese and links to Chinese associations and Chinese media outlets around the world. See (Ong 2008)

In addition, there are even more factors to consider when it comes to overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism. Apart from the debate of whether Chinese nationalism is government-sponsored or spontaneous or a political project, there are issues complicated by the immigrant status of overseas Chinese. Nationalism of overseas Chinese could be influenced by their migration experience. Previous studies on other migrant populations show that migrant loyalty can be split between the home and the host countries given the fact that they maintain strong transnational connections to the home country in various forms (Bach 2011; Brown and Shipway 2012).

Furthermore, different types of Chinese nationalism – state nationalism *versus* popular nationalism, and supernationalism *versus* ethno-nationalism – should be differentiated from each other in order to tease out the multifaceted nature of Chinese nationalism (He and Guo 2000). For instance, studying online nationalism of Chinese migrants in Singapore, Chan (2005) points out that when it comes to events within China such as Tibet and Xinjiang independence, ethnic Han nationalism contends with the multiplicity of Chinese ethnic identities.<sup>13</sup> When it comes to events that involve confrontation with the “other”, such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute between China and Japan, migrants tend to deny the ethnic multiplicity and uphold the homogenous essentialist notion of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*).

## 2.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the theories of nationalism and transnationalism with a special connection made with media, especially the internet. The theories and empirical research in the three areas – nationalism, migration studies, and media

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<sup>13</sup> The ethnic Han Chinese is the majority population in China, accounting for 92% of the overall Chinese population. There are 55 ethnic minority groups in China.

studies – have informed the current PhD research and have helped to shape my theoretical and analytical framework.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the major theories and paradigms researching nationalism. An operational definition of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is put forward by synthesising various aspects of different nationalism theories. While contending concepts of nationalism shapes the complex landscape of the research area – political versus cultural, modernist versus perennialist and primordialist, real/essentialist versus imagined, this review synthesises these arguments and propose that in this research on popular nationalism among Chinese migrants, nationalism should be seen as containing both political and cultural elements. Though the concept of the nation itself exists in the realm of imagination, such imagined membership is perceived to be based on shared common history, language, culture, and biological traits. For migrant populations, nationalism is not just about political projects and movements, but also, and more importantly, it is closely linked with sentiment, emotion, cultural affiliation and identity.

Transnational activities have broken new grounds to this investigation of nationalism, especially nationalism among migrants who reside physically in the host countries while simultaneously maintaining political, economic, and cultural connections with the home country. The second section of this chapter reviews the theories of transnationalism. The analysis of the internet can be situated into most of the major theories on transnationalism, among which the theories on multiple and hybrid identities, cultural reproduction, and (re)construction of locality are the most relevant. Easy connections between migrants and the home country enabled by the internet help to create new transnational social fields where transnational subjects can choose their

ways of being and/or belonging. Intensified by the hyper-connectedness of the internet, simultaneity brings more complexity than clarity in terms of the construction of migrant identity. By linking migrants' transnational media participation over the internet with transnationalism, the theoretical framework is constructed for the analysis of data in later chapters, e.g. Chapter Six: Cyber China and Parallel Lives, and Chapter Seven: Online Homeland Media and Ethnic Media.

The last section of this chapter provides an in-depth review of the theoretical and empirical studies on media and migrants in terms of their identity and nationalism. Major research gaps are identified, which largely directed the research agenda of this current thesis. Existing literature has identified media as the major element influencing migrant identity and nationalism. To date, most of the empirical studies emphasise the role of ethnic media in migrant identity construction, integration and adaptation. However, with the advent of the internet, homeland media has become increasingly relevant in the discussion of migrant identity construction. Homeland media are now readily available to migrants in host countries around the world through the internet. Most importantly, different from ethnic media, homeland media are usually mainstream media in their own countries and do not particularly target overseas audiences. To such audiences, homeland media are the ultimate authority on genuine Chinese culture and identity. Therefore, to understand what role the Chinese-language cyberspace play in migrant nationalism and identity requires a nuanced analysis of both online ethnic media and online homeland media. What is more, whether Chinese Cyber nationalism is government-sponsored or spontaneous remains hotly debated as evidenced in the literature. Admittedly, existing investigations of Chinese nationalism as political projects – be it government-sponsored or elitist – sheds lights on the explanation of the patriotic actions taken by overseas Chinese.

Nonetheless, seeing nationalism as also encompassing ethno-cultural elements and concerning popular sentiment and identity would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism.

The next chapter outlines the research design and the methodological basis of this PhD study. Informed and guided by the theories discussed in this chapter on literature review, the research design will be discussed in detail, and reasons for using a multi-method approach in this qualitative research will be explained.

## **Chapter Three: Investigating Netizens and Media Content – A Multi-method Research**

In the previous chapter, both theoretical and empirical studies on nationalism and identity of transnational migrants are reviewed. Based on a critical review of the literature, I have put forward an operational definition of overseas Chinese nationalism. By contextualising the internet in transnationalism, I have also constructed a theoretical framework for the analysis of migrant nationalism and identity in cyberspace. This current chapter will discuss both methodology and of methods used this research. The aim of this chapter is twofold. One is to provide a framework from which the quality of this research can be judged, and two, to prepare the readers for the content and analysis in the ensuing chapters.

The first section outlines the rationale for using a multi-method approach in this PhD project. The following sections offers detailed explanations of each of the methods employed – qualitative content analysis, online survey, and in-depth interview – with discussions of the respective methodological basis. Following this, I will provide some reflection on my insider-outsider position during the research process and the validation strategies I employed.

### **3.1 A Multi-method Approach Guided by Research Purpose**

This research explores Chinese migrant netizens' experience of internet use with the aim of understanding their nationalism and identity construction online. As a communication medium, a global network of connection and a scene of social construction, the internet provides researchers not only with new tools for conducting

research, but also new venues and new means for “understanding the way social realities get constructed and reproduced through discursive behaviors” (Markham 2004, 95). Therefore, a holistic understanding of the topic requires an approach which can probe into both the media and the users, i.e. the migrant netizens.

Influenced by both quantitative and qualitative methods in the current literature of methodology, especially ethnography and phenomenology, I decided to employ a multi-method research design including qualitative content analysis of online text, an online survey, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with the migrant netizens. These processes were interconnected, and both the design and the implementation of the online survey and the in-depth interview were informed by the findings from the qualitative content analysis.

Such a multi-method research design is directed by the exploratory nature of the research topic. As mentioned previously, the research project started from my observation of large scale manifestations of nationalism by Chinese migrants in New Zealand on the internet. To provide an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, a systematic stage-by-stage research design was developed. In the first stage, the research was directed to investigate what aspects of overseas Chinese nationalism were manifested in the online user-generated text.

Once those aspects were identified, the research proceeded to its second stage. An online survey was employed to chart the internet use by Chinese migrants, their attitudes towards the nationalistic discourses, and their sense of identity.

Simultaneously, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect empirical data pertaining to the identity construction of these Chinese migrants in relation to their

internet use, with the aim of providing an explanation for their nationalism voiced online.

### **3.2 Qualitative Textual Analysis of User-generated Content**

In the first stage of the research process, I intended to identify the themes and dimensions of overseas Chinese nationalism as manifested by the migrant netizens on the internet. Therefore, I employed qualitative content analysis of user-generated online text as the approach to understand the overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism and migrant identity construction. *Qualitative content analysis*, sometimes referred to as ethnographic content analysis or qualitative document analysis, is an approach to documents that emphasises the researcher's role in the construction of the meaning of and in texts (Altheide and Schneider 1996). It is a commonly used method in media studies. According to Bryman, in qualitative content analysis, "there is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding meaning in the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared" (Bryman 2008, 276).

Qualitative content analysis is well-suited to this research. In general, content analysis is often seen favourably by researchers as an "unobtrusive method" which does not entail participants in a study which needs to take the researcher into account (Webb 2000). What is more, as discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, migrant nationalism and identity are seen as socially constructed in this research. Online text enables researchers to study such social construction "in progress as real, enacted process rather than a theoretical premise" and to see "the visible artefacts of this negotiation process", and therefore, it can provide researchers



with a tool to investigate “the way social realities are displayed or how these might be negotiated over time” (Markham 2004, 114).

Due to the lack of consensus in the existing literature on what overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism – and in general what nationalism – consists of, there were no pre-defined categories or taxonomies that could be consulted for a coding system. This situation dictated the exploratory nature of this research project. Qualitative content analysis, though starting from some existing concepts that can serve as tentative categories, allows and even expects new categories to emerge throughout the research process. Similar to quantitative content analysis, the qualitative approach also collects numerical and narrative data. However, instead of putting data into pre-determined categories, qualitative content analysis is directed to “check, supplement, and supplant prior theoretical claims by simultaneously obtaining categorical and unique data for every case studied” (Altheide and Schneider 1996, 17), and as such, it is “embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances” (Dukes 1984, 68).

### **3.2.1 Skykiwi.com as the Site for Data Collection**

The top New Zealand based Chinese-language website, Skykiwi.com, is chosen as the site for textual data collection. The website Skykiwi.com was established in the early 2000s as a non-commercial Chinese-language online Bulletin Board System (BBS), and became a fully commercialised website in 2005. It has several news channels, online forums, advertisements, social networking services, an online equivalent of Yellow Pages called “Opage” (O for orange, the theme colour for Skykiwi), as well as an online trading platform called “Skykiwi Mall”.

The website is the most popular Chinese-language website based in New Zealand. According to Alexa.com, a third party web information company, Skykiwi ranks the 43<sup>rd</sup> among all websites visited by people in New Zealand<sup>14</sup>, and is the only New Zealand based Chinese-language website listed in the top 100. Skykiwi claims to have 160,000 registered members and over 60,000 unique daily IP visits and attracts over 700,000 daily page views (Skykiwi 2013). It is worth noting here that according to 2006 census the total number of Chinese living in New Zealand was 147,56. Skykiwi is arguably the most influential examples of Chinese-language media in New Zealand. According to their own online survey, over half of its users are students and working class aged between 18–30 years old. 89% of its users come from mainland China, and almost half of them (49.02%) reside in Auckland (Skykiwi 2011).

Skykiwi, like almost all the diaspora-based ethnic online media, is simultaneously a geographically embedded website and a ‘de-territorialised’ space. It is geographically embedded in the sense that it caters to the specific needs of the Chinese community in New Zealand. As stated in the website’s mission statement, “we desire to provide our readers quality information and serve as a platform in introducing New Zealand culture and lifestyle to Chinese community.” The purpose, the target group, as well as the content, all point to the fact that Skykiwi is location specific, focusing largely on New Zealand.

At the same time, the website can also be considered a ‘placeless space’. The nature of the internet, especially in the age of Web 2.0, is that it allows user-generated content. Users of Skykiwi can post comments on issues without any specific relation to the host society. They share hyperlinks to other sources based in China and

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<sup>14</sup> As of July 2013. See <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries:0/NZ>.

elsewhere. Skykiwi is not confining the users to a New Zealand only context. In this sense, the website serves as a 'de-territorialised' platform.

Theoretically, there is the possibility that a study on a website targeting the entire overseas Chinese population worldwide with no geographic specificity might generate data different from my research, leading to possible different findings. However, so far, all the Chinese-language ethnic online media tend to be very location specific. Even the largest websites targeting overseas Chinese, the North America-based Wenxuecity and 6park, cannot escape from being location-specific. Although they claim to target overseas Chinese around the world, the websites provide considerable amounts of location-specific information. Users of these websites need to choose their location, or the websites automatically recognise a user's IP and direct the user to location-specific content. These websites are commercial websites, depending on revenue from advertisement which needs to be location-specific. Given this very powerful financial reason, it will take a very long time, if ever possible, for less geographically specific overseas Chinese websites to emerge, survive, and flourish. Therefore, for my PhD research, Skykiwi serves as an optimal site for the investigation of diaspora-based Chinese-language online media in New Zealand.

Textual data used for content analysis in this research was selected from two particular sections of the website – news channels and online forums. According to the statistics from the Alexa website, among all the users who visit Skykiwi, 71.61% go to its homepage (skykiwi.com) which features news headlines, advertisements, as well as various recommended content from different subdomains. Over 54% of Skykiwi users go to the forums (bbs.skykiwi.com), and more than half (51.82%) visit

the news channels (news.skykiwi.com) (Alexa 2013), indicating that these two subdomains are far more visited than the others offered by Skykiwi.

### 3.2.2 Data Collection on Skykiwi

Data collection of user-generated content in news comments and forum posts started from October 2009 and was a long-term continuous process. As discussed earlier in the literature review, Chinese nationalism is identified as “event-sensitive”; most of its manifestations are found online during high-profile events related to China and Chinese, usually on a large global scale (Wu 2007; Ong 2008), and it is a similar case with migrant identity articulation. As such, data collection was initially focused on posts and comments during such events as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China, the Sanlu milk powder scandal which spanned several months’ time from August 2008, and the dispute between China and Japan over Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. All these events took place before the start of this research, and they provided foundation blocks for the initial data analysis. However, as this research targets Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand, selecting only the global scale events would carry the risk of overlooking locally specific events that are highly relevant for this study. Informed by the method of netnography, which requires long-term observation and data collection (Kozinets 2010), I kept observing activities of the Chinese migrants on Skykiwi, and subsequently included several other New Zealand-specific cases for this research, for instance, the 2010/2011 Christchurch Earthquakes in New Zealand, the visits of Dalai Lama and Rebiya Kadeer (the ethnic Uyghur activist) to New Zealand, and the sale of the local Crafar farms to a Chinese company.<sup>15</sup> What is more, this netographic approach also allowed me to identify some

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<sup>15</sup> Details of these events will be presented in subsequent chapters respectively when data generated from them are used for analysis.

comparatively small-scale events that were specifically related to migrant experience in the host country. Such localised incidents were able to spark nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand. These events include various accounts of migrant netizens about their daily encounters with the local population, which were usually perceived to be discriminatory in nature.

### **3.2.3 Data Analysis of Online Texts**

The qualitative content analysis was interpretive in nature and involved close readings of the online text collected. Data analysis of this research took place simultaneously with the data collection process. In the analysis of the text, I employed the process of coding described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Tesch (1990) to identify themes or new concepts. In such a process, words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that belong to the same theme are put together and a label is assigned to that particular theme or topic. Based on the concept of overseas Chinese nationalism developed in the literature review, I initially kept loosely in mind “Cultural”, “Political”, and “Other” as the preliminary coding themes. If certain parts of the postings or news comments fitted into those themes, they were interpreted accordingly. However, during the process, I found that a large number of the data fit neither into the “cultural” theme nor the “political” theme, and the theme of “other” would be too broad to capture the specificity of each item, given the diverse but interrelated topics mentioned in the text. I then subdivided the theme “other” and new themes were added once data emerged pointing to new directions. By using the continual refining process, I was able to identify nine themes and subsequently put them into three groups that I called “dimensions of overseas Chinese nationalism”. Given the complexity and interconnectedness of these themes, I decided to use a “colour coding” system for the three dimensions, as shown below in Table 3.1. Details of these

dimensions are discussed in Chapter Five: Under the Nationalism Umbrella when findings are presented. As such, the major part of data collection continued for more than two years until October 2011, when data from new events were considered as only providing supplementary evidence and fitting into the already identified recurrent themes. With regard to migrant identity, textual data on identity articulations of migrant netizens were analysed together with the interview data at the later stage.

Table 3. 1 Themes and Dimensions of Cyber Nationalism

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	Cultural
	Ethnic
	Essentialist/biological
<b>Red</b>	Sovereignty
	Government
	Military
<b>Blue</b>	Love China, right or wrong
	Protect the image of China
	Criticise China with good intent

### **3.3 Charting Nationalism and Internet Use – The Online Survey**

The second stage of this research project involved both an online survey and in-depth interviews, which were informed by the findings from the previous stage, the qualitative content analysis of online texts. This section focuses on the use of the online survey method, which provided limited quantification to this current qualitative research.

#### **3.3.1 Using a Quantitative Method in a Qualitative Research**

In his book *Social Research Methods*, Bryman points out some dilemmas that qualitative researchers face. Firstly, qualitative researchers tend to use imprecise

terms when it comes to quantity and frequency, such as “many”, “frequently”, “rarely”, “often”, and “some” – a form of “quasi-quantification”. The alternative, Bryman suggests, is to employ a limited amount of quantification in a qualitative research when it is appropriate, especially when such quantification can strengthen an argument (Bryman 2008, 598).

Furthermore, one of the criticisms raised against qualitative research is that the texts (textual data) that qualitative researchers use are often anecdotal, providing little guidance to readers as to the prevalence of the issue to which the anecdote refers. This problem is present in the use of excerpts from texts/documents, snippets from interview transcripts, and brief accounts of encounters between people which “provides little sense of the prevalence of whatever such items of evidence are supposed to indicate” (Bryman 2008, 599). To combat such anecdotalism, qualitative researchers increasingly employ a limited amount of quantification in their studies so that readers can be given a sense of the extent to which “certain beliefs are held or a certain form of behaviour occurs” (Bryman 2008, 599).

With regard to this research, similar problems would occur if only qualitative analysis of online texts were used. This is because online participation usually follows the pattern described in the “long tail” theory (Anderson 2006b), with many netizens being “lurkers”<sup>16</sup> and far fewer are active contributors to online postings and comments (Cha et al. 2007; Ochoa and Duval 2008). Therefore, I decided to use “a limited amount of quantification” by employing the online survey to provide indicative data so that the readers can have a broad sense of the extent to which

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<sup>16</sup> Lurkers are the group of people whose participation online is limited to reading posts/comments rather than writing.

nationalistic sentiment, migrant identity, and internet use patterns are shared among migrant netizens. In so doing, the findings from the online survey would provide a background against which the interview data could be better analysed and understood.

Given the above stated purpose, and in order to prepare the readers with a background for a better understanding of the overall research findings, results from the online survey is presented before the textual analysis which is synthesised with the interview data and presented in later chapters, although in the actual research process the textual analysis was developed before the online survey.

### **3.3.2 Sampling and Approaches to Online Survey Data Collection**

Given the overall qualitative nature of this research, it was not my intention to provide statistically representative data on Chinese migrant netizens' nationalism and identity in this survey. Rather, the survey provided explanatory and indicative data on their internet use patterns, their general level of and attitudes towards online nationalism manifestations, and their identity. The survey targeted all migrant netizens who migrated from the People's Republic of China (PRC) to New Zealand, as well as those "returnee netizens" and "transnational netizens" who used to live in New Zealand for more than 12 months, but were residing in China or another country at the time of the survey.<sup>17</sup> The sample size of the online survey depended on the extent that the recruitment approach reached the potential respondents. The criteria for being a potential respondent were: 1) one must be a migrant originally from PRC; 2) one must be an adult at least 18 years old; 3) one must have resided in New Zealand for at least 12 months at the time of the survey; and 4) one must have access to the internet at

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<sup>17</sup> Returnee is widely used in migration studies to refer to those who return to their country of origin, usually with an intention to settle down or to stay for long periods.



home (outside work and/or study). The criterion of having resided in New Zealand for at least 12 months is set in accordance with the United Nation's definition of migrants. The International Organisation of Migration defines migrant as "an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the courses, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate".<sup>18</sup> Because this research explores the influence of the Chinese-language cyberspace on Chinese migrants, it is important to investigate how participants use the internet in their *daily life* for communication, information, entertainment, as well as business, rather than simply using the internet for work or school. Therefore, "access to the internet at home" was used as a criterion to recruit participants.

An online questionnaire was used for this survey. There are several advantages of using web-based self-administered survey questionnaire. Firstly, the online survey helped to overcome the limitations caused by geographic locations. As the targeted respondents are migrant netizens who reside both in New Zealand and elsewhere, it is impossible for the researcher to travel around the world to conduct this survey, especially given the financial resources available for this PhD project. The online survey is therefore an ideal form to cover multi-location respondents. Moreover, the online approach helps to reduce instrumental bias caused by gender, race, social class and power relations which can occur during face-to-face surveys (Illingworth 2001). The lack of face-to-face dynamics in the online survey puts it in a neutral position in the research practice. Thirdly, as the targeted cohort consists of migrant netizens, using online survey provided a more efficient way – in terms of scale and cost – to

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<sup>18</sup> The definition is given on the website of the International Organisation of Migration. See <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/key-migration-terms-1.html#Migrant> .

reach and enlist potential respondents than telephone or face-to-face surveys. For instance, those who fill out an online survey are more likely to use the internet in their daily life than a randomly chosen respondent over telephone. Although this online survey had no ambition to gather statistically representative data on the research subject, it was still essential to have a high level of involvement of the respondents for general quantitative purposes. The online approach could help to maximise the number of respondents at a low cost. Last but not least, the online survey offered total anonymity for the respondents. Without any face-to-face contact, the online survey could help to reduce the concerns of potential respondents who prefer to remain anonymous.

### **3.3.3 Survey Implementation**

The survey was administered on the online survey platform “SurveyMonkey”, which apart from hosting surveys, also provides templates for questionnaire design as well as preliminary data analysis. The questionnaire was tested within a small group of PhD students in the University of Auckland who meet the criteria set for the potential respondents. Based on the results and feedback, I subsequently made changes to the questionnaire to make sure that the questions and wording were clear and unambiguous. The survey was launched on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2011. In order to recruit more respondents, the survey remained open for 12 months.

Although online survey is an optimal approach to reach more respondents at a low cost, the most challenging task during the process was to recruit suitable potential respondents. As the targeted cohort was Chinese migrant netizens, I employed several online methods to reach out to potential respondents. Once the survey was officially launched, I sent out advertisements (see Appendix 6) in several New Zealand based

Chinese-language websites using their free BBS platforms. This had been reasonably effective and the number of respondents increased slowly.

Trying to take advantage of the fast developing Social Network Service in China, I tweeted the information about my research on Weibo.com with a link to the online survey once a week for four consecutive weeks.<sup>19</sup> However, this only resulted in small increases in the number of respondents. Faced with the difficulty in recruiting potential respondents, I decided to place paid advertisements on Skykiwi's website and through their Weibo account. The advertisement was put in three of Skykiwi's most popular forums – “FML-Your everyday stories”, “NZ Working Class”, and “Serve the people” – for 4 weeks starting from 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012. A link to the postings was also put on the frontpage of Skykiwi's News Channel during the same period of time. My tweet with the survey link was re-tweeted by Skykiwi on Weibo.com for three times on 24 August, 7 and 21 September 2012 respectively.

This approach brought both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, the number of respondents increased quickly once the advertisement was online. On the other hand, despite the recruiting criteria being clearly stated in the advertisement, a lot of people who did not meet the criteria took part in the survey. As indicated in some replies to my Weibo tweet, once they got into the online questionnaire, they found out that the survey was New Zealand-specific and did not target all Chinese migrant netizens around the world. Most of these respondents did not finish the questionnaire, resulting in an increasing number of invalid responses. Based on the experience, I would suggest that future research employing similar recruiting approach should put reminders of recruiting criteria more prominently for respondents

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<sup>19</sup> Weibo.com is the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, and is owned by Sina.com.

before they start. This would help to reduce the number of invalid responses in an online survey.

As the result of all these efforts, I was able to collect a total number of 389 responses. The responses that provided only the demographic profile information were considered invalid. This is because these responses, though containing some useful data, provided little information on the understanding of the internet-migrant relations. Therefore, 285 of the 389 responses were considered valid, and these were used for data analysis.

### **3.3.4 Online Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire designed for the online survey consists of four sets of questions, and it would take 5-8 minutes to complete the questionnaire (see Appendix 2). All the questions were presented both in Chinese and in English. A consent form was presented on the first page, and once a respondent read and clicked on “next”, the survey started automatically.

The first set of questions asked about the respondents’ demographic information including their age, gender, migration/visa status, education, occupation, and income. Most of these were in the form of multiple choice questions, and for questions concerning time and occupation, respondents were required to type their answers in the space provided. For the questions on education and income, I borrowed the specifications and categories from Statistics New Zealand to make it easier for future data analysis.

The second set of questions aimed at charting the respondents’ self-perceived identity(-ies) and level of integration, and their attachment to the host and the home

countries respectively. A 0 – 10 scale was used for these questions. The respondents were asked to give a number from 0 to 10 to show how much they identify with the home and/or the host countries. For instance, a 0 score to the statement “I am a Chinese” means that the respondent did not identify with being Chinese at all, while a 10 means the respondent totally agree with the identity claim. As discussed in the literature review, migrant identity can be hybrid and they can identify strongly with both the home and the host countries simultaneously. To avoid giving the respondents the impression that their New Zealand and Chinese identities need to add up to a total of 10, these statements on identity and attachment were presented separately, with the Chinese identity claims at the beginning of the questionnaire, their level of integration in the middle, and the New Zealand identity claims at the end of the questionnaire.

The third part was designed to chart the use of the internet by these migrant netizens, specifically, their use of the Chinese-language internet. The questions included their online time, the frequency and the reasons that they choose to use the Chinese-language internet. Based on my daily interactions with Chinese migrant netizens and my observation on the research cohort, nine statements were included in the questionnaire as reasons for using the Chinese-language internet. Respondents were asked to give a score from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale depending on how they think they agree or disagree with the listed reasons with “strongly disagree” as 1 and “strongly agree” as 5.

The last set of questions was designed to provide indicative data on the general nationalistic sentiment of the respondents as well as their attitudes towards various claims of nationalism. Based on the categories developed from the textual analysis, 14 nationalistic statements were selected from textual data covering all 9 categories in

the three dimensions listed in the previous section of this chapter. Similar to the previous set of questions, the respondents were also asked to give a score to each of the statement on a 5-point Likert Scale.

The final question in the questionnaire was an optional open-ended question which asked respondents to provide further comments on their use of the internet as migrants, their perception of identity, as well as their feedback about the survey.

### **3.4 The In-depth Interview with Chinese Migrant Netizens**

One of the major objectives of this study is to explore the reasons for overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, and to illustrate the respective influence of Chinese-language Cyberspace and the lived experiences on the integration and identity construction process of the migrant netizens. Therefore, in the second stage of the research process, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted simultaneously with the online survey. The aim of conducting the in-depth interview is to obtain a first person account of the Chinese migrant netizens on their perspectives of internet use in their lived experience, specifically in relation to their cyber nationalism and identity construction.

The use of the in-depth interview in this research was informed by the phenomenological approach widely used in ethnographic studies. Phenomenological methods are used to probe the lived experience of individuals, and the approach is to tease out the participants' subjective perspectives (Polkinghorne 1989; Creswell 2007). By studying human experience or social phenomena, phenomenological methods aim at uncovering "the inherent logic of that experience or phenomenon, the way in which it makes sense to its subjects" (Dukes 1984, 199). The approach is

hence specifically suitable for gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and can help to bring to the fore the perceptions of individuals from their own subjective interpretations .

This research considers overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism and identity construction as social phenomena, and the internet use is seen as part of the migrants' lived experience. Therefore, in-depth interviews with Chinese migrant netizens can not only penetrate into more reflective understandings about the nature of their lived experience from migrants' own perspectives, but can also go beyond taken-for-granted assumptions and common-sense explanations (Johnson 2001) of migrant nationalism and identity.

### **3.4.1 Sampling and Recruitment of Interview Participants**

The interview was designed to be conducted in both New Zealand and China. The same criteria for recruiting online survey participants were applied for the potential interviewees. The rationale for conducting the interviews in the two countries was to generate data for comparison between migrants who were living in New Zealand and returnee migrants who had had living experience in New Zealand. Potential participants were approached using a snowball method. Snowball sampling involves the researcher making initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then use this initial step to establish further contacts with others. As I am a Chinese migrant myself, I had already established contacts with the targeted cohort. Initial contacts were made to a number of my friends and colleagues who fit the interviewee criteria. They were asked to pass on the information about the research to their own networks. To protect the anonymity of the participants, people who were interested in participating were asked to initiate contact with me (instead of

me approaching them) through either email or telephone. Participants who had been interviewed were also encouraged to disseminate the information about the research among their contacts.

Being widely considered as an effective method in qualitative studies, snowball sampling recruits informants on the basis of referrals from previous participants (Bryman 2008). However, this chain referral process carries the known risk of recruiting interviewees in a homogenous group with similar socio-economic backgrounds, occupations, or age and gender (Dicicco-Bloom 2004). Therefore, judicious control over the referral chains becomes essential. The researcher needs to make an effort to “ensure the sample includes an array of respondents that, in qualitative terms, if not rigorous statistical ones, reflect what are thought to be the general characteristics of the population in question” (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 155). Guided by this notion, I established initial contacts with potential participants of various socio-economic backgrounds. Some of the initial participants were international students, some were professionals who obtained New Zealand citizenship, and some others were work- visa holders with comparatively low levels of education and income.

Although the original plan of the research was to recruit 35 participants, I stopped interviewing at the number of 29. The reason is that at that point I was confident that theoretical saturation had already been achieved – a point at which subsequent participants would offer very little or no new or relevant data but would only generate corroborating information (Bryman 2008, 416). Among the 29 participants, 18 (10 females, 8 males) were interviewed in Auckland, New Zealand, and the remaining 11 (6 females, 5 males) were interviewed in Beijing and Shenzhen, China. Most of the



participants (23 out of 29) were young migrant netizens in their 20s and 30s. In my interviews, the gender balance was relatively even, with 16 females and 13 males (see Table 3.2). With regard to their citizenship/visa status, 17 were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, and 12 were Chinese citizens holding student or work visa while in New Zealand (details see Appendix 3).

Table 3. 2 Sample Structure of Interview Participants

	Gender	Age Group			Number
		20-29	30-39	≥40	
New Zealand	Female	3	2	5	10
	Male	5	2	1	8
China	Female	5	1	0	6
	Male	1	4	0	5
<b>Total</b>		14	9	6	29

### 3.4.2 Interview Design

The interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was designed based on the analysis of the textual data. There were three sections in the schedule: 1) demographic information; 2) Internet use; and 3) cyber nationalism and identity.

The first section included questions about demographic background details, i.e. age, gender, place of origin, year of arrival in New Zealand, year of returning to China (if applicable), visa/citizenship status, education background, and occupation. Starting with these questions on factual data helped to lead the participants into an interview atmosphere, and assisted me to contextualise their responses for further questions.

As this interview design was informed by the phenomenological approach, the major purpose was to get the interviewees' perception of their lived experience from their own perspectives. Therefore, questions in section two and three were designed in the

way as to allow the interviewees to elaborate on their experience of internet use and perceptions of identity.

The second section explored how the participants use the internet, especially the Chinese-language cyberspace, and how the internet has influenced their life as migrants. Participants were asked to describe in detail their internet use habit and preferences. These include the average hours they spent on the internet per week, the websites they often use, the frequency of accessing the Chinese-language cyberspace. They were also invited to describe what they used the internet for, and to reflect on the influence of using the Chinese-language cyberspace on their daily life as migrants.

The third section delved into their attitudes towards cyber nationalism and identity construction. Participants were encouraged to talk about any events related to China or Chinese that had touched their emotional feelings during their stay in New Zealand. Events identified in the textual analysis were used as cues for interviewees when necessary to encourage that sufficient relevant information was forthcoming. The events used as cues were only mentioned very briefly to the participants, with the caveat that I was doing so just to prompt them but not to prime them.

### **3.4.3 Conducting Interviews**

The interviews in New Zealand were conducted during July to October 2011 in Auckland, and the ones in China were conducted during November 2011 to January 2012 in Beijing and Shenzhen, which are two of the most preferred return destinations for many Chinese migrants. The participants were interviewed mostly in public places (i.e. cafes and restaurants), and in some cases, participants preferred to be interviewed in their homes.

In the interview I began with a brief introduction of the research project and myself. Then Participants were given the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 4) and were asked to sign the Consent Form (see Appendix 5). During this process, I also explained the ethical issues with regard to data storing and security, and made sure that they understood that their participation was totally voluntary and they could choose to withdraw from the project anytime within the two months after the interview.

The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, the language which most of the participants preferred except for two cases. Both of these two interviewees were so-called “1.5 generation” Chinese migrants<sup>20</sup> who felt more comfortable to switch in between Chinese and English frequently in the interviews.

The interviews were guided by the semi-structured schedule outlined in the previous section. Nonetheless, the questioning sequence varied. The diverse nature of interviewees and their ways of organizing answers and narratives called for flexibility. Some interviews largely followed the schedule, while others preferred leading the conversation with long narratives. When the interviewees were logically developing or reflecting their life stories I would focus on listening and observing their non-verbal cues without interrupting or trying to redirect their thinking. This was to ensure that their perspectives and perceptions are truly of their own rather than the interviewer’s interpretation (Seidman 2006, 25). However, irrelevant information in long narratives would also cause distractions in the interviews and result in

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<sup>20</sup> 1.5 generation refers to those migrants who immigrated to the host country at a young age, usually under 13 years old.

unnecessary work during the transcription and analysis process. Thus, appropriate interruptions were necessary when the interviewees digressed from the main subjects or started to repeat details. In such cases, it was essential for the researcher to direct the participants back to the “anticipated course” (Johnson 2001, 111) rather than spending time on irrelevant details.

Probing into details without leading the interviewee is also essential in semi-structured interviews. Some scholars point out that interviewees who are immigrants can sometimes be prudent and diffident due to their minority social status. They may be reticent to share their experiences and opinions, especially when they had suspicions and worries (Merry et al. 2011; Pih, Hirose, and Mao 2012). In order to avoid causing such feelings among some of my interviewees, I employed strategies to modify the way some questions were asked. When talking about issues that were politically sensitive. For example, when I asked about their impressions on Falungong, the quasi-religious group which is banned in China, some interviewees had concerns about exposing too much of their personal attitudes. In these cases, I used quotes from online postings and asked the participants to provide their comments on the postings rather than urging them to give direct opinions on the issue itself. I would ask “what do you think about these comments about Falungong?” instead of “what’s your opinion about Falungong?” In so doing, I was able to extract much useful and relevant information from most of the interviewees. Only two of the participants preferred not to talk about this highly sensitive issue at all.

#### **3.4.4 Rapport and Interviewer-interviewee Relationship**

Different from the content analysis and the online survey applied in this research, the quality of in-depth interviews is greatly influenced by the people involved in the

process (Given 2008, 728-729; Johnson 2001, 103-104). Factors such as culture, ethnicity, age and gender can influence the interactions between interviewers and participants (Merry et al. 2011). For the one-time face-to-face interview approach used in this research, it is important for the interviewer to develop a positive relationship with participants rapidly. Trust and rapport usually dictate the depth of participants' response and the credibility of the information.

Rapport is built upon trust and respect for the interviewee and the information that is shared with them (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Establishing a good rapport starts even before the actual interview is conducted, and "the more care and thoroughness interviewers put into making contact, the better foundation they establish for the interviewing relationship (Seidman 2006, 50). In my research process, phone calls, text messages, and face-to-face chats were made before the formal interviews as a way to establish initial rapport with the interviewees. Being a young PhD student and sharing the same cultural background and migrant experience, I quickly gained their trust. Most of the interviewees were happy to participate in my research.

A certain level of self-disclosure from the interviewer is important to establish a good rapport because refusing to do so can lead to the feelings of imbalance and result in distance between the interviewer and the interviewees (Atkinson and Coffey 2001; Johnson 2001). On the other hand, scholars also caution that the interviewer should avoid offering too much personal information or to reveal their own values, beliefs, or opinions that may influence the interviewees in any way (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Therefore, during the interviews I was happy to offer a limited extent of self-disclosure to the interviewees (i.e. age, place of origin, educational and

occupational background), but I refrained from sharing any personal values or opinions with them. The result was that most of the participants considered the interviews as a comfortable process, and some expressed that they had enjoyed the interviews. A few interviewees also mentioned that the interview had been a good opportunity for them to reflect on the issues of belonging, identity, and nationalism, and asked for a copy of research findings once the thesis is finished.

### **3.5 Interpreting and Reporting Data from the Online Survey and the Interviews**

#### **3.5.1 Interpreting and Reporting Data from the Online Survey**

As stated above, the online survey serves to provide explanatory and indicative evidence instead of generating statistically representative data. As such, only descriptive statistical analysis (i.e. numbers of responses, percentages, means, and sums) was employed rather than establishing statistically significant correlations between variables and identifying cause effect using regression models.

Data generated from section one “demographic information” and section two “identity and integration” were used to provide a general profile of the respondents and their self-claimed identity, attachment and integration. For the questions using the Likert Scale in section three and four, numbers of respondents and percentages were used to show their level of agreement to the listed statements.

When reporting the findings, results from each of the statements were presented separately but followed the dimensions of nationalism identified in the qualitative content analysis. I also devised a scale called the “nationalism indicator” by summing up the scores given to the 14 statements on the Likert Scale in Section Four:

nationalism and identity. This will be explained in detail in Chapter Four: Online survey with the findings.

### **3.5.2 Interpreting Data from the In-depth Interviews**

Conducting the interviews was a reflective process. To some extent, it was difficult to separate data analysis from data collection in that the actual processes took place simultaneously. Combing the two allowed me to develop an emerging understanding about research questions, which in turn informed the questions being asked in subsequent interviewees (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Preliminary analysis of the interview data initially started during the data collection process, and further analysis continued during the transcription of the interview recordings. This step helped me to familiarise myself with the interviewees' narratives, and it also allowed me to identify themes emerging from the narratives of cyber nationalism and the netizens' preferences of internet use.

The themes on cyber nationalism fit into the three dimensions identified in the qualitative content analysis (see Table 3.1 in this chapter). Narratives in these themes were then used to reveal the possible reasons for online manifestations of migrant nationalism. Their self-reported internet use preferences were used to explain the internet use patterns found in the online survey. Their perceptions of identity were analysed together with the textual data gathered online to tease out the influences of the internet on their identity construction. During the process, I constantly referred back and forth in between the themes, preferences and perceptions to delve into their internal relations to provide a holistic understanding of the overall research topic.

Similar to many studies on migrants, language is an issue that needs to be addressed during data collection, analysis, and reporting. The timing of translation can significantly influence study findings if not handled properly. Usually, the translation can be carried out at different stages of the research process – pre-analysis, during analysis, and post-analysis. As suggested by Suh and her colleagues, the post-analysis translation approach can help the researcher to capture “explicit and implicit meanings embedded in the Asian language, as well culturally specific expressions and concepts” (Suh, Kagan, and Strumpf 2009, 198). For this research I adopted the post-analysis approach – data were collected using Chinese, and only the relevant data were translated into English at the stage of reporting findings when I started to write this current thesis. When reporting findings, pseudonyms are used for the interviewees (see Appendix 3: Interviewee Profile).

As mentioned above, the interviews were multi-sited, including participants both in New Zealand and in China. Similarly, the online survey was “virtually” multi-locational because it included respondents who had migration experience in New Zealand regardless of their current location. The purpose of using such a multi-locational design was to ensure that all types of migrant netizens who have relevant and significant New Zealand connections are included, be they “settlers”, “returnees”, or “transnationals”. It is the purpose of this research to give a comprehensive overview while taking a comparative perspective wherever suitable. Therefore, the empirical Chapters Four to Seven are not structured by comparing the three groups of migrants. Instead, the findings will be discussed around the three research themes – internet use, cyber nationalism, and identity construction – respectively.



## **3.6 Some Reflection: the Position of the Researcher and Validation Strategies**

### **3.6.1 The Insider-outsider Position**

The fact that I am a Chinese migrant netizen myself has provided me with an insider position in this research, which brought both advantages and challenges. As Kanuha points out, being an insider researcher “enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised” (Kanuha 2000, 444). Therefore, a critical reflection throughout the research process from data collection to analysis was an essential factor to ensure the validity and reliability of this qualitative research. While I took advantage of the role of being an insider, I was simultaneously aware of and continuously reflect on my role as a researcher. In fact, as Corbin Dwyer and Buckle point out, researchers can only ever occupy the space between insider and outsider – “We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher...we cannot occupy one or the other of those positions” (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 61). I continuously maintain this position of being in between, in order to all this research to provide robust and valid findings.

The insider position provided me with a better capacity to appreciate the experience of the participants during data collection and analysis. Considering me as an insider, my interviewees felt well understood, especially when they were explaining their experience within the cultural and migration contexts. For instance, I sometimes responded with a tacit nod or smile when they used web jargons that are frequently used by Chinese netizens. This was taken by the interviewees as a sign of understanding and encouragement. Consequently, they felt more comfortable and

willing to share their experience and perceptions in more detail and in depth. This enabled me to generate more robust data from their narratives.

On the other hand, I was constantly aware of my position as a researcher which actually made me closer to an outsider. The extensive literature review on migrant-internet relations, migrant identity, and nationalism equipped me with knowledge and shaped my perspectives on the research topic that differentiate me as a researcher from my interviewees. In a few cases, my participants asked me to share some of my perceptions and findings with them after the interviews finished. While corroborating my findings with their experience not mentioned during the interview, they also pointed out that I had provided insightful perspectives that they had never thought of.

The position of an insider allowed me to uncover salient points in their subtle expressions, and to delve into the deep meanings of their narratives, while simultaneously, the perspective of a researcher as an outsider enabled me to provide nuanced and credible interpretation of the lived experience of my interviewees. As Corbin Dwyer and Buckle cogently argue, the intimacy with the experience under study no longer allows a qualitative research to remain true outsiders, and the role as a research disqualifies one from being a complete insider (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 61). Nonetheless, the critical reflective process that I continuously engaged in during the research has allowed me to grasp the power of the in-betweenness to ensure the validity of this PhD study.

### **3.6.2 Validation Strategies**

During the process, several strategies were used to ensure the validity of this qualitative research. One of the commonly suggested strategies is prolonged

engagement and persistent observation in the field, including a good rapport with the interviewees, familiarising with the culture and experience studied (Creswell 2007). As mentioned above, a good rapport and extensive understanding of the experience were already existent in the research process. I continued to engage in the observation of migrant netizens' online activities in a netnographic manner. This enabled me to maintain a high degree of understanding of nationalism and identity manifestations on the internet.

What is more, the multi-method design allowed me to triangulate the research findings using different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Miles and Huberman 1994; Lincoln and Guba 1985). I also employed peer review and debriefing strategy suggested by (Ely et al. 1991; Creswell 2007). I organised a study group of nine PhD students from various disciplines including media studies, migration studies, sociology, political studies, linguistics and business. During our study group meetings, these members picked up the role of “devil’s advocates” (Lincoln and Guba 1985) – peer debriefers who asked hard questions and provided critical suggestions about my methods and data interpretation. This peer debriefing process helped me to refine my methods as well as interpretation of the data. I also employed a small scale member checking strategy (Creswell 2007). I solicited some participants’ views of the findings from the research when they asked me to share my perspectives on the research topic. As mentioned in the section on building rapport, some of my interviewees provided corroborating evidence after listening to my findings.

However, while all these strategies have been employed to ensure the validity of this qualitative research, I also fully recognise that “text is open to subjective

interpretation, reflects multiple meanings, is context dependent” (Julien 2008, 120).

And the eventual evaluation of the validity of this PhD study is left for readers to judge.

The next part of this thesis consists of four chapters reporting the empirical data which constitute the findings from my PhD research project. In Chapter Four: Discussions of Online Survey Finding, I will present and discuss the findings from the online survey, focusing on migrant netizens’ sense of identity, their level of integration and nationalism.

## **Chapter Four: Discussions of Online Survey Findings: Internet Use, Cyber Nationalism and Identity**

In the previous part of the thesis, I have established the theoretical framework that guides the analysis and the interpretations of this study. The methodological basis of the multi-method approach employed in this qualitative research has also been discussed in detail. From Chapter Four to Chapter Seven, I shall present the findings resulted from this research to provide empirical data support to my subsequent arguments and discussions, with the ultimate aim of outlining a comprehensive understanding of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism and migrant identity of the Chinese migrants.

This chapter provides a descriptive statistical analysis based on the data collected from the online survey. The purpose of using “a limited amount of quantification” in this qualitative research, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is to illustrate the extent to which cyber nationalism, migrant identity, and internet use patterns are shared among the Chinese migrant netizens. Therefore, findings from this chapter help to set up the background against which interpretations in the later chapters based on the data from the online texts and the interviews can be contextualised.

In examining the prevalence of internet use patterns and preferences, various themes of nationalism, and identity perceptions, this chapter is divided into four sections in accordance with the online questionnaire design used. The first section presents the respondents’ demographic profile, including age, gender, migration/visa status, education, and income. The second section probes into the respondents’ self-perceived identity, level of integration, and their attachment to the host and the home

countries respectively. The following section focuses on migrant use of the internet, specifically, their use of the Chinese-language cyberspace. Patterns and preferences of internet use by the migrant netizens are presented. Reasons of using the Chinese-language internet are also discussed in detail by taking into consideration the factors such as language preference, connections to the homeland, acquisition of information on China and Chinese, and familiarity with various web services. The last section discusses the respondents' attitudes towards nationalistic discourses manifested online. While the overall level of their nationalist sentiment is presented, various themes of nationalism are also discussed in some detail to show their respective prevalence among migrant netizens. In addition, the section also refers back to the previous sections when necessary to discuss whether the migrant's attitudes towards nationalism reflect their identity or level of integration.

#### 4.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 389 responses were collected from the online survey. As mentioned in the previous chapter, those responses containing only demographic information were considered as invalid, and as a result, 285 responses were used for data analysis.<sup>21</sup> Among the respondents, 55.4 per cent were males and 44.2 per cent females (n=284, 1 system-missing, see Table 4.1).<sup>22</sup> Male to female ratio is 1.25:1. 234 respondents (82.1%) are in between age 20 and 40 (see Table 4.2).

Table 4. 1 Participant Profile: Gender

Gender	Number	Per cent
Male	158	55.6%
Female	126	44.4%
Total	284	100%

<sup>21</sup> For details please see Section 3.3.3: Survey Implementation in Chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> System-missing means that the respondent did not answer the question in concern.

Table 4. 2 Participant Profile: Age

Age	Number	Per cent
Under 20	24	8.7%
20 – 29	177	64.4%
30 – 39	54	19.6%
≥40	20	7.3%
Total	275	100%

On average, the respondents had spent a significant amount of time in the host country. Almost half of them (49%) had been in New Zealand for five or more years since their first arrival, and 30% of the respondents had been in the host country for 10 years or more (see Figure 4.1). As expected, a large number of the respondents were international students – PRC citizens holding a student visa (36.1%). However, a considerable proportion of the respondents were either New Zealand permanent residents (34.4%) or New Zealand citizens (9.8%). Work visa holders accounted for 12.6% of the respondents (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4. 1 Participant Profile: Number of Years in New Zealand

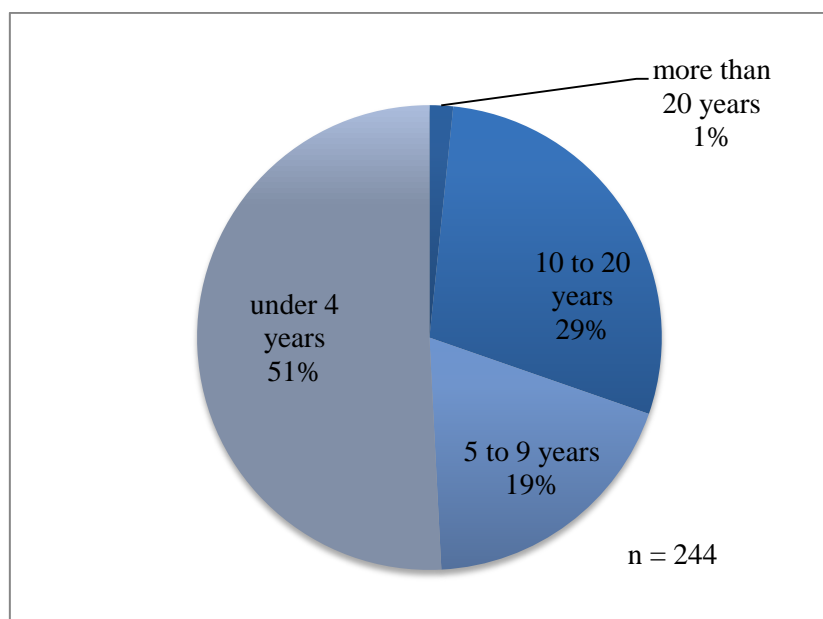
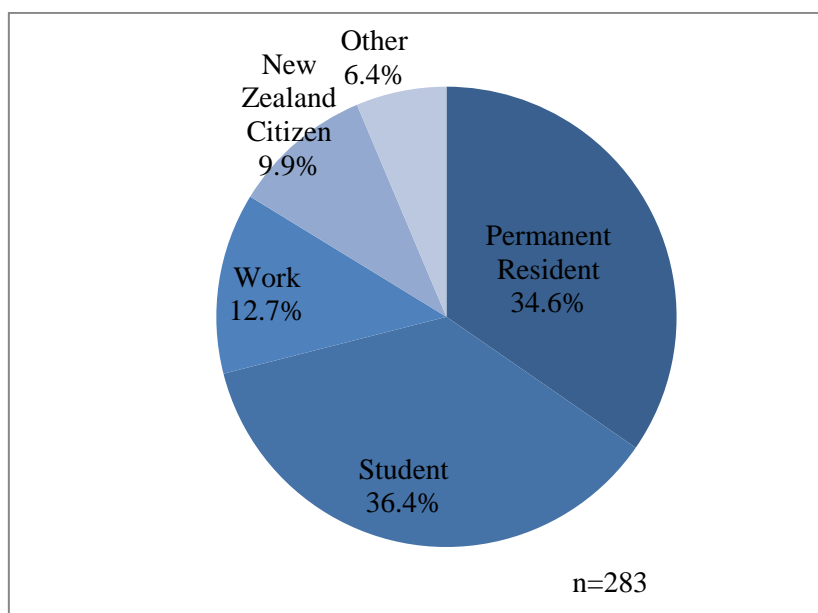


Figure 4. 2 Participant Profile: Visa Status



Given that most young and middle-aged Chinese migrants come into New Zealand under the Skilled Migrants category or as international students, it is not unexpected that around 40% of the respondents had a bachelor's or a higher degree back in China (see Figure 4.3). Almost 80% had education experience in New Zealand at various levels, and more than half of them (53.4%) had acquired level 7 or higher education in New Zealand. It is safe to argue that this is a group with high educational background (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4. 3 Participant Profile: Education in China

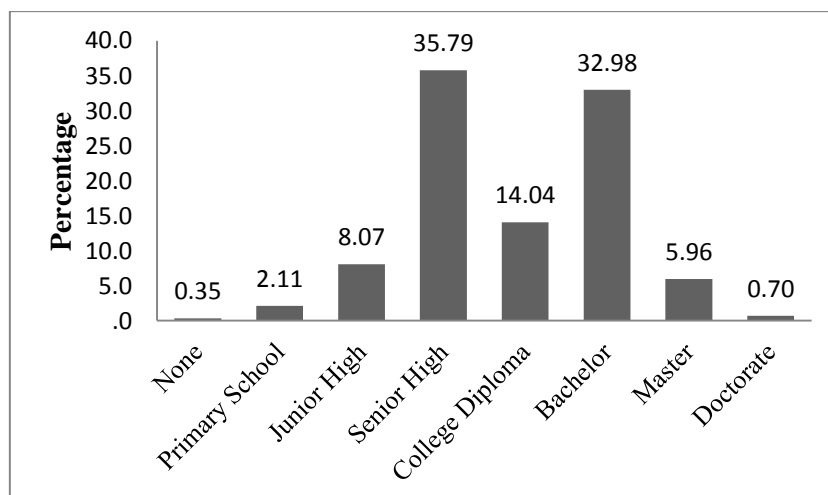
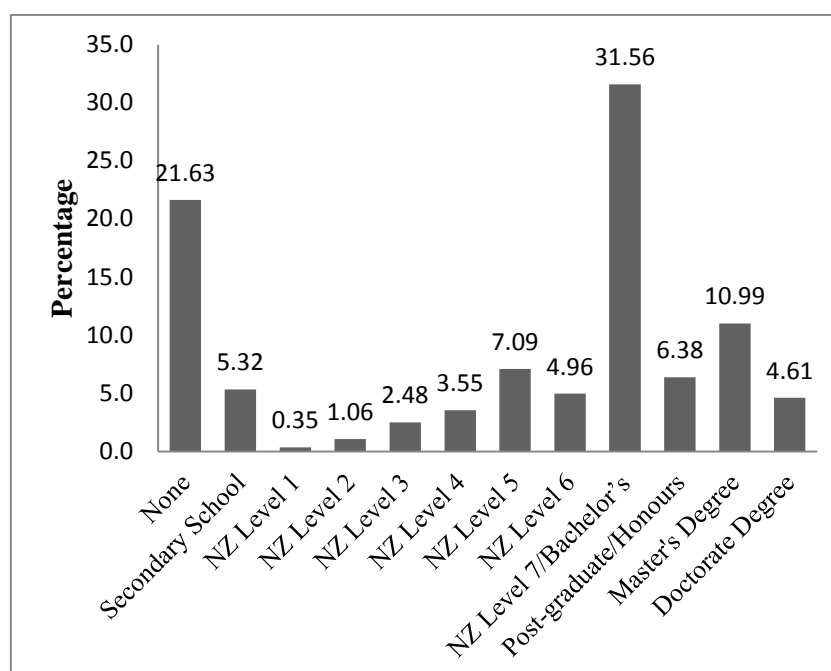




Figure 4. 4 Participant Profile: Education in New Zealand



The self-reported English language proficiency of the respondents is also high in general. 47% of the respondents reported their English level as “fluent” or “near native”, while 51.3% reported that their English was “good enough for daily routine”. Only 1.7% claimed that their English skill was at the basic level (see Table 4.3).

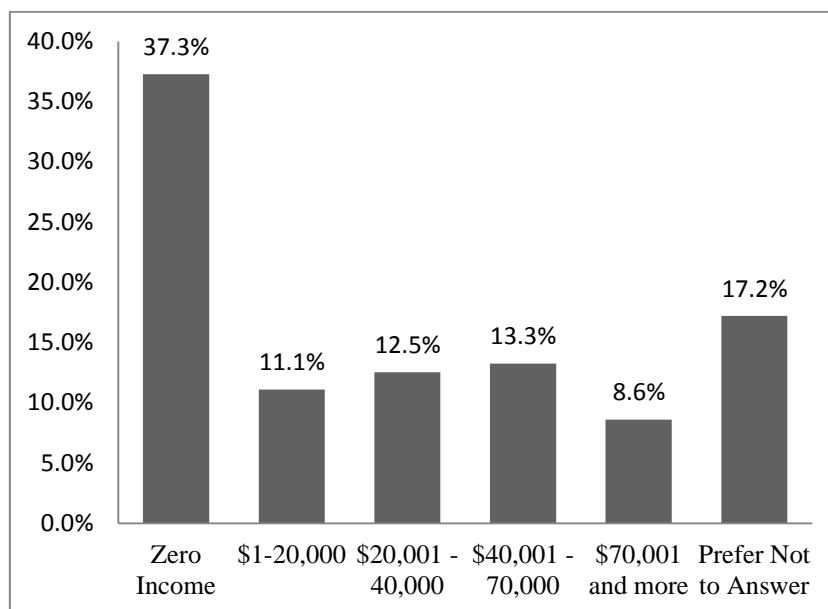
Table 4. 3 Participant Profile: Self-reported English Language Proficiency

English Language Proficiency	Number	Per cent
Hardly Any	0	0%
Basic	4	1.7%
Good Enough for Daily Routine	118	51.3%
Fluent	95	41.3%
Near Native	13	5.7%
Total	230	100.0%

With regard to the respondents’ economic status, as many of them were international students (36.4%), a similar proportion (37.3%) reported to have zero income. A further 29.7% of the respondents earned an annual income under NZD 50,000, while 17.2% of the respondents chose to skip this question. The result suggests that many of

these migrant netizens were low and medium income residents in New Zealand, around 60% were living on a salary that is below the national average income (see Figure 4.5).<sup>23</sup>

Figure 4. 5 Participant Profile: Annual Income in New Zealand



The above presented profile of the respondents largely fits the characteristics of internet users in general – more males, mostly young, and highly-educated. What is more, there is a contradiction between the respondents' education level and their income. Although they are highly-educated, their income is relatively low compared to New Zealand average. This echoes the findings from previous research that the new Chinese migrants tend to be underemployed (Henderson 2003, 147).

## 4.2 Results from the Online Survey

In this part of the chapter, I shall present the results built on the following three themes: 1. Identity and integration; 2. Use of the internet; and 3. Cyber Nationalism.

<sup>23</sup> According to Statistic New Zealand, the annual income in the country was \$37,970 (aged 15+) as at the end of June 2011. See (Statistics New Zealand 2011).

In “Identity and Integration”, I shall present how the respondents perceive their own identity – how Chinese and/or Kiwi they are. In addition, their self-perceived level of integration in the host society will be presented. The next section explores their internet use pattern and discusses why they choose to use the Chinese-language internet. The third section charts how nationalistic in general the respondents are; it also probes into their attitudes towards different aspects of nationalism manifested online.

#### **4.2.1 Identity and Integration**

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to give a score to how much they feel they are Chinese and Kiwi, how much they love China and New Zealand respectively, as well as their self-perceived level of integration. The score ranged from zero (do not identify with being Chinese/Kiwi at all, or not at all integrated) to ten (totally identify with being Chinese/Kiwi, or fully integrated). To eliminate the impression that they had to choose in between either China/Chinese or New Zealand/Kiwi, the research put questions about China and Chinese at the very beginning and those about New Zealand and Kiwi at the end of the questionnaire.

The result shows that 90.4% of the respondents gave a score of 10 to the statement “I am Chinese”, suggesting a very strong Chinese identity (see Figure 4.6). However, their identity claim does not seem to correlate much with their attachment to the home country. 68.8% of the respondents gave a score of 10 to the statement “I love China” (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4. 6 Identity: I am Chinese

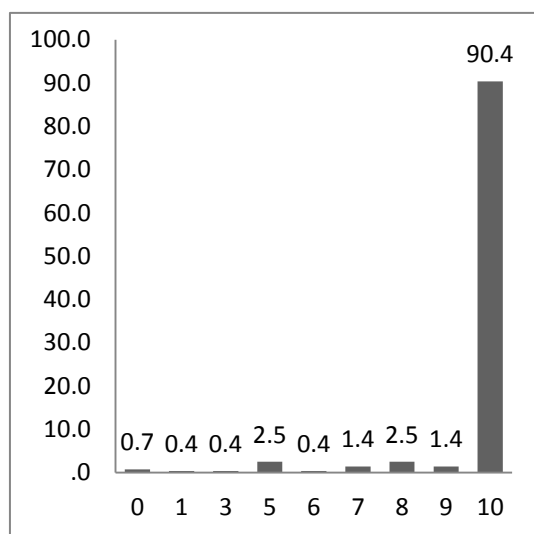


Figure 4. 7 Identity: I am a Kiwi.

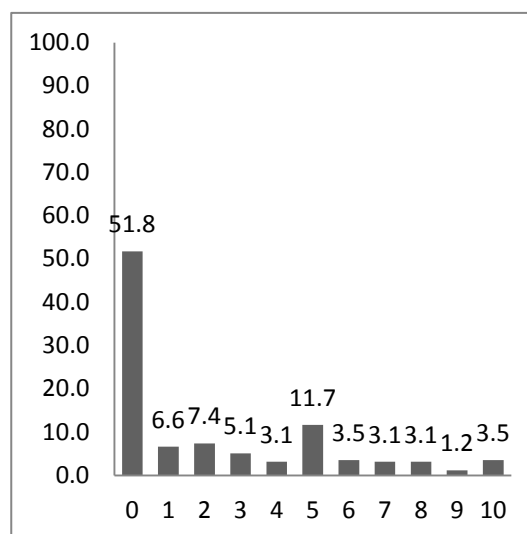


Figure 4. 8 Attachment: I love China

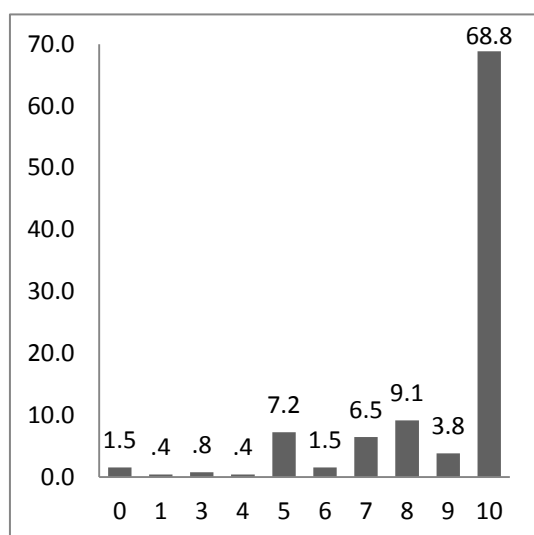
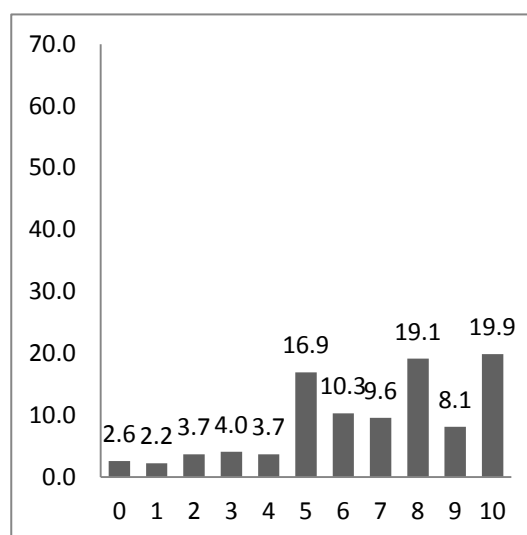


Figure 4. 9 Attachment: I love NZ



Only 26% of the respondents gave a score in between 5 to 10 to the statement “I am Kiwi”, whereas more than half (51.8%) gave a 0 (see Figure 4.7). This shows that the migrant netizens had yet to develop a New Zealand identity. Interestingly, unlike their reluctance to claim a New Zealand identity, many of the respondents showed their love towards the host country. Almost one fifth of the respondents (19.9%) gave a score of 10 to the statement “I love New Zealand”. In fact, a total of 83.9% give a score from 5 to 10, showing a rather strong attachment to the host country (see Figure 4.9).

The above results suggest that the identity of these respondents do reflect their attachment to the home/host country, but only to a certain extent. Many respondents showed a very strong identification with being Chinese, yet the love towards China is less intense; what is similar but more revealing is that a stronger attachment with the host country does not necessarily mean that the migrant netizens perceive themselves as New Zealanders.

Respondents who are New Zealand citizens were more likely to claim a Kiwi identity. About 57% of those who had New Zealand citizenship gave a score of 7 or above to the statement “I am Kiwi”. They also tended to present a stronger attachment to the host country; to the statement of “I love New Zealand”, about 89% gave a score from 7 to 10 (see Table 4.4). In comparison, respondents who hold student visa or work visa were much less likely to identify themselves as Kiwi.

Table 4. 4 Identity and Attachment to New Zealand by Visa Status

Visa Status	Number	I am Kiwi ( $\geq 7$ )		I love New Zealand ( $\geq 7$ )	
		Number	%	Number	%
New Zealand Citizen	28	16	57.1%	25	89.3%
Permanent Resident	98	8	8.2%	61	62.2%
Student Visa	103	2	1.9%	35	34.0%
Work Visa	36	2	5.6%	21	58.3%
Others	18	0	0.0%	12	66.7%

As shown in Table 4.5, the length of their stay in the host country does not contribute to the migrant netizens perception of being Kiwi. Among those who spent 10 or more years in New Zealand, only 25.7% gave a high score (7-10) to the Kiwi identity. A similar proportion (20.3%) of recent arrivals had the same identity claims.

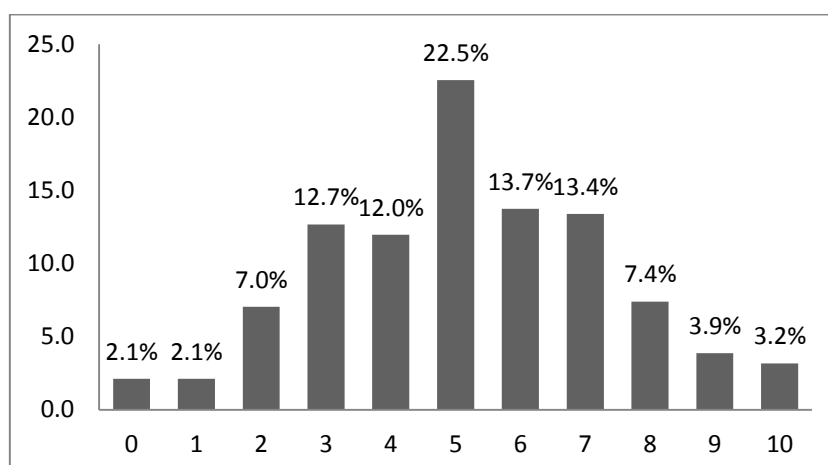
Table 4. 5 Identification with “Being Kiwi” by Years in New Zealand

Number of Years in New Zealand	Number	I am Kiwi Score 7-10		I am Kiwi Score 4-6		I am Kiwi Score 0-3	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
≥10	74	19	25.7%	19	25.7%	36	48.6%
5-9	47	15	31.9%	24	51.1%	8	17.0%
1-4	123	25	20.3%	64	52.0%	34	27.6%

Based on the online survey responses alone, it is difficult to provide concrete explanations to why attachment to the host country does not necessarily reflect the migrant netizens’ sense of Kiwi identity. Nonetheless, one interpretation is that the migrant netizens still do not feel fully included in the host society; or, to these respondents, being “Kiwi/New Zealander” is not as a clear-cut definition as being Chinese. Further explanations will be discussed in the Chapters Six and Seven when analysing the in-depth interview data.

With regard to the self-perceived level of integration into the host society, 27.9% of the respondents reported to have a high level of integration (7 - 10); 48.2% perceived themselves as integrated moderate level (4 - 6); 21.8% claimed to have a low level of integration (1 – 3), and by giving a score of 0, 2.1% saw themselves as not integrated at all (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4. 10 Level of Integration (self-perceived)



Understandably, respondents who reported a low level of integration (score 0-3) were less likely to identify themselves as Kiwi. However, a lot of respondents (41.8%) who reported a high level of integration (score 7-10) were also reluctant to claim a Kiwi identity (see Table 4.6). This might be the result arisen from different interpretations of the term “integration”. While scholars refer to integration as a form of acculturation, migrants themselves may use the concept in a more practical sense – for instance, having a stable job and owning a house, which does not necessarily accentuate cultural identity. In Chapter Six: Internet Use, Integration and Socialisation, the issue will be explored in greater depth.

Table 4. 6 Self-reported Integration Level and Kiwi Identity

Integration Level	Number	I am Kiwi (7-10)		I am Kiwi (4-6)		I am Kiwi (0-3)	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
7-10	79	21	26.6%	19	24.1%	33	41.8%
4-6	137	7	5.1%	22	16.1%	95	69.3%
0-3	68	0	0.0%	4	5.9%	56	82.4%

#### 4.2.2 Internet Use Patterns and Preferences

In the survey, the respondents were also asked about how and why they use the Chinese-language internet. Questions included their average time spent online, the frequency that they use the Chinese-language cyberspace, and the reasons for their internet use preferences.

The respondents were mostly “active” internet users in terms of time spent online. They spent much time on the internet every day, and most of them were frequent Chinese-language internet users. The result shows that 77% of the 285 respondents used the internet for at least two hours per day (see Table 4.7). More than 70% use the Chinese-language internet every day. Another 23.5% claimed that they would use

Chinese-language websites every time they got online (see Table 4.8). The result suggests that more than 90% of the respondents are “everyday” Chinese-language internet users.

Table 4. 7 Average Time Spent Online per Day

<b>Hour(s) per Day</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
< 0.5	1	0.4%
0.5 to 1	13	4.6%
1 to 2	50	17.5%
> 2	221	77.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 4. 8 Frequency of using Chinese-language internet

<b>Frequency (per Week)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Every Time Online	67	23.5%
7	200	70.2%
6	4	1.4%
5	4	1.4%
4	2	0.7%
3	3	1.1%
1	3	1.1%
Never	2	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

To understand why the migrant netizens use the Chinese-language cyberspace frequently, nine statements were proposed as the possible reasons. These proposed statements were based on my understanding of their internet use through my daily interactions with and observations of the Chinese migrant netizens. Respondents were asked to give a score from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale depending on how they agree or disagree with the listed reasons. The statements – all starting with “*I use the Chinese-language internet because...*” – include a variety of reasons covering four aspects,



namely, language preference, connections to the homeland, information/news about China and Chinese, and familiarity of various web services. These statements are:

- ...I feel more comfortable using my native language.
- ...using my native language is more efficient to acquire information.
- ...I feel closer to home.
- ... I need to keep in touch with family and friends in China.
- ... I need to know what is happening in China.
- ... I need to know what is happening in the Chinese community here in New Zealand.
- ... I can have common topics with my friends.
- ...I have always used the Chinese-language internet and haven't thought about changing.
- ... I have limited knowledge about internet in other languages.

#### *Information/News about China and Chinese*

Among the nine statements, the most commonly agreed reason is “to know what is happening in China.” About 87% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposed reason (see Table 4.9).

Table 4. 9 Using Chinese Internet: “need to know what is happening in China”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	4	4	28	110	128	274
<b>Per cent</b>	1.5%	1.5%	10.2%	40.1%	46.7%	100.0%

The respondents used the Chinese-language cyberspace not only to know what is happening in China, but also to get information/news about the local Chinese community in the host country. A little more than 70% of the respondents agreed or

strongly agreed that they use the Chinese-language internet in order to “know what is happening to the Chinese community in New Zealand” (see Table 4.10). What is more, 67.2% agreed that they used the Chinese-language internet so that they could acquire information that allows them to have “common topic among friends” (see Table 4.11).

Table 4. 10 Using Chinese Internet: “know about Chinese in New Zealand”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	5	13	63	98	92	271
<b>Per cent</b>	1.8%	4.8%	23.2%	36.2%	33.9%	100%

Table 4. 11 Using Chinese Internet: “have common topics among friends”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	5	15	69	108	74	271
<b>Per cent</b>	1.8%	5.5%	25.5%	39.9%	27.3%	100%

The above data show that information/news needs is the main driver that migrant netizens choose to use the Chinese-language internet. The need for online information about what is happening in their former homeland echoes previous research that migrants have an “epistophilic desire” (Naficy 1993, 107). This reveals that after years in the host country, these migrants have maintained a high level of attachment to their home country. It is not clear at this stage whether this attachment is emotional or/and practical because the online questionnaire did not allow spaces for participants to deliberate their specific reasons – for instance, it can be purely emotional or they

need to know because they are doing transnational business in China. This will be discussed further and in detail in Chapter Six with data derived from the in-depth interviews.

The information/news about the local Chinese community in New Zealand is also important to these migrants. 70.1% of the respondents used the Chinese-language internet to find out what is happening to/among their co-ethnics in the host country. The finding suggests that strong in-group identification exists among these migrant netizens. This in-group identification has a great potential to transform into a perceived ethnic solidarity and could be further presented as online nationalism. This will also be discussed later in this chapter when I present the results on cyber nationalism.

Furthermore, a considerable proportion of the respondents (67.2%) used the Chinese-language internet to get information that can provide common topics when socialising with their friends. This indicates that firstly, topics about China are essential in these respondents' daily interaction and socialisation with their friends, and secondly, their friends are most likely to be ethnic Chinese either in China or in New Zealand. Given that information from the host society mainstream media cannot meet these migrants' particular needs for homeland information, the Chinese-language cyberspace has become a reliable source for these migrants to fulfil their socialising needs.

#### *Language preference*

With regard to the language factor, a majority of respondents (80.3%) felt that using their native language online made them "feel more comfortable" (see Table 4.12). A further 67.1% considered that "using Chinese language to acquire information is more

efficient” (see Table 4.13). The results suggest that language preference is another major factor influencing the migrant internet use patterns.

Table 4. 12 Using Chinese Internet: “more comfortable using the native language”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	4	2	49	109	116	280
<b>Per cent</b>	1.4%	0.7%	17.5%	38.9%	41.4%	100%

Table 4. 13 Using Chinese Internet: “using Chinese is more efficient”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	9	17	64	90	93	273
<b>Per cent</b>	3.3%	6.2%	23.4%	33.0%	34.1%	100%

It is important to point out that this finding does not suggest that their language skills limited their options to Chinese-language websites. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) claimed that their English proficiency was either “fluent” or “near native”. Nonetheless, among this group of respondents with high English proficiency, 93.5% (101 out of 108) would still use the Chinese-language internet on a daily basis (see Table 4.14).

Table 4. 14 English Language Proficiency and Frequency of Using CN Internet Connection to the homeland

<b>Language Proficiency</b>	<b>CN Internet Frequency (times/week)</b>							<b>Total</b>
	<b>every time online</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	
Basic	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Good enough for daily routine	28	88	0	0	0	0	2	118
Fluent	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	3	2	1	2	0	<b>95</b>
Near native	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	1	0	0	0	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	61	158	4	2	1	2	2	230

The internet enabled connection with the homeland is also an important reason for using Chinese-language web services. A total of 225 (81.8%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they use the Chinese-language internet because they need to “keep in touch with friends and family in China” (see Table 4.15). As to other reasons concerning “homeland connection”, 45% of the respondents believed that they used the Chinese-language cyberspace because it made them “feel closer to home” (see Table 4.16).

Table 4. 15 Using Chinese Internet: “keep in touch with family/friends in China”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	6	6	38	76	149	275
<b>Per cent</b>	2.2%	2.2%	13.8%	27.6%	54.2%	100%

Table 4. 16 Using Chinese Internet: “feeling close to home”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	13	30	105	65	56	269
<b>Per cent</b>	4.8%	11.2%	39.0%	24.2%	20.8%	100%

The result shows that unlike the “old settlers” in New Zealand who suffered from the tyranny of distance in between the host and the home countries (Ip 2003), these migrant netizens have got the new technology at their disposal, allowing them to connect and communicate with their family and friends with ease.

#### *Familiarity with Chinese and non-Chinese web services*

Fewer than half of the respondents (47.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they used the Chinese-language internet because they were familiar with those services and had not changed since migration (see Table 4.17). Only 34.3% believe that the lack of familiarity with web services in other languages had limited their internet use to Chinese-language websites. More respondents (38.1%) disagreed with this proposed reason (see Table 4.18).

Table 4. 17 Using Chinese Internet: “rely on previous internet use patterns”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	10	50	86	78	52	276
<b>Per cent</b>	3.6%	18.1%	31.2%	28.3%	18.8%	100%

Table 4. 18 Using Chinese Internet: “know little about services in other languages”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	39	64	69	64	34	270
<b>Per cent</b>	14.4%	23.7%	25.6%	23.7%	12.6%	100%

It seems that although migrant netizens are familiar with both Chinese and non-Chinese web services, they still prefer the Chinese-language cyberspace over others. One possible explanation is that the migrants do not change their internet use habit developed pre-migration or that websites in other languages do not meet their information needs. One way or the other, the finding suggests that to a large extent, using Chinese internet is a conscious choice taken by the migrant netizens rather than a forced reaction caused by the lack of familiarity and language skills.

### 4.2.3 Cyber Nationalism

One of the objectives of this part of the online survey is to illustrate the extent to which overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is shared among the migrants. In other words, is cyber nationalism widespread among the migrants or is it simply chauvinistic sentiment harboured by a few hot-headed “angry youth” (*fenqing*)?

An important aspect in the examination of overseas Chinese nationalism seems to involve locating a clear definition of the concept. As discussed in Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework, contending theories in the current literature means if nationalism is examined using only one paradigm – be it modernism, perennialism, primordialism, or ethno-symbolism, there will be the risk of overlooking other salient factors. Therefore, the operational definition of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism was put forward by synthesising various theories from the above mentioned paradigms. This operational definition sees migrant nationalism as multi-faceted, encompassing political, cultural, ethnic, as well as essentialist and primordial aspects.

Guided by the multi-faceted notion of cyber nationalism, this part of the survey also seeks to identify which aspects of nationalism are widely shared among Chinese migrant netizens, and which are less favoured and less agreed upon. Based on the qualitative content analysis of user-generated online text, 14 nationalistic statements were selected covering various aspects of migrant nationalism. The respondents were asked to give a score to each of the 14 statement on a 5-point Likert Scale with “strongly disagree” as 1 and “strongly agree” as 5.

The statements were selected from news comments and online forum postings during a variety of events. Cyber nationalism is different from “street nationalism” in that, more often than not, only big political events have the power to trigger nationalism that is manifested in large scale on the street, such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute between China and Japan. In contrast, cyber nationalism is more subtle and contains more aspects and dimensions, and trivial daily incidents – discrimination against one Chinese individual in the host society, for instance – can spark such online nationalistic sentiments among migrant netizens.

The selected statements are as follows.

1. The sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable.
2. Chinese need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities.
3. If China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident.
4. I love China but it doesn't mean that I love its government.
5. Good or bad, I love China.
6. If the Chinese government is weak/soft on sovereignty issues, it is infringing national interests.
7. China is like my parents who gave birth to me and raised me.
8. I feel worse when I hear Chinese people died in the Christchurch earthquake.
9. I criticise China because I love China.
10. When a Chinese is discriminated, it is like I am discriminated against too.
11. I miss my life back in China
12. When there is negative news about China in the media, I feel ashamed.
13. The motherland is what I can criticise harshly, but not a critical word from other people (of other ethnicities).
14. If China is at war with Japan because of sovereignty issues, I will go and join the Chinese army to fight against the Japanese.



To chart the overall nationalistic sentiment among the migrants, the scores given to the 14 statements were summed up for each respondent. In this way, I created a new scale named the “*nationalism indicator*” – a number ranging from 14 (if “strongly disagree” with all the statements, 1 x 14) to 70 (if “strongly agree” with all the statements, 5 x 14). Hence, if a respondent has a score of more than 42 (the mean) on the “nationalism indicator”, then he or she is considered nationalistic; the higher the score is on the scale, the more nationalistic a respondent is.

According to the above nationalism indicator, 242 (89.3%) out of 271 valid responses are found to be nationalistic to some extent. Among them, 117 (43.2%) harbour a “moderate” level of nationalism – having a score of 43-55, while 125 (46.1%) have a “high” level of nationalism – having score of 56-70 (see Table 4.19).

Table 4. 19 The Nationalism Indicator

<b>Nationalism level</b>	<b>Number of respondents (valid n=271)</b>
Moderate level of nationalism (43 – 55)	117 (43.2%)
High level of nationalism (56 – 70)	125 (46.1%)

The result shows that the user-generated online nationalistic remarks and comments are far more than opinions of a few; rather, it reveals that cyber nationalism wide spread among Chinese migrant netizens. Yet, further questions remain to be answered. Where do these nationalistic sentiment stem from? Do some of the aspects of cyber nationalism resonate louder among migrant netizens than other aspects?

Among the 14 online nationalistic statements, four have a median of 5. This means that more than half of the respondents strongly agree with these statements, making

these the most prominent and widely shared aspects of cyber nationalism among the Chinese migrants (see Table 4.20).

Table 4. 20 Online Nationalistic Statements: Scores by Median, Mode, and Sum

<b>Nationalism statements</b>	<b>Valid Number</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Sum</b>
The sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable.	273	5	5	1225
Chinese need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities.	268	5	5	1138
If China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident.	266	5	5	1123
I love China but it doesn't mean that I love its government.	264	5	5	1109
Good or bad, I love China.	270	4	5	1103
If the Chinese government is weak/soft on sovereignty issues, it is infringing national interests.	267	4	5	1098
China is like my parents who gave birth to me and raised me.	266	4	5	1074
I feel worse when I hear Chinese people died in the Christchurch earthquake.	268	4	5	1020
I criticise China because I love China.	269	4	5	1019
When a Chinese is discriminated, it is like I am discriminated against too.	268	4	4	1083
I miss my life back in China	266	4	3	952
When there is negative news about China in the media, I feel ashamed.	269	4	3	939
The motherland is what I can criticise harshly, but not a critical word from other people (of other ethnicities).	267	3	5	930
If China is at war with Japan because of sovereignty issues, I will go and join the Chinese army to fight against the Japanese.	268	3	3	768

More than 83% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that “the sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable”; 79.4% believe that “Chinese

need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities”; 80.5% believe “if China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident” (see Figure 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13).

Figure 4. 11 Nationalism Statement: The sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable.

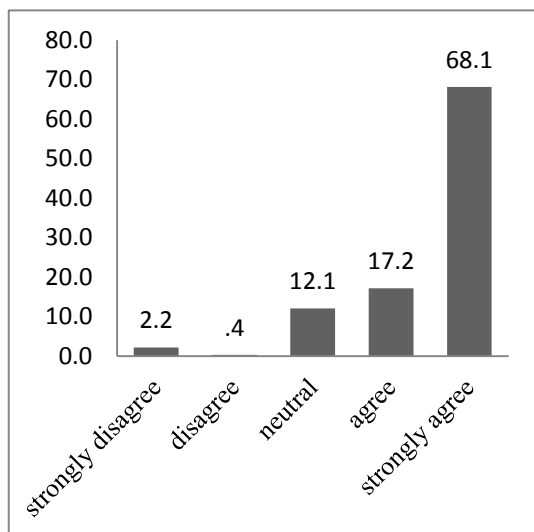


Figure 4. 12 Nationalism Statement: Chinese need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities.

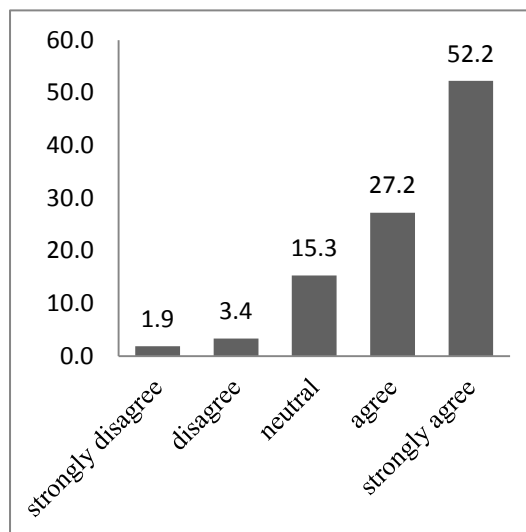
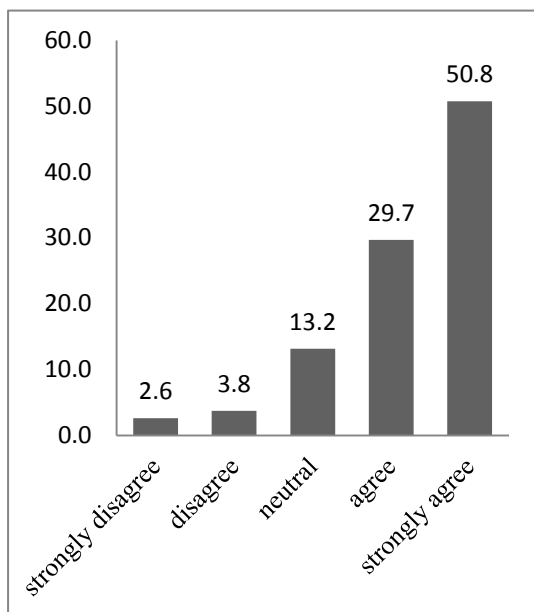


Figure 4. 13 Nationalism Statement: If China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident.



It is not surprising to see that the statements concerning territorial sovereignty and ethnic solidarity are the most agreed ones. As discussed in Chapter Two, nationalism

is usually considered as based on political and/or ethnic elements. This finding echoes the previous theories and illustrates that even for migrants these two aspects – the political and the ethnic – are still the cornerstone for nationalism directed towards the home country.

Another major aspect of the Chinese online nationalism revealed in this finding is particularly related to overseas Chinese. The belief that a stronger China can make overseas Chinese “more confident” suggests that for these migrant netizens, China is still considered as the image that represents them in the host country, and very likely, on the world stage too. It is understandable that this sentiment was shared among temporary work and student visa holders, because many of them would eventually leave New Zealand and return to China. However, it is a surprising fact that among those who were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, a very high proportion shared the same sentiment (77.8% for PRs, and 63% for NZ citizens, see Table 4.21).

Table 4. 21 “China represents overseas Chinese” by Visa Status

Visa	Statement: “Stronger China, Overseas Chinese more confident”					Total (% “agree and strongly agree”)
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
<b>New Zealand Citizen</b>	3	1	6	7	10	27 (63%)
<b>Permanent Resident</b>	1	5	14	24	46	90 (77.8%)
<b>Student Visa</b>	1	3	13	30	50	97 (82.5%)
<b>Work Visa</b>	2	0	0	13	20	35 (94.3%)
<b>Other</b>	0	1	2	4	9	16 (81.3%)
<b>Total</b>	7	10	35	78	135	265

One interpretation for this phenomenon is that the Chinese migrants do not feel totally included in the host country. Although many Chinese migrants have acquired a New Zealand passport, they may still feel that they are yet to have access to a full citizenship. As such, the image of the host country cannot be comfortably used by

these migrant netizens to represent themselves. As a result, China remains the symbolic representation for these migrants.

The fourth statement that receives a median of 5 is related to the Chinese communist government. The result shows that migrant nationalism is directed towards China, but with little connection with its government. As presented in the data, most respondents (74.2%) agree or strongly agree that they love China but this does not mean that they also support the CCP government (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4. 14 Nationalism Statement: I love China but this does not mean that I love the Chinese government.

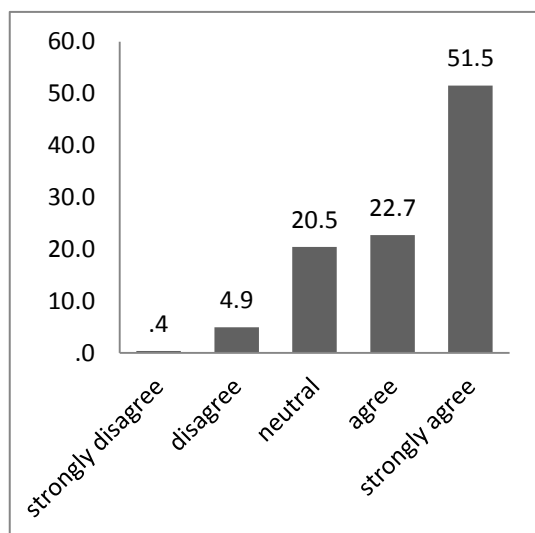
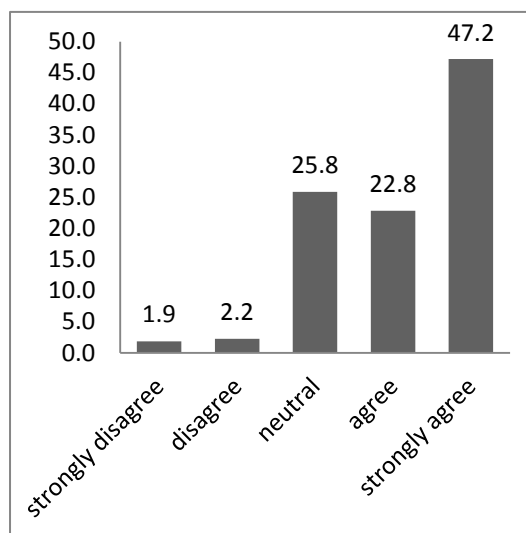


Figure 4. 15: Nationalism Statement: If the government act soft on sovereignty, then it is infringing national interests.



This finding echoes some of the existing research. Although the CCP government originally promoted nationalism and used it to legitimate its rule in China, popular nationalism can often go far beyond the government’s intention. And it can sometimes backfire (Hughes 2000, 2006; Gries 2005). As shown in Figure 4.15, if the CCP government is considered soft or weak in events concerning China’s sovereignty, the migrant netizens (70%) would see it as infringing “national interests”.

Among the rest 10 statements, eight have a median of 4. Apart from those related to the political and the ethnic aspects, most of them are nationalistic sentiments based on a sense of essentialism and a perceived biological link with the motherland. 75.2% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “I love China, no matter it is good or bad” (see Table 4.22). To a large extent, this love of the homeland seems to be unconditional and blind. What is more, 70% of the respondents believed that “China is like my parents who gave birth to me and raised me” (see Table 4.23). By agreeing with these statements, the migrant netizens showed the essentialist aspect of their nationalistic feelings, seeing their link with China as inherent and irrevocable, as if it were biologically imprinted in their blood.

Table 4. 22 Nationalism Statement: “I love China, no matter it is good or bad”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	9	9	49	86	117	270
<b>Per cent</b>	3.3%	3.3%	18.1%	31.9%	43.3%	100%

Table 4. 23 Nationalism Statement: “China is like my parent”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	7	18	55	64	122	266
<b>Per cent</b>	2.6%	6.8%	20.7%	24.1%	45.9%	100%

As manifested in many online forums, Chinese migrant netizens can be very critical towards China regarding its government, social problems, environmental pollution, and so on. However, these critical remarks do not necessarily represent migrants’

resentment towards China. On the contrary, more than 60% of the respondents agree or strongly agreed that they criticise China because of a “love well, whip well” sentiment (see Table 4.24). They were angry and critical towards China because they loved the motherland and they regretted that it did not present the quality to their expectation. And that is probably why they become very defensive when “others” – non-Chinese – criticise China. Almost half of the respondents (49.5%) believed that the motherland is what they can criticise harshly, but they would not allow a single critical word from non-Chinese (see Table 4.25).

Table 4. 24 Nationalism Statement: “I criticise China because I love her”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	14	15	78	69	93	269
<b>Per cent</b>	5.2%	5.6%	29.0%	25.7%	34.6%	100%

Table 4. 25 Nationalism Statement: “I can criticise China harshly, but others can’t”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	26	34	75	49	83	267
<b>Per cent</b>	9.7%	12.7%	28.1%	18.4%	31.1%	100%

The most controversial online nationalism statement selected in this research was actually a rather belligerent and aggressive remark from a New Zealand based Chinese-language online forum. It was included in the design to test how migrant netizens would react to those more chauvinistic and extreme ideas. The statement read “if China were at war with Japan because of sovereignty issues, I would join the

Chinese army to fight against Japan.” Attitudes were widely divided among the respondents. Only 24.2% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 25% disagreed with it, and 40.7% showed their neutral stance (see Table 4.26).

Table 4. 26 Nationalism Statement: “join the army to fight against Japan”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	43	51	109	29	36	268
<b>Per cent</b>	16.0%	19.0%	40.7%	10.8%	13.4%	100%

This finding shows that nationalistic sentiment among the Chinese migrant netizens is not just irrational ideas expressed by a handful “angry youth” or a few hawkish and military enthusiasts as perceived and portrayed by some scholars and in the media (Shan and Guo 2011; Liu 2005). Migrant netizens do have a certain set of rational criteria at work to judge online nationalistic remarks and subsequent actions.

To further establish whether migrant nationalism is rational, an extra statement was added to get their opinion about a form of irrational nationalism. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement that “those who join the boycotting Japanese products march on the street are simply nationalistic angry youth.” More than 40% of the respondents agreed with the statement, and believed that those who took nationalism on the street in the form of “boycotting Japanese products” were a bunch of “angry youth”. Only under 20% of the respondents believed that the action was somehow justified (see Table 4.27). This suggests that many of the migrants have a moral line set in between the rational and the irrational when it comes to nationalistic actions.



Table 4. 27 Nationalism Statement: “angry youth boycott Japanese products”

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	20	30	107	63	48	268
<b>Per cent</b>	7.5%	11.2%	39.9%	23.5%	17.9%	100%

### 4.3 Discussion and Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed migrant identity/integration, internet use, and nationalism based on data from the online survey. The respondents are found to be active internet users who frequently use the Chinese-language cyberspace. For many of these migrant netizens, the Chinese-language internet has become part of their daily routine. On this digital platform, migrant netizens acquire up-to-date information about their previous homeland and the Chinese community in the host country. Previous studies on migrant use of the media show that many migrants are keen on acquiring information about their previous homeland (Sun 2002, 2005; Ip 2006; Sinclair and Cunningham 2000). Hence, it is not surprising to see that these Chinese migrants have made good use of the internet to satisfy such needs. In this sense, the internet does not create a new phenomenon, but serves as a complementary tool that migrants can use to acquire cheaper and timely information services. It can be argued that the internet helps to feed the same desire of migrants for homeland news, but is able to provide a much more powerful media tool.

Anderson (2006a) argues that the newspaper is an extreme form of the book, allowing people to imagine the nation. According to him, the newspaper is “an ‘extreme form’ of the book, a book sold on a colossal scale, but of ephemeral popularity”, and the readers are “well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident,

yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion” (Anderson 2006a, 35). I would argue that the internet has been able to fulfil a similar function but with an even greater scale and with lasting influences. Information on the Chinese-language websites is readily accessible to migrant netizens who are physically apart from the home yet are able to experience the simultaneous imagination of the nation and of belonging to the nation. Hence, the internet is an “extreme form of the newspaper” (Lieberman 2003, 75). Information in the Chinese-language cyberspace is shared among countless Chinese netizens, home and abroad (should they choose to); once it is online, it becomes not ephemeral but lasting, archived, and searchable. It offers a continuous conduit for migrant netizens to revisit and reproduce the nation in which they once lived.

This practice of using the Chinese-language cyberspace on a daily basis helps to explain the high level of nationalistic sentiment among the migrants, as well as their strong identification with being Chinese. Thanks to the Chinese-language internet, the memories and imaginations of the nation have now become ever more vivid for the Chinese migrants. This assists them to preserve their national identity, maintain their attachment to the homeland, and foster their strong nationalism.

Secondly, the majority of the respondents use the Chinese-language internet to communicate with friends and family in China. They also use it to familiarise themselves with topics that they would share and discuss when socialising. In this sense, the internet helps the Chinese migrants to create transnational “social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992b, ix). The geographic distance in between the home and the host countries used to be “a significant barrier to taking part in the lives of those who live

at a distance” (Wilding 2006, 138). Now with the digital technology at their disposal, the Chinese migrant netizens can better forge and sustain “the multi-stranded social relations that linked their societies of origin and settlement” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992b, ix). In the transnational social fields enabled by the digital technology, these migrant netizens can experience and imagine a “life together” with friends and families afar – they can chat face to face using Instant Messaging (IM), they can share photos on Social Network Sites (SNS) in real time. Living with what Wilding (2006) called “virtual intimacy”, migrant netizens can be – to use a rather popular phrase in transnational studies – “both here and there”.

This simultaneity of the everyday transnational life has great implications for the identity formation and nationalism of the migrant netizens. The constant transnational connections enabled by the internet has opened up paths for “new modes of constructing the identities and subjectivities” (Huang, Yeoh, and Lam 2008, 7) that cut across national borders. As shown in the survey findings, migrant netizens can feel entirely Chinese and manifest strong nationalism towards China, while simultaneously presenting a high level of attachment to the host society, yet reluctant to claim a host country identity. All the feelings and sentiments are mixed and mingled together, creating tensions between “locally-defined versus transnationally-assumed identities” (Huang, Yeoh, and Lam 2008, 7). To have a better understanding of this issue, Chapter Six will use in-depth interview data to provide a more nuanced analysis on migrant identity, integration, socialisation, and their relationship with the internet use.

Thirdly, cyber nationalism is wide spread among Chinese migrant netizens. What is important is that cyber nationalism is not harboured by a few narrow-minded and

xenophobic “angry youth” who post extreme remarks on the web as suggested by some academics and portrayed by the media (Liu 2005; Shan and Guo 2011). Nor are they unsophisticated minds gullible to the manipulation of the “state-led nationalism” (Zhao 1998) by the CCP to legitimise its rule in China after the collapse of the communist ideology since the 1980s (Hughes 2006). Physically residing in New Zealand, a democratic country with a very high level of freedom,<sup>24</sup> these migrant netizens have access to the free Western media, many have acquired education in the host country; they are well-informed, well-educated and well-equipped with the digital technology. Nonetheless, their nationalistic sentiment remains high towards China. Talking about the “informed nationalism” of the Chinese internet users on military websites in China, Zhou (2006) rightly points out that the role of the “human agency” deserves more academic attention. The Chinese migrant netizens in this study have presented a judgement system and a set of rational criteria when evaluating various aspects of the Chinese cyber nationalism. Arguably, they are active thinkers rather than “merely subjects who submit to the ‘external’ factors passively” (Zhou 2006, 212).

The above arguments lead to some questions that call for further exploration. To start with, as the migrant netizens are highly nationalistic regardless of their age, citizenship and visa status, educational background, and level of integration, what are the external stimulations and the internal factors that contribute to their cyber nationalism? Secondly, how does the daily use of the Chinese-language cyberspace influence the migrants experience in the host country with regard to their socialisation

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<sup>24</sup> New Zealand was ranked as the number one country for offering the highest level of freedom worldwide by the Canadian public policy think-tank – Fraser Institute in January 2013. See <http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/news/display.aspx?id=19171> .

and integration? Last but not least, what is the influence of the Chinese-language cyberspace on migrant identity construction? The answers to these questions cannot be extracted from the online survey data. In the following chapters, I will tackle these questions by analysing data derived from the user-generated online texts and the interviews with migrant netizens. The next chapter will provide detailed interpretations of the themes and dimensions of overseas Chinese nationalism manifested in the online user-generated content. Taking into consideration of their lived experience in the host society, the chapter will also discuss the relationship between nationalism and migrant identity in a transnational context.

## **Chapter Five: The Nationalism Umbrella – A Secure Overseas Chinese Identity**

In the previous chapter, I have established that overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is wide spread among different groups of migrant netizens rather than a jingoish sentiment limited to a few hot-headed angry youth. While the Chinese migrant netizens are found to be nationalistic in general, their attitudes vary towards different aspects of online nationalism. In this chapter I investigate the dimensions of cyber nationalism with a special focus on both the internal and external factors contributing to the nationalistic sentiments among migrant netizens. Taking into consideration of the migration background and the sense of identity of various netizens, I elucidate the relationship between migrant nationalism and people's actual lived experience. The chapter explains how migrants' lived experience impact on their identity negotiation which subsequently shapes the manifestations of migrant nationalism.

This chapter approaches overseas Chinese nationalism by synthesising data from user-generated online text and the interviews with the migrant netizens. In the first section I discuss the themes of migrant nationalism identified from the online textual data. These themes are further integrated into three dimensions. The themes and dimensions are corroborated by data derived from the in-depth interviews with the migrants. This chapter will establish the link between the online text and the interviewees' perceptions.

As discussed in Chapter Three, a "colour coding" system is applied to the three dimensions of nationalism manifested online, namely red, yellow, and blue

nationalism. In section two to four I investigate each of the three dimensions respectively. The manifestations of each dimension of migrant nationalism are discussed in detail. The interviewees' perceptions and interpretations are used to explain the factors contributing to each dimension of migrant cyber nationalism.

## **5.1 Red, Yellow, Blue: Dimensions of Overseas Chinese Cyber Nationalism**

A total of nine themes of migrant nationalism are identified from textual data gathered from New Zealand's number one Chinese-language website – Skykiwi.com. As established in Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, nationalism has been investigated from various angles among which the political and the cultural are two major perspectives (Hutchinson 1994). However, migrant nationalism also includes aspects beyond the political and the cultural rubrics. For instance, it also includes sentiment and emotions related to migrant identity. The themes identified in this research cannot fit strictly into the political or cultural categories. Therefore, a three-colour taxonomy is used to provide an inclusive framework to interpret the complex migrant cyber nationalism.

The colour red is often related to the state or the communist government of China. “Red China” and “red communist regime” are often used in media report not only in Western media but by the Chinese state media as well. Over time, the colour red has established a political connotation when referring to China. This has inspired me to use red to represent the first dimension of overseas Chinese nationalism manifested in the Chinese-language cyberspace. The red nationalism encompasses three themes: sovereignty, government, and military. The typical statements in these themes include:

- The sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable.
- I love China but it doesn't mean I love its government.
- If the Chinese government is weak/soft on sovereignty issues, it is infringing national interests.
- If China is at war with Japan because of sovereignty issues, I will go and join the Chinese army to fight against the Japanese.

The colour yellow is often used when referring to East Asians in general and Chinese in particular.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in this research I use the colour yellow to represent the second dimension of the overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, which is closely related to ethnicity and culture. Yellow nationalism includes three themes: the cultural, the ethnic, and the essentialist/biological. Typical online statements of yellow nationalism include:

- Chinese need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities.
- China is like my parents who gave birth to me and raised me.
- I feel worse when I hear Chinese people died in the Christchurch earthquake.
- When a Chinese is discriminated, it is like I am discriminated against too.

The colour blue has a mixed connotation. It can be used to describe one's sadness such as in the phrase – "feeling blue". Interestingly, however, blue can also be used to represent happiness and optimism, something with a bright future, something not immediately apparent. One example is the term "blue-sky research" used in academia. By using the colour blue, I want to express the complexity of this dimension of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, a mix of sadness with hopes and expectations, yet not as immediately apparent/comprehensible as red or yellow nationalisms. Blue

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<sup>25</sup> In migration history, Chinese migrants were once referred to as the "Yellow Peril". See (Hornadge 1976).



nationalism is the most emotionally loaded sentiment that is more personal, yet powerful. It rests on an expectation and imagination of a better and stronger China. For people who have this blue nationalism, China is more of an abstract existence (in the realm of imagination), an image rather than a polity, a government, or a state occupying a specific territory. Blue nationalism covers three themes: Intensive/blind love for China, protecting the good image of China, and criticising China with good intent. The typical statements include:

- Good or bad, I love China.
- If China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident in front of others (non-Chinese).
- I criticise China because I love her.
- When there is negative news about China in the media, I feel ashamed.
- The motherland is what I can criticise harshly, but I cannot stand a critical word from other (non-Chinese) people.

It is important to note that the dimensions used here are not considered as mutually exclusive in the online manifestations. On the contrary, more often than not, they are presented simultaneously by migrant netizens. Nonetheless, these dimensions serve as a useful framework to further explore the different paths taken by migrant netizens in their pursuit of an overseas Chinese identity.

## **5.2 Red Nationalism**

Red nationalism is the dimension that is very similar to nationalism commonly manifested within China. In his work on Cyber nationalism, Wu points out that Chinese cyber nationalism is event sensitive – responding to high-profile events concerning China's relations with other countries (Wu 2007). Red nationalism of the Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand is also found to carry a xenophobic

sentiment, and is usually triggered by hot-button events involving the “archetypal enemies” such as Japan and the United States. What is more, events concerning Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang – the regions which China considers as its “inalienable and integral part” – can also trigger strong red nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens.

### **5.2.1 Manifestations of Red Nationalism: Sovereignty, Government, and Military**

Scholars have identified Japan as a major target for the Chinese public nationalistic sentiment (Hughes 2000, 2006; Wu 2007). Chinese nationalists have increasingly turned to cyberspace to rally their movement since the internet is comparatively more difficult for the Chinese government to control (Gries 2005; Hughes 2006). One prominent example was when Japan sought permanent member status in the UN Security Council, the proposed motion sparked a surge of nationalism in China’s cyberspace in 2005 (Wu 2007).

Other issues – such as those on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands<sup>26</sup>, the Nanjing massacre and the Yasukuni Shrine, which honours the soldiers who died fighting for the Emperor of Japan, including a number of World War II war criminals – are frequently seen as the trigger of nationalism among Chinese, both at home and abroad.

On 7 September, 2010, a collision between a Chinese fishing boat and patrol boats of the Japanese Coast Guard near Diaoyu Islands inevitably resulted in a tide of anti-Japan nationalism both in China (BBC 2010) and beyond its state borders in the diaspora. After the collisions, the captain of the Chinese vessel was arrested by

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<sup>26</sup> The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are a group of islands in the East China Sea. These uninhabited islands have been controlled and administered by Japan since 1895, but are also claimed by both the People’s Republic and the Republic of China in Taiwan.

Japanese Coast Guard. On 18 September, the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mukden Incident, which is widely considered a “day of infamy” for Chinese nationals, protests were taken to the streets in several major cities in China. On Skykiwi, news comments and forum postings containing nationalistic claims were collected during the days that the event was unfolding and several days after the captain of the Chinese fishing boat was released from Japanese custody.

For some migrant netizens, cyberspace becomes a platform to voice their loyalty to protect the homeland from external “enemies”. One of the news comments reads, quoting the *Records of the Grand Historian*,

“Territory is the fundamental element of a state; how can we give it up.... No matter how far away, who dares to offend the mighty Han empire will be put to death.”<sup>27</sup>

It is obvious that although these migrants are already physically separated from the homeland, the urge to protect China’s sovereignty is still strong. The nationalistic sentiment against the perceived foreign invasion, in this case from Japan, looms large among Chinese migrant netizens.

Similar discourse is echoed during the visit of Rebiya Kadeer, the Uyghur political activist, in New Zealand, though this time nationalism was directed not against “invaders” but “secessionists”.

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<sup>27</sup> The first half of the quote is from *Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian of China, the Treatise on the Xiongnu)* written by Sima Qian. Ironically, according to *Shiji*, the remark was made by the Xiongnu Emperor, Maodu, who is not considered as Chinese. The second half of the quote is said by Tang Chen, a general in the Han Dynasty, who fought against Xiongnu in the battle of Zhizhi in 36 BCE.

Rallying a protest against Rebiya's talk at the University of Auckland on Skykiwi forums, *San Long* said in his posting, "there is nothing wrong with freedom of speech, but any speech that infringes on the interests of our motherland is unacceptable!" Others like *Cagalli* seemed to be more aggressive and proposed a military action to settle the sovereignty issue once and for all, "...take care of Tibetan and Xinjiang separatists first, then recapture Taiwan" (2009-10-05).

For others, nationalistic sentiment is directed towards a perceived failure in handling the issue by a "soft" Chinese government. One anonymous news comment reads,

"The most abhorrent thing is the inaction of the corrupted Chinese government. When it comes to the territory and sovereignty of the state, when it comes to national interests, the government is so gutless. I lament over our great China. As a country [government], its first and foremost obligation is to protect the sovereignty of the state and its people. If the government wants to act weak as the one in the late Qing Dynasty, our own Sun Yat-sen and Huang Xing will emerge from this generation of Chinese!<sup>28</sup> Rejuvenate China!"

As clearly shown in this posting among many others, the anger directed towards the Chinese government is no less intense than that towards the "invaders" and "secessionists". Some netizens, like the one in the above example, even propose a regime change, given their dissatisfaction with the performance of the Chinese

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<sup>28</sup> Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a Chinese revolutionary. As the foremost pioneer of democratic revolution, Sun is referred to as the founding father of the Republic of China. Huang Xing was also a Chinese revolutionary leader. He was the first army commander-in-chief of the Republic of China. As one of the founders of the Nationalist Party and the Republic of China, his position was second only to Sun Yat-sen.

government. This illustrates that red nationalism though very political is not necessarily a blatant support to the government. In line with what is found in the online survey (see Chapter Four), for many migrant netizens, who enjoy the freedom of speech in cyberspace, and who are more articulate in terms of their political stand, there is a clear demarcation between the Chinese state and the government.

In red nationalism, the overarching sentiment is “infringement on the interests of the motherland is unacceptable”. This infringement on national interests can be physical – damaging the territorial sovereignty of the state, be it from the Japanese “invaders” or the Tibetan and Xinjiang “secessionists”; it can also be intangible – the “gutless” Chinese government betraying Chinese people in exchange for maintaining its political power. What is more, red nationalism is stimulated no matter the infringement on national interests is made by external invaders, the internal secessionists, or even the government.

### **5.2.2 Factors Influencing Red Nationalism**

This section discusses why these migrant netizens, physically away from China, articulate such strong red nationalism. Data from the in-depth interviews with migrant netizens shed light on the understanding of the phenomenon. Although the interviewees are not the ones who posted those nationalistic comments on the internet, many of them showed the same sentiments during the interviews. Their perceptions to a large extent can provide an indication on why and why not some migrant netizens harbour red nationalism.

The first factor identified from the interviews is the educational background of the migrant netizens. This is not in relation to the highest education level that they

acquired, but the location where they acquired their education during their formative years. Although many Chinese migrants acquired education in New Zealand post-migration or as international students, their formative years were spent mostly in China. As such, their perceptions of state sovereignty are very much influenced by the “patriotic education” in China that the government has been promoting (Zhao 1998).

When asked about her perceptions of the sovereignty issues, one interviewee, Jing (F 38 WK),<sup>29</sup> said, “...the Diaoyu Islands... they are Chinese (territory). Of course they are. There have to be...evidence? Not much...I’ve forgotten most of what I learnt in the university, but we were taught in history and geography in the middle school that the Diaoyu Islands belong to China.”

Another interviewee, Jessica (F 52 NZ) who came to New Zealand in 1998 shared similar views, “the Diaoyu Islands? I believe they belong to China. We have all read history. Many years ago, not only Japan, but Korea, Vietnam... they were all within China’s territory. When did the Diaoyu Islands become Japanese territory?!”

In contrast, those who came to New Zealand at a young age showed their uncertain attitudes towards the sovereignty issues, especially the so-called 1.5 generation immigrants. One young international student who came to New Zealand for education after intermediate school expressed it clearly during the interview,

“I don’t know about the history (of these islands), so I don’t think I have the right to comment. Who the islands belong to...this need to be

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<sup>29</sup> In this thesis, pseudonyms are used for interviewees followed by a cod indicating their gender, age, and visa status. NZ for New Zealand citizen, WK for work visa holders, IS for international student, PR for permanent resident with PRC citizenship. For instance, “Jing F38 WK” means that the interviewee was a work visa holder, 38 years old female.

based on history. I haven't paid close attention to this issue... so I'm not sure who has the right over these islands." (Min, M 21 ST)

Kate migrated to New Zealand with her parents when she was a teenager. She is a typical 1.5 generation Chinese migrants who finished intermediate school in China. Her perceptions of the sovereignty issues were very much based on the *status quo*.

"I don't think this (sovereignty issue) can be solved. It's hard to ascertain who the islands belong to. I'm not sure it is definitely China's territory... That's all I know about Tibet and Xinjiang. I feel that they belong to China... but Taiwan... it is hard to say, just like the Diaoyu Islands." (Kate, F 24 PR)

Two of the 1.5 generation migrants happened to be interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> September, which is the anniversary of the Mukden Incident marking Japan's invasion of Northeast China in 1931, and is widely considered as "the day of infamy" for China. The two interviewees expressed that they have no knowledge of either "the day of infamy" nor the sovereignty issues around the Diaoyu Islands. When asked to provide some comments, one said, "... I don't know. Never heard of that. Neither the Diaoyu Islands. Where are they?" (Stephanie, F 22 PR) The other simply answered, "I don't know of these things. I don't know about the history." (Wayne, M 21 PR)

The above evidence shows that red nationalism among migrant netizens is in relation to their educational background. Those who have acquired the "patriotic education" promoted by the government in China generally showed a higher level of nationalistic sentiment towards sovereignty issues, while in contrast those who came to the host country at a young age revealed little red nationalism.

Another factor influencing the red nationalism is the liberal thinking that the migrant netizens acquired after they emigrated. Some of these migrants, empowered by the internet and equipped with a more open mind, showed a mixed feeling towards red nationalism. When asked to comment on the sovereignty issues, Jason (M 30 PR) expressed,

“From my personal feelings and the education I acquired, these places (Tibet and Xinjiang) are China’s territory. But after I migrated overseas, I have the opportunity to acquire more information. Although I still have this deeply rooted emotion, when I hear so many things that I weren’t aware of (in China), when I know of those people’s suffering (in Tibet and Xinjiang), I feel that I should respect the choice of the people of that region...I didn’t know much about Taiwan since I was born...not until 2004. In that year, I broke through the ‘Great Firewall’ and had access to the website of Overseas Chinese Affairs Council (Taiwan, the Republic of China,). I knew more about it (Taiwan) then. I know that they had their president. I’ve paid close attention to their election. I believe that there is a country called the Republic of China... as to the Diaoyu Islands, I learnt from my education that they belong to China, but now... I’m not sure if the education I acquired (in China) has a bias in it.”

Another interviewee, Helen, came to New Zealand in 1999 and has since developed the habit of surfing the US-based Chinese-language website Wenxue City, which had been banned in China because of its occasional stance against the Chinese government. Helen described herself as “counter-revolutionary” – a term frequently



used by the communist party during the Mao era China and especially the Cultural Revolution.<sup>30</sup> She expressed,

“Tibet. It will be good if (the Chinese government) give them a (autonomous) status and keep very close relations with them. Don’t need to always mention that it is Chinese territory since several hundred years ago. I believe in a more peaceful resolution... Now even if Taiwan and China are separated as two countries, I think I can still accept it. I won’t be angry or refuse to recognise (Taiwan).”

These comments suggest that for some migrant netizens, their migration experience and the access to information that is not available to them pre-migration are shifting their perceptions of the red nationalism, specifically, the political and sovereignty issues. The internet, according to them, played an important role in this shift as it empowers these migrants to access various worldviews and interpretations that may contradict with what they were familiar with and took for granted in China.

Last but not least, the sense of belonging of these migrant netizens plays a vital role when it comes to red nationalism. It is important to point out that the interview participants have actually two different types of sense of belonging. One of them has been widely discussed in the literature in migration studies – migrants feel that they “belong” to the home and/or the host country. However, what is more prominently manifested in this research is a different type of belonging – migrants feel that a

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<sup>30</sup> The term includes charges such as collaborating with foreign forces and inciting revolts against the government. The term received wide usage during the Cultural Revolution, in which thousands of intellectuals and government officials were denounced as “counter-revolutionaries” by the Red Guards.

particular territory belongs to them, and they rightfully “own” the place/territory. The mixed feeling of belonging to and owning the territory gives migrant netizens a very strong hold, a justification for their red nationalism.

During the interviews, many migrant netizens used the term “my territory/place (*dipan*)”<sup>31</sup> when talking about China. One interviewee commented, “...China is MY country. It belongs to me. When something belongs to you, you have the rights and obligations to protect it... the sovereignty of China... it is MINE. I can’t let my belongings go to others’ home. It is MY country.” (Jing, F 38 WK)

As the interviewees described, the strong sense of belonging and identification with the homeland in part arises from incomplete identification with New Zealand. Several interviewees articulate their feeling of being in “other people’s place” as migrants. Ian shared his view on China and New Zealand,

“This is other people’s place. When you are in China, whatever happens, it is in your own home... (when) in others’ place... out of your country, whoever you are, whatever you do, however high your education is... you are out of your country. You’d never think of these issues back in China. You absolutely won’t feel it if you don’t come out (of China).” (Ian, M 26 PR)

The evidence suggests that three factors influence the formation of red nationalism among the migrant netizens. Patriotic education promoted by the Chinese government has a powerful impact on migrant perceptions of China’s sovereignty issues, which

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<sup>31</sup> *Dipan* translated literally, the word means “place” or “territory”, but in the Chinese language, it always has the connotation of the “place or territory” under one’s control.

help to form a strong red nationalism. The free atmosphere in New Zealand allows the migrants to access liberal online information which is not available in China. This helps to diminish red nationalism sentiment. What is more, the sense of belonging also fosters a strong red nationalism. The migrants feel that they belong to China, and at the same time, China as a territory belongs to them. The lack of attachment to the host country also contributes to their strong red nationalism.

### **5.3 Yellow Nationalism**

Yellow nationalism, unlike red nationalism, focuses more on the supposed pan-ethnicity of the Chinese nation rather than the sovereignty of the state. It is based on the perceptions of a shared ethnicity, history and culture and is often manifested during events when Chinese are perceived to suffer as a collective. In contrast to red nationalism in which hot-button political issues instigate nationalistic sentiments, the external stimuli of yellow nationalism can be sensational events such as a natural disaster, or simply an incident indicating discrimination against Chinese migrants from the host society – not necessarily New Zealand, but in other Chinese diaspora as well.

#### **5.3.1 Manifestations of Yellow Nationalism: Culture, Ethnicity, and Essentialism**

At the core of yellow nationalism is the in-group identification with all ethnic Chinese. As mentioned earlier, natural disasters can usually cause yellow nationalism. The Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, which killed around 68,000 people,<sup>32</sup> sparked a wave of yellow nationalism on Skykiwi. In forum postings during Sichuan earthquake the migrant netizens expressed their blessings to China. A netizens *Youdian Pianlan* posted, “may peace always be with China” and “my fellow Chinese, rest in peace”

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<sup>32</sup> See news report in the New York Times (Jacobs and Wong 2009).

(2008-05-22); another posting by *Snow white* read “wish my fellow countryman (*tongbao*) can get out of difficulties soon. Go China! Go Sichuan!”(2008-07-27).

Translated literally, *tongbao* means persons born of the same parents. These remarks best exemplify how migrant netizens still identify strongly with China and Chinese. By using the word *tongbao*, being Chinese is presented as something inherited, deeply rooted, and essentialised.

According to the constructionist view, group identities in the society involve differentiating one’s “self” from an “other” (Jenkins 1996; Ashforth and Mael 1989). Yellow nationalism presents the same characteristic based on ethnic identity by drawing a line between “us” Chinese and “other” non-Chinese. During the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, The New Zealand government offered extensive assistance to those who were hit by the quake, yet some Chinese migrants first thought of and turned to China and the Chinese communities in New Zealand for help. The Skykiwi website featured the news about the earthquake prominently, while focusing on the ethnic Chinese who suffered from the earthquake. The website also provided a name list including those who died in the earthquake, and those who were still missing. The news items called for help from the Chinese communities to find those missing persons, and migrant netizens showed their concern and support. One news comment read,

“Where are the people from the Chinese embassy? Where is the Chinese rescue team? ... Aren’t we Chinese?! ... more than ten of us (Chinese) are still missing ... we need your (Chinese netizens) support; we need the support of the Chinese government.”

The above examples suggest that Chinese migrant netizens tend to treat the Chinese victims in the earthquake differently from victims of other ethnicities. Arguably, these migrant netizens were making a statement that “we are Chinese, and I share your pain and sorrow.” By manifesting yellow nationalism online, the sense of belonging to a unique ethnic group is emphasised, and ethnic solidarity promoted.

In yellow nationalism, ethnic solidarity is the theme that frequently appears in the migrant netizens’ postings. This is especially so when they perceive that the ethnic solidarity among all Chinese can help them achieve an equal footing with the dominant group of the host society.

On 27 August, 2010, a posting appeared in Skykiwi forums claiming that a Chinese, *allenhus811016*, was verbally abused and threaten by a duty manager at a local supermarket. According to *allenhus811016*, the reason of the altercation was that he was an ethnic Chinese, and it was a matter of racial discrimination. The posting was later prominently put on the Skykiwi homepage as a news item. In the week that followed, it attracted 11,588 pageviews and 194 comments. Many comments showed strong yellow nationalism. The logic is that solidarity among all Chinese makes the group stronger, and thus Chinese will be treated better by the mainstream society. One comment read,

“We Chinese must hold together even if it’s making a fuss. We need to let them (non-Chinese perpetrators) face the consequences. Otherwise, whenever there is a matter concerning Chinese, those guys will treat the issue half-heartedly... we need them to learn a lesson by telling

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them that the Chinese are standing together and that we do not accept discrimination; they need to learn to respect Chinese ...”

Another comment expressed, “I hope that all Chinese can hold together. Actually, a lot of similar incidents happen to us when we go shopping or are at work. We must unite so that no one would bully us in future.”

One migrant took a step further and used the word “brother” when referring to the victim, *allenhus811016*, suggesting his/her essentialist perspective. The comment said, “a Chinese brother was bullied, and all that is needed is your support... it is exactly because Chinese like to take insult and humiliation silently that others dare to treat us like that.”

As shown in the above examples, the keyword of yellow nationalism is “ethnic solidarity” – the recognition and acknowledgement of a ‘sameness’ within a group about a shared belief or concern. The solidarity is not only a goal but a means for these migrant netizens. It is seen by many as a means to help Chinese – at home and abroad – to get through difficulties, be it a result from natural disasters or from perceived discrimination.

Echoing the findings from the online survey that many migrant netizens share nationalistic sentiments based on a sense of essentialism (see Chapter Four), the essentialised Chinese ethnicity appears to be the major force at play in the making of yellow nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand. Terms such as “*tongbao*”, “brothers and sisters”, and “homeland, my mother” are frequently used in the articulation of yellow nationalism, suggesting a strong in-group identification among some Chinese migrants. The Chinese ethnicity is seen by these migrants as

the essence that remains unchanged over time. The role of ethnic essentialism is twofold. On the one hand, essentialism is used by these migrant netizens to claim their Chinese identity and it serves as the justification for ethnic solidarity. On the other hand, it is utilised by some migrants as a strategy to achieve pragmatic goals in the host society.

### **5.3.2 Factors Influencing Yellow Nationalism**

During the interviews, the participants also showed yellow nationalism and expressed that they cared more about Chinese victims in the Christchurch Earthquake in 2011 simply because “we are all Chinese”. One interviewee Frances (F 27 PR) said,

“... I donated during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China. I also donated during the Christchurch earthquake using my mobile... I would feel sad when innocent people suffer, but if (they are) Chinese, I probably care more... getting more emotional. I am a Chinese myself”.

It is clear that the emotional feelings towards other Chinese come from their shared Chinese identity. Many interviewees attributed their “obvious” Chinese identity to their biological traits. One interviewee, Samantha, elaborated on the matter. She said,

“I feel like ... our nation... It’s the long history of the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua Minzu*). (We are) descendants of the Dragon. No matter where we go, we’d say that we are Chinese. (This) cannot be changed... I won’t change my feelings towards China because of what happens in New Zealand. China is where I was born and raised. We all have yellow skin and black eyes. Wherever you go, you are a Chinese... (we) can’t escape (from the

fact). That feeling is like the emotion towards my own mother.”

(Samantha, F 40 NZ)

Kate put this essentialist idea in a nutshell, “I AM an ethnic Han person with yellow skin and black eyes... I AM a Chinese. It is a racial thing.”

However, another interesting aspect of this ethnic essentialism emerged from the interviews. The Chinese migrant netizens, perceiving themselves as a marginalised ethnic minority group, often resort to this essentialist yellow nationalism in attempt to have their voice heard and to achieve certain political goals in the host society.

Previous research shows that the internet provides a platform to promote a pan-Chineseness in the form of yellow nationalism. In the studies by Ong (2008), this pan-Chineseness manifested in the form of cyber nationalism is described as a political discourse in the aim of lumping all the ethnic Chinese together. She further asserts that the nationalism articulated in cyberspace by certain ethnic Chinese is undesirable and even dangerous for their counterpart in other diasporas (in her case the Indonesian Chinese). This is because ethnic Chinese around the world are undoubtedly diverse populations who have different perceptions of identity and who feel differently about national belonging (Ong 2005b, 2008).

Admittedly, a pan-Chineseness in the form of yellow nationalism can, by no means, cover all the diversified Chinese communities spreading around the world. However, interview data from this research suggest that yellow nationalism and the pan-Chinese identity is not the goal of a political project as Ong argues. Rather, yellow nationalism and the essentialised pan-Chineseness are used as a strategy, a means rather than a



goal, by migrant netizens to have their voice heard by the mainstream, especially in face of discrimination from the host society.

One interviewee said, “(if) it’s racial discrimination (against Chinese), (we) definitely need ethnic solidarity. I support those who organise protests (against discrimination) online.” (Peng, M 37 WK)

Another participant, Debby’s comment illustrates how this solidarity and yellow nationalism can be used as a strategy to fight against discrimination and crimes targeting Chinese migrants.

“Chinese, among other Asians, are often seen as easy targets of crimes... at this necessary and crucial moment, we need to unite and speak in one voice. It is a way to protect ourselves... But this strategy cannot be abused... if we can solve the problem through other channels, then there is no need to use this more extreme form. Don’t use this unless it’s absolutely necessary. Otherwise...we do it too often, no one would take it seriously. No one would care anymore.” (Debby, F 45 NZ)

As clearly shown in the above comment, yellow nationalism is used very strategically by Chinese migrant netizens to articulate their discontent in the hope that their voice could be heard, and their unsatisfactory status improved.

According to the interviewees, the perceived marginalisation and exclusion result in their feeling of insecurity in the host society. Therefore, the essentialist yellow

nationalism is used as a strategy to cope with such insecurity. Susan supported the idea of ethnic solidarity especially if it is related to discrimination from non-Chinese.

“I agree (that all Chinese should unite)... If I saw a foreigner (*laowai*) swearing at a Chinese, if I were there, I’d be outraged. I would definitely speak up for that Chinese person... I believe there is (discrimination). Actually, quite obvious. Those foreigners, apart from some in my church, they look down upon Chinese with that contemptuous look on their face. I did this volunteer job, and all the people in the office were white. I could feel their strong sense of racial discrimination... There were these old women. They have good jobs... and the contempt... from how they acted and spoke...they looked down upon you.” (Susan F 30 PR)

Many other interviewees believe that Chinese migrants are not included in the host society. Being a marginalised ethnic group in the host country, the Chinese need to employ ethnic solidarity to fight back. Jessica (F 52 NZ) said,

“There is absolutely discrimination (against Chinese). A hundred per cent! Because you are foreign. You can feel there is discrimination everywhere... I still don’t feel that it (New Zealand) is my own country. I’m not lying to you. I’m not sure where the discrimination comes from. Maybe the policy...maybe the language barriers, or my skin colour...I can’t agree with these ideas... even if they are very nice Pākehā friends, I still feel there are barriers in between us. Even if you do very well and they praise you, there are still these intangible

barriers. Pākehā appear to be polite and nice, but when it concerns interests and benefits, they would still think of their own people first... wouldn't put Chinese first... I didn't have the strong feeling that 'I am a Chinese' when I first came here. Back then, people were nice, I didn't feel any exclusion. But now, the environment you live in constantly reminds you that you are a Chinese... If you don't want to be discriminated against, (the Chinese) need to hold together and perform better than others in everything.”<sup>33</sup>

The above evidence shows that some Chinese migrant netizens perceive that the strategic use of yellow nationalism can lead to a more equal footing with the dominant group in New Zealand. They believe that a united ethnic Chinese community can raise a stronger voice in the host society.

Yellow nationalism of the Chinese migrant netizens fits well into Spivak's concept of “strategic essentialism”. When discussing the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, whose aim is to deconstruct the imperial version of Indian history and rewrite it with a perspective from below, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out that it is “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (Spivak 1987, 205). The Chinese migrants, with all their internal differences, engage in essentialist nationalism which is employed as a strategy for them to influence the mainstream host society.

Hence, yellow nationalism is more than just an essentialist claim based on their ethnicity. The migrants' feeling of being excluded, marginalised, and discriminated

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<sup>33</sup> Pākehā is the Māori word for New Zealanders who are of European descent.

leads to the sense of insecurity. Therefore, these migrant netizens resort to the strategic essentialism in their pursuit of a secure identity – in the form of yellow nationalism. In this sense, unlike red nationalism which is shared among Chinese, both overseas and in China, yellow nationalism presents its specificity in the migrant population. It results from the Chinese migrants' interaction with the dominant groups in the host society.

## **5.4 Blue Nationalism**

In the previous two sections, I have presented two dimensions of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism – the red and the yellow. This section focuses on the most complex dimension among the three – blue nationalism. It is not strictly political; nor is it purely ethnic/cultural. It is a mix of feelings – of love and criticism, of belonging and detachment, of hope and despair. There are numerous external stimuli that can trigger blue nationalism online, mostly those events that are related to the image of China and Chinese, such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic torch relay, the Sanlu-Fonterra milk scandal in China in the same year, the 2011 Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand, and the Shanghai Expo 2010.

### **5.4.1 Manifestations of Blue Nationalism: A Mixed Feeling**

Great passion towards China, sometimes even blind love for the homeland, is shown among Chinese migrant netizens. In many cases, their affections would not subside even serious problems in China were disclosed in the media. This reveals their sentiment of “love China, good or bad”.

Many migrant netizens become very protective and highly defensive when the image and reputation of China is at stake, as can be best exemplified by the posting of *Ice*

*Crystal Bird*. It read “though I heard a lot about the dark side (of China), I remain intolerant of criticisms towards China...” (2010-09-21). It is important to mention here that when talking about “criticisms towards China”, migrant netizens usually refer to criticisms from “others” – non-Chinese, Western media in particular. Indeed, for some migrant netizens, the perceived bias of Western media and the bigoted Westerners are their arch-enemy. The West is perceived as anti-China in essence and always criticises China in the aim of putting it to shame. Based on such perceptions, Chinese migrant netizens take up a self-appointed role – the protectors of China’s good image.

In 2009, violent protests broke out in Xinjiang against Han Chinese in the area, calling for autonomous and independence of the region. When the Western media blamed Chinese government for a bloody clampdown, many Chinese migrant netizens became enraged. The strong sentiment is shown in *Lao Ying’s* forum posting (2009-07-15)

“Last year when Western media provided biased report on Tibet (violent protests), we blamed Western media. Many took it on the street and protested in the attempt to let Western people know the truth. In fact, what I want to ask is, is it the Western media to blame? No. Western media is only the mouthpiece of Western society. Are Western people really deceived by their media? No. It is very easy for them to ascertain the truth. I reckon that Westerners are just indulging themselves with self-deception. They don’t want to know the truth. The biased report in Western media reflects their true mentality. And this time on Xinjiang, what are we expected to say about the biased

report in Western media? Will we still be foolish enough to bring it on the street and protest again? Are we supposed to tell the truth to those ‘ignorant and naive’ Westerners? That would be purely futile! The Western society is always anti-China. And what we could do when they are determined to be anti-China? We become stronger, and let our strength speak for itself.”

Apart from protecting the good image of China from being tarnished, the comment also reveals the netizen’s eagerness to see a stronger China. This is because, according to migrant netizens’ online expressions, a stronger China is good for Chinese migrants in the host countries. During the 2011 Diaoyu Islands incident described previously, one news comment appeared on the Skykiwi. It said, “if China does not show its strong stance, then there will be no good life for overseas Chinese” (ip: 121.237.95.\*). This belief that the stronger China becomes, the better status Chinese migrants will have in the host society is commonly shared among Chinese migrant netizens. It has been a major driver for blue nationalism. The logic and reasons for such a belief will be discussed in detail later in this section.

Interestingly, however, in contrast to criticisms from “others”, criticisms from within the Chinese communities seem to be acceptable for these migrants. Many of the migrant netizens themselves can be very critical towards China, as the following example shows.

After the catastrophic earthquake which hit Christchurch in September 2010, one of the migrant netizens, *Carrousel*, turned to the Chinese Embassy in Wellington for help. However, she ended up being disappointed by the incompetent performance and

attitude of the staff at the embassy. In Skykiwi forums, she criticised China harshly, and afterwards she expressed her mix feelings of anger and love through her critical remarks.

“...thinking of those moments when Wenchuan was shaken by the earthquake, vigil was organised by students gathered on the Christchurch Squire; thinking of the moments when the Olympic torch relay was in trouble, we protected the sacred flame regardless the obstacles before us. Yes, we love the country, but the country doesn't love us... I love China, and I usually won't say a word that may disgrace our country. But this time I'm furious. (I criticised the government because I believe in) 'Love well; whip well.' We have treated the government well; how come they treat us so callously! I don't know how, in future, I can teach my child to love her motherland?!”<sup>34</sup>

In another netizen's online signature, the following statement was written in highlighted colour – “the motherland is the place that I can criticise harshly; but I wouldn't allow others to express even the mildest criticism.”

When these comments are juxtaposed, the mixed feeling towards China –blue nationalism – is manifest. On the one hand, migrant netizens vehemently protect the good image of China from being tarnished by non-Chinese. They are very defensive, and present intense love for China. On the other hand, the same group of netizens

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<sup>34</sup> According to Carrousel's other posts in the forum, her child was born in New Zealand and the only link the baby has with China is that the parents are migrants from China. Yet, this does not prevent her from branding China as the motherland of her child.

criticise China very harshly, in the name of “love well; whip well”. They throw swearing words at China and the Chinese government. They condemn the social problems and the dark sides of China such as pollution, inequality and corruption. Yet, they would eventually come back to their passion for a stronger China. One netizen made an analogy when commented sarcastically about his relation with New Zealand and China. He recognised the good job done by the New Zealand government during the Christchurch earthquake, but meanwhile revealed his strong identification with China.

“My uncle (New Zealand) wouldn’t become my dad (China) simply because he saved my life once. I’m referring to the country, not the government... Though our mother can be a bitch sometimes, I still don’t want a replacement.”

One way or the other, at the centre of this blue nationalism shared by migrant netizens is the aspiration for a strong China, and a good, pure image of China. As indicated above briefly, some migrant netizens believe that a better image of China means a better status of overseas Chinese in the host countries.

#### **5.4.2 Factors Influencing Blue Nationalism**

I have presented in the previous pages that blue nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens is the complex emotion and action that mix together protection and criticism, passion and condemnation. All these are done in the attempt to defend a perfect image of a strong China. The interview data show that the participants share the same belief and aspiration.



Many of the interviewees believe that the relation between China and overseas Chinese is that of a two-way representation. One of them commented,

“I think that the status of overseas Chinese in the host society is closely related to China’s status in the world. When one comes over here (to New Zealand), he/she represents a nation. You are Chinese, and when you do well, others would say ‘look, this is a Chinese person. Good.’... once the country becomes strong and does well on the world stage, others would probably say, ‘Chinese are good.’ One can represent the country, and the country includes you.” (Peng M 37 WK)

For most of the interviewees, this sense of being included in China, of belonging to China, is where their blue nationalism originated. Although they did not use the exact term “include”, many participants used metaphorical terms such as “home”, “family”, and “parents” to express the sense of inclusion and belonging.

In 2011, China put a 60-second self-promotional advertisement at Time Square in New York City. Susan felt very proud when she saw the advertisement online.

“I watched the video online. (I) felt that China is so powerful! I felt very proud...very delighted, very dignified, and very proud. Actually, it (China) is like your family. Say... your parents achieved something big, a promotion for instance, you’d feel, as their sons and daughters, you’d feel very proud. (Because) I am from this family.” (Susan F 30 PR)

Jessica, a New Zealand citizen in her 50s, pointed out that her feelings towards China have changed after she migrated to New Zealand. Although seeing herself as more mature than those young nationalist students from China, she admitted that sometimes she had similar feelings with those young students and became protective towards China.

“After coming out (from China), the feelings are different from when you were living in China. When you live there, it’s like you are at home. You can complain whenever you want; you can criticise whenever you want. But (now it’s) like you’re out of your home. You wouldn’t let others bully your family. I’m no difference (with those who are nationalistic). I too have a lot to complain when in China, but after I came out, it is my family. Attacking my family is literally attacking me.” (Jessica F 52 NZ)

These migrant netizens, after years residing in New Zealand, still have very strong affections for China. For them, China is where they belong, and a good image of China is what they can be proud of. The logic is that if China has a good reputation, then Chinese migrants will be respected by others, especially the mainstream in the host country. Jing (F 38 WK) expressed this line of reasoning.

“It’s the feeling that when China’s status on the world stage is better, then our status (as migrants) are better in the eyes of those Westerners (when they) know you are Chinese. Probably they don’t feel like that, but I’d feel that ... in their eyes...like...I can have their respect?”

The last sentence of Jing's comment reveals the concern of many Chinese migrants in New Zealand – migrant netizens feel that they are discriminated, or at least looked down upon, by the local mainstream to the extent that they need to resort to a better image of China for a proper representation, to prove to others that Chinese are worthy of respect.

Many interviewees expressed the feeling that they are mis-/under-represented in the host country which resulted in discriminatory attitudes towards Chinese migrants. Therefore, a good image of China can represent Chinese migrants better and subsequently alleviate discriminatory sentiment or even bring respect.

One interviewee gave the following comment when he talked about his feelings of pride after several events showcasing China's development and strength.

“I didn't feel much change. Probably a little, but not much. It can probably change some people, the locals, their perceptions of China. Before these (events) they didn't know about China and still thought that China was poor and backward. They can now see the development of China, which may change how they perceive China. Many of them haven't been to the country after all... When they have better understanding, we would have more topics to socialise with them.”

(Ian M 26 PR)

Other interviewees gave examples from their personal experiences to support this argument. Yin believed that the Beijing Olympic Games had helped his white male English teacher at his language school in Auckland to change his attitudes towards China.

“Take the Beijing Olympics for example...when I first came here, at the language school, my teacher was from Britain. He told me that it was through watching the Beijing Olympics that he started to know more about China. He learnt that China was not a poor and crappy country as they used to believe. There was an obvious change in perceptions (of China).” (Yin M 24 IS)

Min is an international student who came to New Zealand when he was only 17 years old. He gave a similar story to that of Yin's. According to his perception, events that present a good image of China did help the local people to understand more about China, and that was when he felt respected.

“Speaking from my experience, I believe that only when (I) interact with the Pākehās would I think of the issue of honour and disgrace of the Chinese people. If (we were) all Chinese, then these wouldn't even be an issue...The Pākehās don't really know much. Their perceptions of Chinese and their attitudes are still based on this out-dated image of Chinese migrants – those 'old-generation' migrants gave them the deepest impressions. The recent development in China, and its influence on us... they wouldn't feel a thing. They still have the old stereotypes, believing that we all know Kung Fu, eat wild animals, and we are good students and smart... I think it holds some water (that stronger China, better status of overseas Chinese)...When the Olympics were held in Beijing, I feel like at school those Pākehās started to pay more attention to the Chinese. They showed a bit respect to Chinese. It started to become better.” (Min M 21 IS)

The perceived discrimination caused by the misrepresentation and misunderstanding of China is yet only one factor that helps to shape blue nationalism. The other equally important factor is that migrant netizens are yet to forge a strong sense of belonging to the host country; they can comfortably identify themselves with China, but are reluctant to claim a Kiwi identity. As a result, China, rather than New Zealand, becomes the image representing this cohort of ethnic minority in the host country.

Quite a few interviewees expressed their feeling of “living under other people’s roof” – a perception that Chinese migrants are not actually the people of the country, but outsiders, and therefore, they do not have equal rights.

“I can relate to that (feeling). We are foreign people (here in New Zealand), migrants after all... when there is clash between the local and the foreign, (the Pākehā would say) ‘you foreign outsiders, on what grounds do you demand the same rights as we do?!’” (Min M 21 IS)

Although these migrants’ equal rights are legally protected in the host country, the social and cultural reality makes these migrants feel that they are not treated or seen as equal, they are not “people of the land”, and they are not included in the host society. And therefore, it is hard for many of the interviewees to claim a Kiwi identity, not even those who are long-term residents and have already acquired New Zealand citizenship for many years.

When asked how much she felt that she is a Kiwi, Jessica (F 52 NZ) gave a score of two (on a scale from 0 -10). She then commented, “(even though) I think I am (a Kiwi), others don’t think so.” In comparison, Samantha (F 40 NZ) initially gave a

score of five, but later she added, in a voice that revealed her uncertainty, “I was not born here. (I think) those who were born and raised here are real Kiwis?”

Peng (M 37 WK) was not even sure that ethnic Chinese people who were born and raised in New Zealand can be called Kiwi. “Some Chinese say that they are Kiwi. They are still Chinese after all. Just that they’ve got (New Zealand) permanent residency or citizenship doesn't mean they are Kiwi. Even those who were born here, their parents are Chinese, and the generation before that.”

Interestingly, however, while some migrant netizens struggles over whether they can be Kiwi, others have already started to question their identity of being Chinese.

Jessica (F 52 NZ) expressed her concern.

“You feel like... it is now really different from when I was back in China. It is because now you are observing as a third party...it (China) is far from where you are. And now you’ve got New Zealand citizenship...if (I) got back (to China) now, I am going back as a foreigner! When you walk through the customs service, you are treated as a foreigner. I feel like I already have this estrangement with the Chinese in China (*guonei ren*).”

The above comments indicate that for these migrant netizens, their anxiety and unease come from a sense of insecurity with regard to their identity. Their identity is built upon the constant negotiation in between being Chinese and being kiwi (Voci 2006), and a construction of both self-perceived and ascribed identities. As such, their Kiwi identity is yet to fully develop because of the ascribed status of being ethnic minority in the host society – as a result of being “visible minority” (Ip and Friesen 2001; Ip

1995). Many migrant netizens, having difficulties of being accepted as Kiwi by the mainstream, resorted to their Chinese identity for a solution when they encounter insecurity in their identity construction. However, the usually negative portrayal of China and Chinese in the host society media and Western media in general makes migrant netizens believe that only a good image of China can represent them – the overseas Chinese, a cohort that is different from their compatriots in China. As a result, the seeking of a stable, secure, and specific overseas Chinese identity is manifested as blue nationalism as presented earlier in this section.

A rising China also adds some momentum to blue nationalism insofar as the identification with China seem to be able to offer the migrants a more presentable and respectable identity. As one of the interviewees articulated clearly,

“I still feel I love China. It’s natural, it’s in my DNA. Plus, ‘distance produces beauty’<sup>35</sup>... Also, (I) feel like being marginalised here. It’s hard to integrate into the society. Don’t know much about the topics in the mainstream culture....The change in social status... all these have consequences on how we think. Most importantly, China is now stronger. China is wealthier. You can be proud of you natal family now.” (Debby F 45 NZ)

The above comment also exemplifies the complexity of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, as well as the ambiguity that migrant netizens are facing. For the migrant

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<sup>35</sup> This is a literal translation. The idiom is similar to the English idiom - “absence makes the heart grow fonder”.

netizens, blue nationalism is a mix of affectionate feelings for the homeland. It originates from the migrant netizens' lived experience in the host society.

## 5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the three dimensions of the overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism – the red, the yellow, and the blue. Based on the findings, I argue that the overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism actually originates from migrants' perceptions of marginalisation, exclusion, and insecurity as being outsiders and as an ethnified minority group in the host society. In this sense, the online manifestation of nationalism can be considered the outcry of these Chinese migrant netizens for a secure status and a stable identity.

Brown (2000, 52) points out that nationalism as a political concept rests on the belief of a common territorial homeland. I propose that red nationalism of the Chinese migrant netizens is based on the same concept. The territorial sovereignty of China is at the core of red nationalism. If taken at face value, red nationalism resembles very much the Chinese nationalism discussed generally in existing research; and in this sense, Chinese migrants are not so different from the counterparts back in China who do not have migration experience. However, red nationalism has its specificity as the sentiment and actions of overseas Chinese. Gries argues that nationalism of Chinese in China originates from the mixed feelings of *being the victim* of a century's humiliation brought about by colonialism and then imperialism, and of *being the victor* in the current world due to a perceived status of China as a rising power (Gries 2004). In contrast, for Chinese migrant netizens who have physically departed from China, the perceived exclusion from the mainstream host society leads to the feeling



that they do not yet belong to New Zealand, and that China is the territory of which they can rightfully claim the ownership.

The perceived marginalisation and exclusion are also at play in the other two dimensions of overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism. Physically distinct from the mainstream Pākehā or the indigenous Māori population, these Chinese migrants are “visible minorities” (Ip 1996; Ip and Murphy 2005), and the most distinctive of the immigrant groups (Ip 1990) in New Zealand. Therefore, the Chinese migrants are ethnified by the mainstream discourse – usually lumped together with ‘other Asians’. Interestingly, the ethnification goes two-ways – the Chinese migrants themselves also tend to resort to their essentialised ethnicity when they try to resist and challenge the discrimination and disciplining imposed on them by the host society. Consequently, such voices are articulated in cyberspace in the form of yellow nationalism. This is in line with Sun’s argument that the internet allows the migrants to opt for an essentialist position of ‘Chineseness’ in order to alleviate their sense of anxiety, ambiguity and displacement resulting from their migration experience (Sun 2002). The essentialist position that the migrant netizens take has actually become a means and a strategy that they employ to “resist, challenge, and speak against regimes of truth imposed on them” (Chan 2005, 336) by the host society. This strategic essentialism, though manifested as yellow nationalism, reveals the underlying willingness of the Chinese migrant netizens’ pursuit of a stable identity in the host society.

The Chinese migrant netizens’ pursuit of a stable and secure identity in New Zealand has led to the mixed feeling towards the homeland and the host country which is projected online as blue nationalism. On the one hand, migrant netizens fanatically defend a good image of China from non-Chinese, whose criticism is seen as the

intentional denigration of China and would eventually bring shame on the overseas Chinese. A denigrated image of China is perceived as a mechanism to lock the Chinese migrants in a subordinate position in the host society. On the other hand, and simultaneously, the same group of migrant netizens criticise China harshly over the issues such as corruption, pollution, inequality, and human rights. Being away from China and enjoying unblocked access to information on the internet have put them at a previously denied vantage point to re-evaluate the homeland. Nonetheless, according to these migrant netizens, their criticism is yet another form that they express love for China – in the name of “love well; whip well”. As such, blue nationalism reveals the dialectic between harsh criticism and intense affection for China in the migrants’ pursuit of a respectable and secure position in the host society.

While some scholars see migrants as “marginals” (Turner 1974, 233) who are “betwixt and between” the home and the host societies, and may not achieve “a final stable resolution of their ambiguity”, others have pointed out the power of the internet as a “re-embedding technology”, which is “becoming a major medium for the consolidation, strengthening and definition of collective identities” (Eriksen 2007, 8). In the next chapter, I will present how the internet as an empowering tool has been used by Chinese migrant netizens’ in their daily life for socialisation and integration purposes. I will also discuss how the internet enabled homeland imagination shape the identity construction of the migrant netizens.

## **Chapter Six: Socialisation, Integration, and Cyber China – Migrant Internet Use**

In the previous chapter, I have established that cyber nationalism among Chinese migrants is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. These factors include the migrants' education background, their sense of belonging to the home and the host countries, perceived marginalisation and discrimination, and the migrant netizens' aspiration of a secure identity. The lived experience as migrants in the host country is found to have a crucial impact on the formation of migrant nationalism. This chapter further explores migrants' lived experience with a special focus on the role that the Chinese-language cyberspace plays in netizens' daily life with regard to their socialisation and integration.

I have identified in Chapter Four that the majority of migrant netizens use the Chinese-language cyberspace on a daily basis. This establishes that the Chinese internet has become part of their daily experience. Connecting the home and the host countries, the Chinese-language cyberspace serves as a “transnational social field” (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a), providing resources for “self-imagining as an everyday social project” (Appadurai 1996, 3-4). By exploring migrants' daily participation in the transnational social field, this chapter points out the significance of an imagined Cyber China in migrant identity construction.

The first section of this chapter discusses how the technological advancement of the internet has broadened the media landscape for the Chinese migrants in the past decade. Integrating different modalities of communication as well as different kinds

of content (DiMaggio et al. 2001), the internet enables the Chinese migrant netizens to participate in the transnational social fields with unprecedented scale and intensity. Within the context of the enhanced transnational connection, section two draws upon data from the in-depth interviews to analyse how the use of Chinese-language cyberspace influences migrant socialisation and integration process. In section three, I elucidate how the migrants' transnational participation through the internet enables an imagined Cyber China, which creates a sense of leading parallel lives among the migrants – in cyberspace and in the physical world.

### **6.1 The Broadened Media Landscape**

In the past decade, the advancement in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has significantly bettered the accessibility of transnational media content generated in various parts of the globe for the tech-savvy Chinese migrants. While previously relying on ethnic press, newsletters from the homeland, ethnic radio, video cassettes, DVDs, and satellite television, migrants now have the all-encompassing multimedia of the internet built on the ICT infrastructure. Although it might be too early to jump to the conclusion that the internet-based new media are replacing the traditional media, it is my contention that cyberspace has greatly expanded the media landscape for Chinese migrants, bringing to them new (platform) forms of media content, consumption and communication. Therefore, migrants are confronted with shifting transnational social fields, in which the internet enabled “interlacing coherence network” (Elias 1986, also see Pries 1999, 26) is a constitutive part.

The information technology development in the past several years in New Zealand as well as in China has provided the migrants with the “hardware” to have faster and

easier access to the Chinese-language cyberspace. Download speed is arguably the most important indicator that can influence a netizen's choice of information sources on the internet. For example, with a download speed of 56 kbps, it takes nearly 25 minutes to download 10 megabytes of data, while the time is only 54.33 seconds if the download speed is at 1.5 mbps. This means that download speed significantly influences the experience of surfing the Web because it would take much longer for a user to open a webpage when the speed is slow. Slow speed can drive away internet users because it is not only time consuming, but also increases opportunity cost of surfing the web (Rappoport, Kridel, and Taylor 2002, 59). A recent research conducted by Google also reveals that if a website loads slower than its close competitor even by only 250 milliseconds, users will visit that website less often. The findings also show that speed matters in every context when using the internet. Four fifths of users will choose to click away if a video stalls while loading (Lohr 2012).

According to Statistics New Zealand, the predominant download speed in the country was less than 64 kbps in 2005 (dial-up speed), and this usually came with a data cap,<sup>36</sup> whereas in China, users were already starting to enjoy faster speed internet. In 2006, 75.9% of the netizens in China had broadband internet access with a speed of 128 kbps or more (CNNIC 2007). The speed and data caps had resulted in New Zealand's internet connections being ranked low in the OECD countries.<sup>37</sup> What is more, given the fact that the loading speed of a webpage is in positive correlation with the physical distance between the server where the website is hosted and the place one tries to

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<sup>36</sup> A data cap is the amount of data a subscriber can use (both download and upload) during the period of a month.

<sup>37</sup> New Zealand ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 30 OECD countries. See OECD broadband statistics in 2006, <http://www.oecd.org/internet/broadband/oecdbroadbandstatisticsdecember2006.htm>, see also <http://www.landonline.govt.nz/about-landonline/newsletter/landwrap/200703/broadband-new-zealand>.

access the website, users in New Zealand would normally experience a slower speed when they want to access a China-based website than their counterparts inside China. The low speed and long distance put together had led to a joke among young and tech-savvy Chinese migrants in New Zealand. They sometimes refer to New Zealand as “sucks at information technology” (*xinxi lan*) – a homophone of the word “New Zealand” in Mandarin Chinese – showing their discontent with the slow internet speed in New Zealand.

However, what the situation resulted in is more than just jokes among these migrants. As some of my interviewees point out, the slow internet speed also forced migrant netizens to opt out of using Chinese websites. Alex (F 31 NZ), a New Zealand citizen now working in Beijing, recalled that she did not use the internet very much when she was studying in New Zealand because “it was too slow to open a webpage (hosted in China). I would read more (Chinese) newspapers – the *Mandarin Pages*<sup>38</sup> for example, and watch New Zealand TV programmes occasionally... that at least can improve my English. ”

Debby ( F 45 NZ), also a New Zealand citizen, who has been in the country for 15 years, claimed that she tried to access Tudou.com, a video sharing site based in China, but found that video clips usually stall for a long time. She later gave up and started to use Youtube, which loads much faster.

The above evidence shows that in the mid-2000s, the information sources of the Chinese migrants were limited due to the barely satisfying internet services in New

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<sup>38</sup> Mandarin Pages (or Mandarin Times) is a Chinese language newspaper based in Auckland. It was founded in 1991 as a weekly. Since 2004, it started daily publication. It has a circulation of 17,000 copies per issue. See (Voci 2006, 168).

Zealand. Instead of accessing China-based online services which they prefer, some netizens had to choose sources from either New Zealand or internationally based websites – both in English and in Chinese.

The infrastructure of information technology in New Zealand has developed fast since 2006. On 26 October 2006, Telecom, the largest telecommunication company in New Zealand, "unleashed" the download speeds on their network, and download speeds went as fast as the lines could go. In March 2007 the company started to introduce ADSL2+. As a result, 91% of internet users in New Zealand were on broadband in 2011 (Smith et al. 2011).

It is now faster and easier for migrant netizens to access China-based websites with less hassle caused by the slow internet speed and the geographical distance between China and New Zealand. The technological advancement has resulted in more information sources available for migrant netizens, mostly China-based and internationally based Chinese-language sources.

In addition to the faster and easier access to the Chinese-language cyberspace, new features and platforms built on the better ICTs is another factor that helps to expand the media landscape of migrant netizens. While the internet provided mostly static, one-way platforms resembling traditional press and broadcast media during the dot.com phenomenon in the late 1990s, the past decade has seen a mushrooming of more interactive features and platforms enabled by the so-called "web 2.0" technology. The Chinese-language cyberspace has since developed accordingly, providing new features such as web logs (blogs), online video sharing, Social Networking Services (SNS), and microblogs. These new features and platforms have

greatly expanded the choices available to Chinese migrant netizens, helping to broaden their media landscape.

The evidence presented in this section shows that the advancement in ICTs enables the Chinese-language cyberspace to provide unprecedented media forms and platforms, which open up realms that no previous media had been able to reach.

Technological advancement also brings about faster and easier access to such new media realms, not just to netizens within China, but also to Chinese migrants living in various host countries. The broadened media landscape results in the changing dynamics of the transnational social field for Chinese migrant netizens.

## **6.2 Migrant Internet Use: Negative and Positive Influences on Socialisation, Integration, and Adaptation**

Having established that the technological advancement opens up the opportunity of a greatly expanded media landscape for the migrant netizens, this section proceeds to discuss how internet use influences migrant daily life, focusing on the migrant socialisation process in the host society.

The interviewees, mostly young and middle-aged, spend significant amount of time on the internet. Among the 29 interviewees, 21 spend more than two hours a day on the internet; seven of them use the internet for 1 to 2 hours per day; only one person uses the internet for less than an hour a day. This corroborates with the findings from the online survey in Chapter Four that Chinese migrants are active internet users in terms of their time spent online. The following discussions reveal that spending long time online is simultaneously influencing and influenced by migrant netizen's socialising experience in the host society.



### **6.2.1 Failed Socialising Attempt: The Internet as a “Safe Haven”**

Some migrants attributes spending much time off work/study on the internet to their failed attempt to socialise with local residents, and/or their lack of social network due to their recent arrival in the host society. Helen, 51, migrated to New Zealand in 1995 and has been a New Zealand citizen for 13 years. Her off-work time was spent mostly around her two children, and beyond routine duties as a mother at home, she finds herself sitting in front of the computer surfing the internet for an average of one to two hours every day. She recounted her initial desire to socialise with the local people by inviting her Pākehā neighbours and colleagues for dinner at her place when she first came to New Zealand. She was later frustrated after several attempts because “they didn’t invite us back, and later on we just didn’t socialise with them at all”. The lack of reciprocity from her local neighbours and colleagues left Helen little socialising opportunities. Perceiving it to be a “problem caused by differences of ethnicity and culture”, Helen stopped trying to reach out and socialise with the locals. Now after she finished her housework, she starts her computer and got herself merged in cyberspace, which has become a substitution to her real-life socialising activities.

### **6.2.2 Lack of Local Social Networks: The Internet as a Comfort Zone**

Many interviewees in the research claimed that since migrating to New Zealand, their time spent online had increased compared to the amount of time they used the internet when they were in China. This is because, quoting Yin, a young international student in his early 20s,

"In China, I have my family, and I have more friends. Much time was spent on other forms of entertainment and leisure activities such as hanging out with friends at Karaoke or bars. But here (in New

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Zealand), there's nothing much to do after work or school, so I spend a lot of time on the internet."

Yin's comments reflect the experience of many new migrants. For these migrants, family and social networks led to the abundance of social activities in China pre-migration, leaving them not much time for roaming in cyberspace. In contrast, being new migrants means that they lack social networks in the host society, especially in the local mainstream, which results in the increasing amount of time spent online.

Most migrants harbour the willingness to socialise with the local people in the host society as they expressed clearly during the interviews. Like Helen, some migrants made efforts to socialise with the locals only to find it difficult to fit in. Ethnic and cultural grouping are claimed to set barriers for the integration process. As the young migrant Min (M 21 IS) pointed out, the "real-life" scenario is usually "Asians hanging out with Asians, Pākehā with Pākehā, and Māori with Māori". Failing to set up their new social network in the host society, and confronted with, sometimes, repeated failures, migrants turn to cyberspace for a surrogate. Sitting behind the computer screen, migrant netizens can find a "comfort zone" in cyberspace for leisure, entertainment, and socialising opportunities at their choice, with fewer risks of facing unsuccessful experiences of socialisation.

### **6.2.3 Internet Use: Setting Barriers for Socialisation with the Local**

While the lack of social networks and socialising activities can lead to a withdrawal from the "real-life" into cyberspace, roaming cyberspace – a habit developed by many young migrants pre-migration – can result in less participation in socialising with the locals, and subsequently have impact on their integration process.

Susan, a new migrant who came to New Zealand in 2008 with New Zealand permanent residency, described how her use of the internet had impeded her socialisation with the local New Zealanders.

“Using the internet definitely has its negative influence, because I spend much time wandering in cyberspace, reading those gossips about celebrities (in China) rather than going out meeting local people. This has prevented me from integrating into the local society (in New Zealand).”

Like Susan, many new PRC migrants are young and the internet has been around them for a long enough time in their formative years that they are already comfortable with what the digital technology has to offer in their life. Spending long periods of time on the internet is not an onerous task for them. On the contrary, given the multifarious and often tempting content available on the internet, these young people can find it enjoyable roaming the vast and limitless cyberspace, just like Susan enjoying reading celebrity gossips. While bringing leisure and entertainment to migrant netizens, the internet is sometimes accused as a culprit of hindering them from going out socialising.

So far, evidence presented points to a downward spiral of migrant socialisation process in which the internet serves both as a remedy for unsuccessful socialising attempts and as a culprit preventing social participation. On the one hand, these new Chinese migrants lack social networks in the host society; when their attempts to socialise with the locals and to integrate prove to be difficult, many would chose to turn to cyberspace for a less confrontational “comfort zone”, resulting in a withdrawal

from the “real-life” social interaction with the host society mainstream. On the other hand, being young or middle-aged migrants, they are tech-savvy and some had already developed the hobby of spending long time wandering in cyberspace pre-migration, which impedes social participation in the host society.

However, one needs to go a step further to better understand the relationship between the internet and migrant experience. This is because the amount of time spent online – the quantitative indicator – cannot tell much about the qualitative aspects of internet use by migrant netizens. How the migrants use the internet, what they particularly use it for, are equally if not more important to understand the questions. The following section focuses more on these qualitative aspects of internet use especially what migrant netizens use the internet for.

#### **6.2.4 Internet Use: Adaptation and Integration**

Unlike some of the existing utopian views, the previous pages have shown that internet use can have negative impact on migrant socialisation process in the host society. However, findings also suggest that internet use does have positive influence on Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand, facilitating their daily practices in the host country. Many migrant netizens use the internet to acquire information that relates to their quotidian tasks in New Zealand. The local Chinese-language websites and the search engine are the most popularly used internet features, helping the migrants to solve daily problems.

The Chinese-language websites in New Zealand provide an abundance of practical information. For instance, Skykiwi has a section called “frequently used websites” at the bottom of its homepage, providing hyperlinks to various government bodies,

educational institutions, public health organisations, even webpages on transportation and entertainment.

The links cover almost all essential information for the daily life of migrants in the host country. For new migrants who are not familiar with the local society, the information they need is just a click away. For those whose English proficiency is low, they can always go to various forums to ask for help. For instance, there are online forums called “iSite – Information Centre” and “Serve the People”, where one can post questions, and experienced migrant netizens would share their answers. The topics range from finding a good family doctor to hands-on directions on applying for a driving licence.

During the interviews, my participants expressed their reliance on the practical information provided by the local Chinese-language websites which makes their life in New Zealand easier. Yin (M 24 IS) said, “I’d use New Zealand (Chinese) websites to rent an apartment, or to buy a car.” Another participant Frances (F 27 PR) commented, “I like Skykiwi’s ‘Paradise of Fine Cuisine’ forum. All about food. Just want to know where I can find a good restaurant”.

Some participants used the internet to seek for more specific practical information support. Susan mentioned,

“I’d write a posting for help when I have problems to handle, such as what I should do with my leaky house, where to fix my car, where I can find good stuff to eat. (The forums are) popular so that there will be people helping you to solve the problems...” (Susan F 30 PR)

Online search engine is another most useful tool that helps these migrant netizens with daily life – mundane daily routines, work, as well as study. Susan (F 30 PR) uses several search engines a lot because they allow her to solve problems without bothering her friends constantly. “What the internet helps me most is the search engine. It’s like a teacher of life. I can Google or Baidu my questions in my daily life and find the answers I need. No need to bother my friends now.”

For Yang (M 31 PR), an IT professional, internet search engines, especially those in Chinese-language, are critical to accomplish his daily job requirement. “Sometimes in my work there are technical terms in English that is difficult for me to understand. I would then search it on Baidu (China’s top search engine), and read about it (in Chinese). In this way, I can understand it faster. It helps to speed up my work.” Similarly, Yin, the international student, uses search engines to find information relating to his course assignments at the university. “When I do my assignment, I would search useful information first on Chinese websites. This saves a lot of time for me. Reading Chinese is easier and more efficient.” Then he would write his assignment in English. The internet in this sense makes these new migrant netizens’ life and work easier.

The above examples illustrate that the internet provides a very convenient way to get information so that new migrants can adapt faster in the host society. If traditional ethnic media is a roadmap for migrant in the host country (Zhou and Cai 2002), it is a map in print version. The Chinese-language websites in New Zealand can then be seen as “Google Map”, the digital version that allows more interactive features. They have been able to take a step forward in facilitating adaptation by gathering all the information in one place ready for browsing, and also by providing the interactive

features such as search engines and BBS forums – allowing more specific, even trivial needs to be answered by willingly helpful peers.

Apart from the information facilitating migrant daily practices, these Chinese-language websites also contain information advising how new Chinese migrants should behave according to local social norms. For instance, some postings in online forums point out that talking loudly in public is not in accordance with New Zealand norms. To some extent, this finding echoes previous research that using local Chinese-language websites helps the migrant netizens to integrate with the host society in their behaviours such as dressing, eating, drinking, and shopping (Melkote and Liu 2000).

However, integration is not just about behavioural adjustment, but more importantly it emphasises the cultural aspects. Integration is a mode of acculturation, which is defined as culture change resulting from contact between two distinct cultural groups (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936; Berry 1992). It accentuates culture, identity, values, and attitudes. During the process of integration, migrants maintain the cultural integrity of their ethnic group, while simultaneously move towards becoming an integral part of the host society culture (Berry 1992).

As the participants claimed, they use the internet to access information about New Zealand society, but very little. In addition, their focus is mostly related to their immediate needs – news about immigration policy, economic situation (for instance, real estate price, foreign exchange rates), public security, and the local Chinese communities. As Ann (F 61 PR) expressed, “...read New Zealand news, social and economic situation. Not much, but need to get a rough idea about it...won't search for local news particularly.” Moreover, my participants admitted that they would not

often access English websites, which provide much more information that can help with their cultural integration.

In this sense, be it facilitating the migrant netizens' practical adaptation, or acquiring basic knowledge about local social and economic situations, the internet use of the participants in general seems to offer them a means to become "functional individuals" in the host society rather than providing an effective way for their in-depth cultural integration.

### **6.3 Cyber China and Migrant Netizens' Parallel Lives**

Not only do the participants use the internet for little cultural integration, the previous section also indicated that the migrants prefer to use the Chinese-language cyberspace. In this section, I discuss the reasons for such preference, and illustrate that the intensive use of the Chinese-language cyberspace helps to build up a ring-fence around the ethnic Chinese – both in China and overseas, allowing the migrant netizens to create an imagined "Cyber China".

#### **6.3.1 The Preference of Using Chinese-language Cyberspace**

Among the 29 interviewees, 25 claimed that they accessed the Chinese-language cyberspace every day. The other four participants, constrained by their working time and family obligations, cannot get online every day, yet they would access the Chinese-language cyberspace whenever they use the internet. Arguably, roaming the Chinese-language cyberspace has become an integral part of the life of these migrant netizens. Two factors have been found to contribute to this internet use preference: one is using their native language; the other is their internet use pattern developed pre-migration – what can be defined as "path dependence".



*Native Language preference*

According to the interviewees, the first factor contributing to this internet use pattern is their language preference for Chinese over English. Most of the new Chinese migrants arrived in New Zealand after 1990s from PRC, and Chinese is their first language.

When asked why they would access the Chinese-language cyberspace frequently, these migrant netizens expressed that they felt more comfortable viewing Chinese content than that in English. For some of the interviewees, their basic or limited skills of English left them not much choice when it comes to the use of the internet. Min (M 21 IS) expressed,

“my English is not that good. Surfing Chinese websites is not as demanding (as reading English content). So I only use English websites for study and for basic necessities – online banking, applying for schools, and other stuff related to my practical needs. Apart from that...say...entertainment, news... I use Chinese websites only.”

For others, though they had no problems reading English, viewing Chinese content is more “efficient and effective” because many of them admitted that they “read Chinese faster than English”, and more information can be acquired in Chinese using the same amount of time. In addition, communicating using their first language is more comfortable for these new migrants. Yin (M 24 IS) said, “(to use Chinese) is more convenient for me to express myself, and to get myself understood. It makes communication with people easier.”

Language, as expected, is a major factor for migrants' frequent use of Chinese online services. However, the ease and convenience of using their first language also leads to a feeling among some migrant netizens that they have no urgent need to improve their English skills which is crucial for their social life and integration in the host society. Yang (M 31 PR) said during the interview,

“if (my English) language skills were good enough, I probably would read more English (online content). Actually, I do want to go to English websites, and read about what the international English language media have to say about China... But my English is poor, so I have to go to Chinese-language websites... meanwhile, as I can get almost all the information I need in Chinese, I don't have much motivation to improve my English, which is bad for me to fit in the mainstream society.”

The Chinese-language cyberspace has thus become a double-edged weapon for some migrant netizens. While it can help migrants work, study and communicate more efficiently by using their first language, it also brings about the negative effect of encouraging migrant netizens to confine themselves to the Chinese-language world. This would potentially restrict their horizon and limit their acquisition of New Zealand culture and viewpoints.

#### *Path-dependence*

Another factor resulting in the high frequency of roaming the Chinese-language cyberspace is that the migrant netizens have developed a habit of using certain Chinese-language online services over time – long before they migrated to New

Zealand. The internet has made it possible for them to maintain such a habit although the environment (physical, social, cultural, and economic) around them changed significantly, which actually requires commensurate changes in their use of the internet.

To describe the migrants sticking to the pre-migration habit, I borrowed the economic term “path dependence” (David 1985) – where we go next depends not only on where we are now but also upon where we have been. The use of the Chinese-language online services is not determined by a full evaluation of the new environment around the migrant netizens, but by their previously developed habit, which can cause serious problems especially with regard to their integration process in the host society.

Yin (M 24 IS) expressed this path dependence clearly. “My background and the habits I developed in my life decide what websites I would frequent. Using these Chinese websites (Baidu, Sina, QQ) is part of that habit.” Another participant, Ian, came to New Zealand in 2008. He is now a New Zealand permanent resident after finishing his Bachelor’s degree. Similar to Yin, Ian also pointed out that habit was a factor that resulted in his frequent use of Chinese online services. “I still use the websites that I used when I was in China. I haven’t changed since I came to New Zealand.”

A more mature migrant, Helen (F 51 NZ), started to use the U.S. based Chinese-language website Wenxuecity.com in the late 1990s after she migrated to New Zealand. The website was arguably the most popular Chinese-language website outside China at that time. Things have not changed much for Helen in terms of her internet use habit. She expressed that visiting Wenxuecity.com had become her routine in the past last 10 years. She stated that the website was her daily source of

information about China and other overseas Chinese. Actually, she set the website as her homepage on her IE browser.

The two factors – language and path dependence – may seem common-sense reasons for these migrant netizens to roam the Chinese-language cyberspace. However, the outcome has far more significant implications. In the following pages, I discuss how the frequent use of the Chinese-language cyberspace helps to create an imagined Cyber China, which enables the migrant netizens to lead parallel lives.

### **6.3.2 Cyber China and Parallel Lives**

Two major types of online activities help to create the Cyber China in these migrant netizens' imagination – reading online news and “in-group” communication.

Specifically, when talking about “reading news” online, the migrant netizens in this research usually refers to reading various types of news (politics, business, entertainment, sports, etc.) of and about China. And by “communicating”, these participants usually refer to the use of various forms of Instant Messaging (IM) applications and Social Networking Services (SNS).

#### *China news*

Being highly interested in China news is a very common characteristic of the migrant netizens. Most of the participants would frequently read China news online from either China-based websites or diaspora-based ones – all in Chinese language. For one thing, the China news easily accessible for these migrant netizens through various online platforms helps to meet their “epistemic desire” (Naficy 1993, 107), a constant drive for information about recent events in their previous homeland. One interviewee enunciated this emotional need,

“...the news I care most is China news. It is my priority. It doesn't seem to have any obvious or instant influence on my daily life (here in New Zealand), but it is important to my personal feelings and emotions...” (Helen F 51 NZ)

Apart from this emotional craving for homeland news, another commonly claimed reason is related more to these migrants' practical and utilitarian needs – their transnational activities and prospects requires an up-to-date knowledge of China.

Jessica (F 52 NZ) explained that she read China news on Sina.com every day.

“There's no way that I don't read China news because I have stocks of companies listed in China, and I deal frequently in the Shanghai Stock Exchange (online).” For Jessica, knowing what is happening in China in real time is essential for her transnational economic activities.

For some others, a transnational prospect dictates their consumption of China news.

Young Carl, now a university student in his early twenties, migrated to New Zealand with his parents when he was 12 years old. He spent most of his formative years in the host country, acquiring education in New Zealand from year 13 to university.

Nonetheless, he favoured China news over host country local news. Envisioning his future in China after graduating from university, he said, “the most important reason (for reading China news) is that I see my future in China. That makes me more interested in things about the country.”

As presented above, the two distinct yet intertwined forces – emotional needs and practical needs – account for these migrant netizens' desire for China news.

Emotionally, migrants are eager to know what is happening in their homeland. The

internet fulfils the migrant netizens' needs for homeland information by offering easy and timely access to online news at a low cost. Practically, migrant netizens feel the needs to know about China because of their transnational activities and outlook. For some, especially young migrants, their future options are open in terms of physical location. Once they have the strategic plan to return migrate to China, the Chinese-language cyberspace becomes a major source to get them better prepared. For others who need to maintain transnational business ties, China news is seen as a prerequisite for their business success.

The internet thus allows these trans-migrants to "make decisions and act across borders in real time" (Nedelcu 2012, 1340). On the internet, emotional and practical transnational ties with the homeland are maintained or re-established. Most importantly, through online China news, the migrant netizens are able to include themselves as members of a "imagined community" (Anderson 2006a), in this case, an imagined, de-territorialised, online version of China, a Cyber China.

Yin (M 24 IS) expressed, "I would read news of events that are closely related to my life." Interestingly, however, by "events that are closely related to my life" he meant events in China – as he later explained – real estate price, China's economic growth, its policy change, entertainment news, and so on. How can he live in New Zealand while at the same time feels that events in China are closely related to his life?

But Yin is definitely not the only one who shared this idea. Jing (F 38 WK) claimed, "I pay attention to social news, things happening around me, those about people's livelihood... mostly China news..." Like Yin's description of news closely related to

his life, Jing's notion of "things happening around me" refers to events that would happen around her if she were still staying in China.

By using such phrases like "events closely related to my life" and "things happening around me", Jing and Yin unwittingly positioned themselves in an imagined China while physically residing in New Zealand. For these migrant netizens, the internet not only brings the homeland news to them, but the homeland itself seems extended beyond its physical borders in cyberspace to include them.

The conception of Cyber China among migrant netizens is even more manifest in the following example. The previously mentioned young 1.5 generation migrant Carl commented, "I usually read both international news and national news (*guonei xinwen*). Mostly current affairs, sometimes I'd read entertainment news." The core concept here is "national news", by which Carl meant China news. Actually, during the interviews several respondents used the term "national news" when referring to China news. This is an interesting echoing of early Chinese-language press in New Zealand, in which "national news" section covered reporting about China instead of events in the host country (Ip 2006).

It is not clear at this stage whether these migrant netizens are similar to those "old settlers" in the early 1900s who never felt belong to the host country. However, one thing is certain – a collective imagination of China and of being included in this imagined China is present among these migrant netizens. The internet provides a space for such an imagination; internet use, especially the uninterrupted consumption of China news, is a factor contributing to such an imagination; and the internet

provides a space for the migrant netizens to experience and reinforce that imagination through a virtual life lived in Cyber China.

#### *In-group Communication and Socialisation*

As an advanced technology of communications, the internet has been able to offer a transnational space for migrant to socialise and to “living together” with their Chinese friends and families through Instant Messaging (IM) tools and Social Networking Services (SNS).

With regard to SNS, a majority of the participants in this research use both international-based (Facebook, Twitter) and China-based (RenRen, QZone, Weibo) platforms. Except six people, all other participants had Facebook account. Most of those who did not use Facebook were the ones who have limited English language skills. However, these migrant netizens did not use Facebook very often, and some had even rarely used it after registering on this internationally popular and renowned SNS platform. What is more, only three interviewees had a comparatively large proportion of non-Chinese Facebook friends – around 50%, the others’ had overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese friends on Facebook.

In contrast, China-based SNS platforms were more popular among these migrant netizens. More than half of the participants used them every day, and the others frequently, to socialise with either their old friends in China or with new friends they made in New Zealand. It is important to point out that as the Chinese substitute of the international platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which are blocked in China, these China-based platforms see China and Chinese as their main target market. As



such, users on these platforms are overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, ethnic Chinese. This has helped to create a space for in-group socialisation.

Different from SNS, international IM platforms such as MSN and Skype are not banned in China. Many migrant netizens make use of these international platforms as well as the ones based in China. However, the participants still show a preference for China-based IM services such as QQ. Among the 29 interviewees, 25 had at least one QQ account at the time of the interview. Similar to the use of SNS, their friends on these IM platforms are overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese – in China and in diaspora around the world including New Zealand.

Some of the participants used Sina Weibo on a daily basis to socialise with their friends and to get instant update not only on what their friends are doing but also on what is happening in China. Frances (F 27 PR) expressed that she used Sina Weibo every day and she followed some Chinese celebrities and her “real life” friends – all Chinese; she also stated that Weibo had now become her major source of news. Yang (M 31 PR) had only recently started to use Weibo at the time of the interview, and all his contacts on it were Chinese. He considered it a very useful tool, “Weibo disseminates information very fast. It allows you to express your ideas and read about others’ thoughts promptly. I want to use it to spread my (political) ideas, which I think is more liberal (than many Chinese). Chinese (in China) is my target audience.” This type of in-group socialisation can make migrant netizens feel constantly connected to their previous homeland and friends in China, creating a sense of solidarity and intimacy. As Ian (M 26 PR) said, every time he received caring words from his friends in the replies to his Weibo postings, he felt “warm and comfortable”. Although physically departed from China, these migrant netizens can still feel a strong

attachment to an “imagined community” enabled by the China-based SNS platforms, creating and maintaining transnational social networks that cut across geographic boundaries.

If SNS platforms provide migrant netizens with a transnational space for an imagined Cyber China, then the use of IM by these migrant netizens presents a new way of living together with their co-ethnics in this Cyber China.

Astonishingly, 16 of the interviewees would keep their QQ online whenever they use the internet. Yin (M 24 IS) said QQ had become his life habit. “When you live here (in New Zealand), QQ becomes a necessary tool. It doesn’t matter if you actually use it (to chat); you will always keep it online... even when I am doing my assignment...” Similar to Yin, Min (M 21 IS) used QQ to video chat with his parents in China every weekend; he would also keep QQ online at all times because he wanted to be available to his friends back in China. “Just in case if they want to talk to me.”

For many, QQ is not only a necessary tool to communicate with friends and family, it has also become an emotional support that can provide a “remote intimacy” to fight against isolation and boredom that many new migrants face. Susan’s QQ friends are all Chinese, including her previous classmates and colleagues in China as well as new friends made in New Zealand. She said that keeping QQ online had become a “psychological addiction”. “Keeping QQ online... when I feel lonely it’s like there is someone sitting over there, willing to chat with you.” Another interviewee (Kate F 24 PR) said, “(if I don’t open QQ) I’d feel very uneasy. Like...there’s something missing. Most likely because I can feel the intimacy (on QQ). My friends and family are all there after all. Even if we don’t chat, I still feel very close (to them).”

For migrant netizens like Susan and Kate – actually, there are more than just a few participants like them, QQ is no longer merely a tool for communication; it has been assigned the spatiality, it is seen as a space where friends and family are “there”. By saying “my friends and family are all there” and “someone sitting there”, the interviewees revealed their feelings shared among many netizens that QQ is a space that they can meet up with their friends and families in China, a space that can offer them the closeness and intimacy they long for. Most importantly, psychologically, they – Susan, Kate and their friends – are no longer living in China and New Zealand separately, but together in the imagined Cyber China.

Life in Cyber China is no less real than the physical one experienced by these migrant netizens. It has allowed them to lead parallel lives – one physically in New Zealand, and the other imagined in Cyber China. As one of the participants articulated during the interviews,

“(Here in New Zealand) I live with Chinese; I speak only Chinese; I go to Chinese supermarkets; I eat Chinese food. Plus, I visit Chinese websites every day; I watch Chinese TV dramas on these websites...everything is Chinese. I sometimes ask myself, ‘where am I?’ I feel like I’m still living in China, apart from when I’m driving on the road – on the left side.” (Peng M 37 WK)

As presented above, reading China news, socialising with Chinese on China-based SNS platforms, and using IM applications to communicate with Chinese friends and family, all point to an online life led by these migrant netizens in Cyber China. Given the daunting difficulties of grasping the Chinese language and culture for non-Chinese,

and the Chinese audiences targeted by the Chinese online service providers, this Cyber China can be seen as a preventing, even a ring-fenced, space for ethnic Chinese. What is more, it is imagined by these migrant netizens as a de-territorialised space where national boundaries are blurred so that the overseas Chinese can feel included.

#### **6.4 Summary**

As established in this chapter, the Chinese-language cyberspace is a crucial part of the social fields encompassing both local and transnational networks. Within this transnational social field, the migrants resort to the local fields for practical information, while simultaneously connecting to the transnational ones for more intimate interactions with the homeland. Based on the migrant netizens' subjective reflections, this chapter demonstrates that the engagement in the host society through the Chinese-language cyberspace is rather superficial. In their interaction with the host society social fields, the migrant netizens present more of "ways of being" – the actual social relations and practices that migrants engage in rather than the associated identities (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Instead of making use of the ethnic internet as a tool for the genuine, in-depth cultural integration, migrant netizens tend to use it superficially for practical information catering for their immediate needs to fulfil mundane activities. The intention of these migrants is pragmatic – functioning well in the host society. In this sense, the internet in the host country does facilitate their daily practices, but it also sets barriers for the migrant netizens to further engage in the local society.

While it is common that new migrants encounter an inevitable loss of social networks and social connections (Tsai 2006), the Chinese-language cyberspace is used by the socially disembedded as a "safe haven" where migrant netizens can feel

comparatively free from practical everyday distress and rediscover their social networks with their ethnic counterparts in the home and/or the host countries.

As their sociocultural comfort zone, the Chinese-language cyberspace provides the migrant netizens with the possibility of leading a life parallel to their physical life. By indulging themselves with China news, and maintaining their ties with their Chinese peers transnationally on SNS and IM platforms – all in their native language, migrant netizens create a collectively imagined community (Anderson 2006a) – a Cyber China, which they feel included and belong to. Cyber China opens up new space for migrant netizens to live together with their friends and families in China, and new venues for “virtual intimacies” (Wilding 2006).

Transcending geographic borders, this imagined Cyber China is a de-territorialised, transnational, and linguistically ring-fenced space where China news is circulated, experiences of Chinese both within and outside China shared. Parallel lives are made possible. Such parallel lives have great implications on the identity construction of these Chinese migrant netizens. On the one hand it allows ultimate simultaneity: virtual presence in Cyber China is simply a click away on the computer and at any time of their choice; on the other hand, it obviously caused ambiguity and anxiety as manifested by the interviewee’s question “where am I?”

When migrant netizens are physically residing in the host country, and are psychologically and emotionally living in the imagined realm of Cyber China, where do they feel that they belong and attached to? In the next chapter, I will explore the identity construction of the Chinese migrant netizens by investigating online homeland media and ethnic media which are two integral part of the Chinese-language cyberspace.

## **Chapter Seven: Online Homeland and Ethnic Media: Migrant Identity in Cyberspace**

In the previous chapter, the internet has been identified as a crucial component of the transnational social fields through which the migrant netizens maintain various ties with the host and the home countries. Cyberspace facilitates migrant adaptation by providing practical information, but at the same time it encourages the migrants to stay within an ethnic comfort zone and sets barriers, albeit unintentionally, for their integration in the host society. Using the Chinese-language cyberspace is found to be part of the migrant netizens' routine daily life, creating an imagined Cyber China, and allowing them to lead parallel lives – one in cyberspace and the other in the physical world. The twin forces of the Chinese-language cyberspace and the migrants' lived experience in the host society contribute to the continuous tension in migrant identity negotiation. In this chapter, I discuss the role that the Chinese-language cyberspace plays in the identity construction of the migrant netizens, taking into consideration their lived experience in the host country. By investigating the two integral components of the Chinese-language cyberspace – online homeland and ethnic media, I elucidate the contesting forces in the migrant identity construction.

As discussed in Chapter Two, online homeland media as the mainstream media in China treat their audience as a homogenous group without clear differentiation between Chinese in China and Chinese overseas. In section one I explore how the migrant identity construction is influenced by the mainstream identity narratives, the authentic Chinese culture, and the controlled political discourses of online homeland media. Section two focuses on online ethnic media. I elucidate how online ethnic

media help to retain Chinese identity and simultaneously reconstruct the meaning of being Chinese for the migrant netizens. By revealing the ongoing tension between “Chineseness” and “Kiwiness” manifested online, I explain how the Chinese-language cyberspace and the lived experience as migrants help the overseas Chinese to construct an “authentic yet privileged” Chinese identity.

### **7.1 Online Homeland Media: Being “Authentic Chinese”**

This section discusses an emergent but a largely neglected phenomenon by academics – the frequent use of online homeland media by migrant netizens. Based on data derived from online text and the interviewees’ reflection on their media use, the interpretation in this section aims at shedding some new light on the understanding of the relationship between media and the identity formation of the Chinese migrants in New Zealand. I argue that migrant netizens’ frequent use of online homeland media immerses them in the homeland mainstream media narratives. A strong “genuine” Chinese element is fostered in the identity construction of these migrant netizens through three aspects of online homeland media – the undifferentiated Chinese identity narratives, the “original Chinese” culture reservoir, and the uniform political discourses (details see Chapter Two).

Among the 29 interviewees in this research, 26 admitted that they would frequent China-based websites and online services, most of which are mainstream portal web services such as Sina.com, QQ.com, Sohu.com, and 163.com. The three outliers were 51-year old Helen and Wayne and Charles. For Wayne and Charles, young migrants who both came to New Zealand around the age of ten, the lack of Chinese language reading skills was the claimed reason for not frequenting China-based websites, and Chinese-language websites in general. Helen, though not accessing China-based

websites very often, admitted that she would visit the Wenxuecity.com – the U.S. based Chinese media – every day.

### **7.1.1 Mainstream Identity Narratives: Feeling Included**

Homeland media can immerse migrant netizens into their mainstream discourses and give migrants a sense of being an integral part of the Chinese nation. The homeland media in China that migrant netizens frequently access through the internet are mostly portal websites such as Sina.com, Sohu.com, QQ.com, 163.com (NetEase),<sup>39</sup> and can be best described as mainstream media in China. As such, these online media are inherently different from ethnic media in various host countries because they do not differentiate their audiences particularly as Chinese in China or Chinese migrants overseas. This characteristic can be best exemplified in the visions and mission statements of these portal websites. For instance, Sohu describes itself as:

“China’s premier online brand and indispensable to the daily life of millions of Chinese, providing a network of web properties and community based/web 2.0 products which offer the vast Sohu user community a broad array of choices regarding information, entertainment and communication.”<sup>40</sup>

163.com (NetEase) claims,

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<sup>39</sup> Sina.com, apart from its main website in mainland China (sina.com.cn), has three localised websites in Hong Kong (sina.com.hk), Taiwan (sina.com.tw), and North America (home.sina.com) respectively. The participants in this research, when talking about Sina, refer to the website based in mainland China rather than the other three location specific Sina websites.

<sup>40</sup> See <http://corp.sohu.com/companyprofile/>.



“As the pioneer of China’s portal websites, NetEase dedicates itself to the sustainable development of e-commerce and the IT industry. Meanwhile, we endeavour to advance the digital life experience for Chinese nationals (*Zhongguo renmin*). ..”<sup>41</sup>

On QQ.com’s (Tencent) “about us” page, it reads “Vision – To be the most respected Internet company; Mission – To enhance people’s quality of life through Internet services.”<sup>42</sup>

As shown clearly in the above examples, China-based mainstream websites assume that China is their target market and their audiences are thus treated as a homogeneous “Chinese people”. Accessing these mainstream outlets instils users with a natural sense of belonging to the homogeneous and undifferentiated Chinese people; it infers strong in-group identification among all Chinese users with no differentiation between homeland nationals and diasporic transnationals. In these homeland media, there is an assumption of loyalty to China, unifying all Chinese and treating them as the “sons of the Yellow Emperor”, the mythical ancestor of all Chinese.

The influence of the identity narratives in these mainstream homeland media on migrants can be exemplified by the terms that migrant netizens use to describe non-Chinese people. Many Chinese migrants pick up the labels used in homeland media discourses, drawing a clear line between the Chinese “us” and foreign “them”.

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<sup>41</sup> See <http://gb.corp.163.com/gb/about/overview.html>. Translation notes: the difference between people of China (*zhongguo ren*) and Chinese nationals (*zhongguo renmin*) is that *Zhongguo renmin* is more state/nation oriented while *zhongguo ren* is more at the individual level.

<sup>42</sup> See <http://www.tencent.com/en-us/index.shtml>.

Frances had acquired her New Zealand permanent residency for two years at the time she was interviewed. While accessing China-based online services almost exclusively, she found herself using the labels that frequently appear in the online homeland media:

“I want to know what is happening in China; ... most of my friends here in New Zealand are Chinese. We talk about China when we hang out; we wouldn't talk about foreign (*laowai*) news.” (Frances F 27 PR)

As migrants from a foreign country to New Zealand, many migrant netizens like Frances still use the word *laowai* (foreigners) or *waiguo ren* (foreign people), which are the frequently-used terms in the media in China, to describe non-Chinese in the host country, particularly New Zealanders of European descent. This “locals seen as foreigners” comment reveals a paradox that many migrant netizens who frequent homeland media are constantly facing – their reinforced sense of belonging to China from the inclusive narratives in the homeland media and their status as migrants residing physically in the host country. On the one hand, the homeland media narratives provide migrants with a natural, even comfortable way of sticking to their pre-migration identity of being only Chinese. It is natural because the narratives contain no delineation of overseas Chinese and Chinese in China – every user is treated as equal, as simply Chinese. It is comfortable because these media do not require a conscious change or adjustment in the identity of migrant netizens to be just another Chinese user. The naturalness and comfort brought about by frequenting homeland media, as far as the identity of migrant netizens is concerned, play an important role in reinforcing the Chinese element in migrant identity construction. On the other hand, the same media narratives cause the territorial disorientation of migrant netizens, resulting in their identity struggle. The identity struggle comes from

the tension between the psychological feeling of being in China acquired from mainstream homeland media and the consciousness of being members of a visible minority community engendered by their physical presence in New Zealand.

As presented above, the online homeland media do not differentiate China-Chinese and Chinese migrants outside the state borders. In doing so, they create identity narratives which Chinese users, dispersed around the world, find themselves included in. For many migrant netizens who frequent China-based online services, the physical boundaries between the homeland and the host country are significantly weakened. A strong sense of belonging to China is revealed. Kate (F 24 PR), who migrated to New Zealand in 2003 when she was only 15 years old, explained how her choice of visiting China-based websites was linked to her sense of belonging.

“(Accessing Chinese-language content on the China-based websites) gives me a sense of belonging. For example, I don’t feel any [cultural] gap (*gehe*) between me and my 16-year-old cousin from China who visited New Zealand this year. They were surprised that I knew all the popular phrases used among Chinese netizens. I have all the characteristics that Chinese young netizens have. I’m very Chinese in this aspect. We can discuss popular topics in China with them... and I watch the same Chinese entertainment shows online, just like them.”

This quote shows clearly that homeland media have a great influence on the identity and the sense of belonging of migrant netizens who frequently access China-based online media. The homeland online media is able to imbue migrant netizens with characteristics of netizens in China. Affinity with Chinese in China is thus established.

In fact, not only the affinity with netizens in China is instilled, but also the affiliation with the homeland is maintained and reinforced through the daily consumption of the homeland media. Peng, who held a work visa and had been in New Zealand for more than three years, commented on his use of China-based online services:

“I feel not that far away from China now (when using the China-based online services). As soon as I get onto these websites, I feel the intimacy (with China). It feels like...though I’m not physically in China, I can still access things in the country. I’m not cut off from China.” (Peng M 37 WK)

In both of the above examples, the China-based homeland media, enabled by the internet, have transcended the geographical boundaries in between the home and the host countries. They act as a potent factor in building and maintaining the affinity and affiliation with the people of China and the home country itself among migrant netizens.

### **7.1.2 Culture Reservoir: Authentic Chinese**

The second influence that homeland media exerts on diasporic netizens is its power to reinforce the preconsciousness of being Chinese among these migrants by providing an original, authentic culture reservoir. Preconsciousness is memory and/or feelings that are not in a person’s immediate awareness, but is “only latent, and thus easily becomes conscious” (Freud 1933).

The identity of being Chinese fits well into the definition of preconsciousness. Before migrating to another country, people in China rarely think about their identity of being Chinese; their physical location of being in China makes them take the identity for

granted because almost everyone around them is Chinese. Comments from the interviewees in this research support this argument of taking their Chinese identity for granted. When asked what “being Chinese” means to her, Jing (F 38 WK) responded, “I didn’t even think about it when I was back in China. Everyone around me is Chinese. I was just another person [instead of another Chinese person].” For people who live in China and even for those very recent Chinese migrants in the host country, being Chinese is part of their preconsciousness that they are rarely aware of.

However, as a state of mind, preconsciousness can be brought into consciousness either through internal efforts by the subject him/herself, and/or through repetitive external stimuli. All the respondents in this research, at some stage during the interviews, used terms such as “ethnic minority” and “Chinese people (*huaren*)” that clearly reveal their consciousness of being Chinese as a minority group in the host society. This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter when I address the influence of online ethnic media.

While host society experience may remind migrants of their minority and/or migrant status, frequenting homeland media can imbue migrant netizens with a preconscious feeling of being Chinese through language, common myths and history, sometimes even aesthetic and in-jokes which are only comprehensible to Chinese. Kate’s comment about her preference of viewing homeland media websites was “Chinese websites are far better designed and more beautiful than New Zealand ones. Pākehā websites don’t appeal to me. Chinese websites are simply more interesting, more beautiful and more fun.”

For migrants like Kate, from the aesthetics point of view, Chinese websites are more

beautiful (though my colleagues who are Westerners often point out that Chinese website design in general is very “busy and complicated” instead of “beautiful”). Kate’s perception of beauty reflects her cultural preference and her Chinese identity. Kate also considered Chinese websites more “interesting and fun”. Many who have the experience of migrating to a different culture, or learning a second language find the jokes in that culture or language difficult to understand, especially when one has not acquired enough knowledge about that culture such as history, myths, political system, and sometimes even gossips about local celebrities. Migrant netizens find homeland media content more interesting and fun because the content is within their cultural repertoire. Therefore, they have familiarity with the cultural context of the media content, which affect the capacity of understanding, efficiency, and satisfaction acquired. What is of great importance here is that frequenting homeland websites enables migrant netizens to retain such cultural familiarity without any disjunction caused by the physical departure from the homeland. In this sense, the homeland media are able to reinforce the preconsciousness of being Chinese among migrant netizens who frequently access homeland websites.

### **7.1.3 Mainstream Political Discourse and Agenda: Thinking Alike**

As shown in their comments, the interviewees are familiar and up-to-date with the current affairs in and about China. All the interviewees were able to give examples of the major events that appeared in China’s mainstream media at the time of the interview, many of which were covered only briefly in the host country media, if at all. For instance, several of them brought up the topic of the high-speed rail crash in Zhejiang Province, China in July 2011, which was not covered in great detail in New Zealand mainstream media. Some of the interviewees followed the news on homeland media – portal website and microblogs. What is more, the migrant netizens were

caught in the agenda set by these homeland media, as shown in their remarks about the crash.

Yang (M 31 PR) expressed his anger towards those who were responsible for the accident and his sympathy towards Chinese people. “I left some comments online (in reply to the reporting on the high-speed train crash). First, (to express) my anger; second, to hold the government accountable, and third, (to show) my sympathy towards Chinese people.” Another participant, Samantha (F 40 NZ) commented, “I think (the development of China) is too fast. It should be slower, steadier, and that’s the better advancement. (If the development is) too fast, many things can go wrong.”

Jessica was 52 years old and a New Zealand citizen for more than ten years. She read news on Sina and Sohu every night. Her comment was milder and more in-line with the official discourse in China’s mainstream media.

“It’s maybe a blessing in disguise. (China’s) development is too fast, and other systems are yet to catch up and safeguard such a fast development. Now there’s this incident, and (the supervision) becomes stricter. It’s much better now. Though many people died in this incident, it is a good thing (in this sense)... China is obviously striding forward, step by step. The speed of improvement is so fast. The government is now starting to care about the people. In various aspects, the government tries to make improvement...in some primary schools in China, many things are free, from school uniform to stationary... there are subsidies for the elderly and health insurance for the rural people. When I was back in China in hospital, everyone has insurance.

I was the only one who paid cash.”

The three comments above – and many others from the interviewees – are very similar to the online discourses in the homeland mainstream media – expressing anger towards such an avoidable incident, holding the government accountable, suggesting a slower and steady development, and sometimes seeing the incident as a “blessing in disguise” in the course of China’s fast development.

What is important is that, like their counterparts in China, these migrant netizens seldom jump out of the news frame in the heavily censored homeland media and discuss the subject matter from another point of view. For instance, there was no questioning of the corruption and lack of supervision caused by the single-party political system, and no challenging of the CCP’s ruling – all these are strictly censored in China’s media. The comments also indicate the interviewees’ concern over the homeland, be it critical remarks or optimistic predictions.

So far, I have established that frequenting mainstream online homeland media helps to retain the identity of being Chinese among migrant netizens by immersing them into the mainstream discourses and identity narratives, hence, fostering a sense of affinity with Chinese netizens in China as well as the affiliation with the home country. The online homeland media are also powerful in reinforcing the preconsciousness of being Chinese by providing an “authentic Chinese” cultural reservoir, immersing migrant netizens in the familiar and comfortable cultural context. Last but not the least, frequenting the homeland media makes migrant netizens caught in the political discourses of China’s mainstream. National pride is manifested, criticism sparked, concerns articulated. The issues in discussion seldom escape the



boundaries set by the mainstream homeland media which are under the government's strict control.

#### **7.1.4 Authentic yet Privileged**

Under the influence of homeland media, the migrant netizens continue to consider themselves as being authentic Chinese. However, many migrant netizens also see themselves as privileged compared to their peers in China. The lived experience as migrants in a democratic country and the unblocked access to various sources of information make the migrants feel that their worldview is broadened and their experience enriched. As such, the migrant netizens perceive themselves to be in a better position to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of China and Chinese, compared to their peers who do not have overseas experience.

One interviewee, Yang (M 31 PR), pointed out that living in New Zealand gave him the opportunity to access liberal thoughts not available in China through the internet, which had reshaped his worldview. He said, "The internet is revolutionary. It provides various channels to acquire different information... morals, values, and worldviews that you never saw back in China. It makes people better informed, more rational."

The reshaped worldviews are used by the migrants to re-evaluate the homeland and themselves. Peng (M 37 WK) commented,

“... feel that there are more and more negative things in China, ... because of the development of the internet, and now I can read about them from different sources, ... things that I didn't know back in China, now I have the access to the information .... Compare to their country (New Zealand), I now feel China and Chinese have a lot of problems

and issues which need to be solved and improved.”

Another participant, Jacob (M 42 PR), gave a more detailed comment by comparing his experience pre- and post-migration.

“When I was in China, living a dull life, I never thought about these things. Now I’m overseas, in a capitalist country... Looking back at our socialist country, I’d compare the two countries, living environment, social welfare, public infrastructure, relations between people. I make a lot of comparisons. Would I have the same living standard if I was I China now? ... New Zealand...it’s a capitalist country. Everything is easily solved here, but in China, you need to rely on personal relationships (*guanxi*) and even bribe to get things done. As far as this is concerned, New Zealand a much more livable country... but I’m not saying China is not livable at all...”

Given the fact that those who have overseas experience, especially in Western countries, are usually looked up upon in China by the general population, for many migrant netizens, having overseas experience itself gives them a sense of being privileged. Peng (M 37 WK) indicated that his sense of being Chinese has changed slightly – towards a privileged status. “Now when I go back to China, I am a ‘sea turtle’ (*haigui*) too!”

The sense of being a privileged Chinese is revealed in the term “*huaigui*”, which translates as “returnees from overseas” with its homophone meaning “sea turtles”. Such an ornate description is widely used in homeland media, which endows this particular group of people with a sense of being privileged.

This sense of being privileged Chinese is manifest in Sally's comment. As a returnee migrant in her late 20s, Sally was not very satisfied with her current career status in China. She said, "Now, even for us 'sea turtles', life has become more difficult because of the intense competition (in China)." The quote clearly shows that Sally's overseas experience immediately distinguishes her from those who have never left China. More importantly, like many returnees, Sally thought that because of her status of being a "sea turtle", she deserves better opportunities and higher status than her peers.

What is more, some participants believed that as a particular privileged group, overseas Chinese deserve more acknowledgement because they are an invaluable and indispensable asset to the development of China. Debby (F 45 NZ) said during the interview, "China needs to be more democratic, more civilised. It needs reform and improvement politically...there is a large gap between China and many countries... The support from us overseas Chinese is crucial to the development of China."

Due to their frequent use of online homeland media, the migrant netizens are able to retain their Chinese identity. The mainstream identity narratives, the authentic culture, and the uniform political discourses in online homeland media contribute to the perception of being authentic Chinese among the migrants. Simultaneously, however, their lived experience in New Zealand fosters a sense of belonging to a privileged overseas Chinese group. Therefore, an "authentic yet privileged" Chinese identity is in the making among the migrant netizens.

## **7.2 Online Ethnic Media: Being "Different Chinese"**

While the use of online homeland media and the overseas experience helps to

construct an “authentic yet privileged” Chinese identity, online ethnic media make the Chinese-language cyberspace a site for identity contestation. In this section, I examine how online ethnic media influence the migrant identity construction by constantly reminding the netizens of their migrant and ethnic minority status. The contending manifestations of Chineseness and Kiwiness in online ethnic media further complicate the identity negotiation, making the sense of being Chinese changed significantly for the migrant netizens.

### **7.2.1 Sense of Belonging to New Zealand**

Online ethnic media are found to be a space for migrant netizens to articulate the sense of belonging to the host society. These Chinese-language media in New Zealand usually feature local news prominently on their homepage.<sup>43</sup> Apart from a large amount of news items related to local Chinese community, news about local politics and culture takes a significant proportion. They also provide various forums serving as public space for cultural discussion and/or political deliberation among migrant netizens. During their participation in online ethnic media, some migrant netizens manifest their sense of belonging to the host country and occasionally their fledging Kiwi identity.

The 2011 Rugby World Cup held in New Zealand sparked a surge of manifestations of such belongingness and national pride among some Chinese migrants. Widely

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<sup>43</sup> Sometimes the section is called New Zealand and Australian News, covering news reports from both countries. Given the high frequency of people movement in between the two countries, this phenomenon can be seen as answering the needs of highly mobile, trans-Tasman population. Some portals, such as Skykiwi, have their sister sites in Australia.

accepted as ingrained in the New Zealand's national culture,<sup>44</sup> the game is not quite “the cup of tea” for many new Chinese migrants. However, during the 2011 Rugby World Cup, Skykiwi reported the games prominently, attracting many readers as well as discussions among Chinese migrant netizens who were concerned over the performance of the All Blacks, the New Zealand's national team.

One comment to the news item before the grand final between New Zealand and France read, “We will win”. The news item reporting the celebration of the All Blacks' final victory attracted an unusual 12,000 pageviews. Some other comments on the news report about the victory of the New Zealand's national team read, “It was a close game. Fortunately we won. The troubled New Zealand finally gave us a reason to be happy towards the end of the year.”<sup>45</sup> “Salute to the heroes of New Zealand!”

The comments reveal some migrant netizens' feeling of being part of the host society. Seeing the All Blacks as representing New Zealand, some migrant netizens automatically include themselves in the nation by using the word “we” in their comments, claiming some honour as being a member of the nation. Their acclamation and salute to the national icon symbolically serves as an articulation of their sense of belonging to New Zealand.

What is more to the cultural identification with the host land, political participation is also invited and manifested in online ethnic media, suggesting that a sense of

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<sup>44</sup> Rugby is commonly considered as the national sport of New Zealand. According to Tourism New Zealand, “The sport of rugby is embedded in the hearts and minds of Kiwis and, for many, watching games is akin to religious observance – at the very least, most New Zealanders would agree it is an integral part of the culture”. See <http://www.newzealand.com/travel/media/topic-index/recreation-&-sport/rugby.cfm>.

<sup>45</sup> Troubled New Zealand most likely refers to the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, and the slow economic recovering in the country.

belonging to New Zealand is in the making among some migrant netizens. During the 2011 election, a news report on Skykiwi about the overwhelming support of the National Party among Aucklanders sparked a heated discussion among Chinese migrant netizens. Compared to the usually low number of news comments on the website, this item attracted 76 comments within 48 hours. The number itself is a testimony of the concern about the host country expressed by the Chinese migrant netizens. Some of the posts read,

“Has *guojia* become wealthier and stronger in the past three years? Apart from the poll, nothing proves the successful governing by the National Party.”

“*Guojia* is already in debt. If the Labour Party wins, it will once again support those lazy people. How can the country have any hope then? Do we want to be the next Iceland or Greece?”

“Comrades, it’s time for the life or death of *guojia*. Wake up and support the Labour Party...”

Notice the use of the Chinese phonetic transcription “*guojia*” in the above examples which I intentionally choose not to translate into English. There are two reasons of using the Chinese phonetic transcription here. Firstly, *guojia* in Chinese can refer to “country”, “nation”, or “state”, depending on different context in which the term is used. More specifically, the term is made up of two Chinese characters “*guo*” – meaning “country”, “nation”, or “state”, and “*jia*” – meaning “home” or “family”. As such, the single character “*guo*” can be used when referring to countries. However, *guo* and *jia*, when put together, seems to carry the connotation that a country is also a

homeland where family is found. In the above three examples, the term can refer to either “country” or “state” and is open to interpretation.

The second and more important reason is that to make the sentence grammatically correct, a translation of the term “*guojia*” into English inevitably involves the use of a determiner (i.e. the, this, that – the country, the nation, or the state), which the original Chinese text does not have. I argue that it is exactly the missing of such determiners that reveals the migrant netizens’ incipient attachment to New Zealand. In Chinese language, the use of *guojia* without any determiner usually indicates that the speaker takes it for granted that it is his or her country. Similar usage can be found in English as well, such as “Mum told us not to leave” – suggesting “my” or “our” mother. It is in this sense that the above comments reveal these migrant netizens’ attachment and belonging to New Zealand. By using the term “*guojia*”, which infers a “taking-for-granted” belonging, the commenters build up a strong tie between them and the host country. Furthermore, such comments can also ripple outwards and create a milieu in which participants can feel like talking about “our” country’s feature.

This “being part of *guojia*” sentiment is further exposed in a more articulate manner when the second commenter also used “we” to refer to New Zealand, and warned against the risk of New Zealand following Iceland and Greece’s troubled economic path.

Online ethnic media, as presented in the previous several pages, have the great potential of disseminating local cultural and political information among migrants. Given their participatory nature – seeking help in online forums, facilitating discussions and articulations about host country culture and politics, these online

ethnic media can foster a sense of belonging and attachment to the host country.

By saying so, I am not proposing that online ethnic media is the only or the biggest factor that leads to such identification with the host country. Nonetheless, it provides an indispensable, open, and safe space where the sense of belonging, attachment, affiliation to the home country can be collectively articulated, and hence an inclusive nation can be imagined.

The “safe space” concept is essential to the collective imagination. In a study on Indian migrants, Mitra (2006) proposes that the internet has been able to provide a safe place for migrant groups to practice their culture and collective actions without experiencing disruptions and discrimination from the mainstream host society. Ip (2011b), in her investigation of Chinese-language diasporic websites, further points out that the diasporic websites provide “a virtual space for Chinese groups to interact in a familiar cultural milieu beyond the gaze of the New Zealand mainstream society, even if the gaze might be more inquisitive and curious rather than downright disapproving or discriminatory.”

Following this line of argument, I argue that online ethnic media not only provide a “safe place” for the practice of ethnic culture, but the thesis can also be applied to the collective imagination of the identification with the host country among some migrant netizens. Empirical evidence has shown that, in face-to-face communication, the claim of being Kiwi by some Chinese migrants in front of white European New Zealanders can easily incur a suspicious reaction,<sup>46</sup> suggesting that such identification is not totally approved by the mainstream public. In contrast, online ethnic media are

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<sup>46</sup> See examples from the Personal Narrative section in (Ip 2011).



able to provide a “safe place” where such identity claims are rarely challenged by the mainstream, given the ring-fenced nature of the Chinese-language websites (details see Chapter Six). Therefore, it is comparatively “safer” for migrant netizens to articulate their identity and sense of belonging to the host country in the “protected” Chinese-language cyberspace.

Having said that, I also contend that the claims of affiliation, belonging and identification with the host country remain constantly contested, challenged, negotiated, and sometimes neutralised by other elements presented in online ethnic media. However, the challenges are usually not from external factors of the mainstream public, but from the internal “Chinese factors”. The next section will focus on the discussion of how online ethnic media provide spaces for contesting Chinese identity which not only helps to re-construct Chineseness, but also curb the Kiwiness of some migrant netizens.

### **7.2.2 “Being Chinese” Redefined**

In online ethnic media, different dimensions (being Chinese, Kiwi, cosmopolitan, etc.) of migrant identity are at the same time fostered, presented, and manifested. These dimensions usually do not co-exist in a peaceful, mutually exclusive and independent manner. Most of the time, they interweave, contest, and negotiate with each other. The previous section has discussed the potential of online ethnic media to cultivate a sense of belonging to New Zealand. The following pages will present other identity construction factors at play in the Chinese ethnic Cyberspace. These factors have been able to reconstruct the sense of being Chinese among migrant netizens.

The word “reconstruct” here does not only refer to its most accepted meaning – to

build or form something again after it has been damaged or destroyed. It also carries the meaning of to cause to adopt new attitude or outlook. The reconstruction of being Chinese among migrant netizens, as found in this research, has both “restoring the old” and “adopting the new” aspects – that is being Chinese in the diaspora is categorically different from being Chinese in the homeland. Although some original Chinese elements can be retained or re-instilled in the identity construction of migrants, new factors are unavoidable.

#### *Retaining and reinforcing Chinese elements*

The Chinese elements in the migrant netizens’ identity is retained and reinforced largely through three aspects – featuring and promoting Chinese cultural festivals, holidays and events, offering a large proportion of homeland news, and enabling connections with the homeland through China-based SNS services.

Almost all the cultural festivals are reported in the news on Skykiwi, ranging from the most important Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) to minor ones such as the mainland Chinese creation of the Chinese Valentine’s Day. News reports on major festivals usually cover how the local Chinese as well as the people in China organise celebration events. One of the most prominently featured events is the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> National Day of China.

In 2009, China celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> National Day. It was one of the largest celebrations that China had seen since it was founded in 1949, marking a decade’s rising of China as a new world power. During the weeks before and after October 1<sup>st</sup>, Skykiwi put up a new homepage background design. The background was in red, representing the colour of China; it also features the national flag of China and other iconic images

such the Great Wall and the Tian'anmen Gate. On the National Day, Skykiwi co-operated with PPlive<sup>47</sup> and provided a 24-hour live streaming of the celebration in China, including the military parade.<sup>48</sup>

Skykiwi also opened a special temporary online forum entitled “the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of New China”. The forum attracted tens of thousands of pageviews with 231 discussion threads and 1829 comments. Even a brief scan of the thread titles in the forum can reveal the overwhelming national pride and affiliation of migrant netizens towards China.

“Happy birthday, my country, my mother.”

“Bless the motherland.”

“Long life China. May the motherland be wealthy and strong.”

“Pride [*sic*] to be Chinese.” (original in English)

“I'm proud because I'm Chinese.”

Some migrant netizens took a step further to articulate their patriotism, and brought it into action.

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<sup>47</sup> PPlive is one of the biggest online TV and Film websites which offers a variety of live streaming of Chinese television channels. See <http://www.pptv.com/>.

<sup>48</sup> The other event that has been live streamed on Skykiwi, also with PPlive, was the official celebration of the Spring Festival in China, including the variety show. It is important to point out that these live programmes can also be watched on the local Chinese television – WTV8. However, some migrants, especially temporary migrants and international students do not have a television set and would choose to watch these programmes online – either through Skykiwi, or directly from the China-based websites.

“Where can I buy a brooch of the (Chinese) national flag in Auckland?”

“Who else is using the national anthem as the ringtone for the mobile like me?”

Obviously, the prominently featured National Day on Skykiwi sparked a strong collective national pride and effectively stimulated the Chinese element in the identity of these migrant netizens.

Similar to the “safe place” concept of Mitra (2006) and Ip (2011b) mentioned in the previous section, the articulation of this kind of national affiliation and patriotism towards the homeland in the online space is also “safe”, without provoking suspicious sentiment among the host country public against the new migrants. Providing the safe place is an essential function of these ethnic online media. In such an environment, the Chinese migrant netizens can comfortably perform and assert their identification with the homeland and their nationalism, helping the maintenance of their Chinese identity.

Similar to their traditional media counterparts, many online ethnic media carry a large proportion of homeland news. Homeland news is usually put in the “International News” section, mixed with news from other countries. As expected, China news takes a significant proportion in the “International News” section. However, as suggested by my participants, the migrant netizens would not rely on ethnic media for China news. This is because they can read homeland news directly on the China-based websties such as Sina or Sohu, and search engines like Google and Baidu provide convenient tool for them to explore further into any news they are interested in. One

of the interviewees, Jessica (F 52 NZ), expressed that she read news on Skykiwi, and when she spots something of interest in the news headlines about China, she would go directly to China-based news websites for more detailed information.

Nonetheless, for some migrant netizens, online ethnic media provide a starting point for their homeland news consumption. More importantly, these news items on the ethnic websites serve as a constant reminder of and a symbolic connection to the homeland for migrant netizens, especially for those whose time is constrained by their job or study, and would prefer to briefly browse the host country and the homeland news all in one place.

If China news indicates a symbolic connection with the homeland for migrant netizens, then the emerging China-based SNS platforms increasingly exploited by the online ethnic media further accentuate such links between the diaspora and the homeland.

When this research started in 2009, the China-based SNS services such as Weibo (microblogs) and Renren (Chinese version of Facebook) were only in their infant forms, some did not even exist. Therefore, they were originally excluded in my proposal. During the course of the research, especially in 2011, the China-based SNS services have developed exponentially and they are currently in their full-fledged form. By now, any research on the culture and politics of China's internet would be considered missing a huge trunk of the area by overlooking such an important and potent realm. However, given the original plan and the limit of time and resource of this PhD research, I am only able to touch upon the issue briefly with the aim to tease out the most salient points about the China-based SNS services in the construction of

migrant identity.

Since 2011, many online ethnic media have noticed the momentum of SNS, especially the China-based ones, and started to offer “sharing” buttons under each of their news items which allows users to share news on various SNS platforms such as Sina Weibo, Netease Weibo, Tencent Weibo, Sohu Weibo, Renren, Douban.<sup>49</sup>

This is a significant move towards a stronger connection with the homeland. Now the link is not only an imagination created by migrant netizens when reading homeland news, but can also be a conscious action of making the connection by clicking the sharing button. First, to share news items requires the user to be a registered member of those China-based SNS. Although the membership registration is usually a simple process, it signifies a sense of in-group belonging to and identification with China and Chinese. Given the fact that these China-based SNS are usually substitutions of international platforms banned in China (i.e. Twitter and Facebook), the target group is focused on Chinese users. Setting up one’s network on these SNS literally means signing into a network among Chinese peers. Thus, using the SNS does not only represent being a member of the online community, but more importantly, a member of China and Chinese people. As pointed out by the interviewees in this research who are users of these China-based SNS, all their “friends” and “followers” are Chinese, either in China, New Zealand, or other Chinese diasporas.

What is more, the sharing action is a conscious choice that emphasises the building and/or strengthening of the connection between the migrant netizens and the

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<sup>49</sup> Different websites provide different sharing platforms. For instance, Skykiwi allows sharing over Sina and Netease Weibo, and Renren, while NZChinese provides sharing over Sina, Renren, and Douban. These websites also allow sharing over internationally popular platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

homeland. Through sharing information within one's network, old ties with Chinese peers are maintained, and new ties are built with those who are also interested in the information shared. One interviewee, Ian (M 26 PR) told me that when he shared news through Sina Weibo about a tornado in Auckland in May 2011. The tweet drew attention from his friends in China. Caring words appeared in the replies to his tweet, which made him feel "warm and comfortable when away from the homeland". The evidence suggests that the simple function of sharing news on the ethnic media over China-based SNS platforms enables the strengthening of the ties between migrant netizens and their homeland, maintaining and arousing particularly a sense of belonging to China and affiliation with other Chinese.

The ties, national pride, cultural identification, and the sense of belonging to the homeland fostered by the online ethnic media are very potent elements in the consolidation of the Chinese identity among migrant netizens. However, other factors also manifested themselves on these ethnic media, introducing new resources to and creating new dynamics in the identity construction of migrants. Due to these additional factors, "being Chinese" has taken on a new meaning for migrant netizens.

#### *Creating new meaning of being Chinese*

A new notion of "being Chinese" is in the making as manifested on the ethnic websites. First and foremost, through the discourse of a homogenous Chinese group, online ethnic media present to its audiences an all-encompassing pan-Chinese identity. The seemingly simple but arguably most compelling example is the frequently used term "*huaren*" or "*huayi*". Literally translated, the term *huaren* means "Chinese people", and *huayi* means "Chinese descendant". Both of the terms, when used without any modifier, carry a connotation of a homogenous group, including all

ethnic Chinese without any acknowledgement of their differences in culture and country of origin. The reason that the Chinese phonetic transcripts are used is that translating these terms into “Chinese” would be problematic because the word “Chinese”, for most of PRC people, connotes “people of China” or “China-Chinese” (*zhongguo ren*).

By using the term *huaren*, online ethnic media present to their audiences a different concept of being Chinese – an essentialised idea that emphasises biological similarity and covers every single ethnic Chinese under its umbrella. For many new migrants who have not been away from PRC for long, the difference between *huaren* and *zhongguo ren* is yet to be registered, and the term can cause feelings of anxiety about group identity.

In our discussion, Yang (M 31 PR), who had been in New Zealand for only 2 years, articulated his confusion and anxiety when he commented on the news about a poster presented by a Hong Konger on Auckland’s Queen Street. The poster carried derogatory remarks such as “*zhongguo ren* are pigs.”

“I don’t understand. The guy is himself a *zhongguo ren*. Isn’t he bringing shame to himself by doing so? Plus, How come those angry replies are all from mainlanders? Why didn’t people from other areas – Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia –comment on this? Aren’t they all *zhongguo ren*?!”

It is obvious that Yang’s mind had yet to adjust from his PRC homeland to the new environment. For him, being Chinese is as simple as when he was back in China – everyone is *zhongguo ren* (China-Chinese). Though in the interview, he also used the



term *huaren*, he did not quite understand the difference between *zhongguo ren* and *huaren*, which many people living in PRC would use interchangeably as it is taken for granted that everyone is China-Chinese.

For others migrants, the all-inclusive concept of *huaren* has started to be taken in. Jing has come to New Zealand for about three years, and due to her limited English language skills, her information about local events are exclusively from ethnic media – websites and radio. She commented on the same incident,

“As a *zhongguo ren*, as a *zhongguo ren* living in a foreign country, I can’t comprehend the behaviour of this person. Discrimination against *huaren* already exists in the Western world. Now a *huaren* swears at his own group?! I’m furious at this.” (Jing F 38 WK)

Jing had already learned to pick up the term *huraren* frequently used in her newly adopted media environment. She was also aware of the inclusive nature of the term. Seeing *zhongguo ren* as a subset of *huaren*, she automatically put herself and the Hong Konger into one homogenous group.

The term *huaren* is used frequently by the participants in the interviews, suggesting that for many of them, being Chinese has changed – from being a member of China to a member of a larger Chinese group. What is more important is that this changed sense of being Chinese is constantly reminded by the ethnic media which the interviewees are surrounded.

Another additive in the construction of a new meaning of being Chinese is the ethnic/racial and social labels that online ethnic media stamp on their audiences. The

online ethnic media's potential to facilitate the identification to the home country is put into challenge by their very own content and interactive platforms. In her study of the Chinese ethnic print in the U. S., Shi cogently points out that the ethnic newspapers "pick up the identity labels prescribed by the dominant ideology and pass them on to the minority readers *without* consciously questioning the cultural meanings of these labels...ironically subject immigrants to the mainstream control" (Shi 2009, 606). The online ethnic media in this sense are very similar to their traditional media counterparts. Identity labels such as "minority", "ethnic minority", "immigrant", and "Asians" appear frequently when referring to Chinese in their news report in which a large proportion is translated directly from local mainstream media.

These identity labels are essential in the construction of migrant identity in that most migrant netizens did not encounter such identity reminders in China before they migrated to New Zealand. For them "being Chinese" was an accepted fact that is natural, and that there is no need to articulate. However, after they came to New Zealand, "being Chinese" becomes a constantly reminded identity label. More importantly, this identity label of "being Chinese" does not appear alone, usually presented with a modifier such as "minority" or "immigrant". Terms such as "*huaren* immigrants" and "*huaren* as ethnic minority" are overwhelmingly used on these ethnic websites, confronting in every sense the meaning of being Chinese that had long been developed among these Chinese pre-migration.

Labelling and adoption of names are important process of identity formation, are powerful in the construction of meaning for migrants in their host land. Even for those who have already developed an attachment to New Zealand, the terms seem to solidify a wall preventing a total sense of inclusion. One of the interviewees expressed

her opinion on whether Chinese should consider themselves as equal to other peoples in New Zealand.

“It’s stupid to think that we are sheltered under their roof and thus we need to take it (discrimination) all in without raising our voice. When we come here, this place becomes home, and we are part of this place... as ethnic minority, we may need political leaders, representatives to fight for our rights...the laws here won’t discriminate against us simply because we’re *huaren*.” (Helen F 51 NZ)

Clearly for Helen, New Zealand was already home which she was a part of. Ironically, this sense of belonging and identification with the host country is seen as limited, as manifested in the use of ethnic labels. Helen referred to herself as both *ethnic minority* and *huaren*, the meaning of being Chinese as a Cantonese in Guangzhou city (where Helen was originally from) has changed to being Chinese as *huaren* and *minority* who need to fight for equal rights in the host land.

Jessica’s (F 52 NZ) comments reflect the similar shift in the meaning of being Chinese. During the interviews, she said,

“I think that *huaren* migrants lack the active will to communicate with the mainstream society. That is why (among them) there is a feeling of being discriminated upon.”

Slightly different from Helen, Jessica used the term *huaren* migrants instead of ethnic minority. Being a migrant means, on the one hand, one is away and separated from the

place of origin; on the other hand, it infers that one is less attached to the host country.

It seems understandable that Helen and Jessica had different views about their identity and vary in their sense of belonging to the host country. Helen was more of a “settler” in the traditional sense, who came to New Zealand 16 year ago, bought a house, raised her children, had a decent job and saw herself as an ethnic minority of the nation.

Whereas Jessica can be better described as a practical “transmigrant” who opened her own family business, had strong business and social networks back in China, travelled at least twice a year back to the homeland for business or family reasons.

One way or the other, the meaning of being Chinese has changed after they migrated to New Zealand. The labels as manifested in the media have significant influences on how the migrant netizens perceive themselves *vis-à-vis* the home and host countries. “Migrant *huaren*” and “ethnic minority *huaren*” remind the migrant netizens of their status of being migrant Chinese outside the homeland, and being ethnic minority Chinese in the host country. As such, it can be argued that the migrant netizens still consider themselves as being Chinese, but as migrant, ethnic Chinese; and the ethnic media never let them forget the new meaning by crystallising the labels in their media discourses.

#### *Contesting Kiwiness among migrant Chinese*

Reminders of being Chinese are also manifested in the interactions among migrant netizens themselves. In the news comments and forum posts, exchanges among the participants sometimes present the contention against the articulation of Kiwiness or the sense of belonging to the host country.

During the Crafar Farms saga in 2009-2012, news items on the proposal of 16 New

Zealand farms to a Shanghai-based company attracted a large amount of participation from Chinese migrant netizens. Some were disapproving of the deal and articulated their concern over the possible negative effects brought about by the ownership of a Chinese company such as the decrease of the quality of dairy products of New Zealand and company corruption. These Chinese migrants sometimes revealed a sense of belonging to the host country and became defensive of the interest of New Zealand. Their view was contested then by other migrant netizens who not only approve of the sale but also see the “disapproving group” as putting shame to their homeland. Some comments to the news item on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011 directly addressed to the “disapproving group”.

“Could you please stop putting yourselves on high moral grounds?  
People living an average life are plentiful in this ‘bird country’! Their government will take consideration of their people from an economic point of view. No fucking use that you second class citizen bark here...” (ip: 125.237.89.\*)

“...you typed the Chinese character wrong. Learn some Chinese when you have the time. Don’t learn to be anti-China. That’s the place where your ancestors are from... A strong China is a good thing for you, for all the *huaren*...If China were still like the 50s or the 60s in the last century, you wouldn’t have your life now in New Zealand.” (ip: 222.153.68.\*)

“Whenever this kind of topics appears, there are always some ‘banana’ coming out and defame their own brothers and sisters...” (ip:

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202.169.203.\*)

The exchanges can usually become very nasty with participants swearing at each other and accusing the “disapproving group” as traitors to China/Chinese nation (*hanjian*).

There is no telling whether one group of migrant netizens had been successfully persuaded by the other – judging from their ongoing heated exchanges, it seems that there would not be an easy settlement between them. However, the salient point of the seemingly uncivilised rumpus is that the comments can serve as a constant reminder of being Chinese for the migrant netizens while contesting a sense of attachment to the host country. Notions such as “second class citizens”, “banana”<sup>50</sup>, and “ancestral China” suggest to migrant netizens their status in the host country, their mixed identity, and their irrevocable links to the ancestral homeland as perceived by some of the in-group peers.

Online ethnic media are similar yet have more potential than their traditional counterparts. They can facilitate adaptation of new migrants, and foster cultural and political participation in the host society in a better, faster, more convenient and more individualised manner. By doing so, online ethnic media provide a comparatively “safe place” for migrant netizens to articulate and practise their sense of belonging to and identification with the host land away from the mainstream public’s questioning. Meanwhile, the discourses of the media content and interactive platforms of these media provide another “safe place” for migrant netizens to perform ethnic culture and

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<sup>50</sup> Banana is a derogatory term used to refer to an overseas Chinese person who has grown up in Western countries, and strongly identifies with a Western culture rather than Chinese culture. Bananas generally have little Chinese language proficiency.

retain the Chinese elements in their identity formation, also away from the mainstream public's gaze. However, the exactly same discourses and platforms are potent in the making of the new meaning of being Chinese for these migrant netizens. They will never be the same Chinese as they used to be before migrating to New Zealand. They are now "Chinese" as part of the larger *huaren* group; they are "migrant Chinese" who are away from the homeland and new in the host land; they are "ethnic Chinese" in New Zealand who need to be vigilant against discrimination and fight for their equal rights; even if they migrate back to China, they would be "sea turtles" (*haigui*). The daily media encounters of the migrant netizens have profoundly impacted the (re-)construction of being Chinese for them, and hence influencing the identity formation of these Chinese migrant netizens.

### **7.3 Summary**

This chapter has investigated the influence of the Chinese-language cyberspace and the impact of migrant lived experience on the identity construction of Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand. More specifically, the Chinese-language cyberspace is further divided into two components –online homeland media and online ethnic media.

Based and produced in China, the online homeland media are found to be the source of an "authentic Chineseness", emotionally, culturally, and politically. Targeting the China-Chinese as their audience group, the online homeland media is a homogeneous and inclusive media sphere where everyone is treated as Chinese, without differentiating those inside and outside of the national borders. Enabled by the fast connection through the internet, migrant netizens have virtually equal access to online homeland media as their counterparts in China.

When enjoying the services provided by the China-based media outlets, the migrant netizens are immersed in the mainstream identity narratives of these homeland media. Affinity with the homeland compatriots is built, and the feeling of being included is strong. With the commanding authority of genuine Chinese culture, online homeland media provide the migrant netizens with an original cultural reservoir which helps to reinforce the sense of being authentic Chinese among the migrants. Even in the political realm, online homeland media are capable of sparking national pride, nationalism, and participation in political deliberation among migrant netizens. It is not just the pro-China stance taken by some of the migrant netizens that reveals the migrant netizens' Chinese identity. Criticism as well as the simple presence of a common concern can expose a strong affiliation and attachment to China.

The overseas experience adds another element to the migrant netizens' Chinese identity, while the sense of being authentic Chinese is reinforced by frequenting online homeland media. The lived experience as migrants in a democratic country and the unblocked access to various sources of information make the migrants feel that their worldview is broadened and their experience enriched. This contributes to their perception of belonging to a privileged Chinese group. Therefore, I argue that an "authentic yet privileged" Chinese identity is in the making among many migrant netizens.

In contrast, online ethnic media provide more complicated and multi-thread sources for the meaning making of being Chinese among migrant netizens. On the one hand, online ethnic media provide elements that help migrant netizens to maintain their Chineseness by promoting and celebrating cultural events, providing "safe place" for cultural performance, reporting extensively on homeland news, and establishing links



through China-based SNS services. On the other hand, they imbue the migrant audiences with a new meaning of being Chinese. Online ethnic media contribute to the construction of a homogeneous Chineseness through its inclusive *huaren* discourse, while simultaneously reminding the migrant netizens of their social, political, and ethnic status in the host country. This new meaning of being Chinese goes beyond the “authentic yet privileged” Chinese identity. It is being Chinese as migrant outside the homeland, and being Chinese as an immigrant group and an ethnic minority in the host country.

The frequent use of the Chinese-language cyberspace and the migrant experience contribute significantly to the migrant identity construction, reinforcing their authentic Chineseness, while at the same time reconstructing the sense of being Chinese. However, the Chinese-language cyberspace is a double edged blade in identity construction. While fostering a strong Chinese identity, it also provides a comparatively “safe place” for migrant netizens to perform their Kiwiness away from the mainstream. The internet is hence “an alternative space for the Chinese community to define itself” (Voci 2006). The Chinese-language cyberspace – homeland media and ethnic media included – becomes a virtual territory where migrant identity is constantly negotiated among conflicting forces of acquired Kiwiness and inherited and reconstructed Chineseness.

## **Chapter Eight: Being “Different Chinese” – Discussion and Conclusion**

This thesis set out to investigate nationalism and the identity construction of New Zealand’s new Chinese migrants who originally came from the People’s Republic of China after the late 1980s. Specifically, I have explored this group’s articulation of nationalism and identity in relation to their use of the internet, and in particular the use of the Chinese-language cyberspace which is a potent factor in their identity construction. With the development of new technology in communications and transportation, the internet has significantly changed the mediascape of Chinese transnational migrants. Therefore, this research has used a transnational framework to illustrate the interactions between the new media and migrants in terms of their nationalism and identity.

As shown in Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, Chinese nationalism is by no means a new research topic, and Chinese Cyber nationalism has attracted a lot of academic attention in the past two decades ever since the advent of the internet. However, apart from a few efforts made in the academia, the research of overseas Chinese nationalism seems to lag behind the trend. Given the theoretical development in transnationalism and globalisation, as well as recent manifestations of large global scale nationalistic moments among overseas Chinese during high profile events such as the 2008 Olympic torch relay, the scholarship requires significant and immediate update. One of the major issues is that Chinese nationalism had been discussed largely within a “nation-state container”, with an overwhelming majority of studies focusing on manifestations within China. They tend to ignore the nationalistic

articulation among overseas Chinese. What is more, overseas Chinese nationalism, and long-distance nationalism in general, usually considers nationalism as political projects or movements, ignoring its more subtle manifestations of cultural elements and identity concerns. Using the internet as the site of investigation, this research project has employed a transnational framework to explore overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism. This transnational model of Chinese nationalism argues that when empowered by the internet, Chinese migrants in various host countries such as New Zealand can now voice their nationalistic sentiment and participate in global nationalistic movements – cultural as well as political – in the Chinese-language cyberspace at an unprecedented scale and with untold intensity which in turn impact greatly on their identity construction and their self-perception of being Chinese.

Media studies on migrants have focused on ethnic media, both the traditional print media, cinema, television and the new media. Theories have established connections between media and migrant identity construction, mostly directed at ethnic media in the host country. One limitation of these studies is that although many of them bring in the concept of transnationalism in their discussions on migrants' connections to the home country, they tend to overlook the role played by the media in the home country, which have become readily available to migrant audiences residing in various host countries through the internet. In other words, methodologically, overlooking the online media based in the home country means excluding one of the major elements of the transnational mediascape of migrants, and ignoring its impact on migrant identity formation.

Based on the framework developed from the current theories in transnationalism and new media, this study has addressed the research questions related to three

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interlinking themes, namely, overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, the use and implications of the Chinese-language cyberspace, and migrant identity construction.

More specific questions and objectives were presented earlier in Chapter One: Introduction, and addressed in the subsequent empirical Chapters Four to Seven respectively. In Chapter Four and Five on overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism, I discussed the prevalence and the dimensions of such nationalism and identified the hot-button events that triggered it. I also established the factors and reasons of migrant nationalism, which distinguish overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism from nationalism in China. The second set of research questions about internet use and its implications for migrant life were detailed in Chapter Six on the imagination of Cyber China and the creation of parallel lives. I identified the internet use patterns and preferences of Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand and the reasons for such patterns and preferences. By mapping the connections between the migrant netizens and the home and host countries, I addressed how internet use and migrant netizens' everyday life influenced their integration/adaptation process. The role of the internet as a transnational social field was highlighted in the last set of research questions which were focused on the Chinese-language cyberspace and migrant identity construction. These questions were addressed in Chapter Seven in a discussion which integrated online homeland and ethnic media.

In this final chapter, I first synthesise the empirical findings of the previous chapters with a theoretical discussion integrating the three themes mentioned above. Then I proceed to discuss the implications of the findings and how this research contributes to a better understanding of the media-migrant nexus in the era of intensified globalisation and transnationalism. In the final section of this chapter, limitation of

this study and directions for future research on Chinese migrants and their interaction with the new media are pointed out based on the findings from this research.

## **8.1 Chinese-language Cyberspace, Nationalism, and Identity**

Although this thesis has presented the research findings thematically in separate chapters, these themes are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the three themes are closely interconnected.

### **8.1.1 The Chinese-language Cyberspace as a Transnational Social Field**

Theories in transnationalism assert that transnational activities have changed people's relations to space/locality by creating transnational "social fields" or "social spaces" that connect actors in more than one country (Goldring 1998; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992a; Castells 1996). In this research, the Chinese-language cyberspace – encompassing both online homeland media and online ethnic media – has been identified as such a transnational social field where various ties with the home country are maintained and reinforced. Being active internet users who frequent the Chinese-language cyberspace, the Chinese migrant netizens are found to have made this transnational media consumption part of their daily experience in the host country.

The first claim I wish to make is that the Chinese-language cyberspace as a transnational social field provides a means for Chinese migrant netizens to participate intensively in transnational activities. It is also a virtual space that the migrant netizens can "hang out" with their families and friends around the world, creating a collectively imagined Cyber China. As discussed in Chapter Six, this Cyber China allows the migrant netizens to familiarise themselves with up-to-date information

about China, providing topics for their socialising activities, meeting their “epistephillic desire” (Naficy 1993), and soothing their nostalgia. Through Instant Messaging (IM) platforms such as QQ, and Social Networking Services (SNS) such as Renren.com and Weibo.com, all based in China, the migrant netizens are able to maintain their strong ties with their peers, forming “virtual intimacy”(Wilding 2006) in Cyber China.

Different from the Chinese-language cyberspace, which is an objective existence including all online services and platforms in the Chinese language, I argue that Cyber China exists in the realm of imagination of the migrant netizens. Through their daily use of the media content and maintaining constant connections with their families and friends on IM and SNS in the Chinese-language cyberspace, migrant netizens share and enjoy the many activities with their counterparts in the imagined Cyber China.

What is more, Cyber China is imagined simultaneously as a transnational and an in-group and ring-fenced space for ethnic Chinese; it can serve as a safe haven for the migrant netizens to fight against difficulties they encounter in their daily life in the host country. In real life, they may suffer a lack of social network, boredom, and discrimination. Given the linguistic difficulty for non-Chinese to participate in the Chinese-language cyberspace, the migrant netizens can articulate their nationalism and identity claims in Cyber China far away from the gaze and/or criticism of the mainstream society. Though contending views exist, they are all within the ethnic circle. In this sense, it is similar to Mitra’s notion of cybernetic “safe place” (2006).

The transnational ring-fenced online imagination provides migrant netizens more than a safe space in that the imagined Cyber China, transcending geographic borders and

incorporated in migrant netizens' daily life, has strong implications on overseas Chinese nationalism and migrant identity, which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

The second point of this conclusion is that as part of the transnational social field, the Chinese-language online ethnic media in New Zealand facilitates migrant adaptation by providing practical information, but at the same time it encourages the migrants to stay within an ethnic comfort zone and sets barriers for their integration in the host society. Findings in Chapter Six suggest that Chinese migrant netizens use online ethnic media mostly for information that can help them achieve their quotidian routine practice, such as buying cars and real estate, renting or fixing their houses, locating good restaurants and so on. It is also found that they tend to read news about the host country but mostly on economy and immigration policy related news items. To a large extent, the use of online ethnic media by these migrant netizens echoes Zhou and Cai's argument that ethnic media assist migrants to "navigate unknown and foreign territories" (Zhou and Cai 2002, 435), but discourage them from in-depth and more meaningful engagement.

However, apart from helping migrant netizens to become functional individuals in the host country, online ethnic media are found to have limited function in facilitating genuine and in-depth cultural integration of these migrants. Although many previous studies argue that ethnic media, both traditional and new media, help migrants integrate and/or socialisation in the mainstream culture of the host country (Lin and Song 2006; Zhou and Cai 2002; Viswanath and Arora 2000; Zhang and Hao 1999), findings in this research do not corroborate such claims. On the contrary, internet use, especially the use of the Chinese-language cyberspace is found to be a factor that can

impede migrant integration and socialisation in the host country. A major reason for the discrepancy is that many of the existing studies tend to examine only the media content provided by ethnic media while downplaying how netizens might choose to use the content. Long periods of time spent in the Chinese-language cyberspace is seen by many participants as taking up time that they could have spent on socialising with the locals, and using their native language (i.e. Chinese) instead of English is seen as setting up barriers for their cultural integration into the host country culture.

At the theoretical level, the Chinese-language cyberspace as a transnational social field enables simultaneity for the migrant netizens to maintain their ties with both the home and the host countries. A common view of many existing studies sees migrants as no longer marginals but “connected migrants” (Diminescu 2008), living “both here and there” (Ip 2011c; Vertovec 2004; Portes 1996; Sun 2002; Sinclair and Cunningham 2000). Theories in transnationalism assert that when participating in transnational social fields, migrants manifest different levels of engagement – ways of being and ways of belonging. Ways of being means that migrants can be embedded in a social field, but the practices do not necessarily associate with the identity of the field; in contrast, ways of belonging refers to both practices and the identity signified by such practices (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

In the Chinese-language cyberspace, migrant netizens engage in different ways in relation to the host country and the home country. With regard to the home country, the imagined Cyber China suggests that the migrant netizens’ participation in this transnational social field represents ways of belonging. The findings of Chapters Five and Six offer evidence that their practices in the Chinese-language cyberspace signal



and enact a Chinese identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to China and Chinese.

In contrast, when it comes to the other part of the social field – the host country, the migrant netizens tend to engage more in practical connections rather than the identity associated with the actions. As established in Chapter Six, the migrant netizens use the Chinese-language cyberspace as a means to facilitate their daily mundane routines rather than use it to help their in-depth cultural integration into the host society. This suggests that the migrant netizens are embedded in the host society social field in ways of being. Their daily practices and behaviours in the social field do not necessarily associate with a New Zealand identity.

In addition, the Chinese-language cyberspace not only enables the imagined Cyber China which the migrant netizens can feel comfortably belong to, it also helps to create parallel lives for these migrants as discussed in Chapter Six. The account of the interviewees suggests that overwhelmed by the Chinese-language online media content, they feel that they have never left China, but at the same time, daily reality in the host country reminds them of their objective existence in New Zealand. Leading parallel lives – one in the imagined Cyber China, the other in the offline real world in New Zealand – these migrant netizens constantly face the identity tension in between being Chinese and being Kiwi. In the following section, I will integrate research findings to illustrate their nationalism and identity fostered and articulated in the Chinese-language cyberspace.

### 8.1.2 Identity and Nationalism in the Chinese-language Cyberspace

A stable and secure identity is essential for individuals to flourish in any society. PRC migrants in New Zealand are individuals who departed from the homeland and they are new to the host country. Under the influence of their parallel lives – in the Chinese-language cyberspace and their physical experience in the host country, the migrant netizens' identity undergoes constant negotiation. It is a process of constant re-balancing, aiming to achieve such stability and security. On the one hand, online homeland media foster a feeling of being authentic Chinese; on the other hand, online ethnic media and lived experience in the host society help these migrant netizens to perceive themselves as privileged Chinese while simultaneously reminding them of their ethnic position and their migrant status in New Zealand. As such, the migrant netizens are constantly in search of something that can provide them with a stable identity, something that can represent them in a positive light, and that they can be proud of and comfortably identify with.

Findings in Chapter Seven suggest that frequenting homeland media gives the migrant netizens a sense of security. Without differentiating Chinese in China and Chinese migrants residing in host countries around the world, online homeland media help to foster a sense of “being authentic Chinese” among migrant netizens by providing authentic Chinese identity narratives, the original Chinese cultural reservoir, and a largely uniform political discourse. This argument is corroborated by the interviewees who perceive themselves as Chinese not so different from their counterparts in China. However, these migrant netizens also reveals their feeling of being privileged Chinese as compared to their peers who have never left China. Unblocked access to information via the internet and their experience in the free and democratic host country are seen as having broadened their worldview and kept them better informed

than they used to be pre-migration and their compatriots in the homeland. Hence, an authentic yet privileged Chinese identity is in the construction among the Chinese migrant netizens.

Findings in Chapter Seven show that only a minority of Chinese migrant netizens articulate an emerging Kiwi identity in online ethnic media. However, such actions are usually contested by the majority of the migrant netizens who participate in the online forums. Those who reveal their Kiwi identity are usually accused of being traitors to the Chinese nation, and their voices are quickly immersed in finger-pointing and name-calling. Lived experience in the host country as well as online ethnic media constantly remind these Chinese migrants of their status as being ethnic minority and their position as migrants in New Zealand. Perceived discrimination and unfair treatment in the host country, as well as identity labels such as “Chinese migrants” and “Chinese as ethnic minority” in ethnic media make many migrant netizens uncomfortable and reluctant to claim a New Zealand identity.

These findings suggest that the Chinese-language cyberspace – homeland and ethnic media included – becomes a virtual territory where migrant identity is constantly negotiated. In his recent work, Eriksen cogently points out that the internet is a “re-embedding technology” which is “becoming a major medium for the consolidation, strengthening and definition of collective identities” (Eriksen 2007, 8). For Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand, the Chinese-language cyberspace provides “an alternative space for the Chinese community to define itself” (Voci 2006, 163) to (re)construct their identity, and to explore what being Chinese means.

The contestation of identity claims in the Chinese-language cyberspace is a major driver for migrant netizens to pursue a stable and secure identity. The process, in its more articulate/assertive form triggered by high-profile events related to China and/or Chinese, is expressed as overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism. Arguably, overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is multifaceted and is an assertive form of manifestation/expression during the quest for a secure and particular identity by Chinese migrant netizens.

It is multifaceted in that migrant netizens' nationalistic articulation encompasses both political and cultural elements. It also includes nationalistic sentiments based on ethnic and even essentialist claims, as well as great emotions and affections expressed towards China, often with mixed feelings. The colour coding of nationalism employed in Chapter Five – red, yellow and blue – helps to present the complexity of nationalism among Chinese migrant netizens.

Echoing Wu's finding that Cyber nationalism in China is "event-sensitive", usually triggered by global-scale high-profile events related to China (Wu 2007), nationalism among migrant Chinese netizens is also found to respond to high-profile events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic torch relay, and the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands between China and Japan. However, migrant netizens' nationalism can also be triggered by events specific to the Chinese community in the host country. This is evidenced during the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake in New Zealand which claimed 185 innocent lives including a significant number of ethnic Chinese. Stories posted online by migrant netizens about unfair treatment or discrimination towards Chinese in the host country also aroused similar nationalistic sentiment.

Undoubtedly, overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is rather assertive and sometimes involves more extreme form of expression. Migrant netizens often become quite bold in their nationalistic claims, partly due to the protection provided by the anonymity in cyberspace. However, it should not be considered as xenophobic and irrational sentiments harboured by a few “angry youth” (young cynic) as suggested by some scholars in China (Liu 2005; Shan and Guo 2011). Such nationalism is similar in nature to what Zhou (2006) calls “informed nationalism” often displayed by netizens in China. Findings from the online survey shown in Chapter Four illustrate that a great number of migrant netizens are nationalistic; however, a large proportion of them do not agree with obvious xenophobic and irrational statements intentionally included in the questionnaire. Findings in Chapter Five further suggest that many migrant netizens are well-informed by the liberal and democratic thoughts of the West, and they are well-educated and well-equipped with the new digital technology, yet their nationalistic sentiment is found to be intense.

Most importantly, cyber nationalism among migrant netizens is the articulation of the sense of identity expressed during their pursuit for a secure and particular overseas Chinese identity. It is far more than simply a political project as argued by some scholars (Ong 2008; Glick Schiller 2005). As discussed in Chapter Five, although overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism has many manifestations in the political realm – territorial claims and sovereignty issues for instance, it concerns more about migrant identity. As mentioned above, while the double force of the Chinese-language cyberspace and lived experience in the host country help to construct an authentic and privileged Chinese identity, the same force puts their budding New Zealand identity into question. Under such conditions, these migrant netizens feel uneasy to claim a strong New Zealand identity, but they find it much more comfortable to identify with

China. The perception that a strong China as a world power can lift their status in the host country and can provide security is shared among many migrant netizens. Hence, protecting the image of a good, sovereign and strong China which can better represent overseas Chinese becomes an important mission for these migrant netizens. The eagerness to protect the image of China is subsequently manifested as nationalism by these migrants.

In addition, unpleasant encounters in the host country – unfair treatment and random incidents of discrimination – are perceived to result from their status of being Chinese as a “visible minority” (Ip 1996; Ip and Murphy 2005). A collective and inclusive Chinese identity is considered by many migrant netizens as the pillar for ethnic solidarity which empowers them to fight against perceived discrimination in the host country. By employing essentialism, as both a genuine belief and a strategy, the migrant netizens promote cultural and ethnic nationalism to achieve their goals for a secure status in New Zealand. However, we have to admit at the same time that the articulation of nationalism in the Chinese-language cyberspace has limited impact, as far as the purpose of the essentialist nationalism is concerned. This is because the discussion, negotiation and collective voicing of discontent are usually confined to the Chinese-language cyberspace without direct engagement with the mainstream; the discussions seldom go beyond the ethnic circle. Few meaningful dialogues are engendered in between Chinese migrants and the mainstream New Zealand.

To sum up, their parallel lives – a combination of the Chinese-language cyberspace and the lived experience in the host society – determine the contesting nature of identity construction of Chinese migrant netizens. While their identity is insecure and unstable, Chinese nationalism is employed as a mechanism by migrant netizens,

though not always consciously, to reassure themselves that they are supported by their homeland on the one hand and empowered by ethnic solidarity on the other. Therefore, it can be argued that overseas Chinese Cyber nationalism is articulated by the migrant netizens with the aim of acquiring a secure identity.

It is important to point out that the generally young age of the participants of this study – in both the online survey and the in-depth interview – does not mean that the sampling is biased. On the contrary, it reflects the fact that younger generations are more tech savvy and use the internet more frequently than their elderly counterparts, especially with regard to the articulation of cyber nationalism and identity negotiation online.

Admittedly, the Chinese population in New Zealand is by no means homogenous in terms of their socio-economic status, their education background as well as their visa status – being New Zealand citizens, permanent residents, work or student visa holders. However, when it comes to expressions of Chinese nationalism and identity, there is a centripetal tendency that most of the participants shared similar views. It should be highlighted that visa status did not feature prominently in the participants' discourse. This echoes findings from recent research on PRC transnational migrants that permanent residency and citizenship have become less relevant in migrant identity construction, and taking up citizenship of the host country is more often due to practical consideration – facilitating transnational travel (Ip 2011). Therefore, surprising as it is, the homogenous articulation of Chinese nationalism and identity among the Chinese migrant netizens is both a sign of their strong Chineseness, and it further accentuates the collective anxiety and sense of insecurity

## 8.2 Contribution and implications

This research provides an original contribution to the understanding of the media-migrant identity nexus in a transnational context, both at the empirical and the theoretical levels.

Methodologically, by treating both online homeland and ethnic media as two integral parts of the Chinese-language cyberspace, the research has been able to draw new data and to use a new angle to explain the transnational identity construction of Chinese migrants. This perspective is of special significance, since Chinese migrant netizens are found to consume homeland media intensively in cyberspace as evidenced in Chapters Four, Six and Seven. Very often, as discussed at the beginning of this thesis, studies of migrant use of media tend to focus on ethnic media or the traditional media form of newspaper, magazine, cinema and television, which provide much less transnational significance compared to the internet in terms of content, scale and speed. The direct and intensive connections with the homeland media via the internet have significantly shaped migrant netizens' strong Chinese identity and provided fertile grounds for their assertive Chinese nationalism. This new perspective investigating the Chinese-language cyberspace as a transnational social field allows us to see a very strong and new Chinese identity being reconstructed among Chinese migrant netizens, and simultaneously, an emerging Kiwi identity is constantly contested and very often suppressed by the predominant Chinese identity claims.

Therefore, the theoretical cases for transnational migrant identity need to be revisited in order to better understand what kind of identity is influenced and shaped by transnationalism. Transnationalism theories claim that identities of transnational migrants are fluid, often characterised by hybridity with hyphenated identity



(Vertovec 1999; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). For instance, Chinese migrants in New Zealand would have an identity of being Chinese-New Zealander or New Zealand-Chinese. However, this research has noted that such a hyphenated identity does not necessarily exist, especially among the new Chinese migrants from PRC who are under constant influence from the twin forces of the Chinese-language cyberspace and their lived experience in New Zealand.

Although this research supports the notion that migrant identity is fluid and is subjected to continuous reconstruction and negotiation, its findings do not corroborate with the notion that transnationalism inevitably puts migrant identity into hybridity, swinging in between the dichotomy of home and host country identities and a combination of the two. In some situations, migrants can find the claim of Chinese identity more advantageous and empowering as manifested in their nationalism during various events. In other situations, the Chinese migrants may feel that claiming a New Zealand identity gives them more privilege, and admittedly, sometimes claiming a hybrid identity is seen as more convenient. Hence, the sense of identity of these Chinese transnational migrants can be better described as situational, i.e. depending on their perceived advantage of staking particular identity claims under different circumstances.

By providing new empirical evidence from the analysis of Chinese-language cyberspace, and by proposing new interpretations to nationalism and identity construction of the Chinese migrant netizens in New Zealand, this research has added arguments to the current theoretical debate on the construction transnational migrant identity. The arguments support the notion that the Chinese-language cyberspace provides a transnational social field where migrant identity is constantly negotiated

among various factors of acquired Kiwiness and inherited and reconstructed Chineseness (Voci 2010). Overwhelmed by the all-encompassing Chinese content in cyberspace, the salient question is not whether migrant netizens can continue to be Chinese outside China, but how Chinese or what kind of Chinese they want and choose to be (Sun 2006).

Although this research is conducted in New Zealand on new migrants from PRC, the findings may be applicable in other similar settler countries such as Australia and Canada, which share similar Chinese population composition and immigration policies. In these settler countries, white European remains the mainstream dominant group, and the PRC migrants are relatively new, only arriving in large numbers in the respective host countries during the past 20 years. Due to the similarity of migrant selection policies in these countries, the PRC migrants are also largely young, well-educated, middle class professionals or business people. Therefore, New Zealand, with a small base population and uncomplicated migration history, is arguable the optimal choice for emergent social trends to be observed clearly. In addition, the similarities in the structure and operation of online Chinese-language media in various host countries, as well as the equal accessibility to online homeland media regardless of locality, also make the findings from this research generalizable and applicable in other settler societies.

### **8.3 Limitation and Further Research**

This research has established that the Chinese-language cyberspace is a major factor in the construction of an authentic yet privileged Chinese identity among migrant netizens; it also acknowledges the importance of migrant netizens' lived experience in the host country. This exemplifies the extensive and multifaceted nature of the scale

of the academic research on migrant-media nexus. Therefore, there is need for more empirical studies to allow a holistic understanding of the interaction between migrants and cyberspace as far as their identity construction is concerned.

Limited by the resources available to and the scale of this PhD research, I have only been able to explore the Chinese-language cyberspace, while another potentially important site is left out – the mainstream online media in the host country. Although my ethnographic observation of the Chinese migrant netizens and evidence derived from my interviewees' self-reported perceptions indicate that the first generation new Chinese migrants typically engage only in the online host country media in a tangential and limited fashion, and often on very specific China-related topics, the site nonetheless requires proper academic investigation. Such an investigation may reveal the extent of migrant netizens' identification with the host country.

Therefore, the first direction I propose for future research is the exploration of migrant netizens' engagement with online mainstream media in the host country. While the Chinese-language cyberspace fosters a strong Chinese identity among migrant netizens, the part played by online mainstream media in migrant identity construction is another rich area that might yield many answers to pertinent questions on the sense of multiple belonging and flexible identity. More specifically, with regard to migrant identity and sense of belonging, what are the major discourses in these mainstream media outlets? How do Chinese migrants react and interact with such discourses? And most importantly, what is the implication of such interaction in terms of migrant identity construction?

The scope of this PhD research is also confined to the time it was conducted and the technology available at that time. When this research started in 2009, the China-based SNS services such as Weibo and Renren were only in their infant forms, some did not even exist. Furthermore, access to the internet via mobile devices was not as widespread and popular as in current times. Therefore, these aspects were not present in my proposal. During the course of the research, especially since 2011, the China-based SNS services have developed exponentially and they are currently in their full-fledged form. What is more, a large proportion of Chinese migrants are now accessing the internet using their mobile phones and tablet devices such as the iPad.

Using SNS apps on their mobile devices suggests that an even more intensive and constant technological connection can be established between migrants and various localities – the home and host countries included. Tethered to these devices which enable them to access real-time updates of information and to keep connected to various social networks, how do migrants perceive and position themselves in the highly connected world? Does this mean that they can “carry” their homeland with them, further re-embedding themselves in Cyber China? Or, does it mean that they can foster a more cosmopolitan perspective on their identity as global citizens?

Further research to answer these questions can contribute to a holistic understanding of migrant identity in the current era of globalisation.

#### **8.4 Concluding Remarks**

The Chinese-language cyberspace is a potent re-embedding transnational social field, which empowers migrant netizens to reconstruct a privileged authentic Chinese identity. “Being Chinese” has always been important to all Chinese migrants, and it has taken on stronger salience for the new Chinese migrant netizens. A clear Chinese

identity and its assertive form of articulation – nationalism – combine to nurture a sense of stability and security in the host society.

While harbouring this strong feeling of being Chinese, migrant netizens would actually never be the same Chinese they used to be before migrating to New Zealand. In their own eyes, they are privileged authentic Chinese, in reality they are now “Chinese” as part of the larger *huaren* group; “migrant Chinese” who are away from the homeland and new in the host land; “ethnic Chinese” in who need to be vigilant against the gaze from the mainstream; and “returned overseas Chinese”, should they choose to relocate to China. The daily media encounters of the migrant netizens have profoundly reshaped the meaning of Chinese for them.

The pursuit of a secure identity would most likely to be an ongoing and long-lasting process for the new Chinese migrants in various host countries including New Zealand, and along the way, nationalism as the assertive form of such a quest will continue to be a recurring theme in the Chinese-language cyberspace.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Before we start, please give a score from 0 to 10 to the following two statements. (example: if you don't think you are Chinese at all, give 0; if you totally identify yourself as Chinese, give 10.) 请您从 0 到 10 给下面的两个陈述打分。(例如：您完全不认为自己是中国人，请给 0 分；如果认为自己完全是中国人，请给 10 分。)

I am a Chinese. (我是中国人。)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I love China. (我爱中国。)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Section One: Demographic Information

- Year of birth (出生年份)
- Year of first arrival in New Zealand (初到新西兰的年份)
- Gender (性别)
- Year of returning to China (if applicable) 回到中国的年份 (如适用)
- Citizenship/visa status (国籍和签证类别)
- Education background (教育背景)
- Occupation background and income (工作背景和收入)

### Section Two: Internet Use

Now we are going to talk about your internet use.

- On average, how much time do you spent on the internet per week? (你平均每周上网的时间是多少?)
- What do you mainly use the internet for? (你主要上网做什么?)
- What are the websites you visit most? (你最常浏览的网站有哪些?)
- How often do you use the Chinese-language internet? (你浏览中文互联网的频率是什么样的?)
- Why do you use the Chinese-language internet? (你觉得使用中文互联网的原因是什么?)
- Generally speaking, what does using the Chinese-language internet mean to you? (总体来讲，你认为用中文互联网给你带来了什么?)

- Have there been changes in your internet use pattern after your migration/return migration? If yes, How and Why? (自从你移民/回流之后, 你应用互联网的习惯是否发生了变化? 如果是, 你觉得是什么原因?)
- What influence does the internet have on your life? In particular, what influence does the Chinese-language internet have on your life? (你对互联网给你的生活影响有什么样的评价? 你对中文互联网给你的生活影响又有什么样的评价?)

### Section Three: Cyber Nationalism and Identity

- Is there any event about China or Chinese that attracted your attention when you were in New Zealand? Can you give some examples? (你在新西兰期间, 哪些和中国或中国人有关的事情引起你的关注? 能举几个例子吗?)
  - How did you get the information? What are your comments and perceptions? (你讲到的这些事情是通过什么渠道获得信息的? 你对这些事件有什么评论和看法?)
  - When you read the online comments, did you feel they trigger your emotional empathy? If yes, under what circumstances? For what reasons? 当你读到网上评论/言论时, 你是否感到它们激起了你心中的“共鸣”? 如果是, 是什么情况下会这样, 你觉得是什么原因呢?
- What does “China” mean to you? (中国对于你来说意味着什么?)
- What does “Chinese” mean to you? (中国人对你来说意味着什么?)
- Do you think that because of the internet offers anonymity, you would express your sentiment more openly, which you may not do offline? If yes, under what situations would you do this? Why? (你会不会因为网络“匿名”的特性而在网上讨论时表达你在网络空间之外所不能表达的情感与言论? 什么情况下? 为什么?)

Before we finish, can you please give a score from 0 to 10 to the following two statements? (在我们结束之前, 请给下面的两个问题从零到十给个分数。)

- I am Kiwi. (我是新西兰人。)  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- I love New Zealand. (我爱新西兰。)  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

De you have other comments on your migration experience and/or the use of the Chinese-language internet? 你还有对移民和使用中文互联网的其他感想吗?

## Appendix 2: Online Survey Questionnaire

### Consent

To participate in this survey, you must be over 18, and have migration experience in New Zealand for more than 12 months. If you are not, please leave by click “leave the survey” button”. Thank you.

By clicking “Proceed”, you consent to participate in the online survey.

如果您未满 18 周岁，或是没有在新西兰居住 12 月以上的移民经历，请点击“离开问卷”。谢谢。

点击“进入”代表您已同意参与本问卷调查。

This online survey has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 08/09/2010 for 3 years. Reference number 2010/389. For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

本项目于 2010 年 9 月 8 日由奥克兰大学道德委员会审批通过。为期 3 年。参考号 2010/389。如有疑问，请咨询奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会主席，奥克兰大学，校长办公室。Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

1. Please give a score from 0 to 10 to the following two statements. (example: if you don't think you are Chinese at all, give 0; if you think you are total Chinese, give 10.)  
请您从 0 到 10 给下面的两个陈述打分。(例如：您完全不认为自己是中国人，请给 0 分；如果认为自己完全是中国人，请给 10 分。)

a. I am Chinese. 我是中国人。

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b. I love China. 我爱中国。

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**We will start by asking you some questions about yourself. 一些关于您的基本资料**

2. Current location 您现在居住在何地？

- China 中国
- New Zealand 新西兰
- Other (Please specify) 其他

3. Gender 性别

- Male 男
- Female 女

4. Year of birth (*four digits, e.g. 1976*) 出生年份（四位数字如 1976） \_\_\_\_\_

5. Year of first long-term (more than 12 months) arrival in New Zealand (*four digits, e.g. 1976*). 您首次到新西兰长住（超过 12 个月）是在哪年？（四位数字如 1976）  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Your citizenship status 您的国籍与签证状况？

- PRC citizen 中国公民
- NZ citizen 新西兰公民 → **go to 8 if selected**

7. What visa are you currently holding? 您现在持什么签证？

- PR (permanent resident of New Zealand) 新西兰永久居民
- Student 学生
- Work 工作
- Others 其他

*Educational background. 教育背景*

8. How would you describe your English level? 您认为您的英语水平如何？

- 1 hardly any 基本不会
- 2 basic 非常有限
- 3 good enough for daily routine 能应付日常生活
- 4 fluent 流利
- 5 near native 近乎母语

9. Your highest education level acquired in China. 您在中国已获得的最高学历是？

- None 无
- primary school 小学



- Junior high 初中
- Senior high 高中
- College certificate 大专
- Bachelor's degree 本科
- Master's degree 硕士
- Doctorate 博士

10. Your highest education level acquired in New Zealand. 您在新西兰已获得的最  
高学历是？

- None 无
- Secondary school 高中
- NZ level 1 certificate 新西兰一级证书
- NZ level 2 certificate 新西兰二级证书
- NZ level 3 certificate 新西兰三级证书
- NZ level 4 certificate 新西兰四级证书
- NZ level 5 diploma 新西兰五级文凭
- NZ level 6 diploma 新西兰六级文凭
- NZ level 7 qualification or Bachelor's degree 七级文凭或学士学位
- Post-graduate/Honours degrees 研究生班或荣誉学位
- Master's degree 硕士
- Doctorate degree 博士

*Occupation and Income 工作与收入状况*

11. What is your current occupation? 您现在的工作是什么？

- I am employed. (example: accountant, nurse, lecturer, etc.) 我有工作。（如：  
会计师，护士，大学讲师等）
- I am not employed. (example: unemployed, students, retired, etc.) 无工作。  
（如：无业，失业，学生，退休等）

12. What is your estimated personal annual income now? (in NZ\$) 您现在在新西兰  
的收入是多少？（新西兰元）

- Zero income
- NZD1–NZD5,000
- NZD5,001–NZD10,000
- NZD10,001–NZD15,000
- NZD15,001–NZD20,000
- NZD20,001–NZD25,000
- NZD25,001–NZD30,000
- NZD30,001–NZD35,000
- NZD35,001–NZD40,000
- NZD40,001–NZD50,000

- NZD50,001–NZD70,000
- NZD70,001–NZD100,000
- NZD100,001 or more

13. What was your occupation BEFORE you came to New Zealand? 您在到新西兰之前的工作是什么?

- I was employed. (example: accountant, nurse, lecturer, etc.) 我有工作。(如：会计师，护士，大学讲师等)
- I was not employed. (example: unemployed, students, retired, etc.) 无工作。(如：无业，失业，学生，退休等)

14. What was your estimated personal annual income in China? (in RMB) 您当时在中国的收入是多少? (人民币)

- Zero income
- RMB1–RMB5,000
- RMB5,001–RMB10,000
- RMB10,001–RMB15,000
- RMB15,001–RMB20,000
- RMB20,001–RMB25,000
- RMB25,001–RMB30,000
- RMB30,001–RMB35,000
- RMB35,001–RMB40,000
- RMB40,001–RMB50,000
- RMB50,001–RMB70,000
- RMB70,001–RMB100,000
- RMB100,001 or more

15. How well do you think you have integrated into the NZ mainstream society? Please give a score from 0 to 10. (0 means not at all integrated; 10 means totally integrated.) 您觉得自己融入新西兰主流社会程度如何? 请从 0 – 10 给出个分数。(0 代表完全没有融入，10 代表完全融入了。)

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Now we would like to ask you something about you internet use. 现在是一些关于使用互联网的问题*

16. On average, how much time do you use the internet every day? 您平均每天上网时间有多长?

- Less than half an hour per day 每天不到半小时

- Half to one hour per day 每天半小时到 1 小时
- One hour to two hours per day 每天 1 到 2 小时
- More than two hours per day 每天多于 2 小时

17. How often do you use the Chinese-language internet (on average)? 每周浏览中文互联网的次数(平均)?

- I cannot remember how many times per week, but I would use it whenever I get online. 不记得一周几次，但只要上网就会用。
- Everyday 每天
- 6 times per week 一周 6 次
- 5 times per week 一周 5 次
- 4 times per week 一周 4 次
- 3 times per week 一周 3 次
- 2 times per week 一周 2 次
- 1 times per week 一周 1 次
- Never use it 从不

*Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. 请选择你对下列陈述的同意程度。*

18. I use Chinese-language internet (platform and content) because... 我使用中文互联网（包括中文平台和中文内容）的原因是——

	1 Strongly Disagree 强烈 反对	2 Disagre e 反对	3 Neutral 折中	4 Agree 同意	5 Strongly Agree 强烈 同意
I feel comfortable using my native language. 我觉得用母语更舒服	○	○	○	○	○
using my native language is more efficient to acquire information. 用中文在网上获取信息更有效率	○	○	○	○	○
I feel closer to home. 我觉得离家更近了	○	○	○	○	○

I have always used the Chinese-language internet and haven't thought about changing. 我一直都用中文网络，没想过改变	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can have common topics with my friends. 我可以和我的朋友有共同话题。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to know what is happening in China. 我需要知道中国发生了什么事	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to know what is happening in the Chinese community in New Zealand. 我想知道在新西兰的华人社区发生了什么事	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I need to keep in touch with my friends and family in China. 我要和在中国的家人朋友保持联系	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have limited knowledge about internet in other languages. 我对于其他语言的网站所知有限。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Now we would like to ask you something about you nationalism and identity. 现在是一些关于民族主义和身份认同的问题。*

19. Here are some quotes from Chinese websites during several events. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. 以下是从一些中文网站上摘录下来的陈述，请选择您对下列陈述的同意程度。

	1 Strongly Disagree 强烈 反对	2 Disagree 反对	3 Neutral 折中	4 Agree 同意	5 Strongly Agree 强烈 同意
The sovereignty of our homeland is sacred and inviolable. 祖国领土完整神圣不可侵犯。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If the Chinese government is weak/soft on sovereignty issues, it is infringing national interests. 在主权问题上，如果中国政府软弱，那它就是侵害了国家利益。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If China is at war with Japan because of sovereignty issues, I will go and join the Chinese army to fight against the Japanese. 如果中国因为主权问题和日本开战，我就会去参军。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Those who join the boycotting Japanese products march on the street are simply nationalistic angry youth. 上街抵制日货游行的就是民族主义愤青。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel worse when I hear Chinese people died in the Christchurch earthquake, because they were Chinese too. 在基督城地震中，中国人伤亡让我更难过，因为他们也是中国人。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>When a Chinese is discriminated, it is like I am discriminated against too. 其他中国人被人歧视会使同为中国人的我也觉得收到了歧视。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Chinese need to unite so that we will not be bullied by people of other ethnicities. 华人要团结一致才能不被外族人欺负。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>China is like my parents who gave birth to me and raised me. 中国就如同生我养我的父母。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I criticise China because “love well, whip well”. 我骂中国，是因为“恨铁不成钢”。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Good or bad, I love China. 不管中国好不好，我都爱它。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>I love China but it doesn't mean that I love its government. 我爱中国不代表我爱政府。</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I miss my life back in China. 我怀念我以前在中国的生活。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The motherland is what I can criticise harshly, but not a critical word from other people (of other ethnicities). 祖国就是我可以骂的狗血喷头， 外国人说不得半句。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If China is stronger, we as overseas Chinese can feel more confident. 中国更强大，我们在海外的华人 腰板也直。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When there is negative news about China in the media, I feel ashamed. 有关于中国的负面新闻，我觉得 在海外也抬不起头来。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Please give a score from 0 to 10 to the following two statements. (example: if you don't think you are Kiwi at all, give 0; if you think you are totally Kiwi, give 10.) 请您从 0 到 10 给下面的两个陈述打分。(例如：您完全不认为自己是中国人，请给 0 分；如果认为自己完全是中国人，请给 10 分。)

a. I am Kiwi. 我是 kiwi (新西兰人)。

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

b. I love New Zealand. 我爱新西兰。

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

21. Final Comments (optional)

If you have further comments or remarks on migrant use of the internet or your identity, please leave your comments below (or finish the questionnaire by click “next”).

如果您对自己作为海外华人使用互联网或是对自己的身份认同还有其他看法，请在下面的文本框中输入您的评论(或是点击“下一步”结束问卷)。

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### Appendix 3: Interviewee Profile

Name	Age	Sex	Visa/Citizenship Status	Year of Arriving in New Zealand	Year of Returning to China	Highest Education (country)*	Place of Interview
Yin	24	M	Student	2008	NA	Level 7 Diploma (NZ)	Auckland
Jing	38	F	Work Visa	2010	NA	College Diploma (CN)	Auckland
Kate	24	F	Permanent Resident	2003	NA	Master's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Frances	27	F	Permanent Resident	2006	NA	Honour's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Ian	26	M	Permanent Resident	2006	NA	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Carl	25	M	Permanent Resident	1999	NA	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Samantha	40	F	New Zealand Citizen	1995	NA	College Diploma (CN)	Auckland
Jessica	52	F	New Zealand Citizen	1998	NA	Bachelor's Degree (CN)	Auckland
Helen	51	F	New Zealand Citizen	1995	NA	Post Graduate Diploma (NZ)	Auckland
Debby	45	F	New Zealand Citizen	1999	NA	Master's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Stephanie	22	F	Permanent Resident	2001	NA	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Auckland
Wayne	21	M	Permanent Resident	2001	NA	College (NZ)	Auckland
Min	21	M	Student	2008	NA	College (NZ)	Auckland
Peng	37	M	Work	2008	NA	Junior High (CN)	Auckland
Jacob	42	M	Work	2007	NA	Senior High (CN)	Auckland
Yang	31	M	Permanent Resident	2008	NA	Level 7 Diploma (NZ)	Auckland
Susan	30	F	Permanent Resident	2008	NA	Master's Degree (CN)	Auckland
Ann	58	F	Permanent Resident	2010	NA	Bachelor's Degree (CN)	Auckland
Judy	29	F	Student	2003	2007	Level 7 Diploma (NZ)	Shenzhen
Sally	29	F	Student	2000	2008	Master's Degree (AUS)	Shenzhen
Han	32	M	Student	2002	2010	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Shenzhen
Cheng	29	M	Work	2002	2008	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Shenzhen
Brenda	29	F	Permanent Resident	2000	2006	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Beijing
Alex	31	F	Permanent Resident	2000	2006	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Beijing
Gene	31	M	Permanent Resident	2001	2011	Post Graduate Diploma (NZ)	Beijing
Wen	27	F	Student	2007	2008	Master's Degree (NZ)	Beijing
June	28	F	Student	2008	2009	Master's Degree (NZ)	Beijing
Mark	39	M	Permanent Resident	2003	2008	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Beijing
Charles	30	M	New Zealand Citizen	1994	2011	Bachelor's Degree (NZ)	Beijing

\* The country where the participant got his/her highest education. CN=China, NZ=New Zealand, AUS=Australia.

## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

(English)

### Participant Information Sheet (Online Questionnaire Respondents)

**Project Title:** Chinese Cybersphere:

Nationalism and Identity

**Researcher:** Hang YIN



School of Asian Studies  
The University of Auckland  
Auckland  
New Zealand,

18 Symonds Street, Auckland City  
<http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/about/departments-and-schools/school-of-asian-studies>

Telephone: 64 9 373 7599 extn 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Dear participant:

I am a PhD student in the School of Asian Studies, the University of Auckland. I would like to invite you to participate in my thesis research entitled “Chinese Cybersphere: Nationalism and Identity”. This research aims at exploring the influence of the Internet in fostering nationalistic sentiment among overseas Chinese. It will also investigate how a combination of online-offline experience helps forge the identity of overseas Chinese. This online questionnaire is a part of my thesis study which will explore your online and offline experience, feelings and opinions as an overseas Chinese. Please note that some questions may be politically sensitive.

Your participation would involve filling out a questionnaire in which I will ask you about your online and offline experience. It will take you about 20 to 40 minutes to finish the questionnaire, depending on how much comment you wish to provide. You can choose to use English or Chinese for the questionnaire.

Data generated from this questionnaire will be used in my PhD thesis entitled “Chinese Cybersphere: Nationalism and Identity” and in future publications. Your name and personal identity information are not included and are not required in this questionnaire. Each participant will be assigned a computer-generated code, and the feature of ‘collect responses anonymously’ provided by the online survey platform further ensures your identity not being revealed.

All materials will be stored in a secured place on a flash drive and a back-up copy on CDs in the School of Asian Studies, the University of Auckland for six years for future study. Only the researcher and his supervisor have access to the data.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the questionnaire anytime by closing the webpage, and your data will not be collect, stored and used. However, once you complete and submit the online questionnaire, withdrawal will not be possible. If you have any further questions about this research, please contact my supervisor or me, or the head of my school.

Contact details:

Hang YIN

Address: No. 18 Symonds St.

School of Asian Studies

University of Auckland

Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 85399

Email: hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Head of the School of Asian Studies:

Professor Paul Clark

Address: No. 18 Symonds St.

School of Asian Studies

University of Auckland

Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 87536

Email: paul.clark@auckland.ac.nz

My supervisor: Professor Manying Ip

Address: No. 18 Symonds St.

School of Asian Studies

University of Auckland

Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 87531

Email: my.ip@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

## Participant Information Sheet

(Interview Participants)

**Project Title:** Chinese Cybersphere:  
Nationalism and Identity

**Researcher:** Hang YIN



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The University of Auckland  
Auckland  
New Zealand,

18 Symonds Street, Auckland City  
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Telephone: 64 9 373 7599 extn 85399  
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Dear participant:

I am a PhD student in the School of Asian Studies, the University of Auckland. I would like to invite you to participate in my thesis research entitled “Chinese Cybersphere: Nationalism and Identity”. This research aims at exploring the influence of the Internet in fostering nationalistic sentiment among overseas Chinese. It will also investigate how a combination of online-offline experience helps forge the identity of overseas Chinese. This interview is a part of my thesis study which will explore your online and offline experience, feelings and opinions as an overseas Chinese who has spent a total of no less than 6 month in New Zealand. Your participation would involve an interview in which I will ask you about your online and offline experience while living in New Zealand. If you have returned to China, I will also ask you questions about your Internet experience in China.

The interview will last for about 60 minutes, and it will be recorded on a Digital Voice Recorder. You can choose to use English or Chinese for the interview. You are free to elaborate on any of your answers within the course of the interview. You will not be offered a copy of the recording. However, you will be given a copy of the transcript of the recording transcribed by the researcher and have a chance to make corrections to factual errors in the transcript. All materials will be stored in a secured place on a flash drive and a back-up copy on CDs in the School of Asian Studies for six years for future study. The voice recording will be deleted and CDs destroyed after that period of time.

The interview data will be used in my PhD thesis entitled “Chinese Cybersphere: Nationalism and Identity” and in future publications; however, your identity and personal information will not be revealed in these and no third party has access to your information. Should you require it, a link to access the electronic version of the PhD thesis will be sent to you through email when it is completed. You will be informed if the data is used in future publications by email and a link to access the publication will also be sent to you upon request.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the project anytime within 3 months after the interview, and your data will not be used. If you have any further questions about this research, please contact my supervisor or me, or the head of my school.

Contact details:

Hang YIN  
Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
School of Asian Studies  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

My supervisor: Professor Manying Ip  
Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
School of Asian Studies  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 3737599x87531  
Email: [my.ip@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:my.ip@auckland.ac.nz)

The head of the School of Asian Studies:  
Professor Paul Clark  
Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
School of Asian Studies  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 87536  
Email: [paul.clark@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:paul.clark@auckland.ac.nz)

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

(Chinese)

## 参与者须知

(网上调查问卷参与者)

**项目名称:** 华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同

**研究员:** 尹杭 (Hang YIN)



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Telephone: 64 9 373 7599 extn 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

亲爱的参与者:

本人是奥克兰大学亚洲研究学院在读博士生。我诚恳地邀请您参与我的题为《华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同》的博士论文研究。本研究旨在探索互联网在培养海外华人民族主义情结中的影响。同时, 本研究也探讨实际生活与互联网如何塑造海外华人的身份认同。本采访是我论文研究的一部分, 主要是要了解您作为身居海外 6 个月以上的海外华人在互联网“线上”与“线下”的经历、感受、以及观点。在本采访中, 我将会问及您在新西兰生活期间的“线上”与“线下”经历。如果您现已回流中国, 我将会问及您在中国的互联网使用经历。请注意, 问卷中有些政治敏感性的问题。

您的参与是填写一份调查问卷。问卷中会问及您互联网“线上”与“线下”的经历。根据您的评论的长短, 完成本问卷大概要 20 到 40 分钟。您可以选择用中文或英文填写问卷。

来自本问卷的数据将用于在我的博士论文《华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同》, 以及将来的出版物中。问卷中不涉及到您的姓名和身份信息。每个参与者会分配到一个由计算机产生的代码, 而且网上调查问卷平台的“匿名收集信息”功能也会确保您的身份不会外泄。

所有问卷收集到的材料会储存在移动硬盘上, 并有一个备份在 CD 上。这些材料会被存放在亚洲研究学院一个安全的地方并保存 6 年以方便以后的研究。在这之后, 所有的材料将会被销毁。除了研究员本人和其导师以外没有任何第三方可以接触到这些材料。

您的参与是完全自愿的。你可以在填写问卷的过程中通过关闭网页来撤出本研究。如果是这样, 任何您的采访数据都不会被收集、储存及使用在本研究中。然而, 当您

完成问卷并提交以后，您就无法再退出参与。如果您对这个研究还有其他疑问，可以联系我，我的导师，或者是系主任。

联系方式:

尹杭

Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
School of Asian Studies  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

我的导师:

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系主任:

Paul Clark 教授

Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

如有疑问，请咨询奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会主席，奥克兰大学，副校长办公室。Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

本项目于 08/09/2010 由奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会审批通过。为期 3 年。

参考号 2010/389

(Chinese)

## 参与者须知

(受访者)

**项目名称:** 华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同

**研究员:** 尹杭 (Hang YIN)



School of Asian Studies  
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New Zealand,

18 Symonds Street, Auckland City  
<http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/uoahome/about/departments-and-schools/school-of-asian-studies>

Telephone: 64 9 373 7599 extn 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

亲爱的采访参与者:

本人是奥克兰大学亚洲研究学院在读博士生。我诚恳地邀请您参与我的题为《华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同》的博士论文研究。本研究旨在探索互联网在培养海外华人民族主义情结中的影响。同时, 本研究也探讨实际生活与互联网如何塑造海外华人的身份认同。本采访是我论文研究的一部分, 主要是要了解您作为身居海外 6 个月以上的海外华人在互联网“线上”与“线下”的经历、感受、以及观点。在本采访中, 我将会问及您在新西兰生活期间的“线上”与“线下”经历。如果您现已回流中国, 我将会问及您在中国的互联网使用经历。采访中可能有些政治敏感性的问题。

本采访会进行大约 60 分钟。采访内容会被录音。您可以选择用中文或是英文进行采访。你可以自由地就采访中的任何问题详细阐述, 您可以因为任何原因拒绝回答任何问题。虽然不会提供给您采访录音, 但是我会提供给您一份录音内容的抄本, 而且您可以就其中的数据错误进行更正。所有的采访材料会储存在移动硬盘上, 并有一个备份在 CD 上。这些材料会被存放在亚洲研究学院一个安全的地方并保存 6 年以方便以后的研究。在这之后, 所有的材料将会被销毁。

采访所得到的信息会用在我的博士论文《华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同》, 以及将来的出版物中。您的身份和个人信息不会透露给任何第三方。如果您需要, 我会在论文结束后通过电子邮件发给您一个论文电子版的链接。如果您的采访数据被应用于将来的出版物中, 我会通过电子邮件通知您, 并在您要求的情况下发一个该出版物的链接给您。

您的参与是完全自愿的。在采访过程中你可以拒绝回答任何问题。你可以在采访之后的三个月内撤出本研究。如果是这样, 任何您的采访数据都不会用在本研究中。如果您对这个研究还有其他疑问, 可以联系我, 我的导师, 或者是系主任。

联系方式:



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Address: No. 18 Symonds St.  
School of Asian Studies  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 09 3737599 extn. 85399  
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

如有疑问，请咨询奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会主席，奥克兰大学，副校长办公室。Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

本项目于 08/09/2010 由奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会审批通过。为期 3 年。参考号 2010/389

## Appendix 5: Consent Form

(English)

### Consent Form (Interview Participants)

**Project Title:** Chinese Cybersphere: Nationalism and Identity

**Researcher:** Hang YIN



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The University of Auckland  
Auckland  
New Zealand,

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Telephone: 64 9 373 7599 extn 85399  
Email: [hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:hyin018@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

I have read the Participation Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that participation in this interview is entirely voluntary
- I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me within 3 months after the interview.
- I understand and agree that this interview will be recorded on a Digital Voice Recorder, and a copy of the transcript will be given to me and I can make changes to factual errors in the transcript.
- I understand that the data will be kept for 6 years for future publication. After that period of time, they will be destroyed.
- I understand that my participation in this research will be kept confidential and the information I provide will be reported or published in a way that will not identify me as the source.
  - I agree/ do not agree that the interviews be audio-taped.
  - I would like / would not like a copy of the summary in email.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

(Chinese)

## 同意书

(受访者)

**项目名称:** 华语互联网空间: 民族主义与身份认同

**研究员:** 尹杭 (Hang YIN)

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本同意书将保存六年

我已经阅读过《参与者须知》并且理解了本研究的宗旨和我被选中参与研究的原因。研究者已经针对我想要了解的问题做出了另我满意的回答。

- 我同意参与本研究项目。
- 我了解我的参与是完全出于自愿。
- 我了解我可以在受访过程中, 或在采访结束后的 3 个月内随时退出参与本研究。
- 我了解并同意本采访被录音。录音抄本会提供给我, 而且我可以对抄本中的数据错误进行更正。
- 我了解采访信息会被保存 6 年以用于将来的出版物。在这段时间以后, 所有信息及数据会被销毁。
- 我了解我在本研究的参与会被保密, 而且第三方无法从论文和出版物中的追溯到我是信息来源。
  - 我同意/不同意采访被录音
  - 我想要/不想要通过电子邮件获得论文摘要及信息电子邮件地址: \_\_\_\_\_

姓名: \_\_\_\_\_

签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 08/09/2010 for 3 years, REFERENCE NUMBER 2010/389.

本项目于 08/09/2010 由奥克兰大学人力参与道德委员会审批通过。为期 3 年。参考号 2010/389

## Appendix 6: Advertisement in Skykiwi Online Forums

(English)

**Forum Posting Title:** Call for Attention, Participation, and Dissemination. A Study about Chinese Migrants and Internet Use. Everyone Can Help!

**Posting Content:**

In order to better understand how internet use influences the Chinese migrants in New Zealand, I invite you to participate in a PhD research entitled “The Chinese-language Cyberspace: Overseas Chinese Nationalism and Identity” (University of Auckland).

I invite you to participate in an online survey.

Are you 18 years old and over? Have you been in New Zealand for more than one year? YES?  
– Great!

Online about 5 minutes! Answer some questions (you can skip any question that you don’t want to answer).

Please click the link below (professional online survey platform, absolutely secure).

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/overseaschineseandinternet>

The project has been approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee.

The reference number is 2010/389.

(Chinese)

**广告帖主题:**

求关注，求参与，求扩散。了解新西兰中国移民对互联网的使用。大家帮忙啊！

**内容:**

为了增进了解互联网使用对新西兰中国移民的影响，奥克兰大学博士研究项目《中文互联网空间与海外华人民族主义与身份认同》

恳请各位参与网上调查。

你够 18 岁不？你到新西兰有 1 年了不？ YES。好！

只要 5 分钟！回答一些问题（不想答的可以跳过噢！）

请点下面的链接（专业调查网站，绝对安全）

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/overseaschineseandinternet>

项目是通过了奥大“道德委员会”批准了的噢！

有研究项目备案的噢！编号是 2010/389