"Us" and "Others": The Chinese diaspora in Japan and the negotiation of their membership in the sphere of Chineseness

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Introduction

In the steamy heat of 2021 summer, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was finally held after being postponed for a year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, although largely behind closed doors. With the arrival of the Chinese delegation of 777 members in Tokyo, Liu Guoliang, the secretary-general of the Chinese delegation, gave a public speech when he was interviewed by CCTV News, one of China's state-owned news agencies. While he urges the Chinese athletes to strive to achieve the best possible result, he also indicates that they now face significant challenges due to the stubbornly high infection rate in Japan and some anti-epidemic measures introduced by the Japanese government. For instance, he pointed out that "…for table tennis athletes, they are not allowed to touch the table with their hands, neither blow directly on the Ping-Pong ball…so in the preparation stage, we tried hard to train our athletes, so that they can get used to the interference brought about by these rules". This interview clip soon becomes viral on many Chinese social media platforms, such as the well-known Weibo and WeChat, as Ping-Pong, according to one of my informants, "is China's national sport… and acquiring an Olympic gold medal in this game while defeating Japan is almost like a default perception among many Chinese citizens".

Several research participants discussed Liu Guoliang's speech with me during and after our interviews. For instance, Xuefen, a forty-eight-year-old businesswoman who has been living in Japan for 27 years, commented that:

> "It was clear that they were trying to make things difficult especially for the Chinese players…well, but he (Liu Guoliang) only gets to taunt Japan. Do you think he would dare to say so if it were their government who did this?"

I was once again amazed by how she, like many other Chinese migrants I talked to, articulated her relationship with China in an ambivalent way by using the notion of "others" to

refer to both China and Japan. Although she used the same "they" pronoun (in Chinese: *tamen* 他们) twice in the interview, it is clear that the former "*tamen*" refers to Japan/ the Japanese nation, while the latter refers to China/ the Chinese nation. Therefore, to some extent, this shift or change in subject that the "they" pronoun describes reflects a shift or change in her own understanding of her relationship with the homeland. As we approached the end of our interview, I could not resist but asked her, "Which side do you take"? And Xuefen replied to me laughing, "neither".

It is interviews like this that inspire me to explore the way Chinese diaspora in Japan articulate their memberships to the Chinese nation – in which context do they consider "China" as "we" and "us", and as "they" and "others"? I am also interested in investigating whether their "us v.s. others" articulation has anything to do with their unique position as "Chinese living in Japan", given that these two countries are well known for their ongoing and historical conflicts. Therefore, I dedicate this thesis to answering these questions by exploring the daily experiences of the Chinese diaspora derived from both the online and the offline realm. As detailed in later sections, in the context where "digital media have become so inseparable from us that we no longer live with media, but in media" (Deuze, 2011: 137), I consider observing their engagement with both the digital and the physical world a necessary condition to unpack their relationship with the Chinese nation.

In the following sections, I first set out the focus of this research and list key research questions. Then, I introduce some key concepts that ground this research project, such as "digital diaspora", "online-offline continuum", and "digital divide". In this section, I also clarify how I interpret these concepts in this thesis after thoroughly reviewing existing studies in the field of digital diaspora studies. This is quite necessary as many "buzzwords" commonly used in this field are actually loosely defined. Next, I introduce Lefebvre's work on "the right to the city", as this particular work inspires me to develop the conceptual framework of this thesis. In

this section, I explain the meaning of his work and how I take inspiration from it to conceptualise the articulation of "us" and "others" among Chinese diaspora in Japan when considering their membership in the Chinese nation. Following this, I present existing studies concerning the Chinese diaspora in Japan in Section 4. Specifically, given that many previous studies found the Chinese diaspora in Japan having difficulties making sense of their lives in the host society and their ties with the homeland, in this section I focus on explaining the causes of these phenomena and illustrating how the use of digital media has made their identity and belonging formation process even more dynamic. Finally, Section 5 presents the structure of the thesis and explains how I plan to present the findings.

1. *Focus and research questions*

Inspired by my experiences interacting with the informants, this PhD project is about to make sense of the way the Chinese diaspora articulate the "us v.s. others" narrative when reflecting on their relationships with the Chinese nation. In other words, I want to understand what motivates them to claim an identity alignment with Chinese nationhood in some contexts, while disengaging themselves from it in other contexts. Given that we now live in a digital era in which digital media have become an integrated part of our daily experiences, the word "contexts" here hence refers to occasions and realities that are derived from both the online and the offline realm.

This main goal of my study consists of several important concepts, such as China, the Chinese nation, and the Chinese diaspora. While "Chinese" is clearly the thematic word for this PhD project, it also means that it is crucially important for me to unpack the meaning of this term. Therefore, the first main research question I aim to address is, when we are talking about the China nation and its subjects, what is this notion of "Chineseness" about and what kind of ideologies does it entail?

Following this, the next research question is therefore what are the reasons the Chinese diaspora have in claiming or not claiming an identity alignment with this notion of Chineseness, and how do they articulate such identity alignment within, across, or against axes of identification such as ethnicity, human mobility, digital connectivity, and gender? While the first part of this question allows me to address the focus of this thesis, by answering the second part of this question, I aim to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the self-identification of the Chinese diaspora, since it allows me to approach this population by acknowledging its diversity rather than assuming unity. Furthermore, as Anthony Giddens explained, one's self-making and self-understanding are both "reflexive project of the self which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised narratives and takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems" (Giddens, 1991: 5). In this sense, this research question also allows me to see the Chinese diaspora's claiming or disclaiming of membership in the Chinese nation not as a one-off or once-and-for-all event but a process that involves constant revision and reflection when they come across multiple or the convergence of multiple axes of differentiation.

When answering these questions, I simultaneously consider the role that digital media play in the Chinese diaspora's membership claiming and/or disclaiming process. In addition to what I have already explained earlier, this is because digital media have to a large extent become a necessary condition for the diaspora's connection with and the imagination of the homeland while physically isolated from it. Therefore, in this thesis, I consider digital media as an indispensable element to the Chinese diaspora in Japan and posit that it plays a vital role when they negotiate their relationships with the Chinese nation. By answering these research questions, my objective is to map out and contextualise the membership negotiation process of the Chinese diaspora in a time when their lives are digitised and constantly mediated.

Methodologically, the arguments reported in this thesis are mainly drawn from extensive

qualitative data that I collected from April 2018 to May 2022, including in-depth interviews with 69 interviewees and ethnographic media observations with 26 informants. In addition, I also used descriptive quantitative data of 413 survey participants to supplement the qualitative findings to obtain more complementary data and perspectives on different dimensions of the Chinese diaspora's narratives, offering insight into both divergent subjectivities and shared understandings among the research participants regarding memberships and belongings. Theoretically, I use intersectionality as a framework to connect and analyse dialogues across digital media, human mobility, ethnicity, and gender studies.

2. Digital diasporas

As the title indicates, in this thesis, I tend to consider the research participants, as well as millions of other diasporas who are digitally connected as the "digital diaspora". This term, as pinned down by Everett (2009), together with some other "buzzwords" such as "connected migrants" (Diminescu, 2008), "web diasporas" (Brinkerhoff, 2009), "mediated migrants" (Hepp et al., 2012), "net diasporas" (Madianou and Miller, 2012), and "e-diasporas" (Diminescu and Loveluck, 2014), is introduced by scholars attempting to understand the complex intersectionality between digital communication technologies and human mobility. However, the use of this term sometimes leads to confusion. For example, when I met my informants for the first time, many of them were confused by this term, especially the "digital" part, saying to me "but I am real and I am here though"? I assume that part of the reason is that the term "digital diaspora" itself is far from having a clear/ concrete definition or being coherent. In this section, I first break down the term and separately explain how "digital" and "diaspora" are conceptualised in the field of media and migration studies. Then, I shall clarify how this term is interpreted in this thesis and explain the reason for using it.

The "digital" and the "diaspora"

As Ponzanesi (2020) points out, depending on the disciplinary takes and media-specific variations, there are profoundly different ways to interpret and describe the relationship between digital connectivity and mobility, spatiality, belonging, as well as self-identification (978-979). For example, while terms such as "web-", "net-" and "e-" diaspora reflect some researchers' more medium-specific interests in digital and communication studies and their attention paid to hyperlinks and digital traces (Candidatu et al., 2019), "online-" and "digital-" diasporas, on the other hand, indicate a focus on online discourses and how communities are imagined and sustained in the digital-physical continuum (Miller and Slater, 2000). Moreover, other terms such as "transnational habitus" (Nedelcu, 2012) and "polymedia" (Madianou, 2014) introduced in media and migration studies mark a more ethnographic approach to digital media and diasporas, focusing on how the former mediates the daily life of the latter, and how such technologies help with sustaining transnational emotional and other social ties.

In this sense, the "digital-" prefix underlines the continuum between online and offline spaces, or, as Fortunati et al. (2012) phrased, the "dialogical engagement between the societies and information". Furthermore, it also pays attention to how individuals navigate through those spaces. As Fortunati et al. (2003) indicate, the term "digital" itself started to emerge in academic discussions after the invention and popularisation of portable devices for digital communication, such as mobile phones, laptops, and tablets. Different from fixed digital tools such as desktops which do not have the ability to move through the physical space alongside the human body, the introduction of handhold digital interfaces enables users to experience and imagine digital spaces through their body while they are moving through the physical world. In other words, the fact that people can carry and use their digital devices on the move indicates their ability to consume and interpret narratives that take place in both

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online and offline spaces simultaneously and instantaneously. In this way, the word "digital" seems to perfectly reflect how the "movement of the human body" is often accompanied by portable digital devices, indicating that it is a "digitalised" and "mediated" experience. In addition, it also illustrates how the online and offline spaces are integrated together; and how the online realm is "enacted and constructed" in the offline realm (Fortunati et al., 2012: 109-110).

In addition to this word, another word worth some clarification is "diaspora". Perhaps the first attempt to use the term "diaspora" systematically in the field of social sciences was made by Armstrong in 1976 in his article *Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas*, in which he argues that "contemporary diasporas…constitute indispensable aspects of the multi-ethnic character of human societies", which should be seen as "distinctive collectivity" or even as "separate society" (393). He further indicates the need to acknowledge the interaction between "the diasporas" and "the mainstream", which reflects a common understanding and expectation towards the diaspora population in his time, that "they should relinquish their attachments to their homeland in favour of integration" in the country of destination (ibid). More importantly, by adopting a historical perspective, as he claims – "diasporas can hardly be understood except in historical perspective" (ibid: 393), he categorises the diaspora as either "archetypal" - such as the Jews, Gypsies and Armenians; or "situational" - such as the Germans throughout Eastern Europe and the Chinese dispersed over Southeast Asia (ibid: 394). This conceptualisation, as Tölölyan pointed out later in 1996, has an emphasis on the notion of "dispersion", which he argues is something different from the underpinning connotation of the term "diaspora". Tölölyan (1996) therefore proposes a reframing of the definition of the term, arguing that it is important to note the notion of agency of dispersed individuals – in other words, to acknowledge "the process of making sense of the dispersion beyond diasporas' place of origin…of creating infrastructures for narration and action in trans-national and trans-local

contexts", which to zome extent also echoes with the "roots v.s. routes" argument suggested by Gilroy in 1993.

Diaspora studies after the 1990s have therefore tended to underline the processes of the *making* of diasporas (Tsagarousianou, 2020: 11), which marks a shift from a classical essentialist perspective to a comparative and social constructivist view (Cohen, 1997=2008). Khachig Tölölyan's argument seems to perfectly match the aspiration of this thesis, which is to see how the Chinese diaspora make sense of their lives in Japan through the use of digital media in the trans-national context. As the narratives I report in this thesis are collected from either face-to-face interviews with my informants or the ethnographic observation of their online activities, this means that this research in essence sees its subjects as active actors who have the freedom and agency to live and shape their lives in a way that their hearts desire – which is one of the reasons why I opted for the term "diaspora" in this thesis.

The term "diaspora" has since been popularly used to identify and denote various human mobility phenomena, such as the "indentured labour movement of Indians within the British colonies… the imperial and trade diasporas in the case of the Chinese and Lebanese… cultural diasporas in the case of the Caribbean" (Candidatu et al., 2019: 35), and the "more recent' 'professional", North-South mobility from Western post-industrial societies to other parts of the world (Brubaker, 2005). In a general sense, the "diaspora" in those literature is used to establish, but also to problematise the relationship between nation, soil and identity (Ponzanesi, 2020: 979) under the totalising discourse of postcolonialism. As a result, they are criticised for seeing diasporas as not much more than a sub-category of an ethnic group (Candidatu et al., 2019) and for claiming that their human mobility is a mere reflection of the history of dispersal and expropriation (Ponzanesi, 2020: 979). In this sense, how "diaspora" is defined in those studies is not so different compared to how it was conceptualised by Armstrong in the 1960s – that its definition has an essentialist notion in the sense that its concept always circulates

around ethnic minorities' visions, memories or myths about their "homeland" and the belief that diasporas and/or their descendants will eventually return to the "homeland" should the conditions prove favourable (Safran, 1991: 83-84). In other words, a homeland and a pre-existing ethnic identity are considered as necessary for the conceptualisation of "diaspora", and nations and borders were understood as a geographically defined concept.

Scholars have consequently asked for a revision of the word diaspora to account for the erosion of the nation-state, or deterritorialization, as well as the emergence of new cultural hybrid identities partially as consequences of the progress of globalisation and the rise of digital media (Cohen, 1997; Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990; Safran, 1992). For instance, Robin Cohen pointed out that the Internet allows diaspora communities to form a collective identity with not only the destination countries/ homelands, but also members of the same ethnic communities in other countries (Cohen cited in Tsagarousianou, 2019: 79). Cohen (1997) consequently argues to use the underlying focus on ethnicity in diaspora studies as a means to account for the transnational social engagement of the diaspora.

Following his argument, from the early 2000s and onwards, the term diaspora in more recently literature refers to a notion of "bonding" or "bridging" (Erikson, 2007), where the former means the strengthening of ethnic ties among diaspora individuals of an ethnic community, and the latter means reaching out to other ethnic communities. The first case "bonding" creates forms of ethnic encapsulation (Christensen and Jansson, 2015), indicating the nurturing of the diaspora's pre-migration/ pre-existing social ties and communities, therefore the maintenance of established structural ties with the homeland post-migration (Erikson, 2007). Following this, the second case "bridging" refers to either the creation of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) and "transnational nationalist cohort" (Ang, 2004), illustrating the construction of new social networks with the diaspora's co-ethnic counterparts living in other parts of the world, or the possibilities for cosmopolitanisation (Ponzanesi, 2020: 979), emphasising the diaspora's

connection with other ethnic groups and transnational communities (Vermeulen and Keskiner, 2017).

This "bonding" and "bridging" argument, while making some important contributions by underlining the transnational and cosmopolitan axes of diasporas, also attracts criticism for promoting a binary understanding of the diaspora's connectivity and identity, as if their "encapsulation" and "cosmopolitanisation" are two mutually exclusive constructs (Christensen and Jansson, 2015). Ponzanesi and Leurs (2014) problematise the opposition between the "ethnically encapsulated connectivity" and the "cosmopolitan connectivity", arguing that this binary perspective is inadequate to acknowledge the complexity of diasporic life, especially for the diaspora who enjoy variant forms of digital connectivity. They further indicate that as digital media allow diasporas to establish different forms of connectivity and to shape those connectivities on different scales and across different spaces and time, instead of arguing their diasporic lives as either "cosmopolitan" or "encapsulating", scholars should "…understand migrant's connectivity as articulating these two constructs", namely 'the cosmopolitan self' and 'the encapsulated self', simultaneously and not as mutually exclusive constructs" (Ponzanesi, 2020: 980).

The way in which the word "diaspora" has been defined and constantly redefined marks how our understanding of this term has been shifting in parallel with the processes of globalisation and technological uprising. It no longer represents something that is dissolved in the notion of ethnicity and hence nation-state centred. Instead, the "diaspora" now constitutes an appropriate vehicle for scholars to take into account the opportunities and new possibilities that the deterritorialisation and immersion into transnational fields can bring to internationally mobilised populations, which, once again, hitherto defined in ethnic terms. In this way, I have decided to use the word "diaspora" in this thesis because it best echoes with the concept of digital media in the sense that both terms pertain a meaning to transnational social formations

and interactions, hence defying the conventional nation-centred understanding in conceptualising human mobility. As pointed out by Laguerre (2010), contemporary migrants have "three building blocks", namely immigration, information technology, and network capacity (50). In this context, the term "digital diaspora" best describes the capacity of internationally mobilised people to share information and networks and through their mobility, to maintain an "imagined community", address their local concerns, and engage in place-making (Sun and Yu, 2022: 5). In addition, given the complex Sino-Japanese history and the way the two countries have constructed their national identities, the term "diaspora" offers me a transhistorical stance to explore how the research participants understand the Chinese nation in relation to their life experiences in Japan, how they perceive their associations with the Chinese nation, and how they understand their connections with the Chinese diaspora who are geographically dispersed in other regions. Therefore, the digital diaspora as I intend it in this thesis focuses on exploring the Chinese diaspora's imagination and re-imagination of the Chinese nation through the lens of digital media: How do they understand the Chinese national identity and Chineseness? Are their interpretations in tandem with the political discourse of the party state? How does the use of digital media and consequently their transnational social interactions potentially shape the way they interpret those concepts? The digital diaspora best reflects my interest in exploring not only how the notion of a nation is interpreted and distinguished, but also the style in which it is imagined.

The online-offline continuum and media repertoire[1]

The lens of the online-offline continuum will be empirically developed as it is an important concept to understand how Chinese digital diasporas in Japan negotiate their daily

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1 Part of this section is extracted from my paper WANG, X. (2020) "Digital Technology, Physical Space, and the Notion of Belonging among Chinese Migrants in Japan" in *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 7(3): 211-233.

experiences and senses of belonging. As I briefly discussed earlier, due to the technological revolution, digital tools are widely accessible, becoming the physical basis of the contemporary globalized society (Castles 2017: 338). In this context, scholars such as Miller and Slater (2000) plead for a more "holistic" way to understand the dynamics between the internet and the "mundane", and how the use of the Internet can be perceived as a transformative process of everyday reality:

> "…treat internet media as continuous with and embedded in other social spaces, that they happen within mundane social structures and relations that they may transform but that they cannot escape into a self–enclosed cyberian apartness". (5)

Essentially, this argument indicates that the connection between online and offline is "not disengaged and separated but intertwined in daily practice and event" (Ponzanesi and Leurs 2014: 11), which is also confirmed by my informants. For instance, 40-year-old Qinhui, who has lived in Japan since the 1990s and works as a banker, was one of many who indicated that he would not be able to sustain his daily life without digital media. Qinhui often checks his business emails on his way to work, using WeChat to maintain contact with his friends and families in China from time to time, relying on online banking for international remittances, and Google Map to navigate throughout the city. He also uses the remote surveillance system on his computer to ensure that his home is secure while travelling. His experiences reveal the crucial role that digital media play in the daily interaction of the Chinese digital diaspora with surrounding realities. Although his experiences may read unsurprisingly as the way Qinhui uses digital media can easily overlap with the digital experiences of many, whether diaspora or not, this fact in turn indicates the irrelevance of the online-offline dichotomy in understanding the diaspora's everyday practises. Therefore, this thesis sees and presents digital media as something that is a protogenetic part of the Chinese diaspora's daily lives. It considers the online and the offline as spaces that validate each other, seeing both of them as essential

elements that constitute the informants' everyday lived experiences in Japan.

In addition, as my research interests are to investigate the Chinese diaspora's life experiences within this online-offline continuum, I also tend to approach digital media as a "media repertoire" (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006), meaning that I see digital media as an online ecology (Helmond, 2015) that comprises variant interactive platforms, communication channels, social networks, as well as communities, borders, and spaces. This means that in this thesis, instead of analysing how a single online platform can shape the digital diaspora's transnational experiences, I try to conceptualise the informants' digital engagements as constituted by their multi-dimensional, simultaneous use of a wide range of digital tools according to the different social and emotional contexts they are dealing with. I believe that this is a more accurate way to approach digital media, simply because it is not possible nor realistic to argue an individual's diasporic experience as solely contributed by a single digital tool.

Analysis-wise, perceiving digital media as a media repertoire also resonates with the recent theoretical surge (2010s onwards) in digital diaspora studies that seek to "decentre the media" in order to better study and deconstruct the highly dynamic digital diaspora population. Helmond (2015) points out that the media-centric approach in studying digital diasporas potentially risks to once again reinstate the human-machine division and the online-offline boundary. She indicates that overly glorifying the impact that a single digital tool could potentially have on the diaspora's life experiences risk assuming that one digital tool can be studied to make general societal and political claims, which undermines the complexity and heterogeneity of the diaspora's dynamic engagements with variant online and offline spaces. In this sense, only by focusing on a broader, more comprehensive media environment in which diasporas are situated within could we understand their cross-platform, cross-realm practises, and how such practises are spanned among various geographical and social contexts.

Therefore, I believe that an understanding of digital media as a media repertoire is needed to address the questions of the digital diaspora and fully make sense of their engagement in the "online-offline intersectional co-constituency" (Candidatu et al., 2019: 40).

Narratives from some of my other informants support this argument even more directly. For example, Yuxuan, a 28-year-old entrepreneur, explained:

"I definitely feel that the world today is totally digitised. I use so many [digital tools] at the same time, so my phone's battery dies out quickly…like email, video calls, news feeds, WeChat, Instagram, Twitter…What cannot be achieved with one app can always be accomplished with other apps".

Since most of my informants, if not all, indicated their simultaneous use of a wide range of digital tools to achieve various purposes on a daily basis, I argue that approaching digital media as a "media repertoire" therefore helps to understand how the Chinese digital diaspora are "relationally constituted here and there…across platforms, spaces, borders and networks, online and offline, by humans and data, users and platforms…that are all reflective of intersecting power relations" (Candidatu et al., 2019, 40). This approach not only works in accordance with my intention to reject the online-offline dichotomy ways of thinking, but also indicates how the coexistence of the digital and physical world may create new possibilities for scholars to (re)interpret migration and human mobility not as a mere territorial dislocation, but as being part of imaginaries on the move (Appadurai, 1996). Furthermore, as Yuxuan indicated, "what cannot be achieved with one app can always be accomplished with other apps" – in this sense, approaching digital media in a more comprehensive manner allows me to better understand the complexity and multi-layered manifestations of the Chinese digital diaspora's media usage, and hence to more clearly see how they deal with different accents and problems posed by the continuity between online and offline worlds, how they navigate through such

continuity, and how the two realms complement each other, and equally legitimating my informants' diasporic experiences in Japan.

Digital divide

One of the preconditions that ground the discussion of this thesis is the prevalence of global and transnational digital connectivity, meaning that digital tools mediate diasporas within and across borders, shaping their lives and mobilities. While this digital accessibility is key for this study, it is equally important to acknowledge the hierarchies in terms of the contemporary participation in the digital space, that individuals and communities across the globe enjoy an uneven access, availability, and affordability of digital media. Against these backdrops, the phrase "digital divide" has a considerable history as a metaphorical device to address the uneven distribution in terms of ownership of hardware on the one hand and the inequality and exclusion in/ of the internet on the other. At the initial stage, scholarships of digital divide focus on addressing "the gap separating those individuals who have access to new forms of information technology from those who do not" (Gunkel, 2003: 1) "across static geographic scales and across markers of difference" (Leurs, 2015: 19). Therefore, some early studies on digital divide indicate inequalities between the rural and the urban, the overdeveloped and the underdeveloped (Global North and the Global South), and the rich and the poor (van Dijk, 2006). In this way, "digital divide" pertains a passive, negative connotation, and the individuals in question are therefore "lagging in the use of technology…remaining behind a veil of limited knowledge and opportunities" (Green and McAdams quoted in Selwyn 2004: 370), thus seen as a symbol of backwardness.

Subsequent research concerning digital divide also raises awareness in terms of technological literacy as well as digital motivations. The former refers to limitations in accessing digital media due to limited knowledge of the digital infrastructure, whereas the latter discusses

how digitally disengaged individuals may not have enough driving force to stay connected (Olphert and Damodaran, 2013). These studies introduced much needed nuances in the early discussion, as they indicate that digital divide is not simply about having access to digital devices or not – "instead, disengagement from the cyberspace has become a much broader notion that covers more sophisticated use of ICT including not using ICT effectively in defending social groups' rights in political discourse" (Zhou, 2017: 345).

Digital divide also concerns some other markers of differentiation, such as race, ethnicity, as well as gender. Some empirical evidence found that compared to their younger, white, upper-class, male counterparts, more senior, non-white, lower-class, female individuals and individuals of other genders are less privileged with digital access and connections (Murelli and Okot-Uma, 2002). Consequently, some techno-optimists propose that once the gap between the "information haves" and "information have-nots" is closed, digital media would lead to a proliferation of democracy, equality, as well as economic development (ibid). On the other side of the spectrum, more pessimistic scholars argued against this utopian appraisal, indicating that closing the "gap" risks to further undermining democracy, devaluing individuality, and contributing to propaganda, information manipulation, censorship as well as surveillance (Morozov, 2011).

In this thesis, I plan to adopt a middle ground position between the optimistic and pessimistic perspectives, as the focus here is not to see whether the "gap" is closing or not, but to see how it shapes the daily experiences of the Chinese digital diaspora. This position allows me to move beyond the utopian and dystopian take on digital media, and instead focus on how my research participants, as non-mainstream users of digital media in Japan, pose agency to appropriate digital media and negotiate digital divide throughout such process. This research objective is derived from a recent turn in digital divide studies that shifts the research focus from accessibility and ownership toward digital spatial hierarchies. As I mentioned earlier,

given that the digital space is conceptualised as a platform that is constructed around the existing social hierarchical divisions (Papacharissi and Easton, 2013), studies on digital divide now underline the difference in terms of social-cultural configurations and political repertoires between the majority and the monitory, and between the state and individual actors (Gillespie, 2010; Couldry, 2012). Digital divide consequently investigates how technological constraints limit or manipulate individuals' access to online content (King et al., 2013). Specifically, existing studies describe the online realm as a carefully operationalised and sophisticatedly censored domain, manipulated by public and private sectors, political institutes and leading enterprises. These studies often discuss digital divide in two political contexts, namely the democratic and autocratic states (MacKinnon, 2012; Meserve and Pemstein, 2018; Stoycheff et al., 2020).

In the case of democratic states, some earlier debates mainly studied the role of PICS (Platform for Internet Content Selection), which is developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (WWWC), arguing that while it was originally introduced to control children's access to the Internet, can be seen as a sign of "everyday censorship", something that is "the most effective censorship technology ever designed" (Loosen, 2002), adopted by nation-states to prevent economic failure and its subsequent political issues (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995).

Unsurprisingly, political institutes that attract main academic interests in the discussion of digital divide are the latter, namely autocratic states. Empirical evidence reveals how autocratic governments on average tend to prefer restraining the development of Internet technology and the spread of information as a means to centralise political power, stabilise its ruling regime, and minimise unpreferred voices (Milner, 2006). This is because the Internet can essentially be seen as a channel that allows the flow of information (Meyen and Hillman, 2003), which means that if not censored, individual access to information and the ability to share information with others pose potential threats to the stability of the autocratic regime. As

Goodman et al. (1998: 23-24) argue:

"To the extent that it provides an additional communications medium, the Internet can be seen as a threat to coercive control, whether internal or external. In its most basic form, it is merely another means of sharing information. However, the robust nature of the international network . . . presents unique problems to [national] security services."

Other scholars also indicate that:

"The Internet poses a new challenge to such censorship, both because of the sheer breadth of content typically available, and because sources of content are so often remote from [the] state's jurisdiction, and thus much more difficult to penalize for breaching restrictions on permissible materials. There is some evidence that the government has attempted to prevent the spread of unwanted material by preventing the spread of the Internet itself, but a concomitant desire to capture the economic benefits of networked computing has led to a variety of strategies to split the difference" (Zittrain and Edelman, 2002: 1).

When it comes to the discussion of internet censorship in the context of autocratic states, China attracts a moderate amount of attention. Supposedly, the Chinese state has been building a sophisticated, carefully maintained, and thoroughly monitored digital repertoire ever since the 1990s, marked by its implementation of the *Golden Shield Project* (Lagerkvist, 2010). This Project, which was later famously known as the *Great Firewall*, scans online content such as text, audio, and video for sensitive words and blocks those contents from public access (Harwit and Clark, 2001; MacKinnon, 2011). In addition, some researchers found that the Chinese government also employs people to manually censor the digital domain (Qiang, 2011). A benchmark in China's Internet censorship history is the establishment of the Cyberspace

Administration of China (CAC, 中华人民共和国国家互联网信息办公室) in 2014. The CAC

constitutes the state arm of the CCP's central leading group of cyberspace affairs (Schneider,

2018: 197), namely the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission (OCCAC, 中共

中央网络安全和信息化委员会办公室), and is one of the core institutes under the direct

command of Xi Jinping. The CAC contributes to expanding and deepening the digital

governance over China's domestic digital domain, to an extent that it monitors the whole

Chinese media ecology, establishes China's media rationale, and hence contributes to

protecting the CCP's 'internet sovereignty' (Schneider, 2018).

However, it is equally important to acknowledge that in China's case, digital divide

brought by online censorship also exists beyond the nation's physical border. Back in 2019, I

conducted an online survey investigating the media usage behaviour among the Chinese
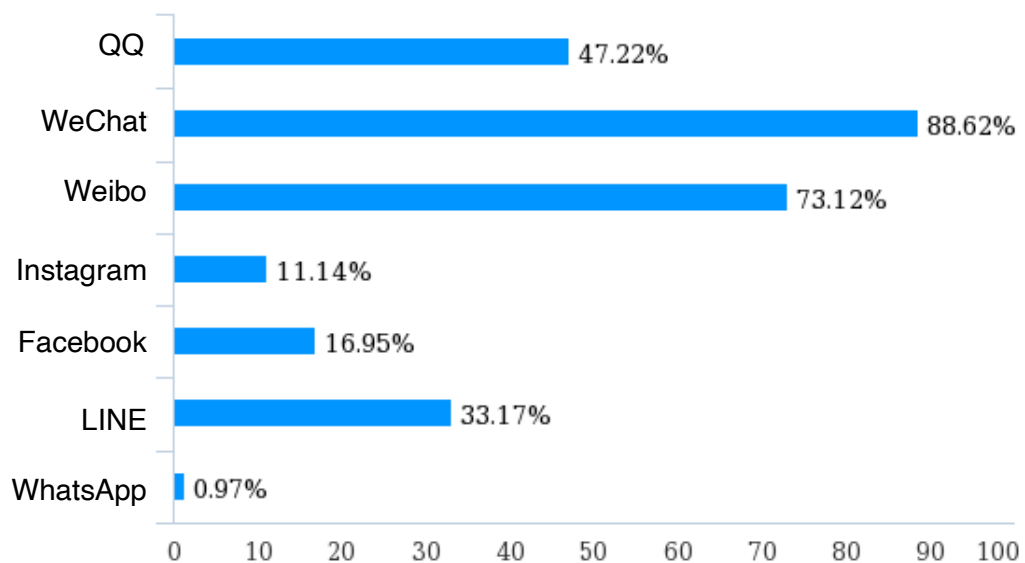
Figure. 1 Research participants' use of social media (N=413)

diaspora in Japan. The survey participants indicate that their daily use of digital media is

dominated by ethnic Chinese social media networks such as QQ, WeChat, and Weibo, as

indicated in Figure. 1 above. In addition, as Figure. 2 below illustrates, the majority of survey

participants (71.67% - 295/413) rely on mainland Chinese news agencies as their main source

to obtain news and information. Given that all these ethnic Chinese social media platforms are closely monitored by the Chinese state, it is therefore reasonable to argue that to some extent, the survey participants' digital access post-migration is still digitally divided. As the theme of this thesis is to explore the the daily experiences of the Chinese digital diaspora online and offline, I consider the impact of digital divide in their everyday lives and aim to see how the digital divide intersects with their marginalised diasporic experiences across different locations where digital culture is expressed.
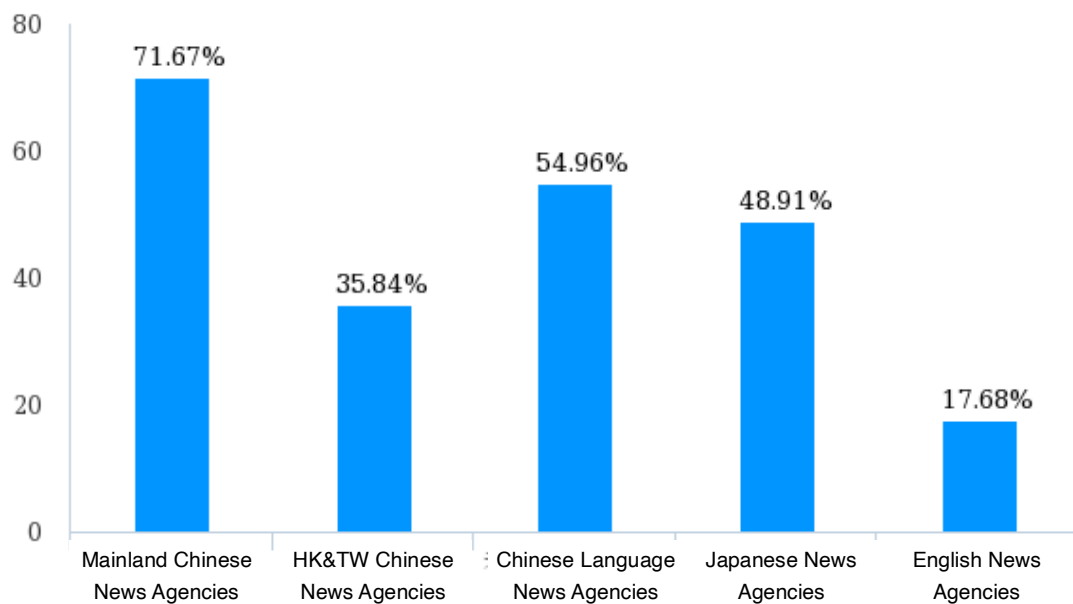
Figure. 2 Research participants' preference of news sources (N=413)

However, an important dimension regarding the digital divide that I want to emphasise in this thesis is the agency of the Chinese digital diaspora as active digital users. As illustrated above, while existing studies tend to see digital divide in the form of online censorship as something that is implemented by autocratic state actors in a top-down manner, those studies consequently downplay the power and freedom held by digital users. Therefore, the existing digital divide studies have a tendency to portray digital divide as a mere symbol of technological backwardness and/or autocratic governance and consequently perceive those who are

digitally divided as the mere victim whose media appropriation represents their desire to escape from the digital divide. However, based on both the qualitative and quantitative data I have collected, this thesis proposes a more nuanced interpretation of the power relations between the Chinese digital diaspora and digital divide. A good example to illustrate this point is the narrative offered by my informant Yang, who is a 29-year-old PhD student. When I asked her about her preferred information channel to obtain COVID-19 related news, Yang elaborated:

> "…I choose to believe the information released by Chinese media…I know what you are talking about (online censorship), that the information disseminated on those platforms is all filtered and pro-China…but after all, it would have been impossible to have pro-China narratives coming from Japan's side anyway…To put it nicely, they have been working against us for years".

On the one hand, her narrative shows how the complex Sino-Japanese power relations and conflicting political narratives are transmitted online and shape her digital media usage behaviour. On the other hand, it is more important to acknowledge her agency in consciously and actively appropriating the digital divide in a way that reflects how she positions herself within the Sino-Japanese power dynamics. In her case, opting for "news from Chinese media" that are digitally divided due to online censorship and information screening does not mark her "lagging in the use of technology" nor "remaining behind a veil of limited knowledge and opportunities" (Green and McAdams quoted in Selwyn 2004: 370). Instead, it shows how digital divide can sometimes be a preferable option and how it emerges from the interplay of socio-political dynamics and individual agency. Therefore, I argue that it is crucially important for researchers to bear in mind that in certain cases, the so-called digital divide can actually be seen as a digital tool that is actively appropriated by individual users in a way that best meets their needs and desires. The more important question I want to explore in this thesis is,

therefore, the reasons behind their voluntary opting for digital divide. In this way, I tend to address the particular and strategic digital media appropriations of the Chinese digital diaspora, and how these strategic appropriations are related to different contexts and power dynamics they are facing across online and offline spaces.

3. *Digital media appropriation and power relations – rights, spaces, and identities*

Following earlier discussions, in this section I theorise the agency of Chinese digital diasporas in Japan as well as their digital media appropriation, seeing them as active agents in their own media usage, as well as their identity formation and performance through digital media. Taking inspiration from Lefebvre's (1968=1996) writing on "the right to the city", I compose a middle ground position to account for how the use of digital media by the Chinese diaspora can be conceptualised as a way in which they negotiate their 'rights' to various social spaces with which they engage on a daily basis.

I posit Henri Lefebvre's work on "the right to the city" can be transdisciplinarily adapted to conceptualise the Chinese diaspora's use of digital media, because he initially proposed this concept to describe how technological development allows marginalised rural-urban migrants who settled in Paris' urban peripherals to fight for their rights in the Paris city and deal with conflicts of interest with the local citizens. In his time back in the 1960s, he mainly used the introduction of "the modern way of transport" and "electricity" to manifest new waves of technological advancement in human society. The linkage Lefebvre recognised between "technology" and the "right" of marginalised communities in a given social environment made me realise that such argument could also be useful in conceptualising the use of digital media – one of the symbols of technological advancement in the 21st century – among a given ethnic minority community namely the Chinese diaspora in Japan.

I came across the expression "the right to the city" back in 2013, when I was reading

Henri Lefebvre's *Writings on Cities* (1996) for a postgraduate course at LSE. To introduce Lefebvre's writing in more detail, in the sections below I first of all shall explain my inspiration for transposing Lefebvre's argument of "the right to the city" ("le droit à la ville" in French) to conceptualise the use of digital tools by the Chinese digital diaspora. Then, I illustrate how his argument can be useful for us to conceptualise the identity construction and performance processes of the Chinese diaspora in Japan as a tangible result of their intersection across the axes of race and ethnicity, gender, nationalism, and Sino-Japanese relations in different social spaces.

Digital media as a means of negotiating the right to the "city"

The term "the right to the city" is widely used in the field of urbanisation and development studies to illustrate how the processes of technological development and democratisation are two deeply associated social transformations (Lefebvre, 1996). The term "city" here is not regarded in any way as the "physical city" or the fixed, geographically defined static location. Instead, it is a synecdoche for the social space where people live (Holston, 2009). In this sense, Lefebvre's argument of the "right" to the "city" places an emphasis on the collective desire of a community rather than the classic measurement of citizenship in terms of an individual's right of occupying certain social and economic capitals in a geographically defined physical city. By using the social spaces within the Paris city as an example, Lefebvre (1996) describes how the process of technological advancements, such as electricity and the modern way of transport, encourages the influx of labour forces from the rural to the urban area. However, the gap between labour supply and labour market demand means that most of those influx rural populations, who now become urban dwellers, actually live in impoverished urban peripheries, "benefiting from both the city's services and its poverty" (Holston, 2009: 245).

However, the process of technological development also stimulates another response,

namely democratisation, that precisely members of those impoverished, segregated, and satellite peripheries organise movements to: confront the entrenched inequality between the "local" and the "influx"; challenging the exclusions they face; utilising modern tools to disrupt the biased ruling regime that has been privileging the majority since the establishment of the "city"; and dealing with the conflicts among citizens, as the "influx's" claims of "the right to the city" collide with existing national membership and the distribution of rights (ibid: 245-246). It is in this context that in the 1960s, Lefebvre (1996) published his incitement to change the world by asking what are people's rights to a given social space and more importantly, *who* has the right to those social spaces. His imagination of "the right to the city" is therefore a response to the struggles that are inherent in the daily lives of marginalised communities. Consequently, he interpreted their "rights" to the "city" as the right to present themselves, the right to own a place in the "city", and the right not to be excluded from the "city". For Lefebvre, this "right to the city" is therefore a political claim for social justice and social change, and for the realisation of the potential that technological development had made it possible to eradicate marginalisation and abolish unjust social inequality (Marcuse, 2013).

Building upon his argument, David Harvey (2008) has once written about "the right to the city'" to further elaborate on Lefebvre's interpretation of "rights". By quoting urban sociologist Robert Park's (1967) statement, he argues that:

> "Man's most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But, if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself" (Harvey, 2008: 1).

Harvey indicates that the "right" to the "city" is not merely an access to the "city" or a

right to be included in what the "city" already embodies. Instead, such "right" involves people's ability to appropriate modern tools so that the "city" can be shaped into a space where people can be who they want to be, can have the social relationships they have been seeking, can relate to the surrounding nature in a way they cherish, can live the daily life in a style they desire, and is aesthetically pleasing to their values. In other words, "the right" here refers to the agency that citizens acquire through technological change, and by exercising their agency, they can negotiate how they want to be associated with the "city" in which they live. Simply put, "the right to the city" should be understood as people's acquiring of agency through technology, so they can make sense of not only their existence within a social space, but also their relationships with that social space. Harvey further claims that only when people have acquired this "right", could the "city" be an ideal place where "the labour, women, gays and minorities" can be accommodated (Harvey, 2008: 1).

Therefore, the so-called "right" in this thesis does not refer to the access of the Chinese diaspora to the resources that a "city" offers to its local citizens, such as civic rights, citizenship, and infrastructures. Instead, it is interpreted as the Chinese diaspora's agency of negotiating their relationships with the "city" and making sense of what it means to be a "Chinese", an agency that is enabled and/or facilitated by a particular type of "modern technology", namely digital media. This interpretation allows me to really see each Chinese digital diaspora as an active agent, highlighting their power and freedom in the process of understanding "who they are", although they may struggle to answer this question due to various challenges and difficulties, such as perceived marginalities in the Japanese society as well as the digital divide in the Chinese mediascape as detailed earlier.

"City" and the "sphere of Chineseness"

As explained above, Lefebvre's argument of "the right to the city" allows me to bring the

analytical focus to each Chinese diasporic individual to empirically scrutinise and sustain how they interact with their surrounding social spaces. However, lexically speaking, the term "city" is often associated with a geographically defined physical space. Given that in this thesis I want to investigate how the Chinese diaspora negotiate their membership in the Chinese nation, which is essentially a process of articulating identity alignment with the notion of Chineseness, I take inspiration from Lefebvre's argument and substitute the term "city" with "sphere of Chineseness" for clarity in this thesis.

I consider this term to be the most suitable analogy to Lefebvre's "city" for several reasons. Firstly, as this term is both a spatial and an ideological concept, I consider it to be useful to conceptualise both how the Chinese diaspora engage with various "spheres" throughout their daily experiences as well as how these "spheres" are inevitably politicised by different entities and social traits. In this sense, adopting the term of "sphere of Chineseness" could help me to see and understand how the Chinese diaspora's daily engagements within various spatial contexts are constantly subject to different "forces and powers", as Foucault (1980) puts it. Furthermore, with an emphasis on "sphere", this term also reminds me to see the lived experiences of the diaspora as constituted by daily realities derived from not a single, but multiple spaces, spanning across both the online and the offline, as well as the home and the destination society. It is the amalgamation of their decisions, actions, interactions, and inspirations that take place within those spheres that constitute the Chinese diaspora's feeling of living in the "city". In this sense, the "sphere of Chineseness" more accurately represents the reality of one's lifeworld, that the being and the sense of belonging are framed through their interactions with different life projects and social schemas, and always involve contexts and realities emerged from different spaces.

Furthermore, substituting "city" with "sphere of Chineseness" also helps me to understand how the different spaces that the Chinese diaspora engage with might be

politicised differently but are all essentially a "Chinese" space. This is not to say that every social space with which the Chinese diaspora in Japan engage with only accommodates people with the Chinese roots, such as the Chinese ethnicity. Instead, it means that when the Chinese diaspora consider their "rights", i.e. whether they can or want to claim memberships to these social spaces, this Chineseness always plays a role during this process. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, while the spaces with which the Chinese diaspora engage could include Japanese society, homeland, transnational Chinese community, online space sustained by digital media, queer space, and / or amalgamation of all these different spaces, their identity as "Chinese living in Japan" as well as their Chinese roots always serve as a reference when considering their memberships in those spaces. In this context, the "sphere of Chineseness" more accurately manifests that for many of them, while they engage with different social spaces and these social spaces can be politicised differently, they are all essentially a "Chinese" space.

Following this point, given that the spaces considered in this thesis do not only include physical or geographically-defined spaces, lexically speaking, the term "sphere of Chineseness" more adequately reflects my goal in making sense of different dimensions of Chinese's diasporic lives in Japan as well as the way I approach this question, as the word "city" is frequently used to denote large-scale physical spaces, structures, compositions, and phenomena.

Therefore, given the focus and approach of my research, while I take inspiration from Lefebvre's argument of "the right to the city" and transdisciplinarily adopt it to conceptualise lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora in relation to their use of digital media, I transpose the term "city" with "sphere of Chineseness" to manifest my objective more clearly in illuminating the complexity of the way the Chinese diaspora self-identify and belong.

Identity and digital engagement

Both the term "identity" and "belonging", while loosely and versatilely defined, are at the very core of the diaspora and the notion of homeland and host society. As Butler (2001) once argued, identity and belonging "transform [diasporas] from the physical reality of dispersal into the psychosocial reality of diaspora" (207). Although "identity" and "belonging" pertain different meanings to different people at different times in different contexts, they essentially involve the making and the realisation of distinctions. Identity's Latin origin "identitias" has the meaning of "being the same". Meanwhile, the Old English form of belonging, "langian", relates to the sense of "being the property of' and 'being the member of". To put it in a simple way, "identity" is therefore an expression that describes the feeling and being as the same as a certain "other", whether it is someone, something, or somewhere. And "belonging" indicates people's spatially and relationally constructed feelings that are attached to a certain social space - such as a nation-state, a community, a system - framed through their daily activities and interactions with(in) such space.

In this sense, both terms consist of the searching for similarity and unity, which, at the same time, means that they operate in parallel with identifying differences, and encompassing various forms of distinctions: among different mobilities; among different genders and sexualities; among different generations; among different races and ethnicities; among different statuses of residence and different backgrounds of social-economic power; among different cultures, rituals, traditions and religions; among different languages and historical memories; among different imaginations of the nation; and concerning the theme of this thesis, among different levels of digital engagement and connectivity (Ang, 2004; Urry, 2000; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Wong, 2003). In this sense, we can conceptualise the identity and construction of individuals' belongings as a reflexive self-making process (Giddens, 1991). This

process entails the reflective production as well as the projection of self-narratives, so one's identity and sense of belonging are sustaining, coherent, yet continuously revised through the filter of "abstract systems" (ibid: 5), such as those distinctions mentioned earlier.

However, what makes "identity" and "belonging" complex to conceptualise is that none of these distinctions is fixed or permanent. In the context of globalisation, previous studies call for a shift from a static, nation-state centric understanding of identity and belonging to one that emphasises cultural hybridisation. As Hall (1990) indicates, diaspora identity "lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235).

For many scholars of media and migration studies, conceptualising identity and belonging has now become an even more difficult task due to the widely available digital media. With its ability to mediate not only time and space but also emotions and ideologies, our understanding of identity and senses of belonging increasingly underlines fluidity, multi-dimensionality, instantaneousness, as well as (online) performativity (Friedman, 1994; Livingstone, 2002). The reason for this shift is twofold. First, due to digital media, diasporas now have "new possibilities of (digital) co-presence" (Tsagarousianou, 2019: 88) in multiple localities, without the need to physically move between home and destination countries (Candidatu et al., 2019). This means that although a reference point is always required for an individual to have a valued involvement and to feel "fitted" (Kestenberg and Kestenberg, 1998 cited in Liu-Farrer 2020) – hence to self-identify and belong, the way we understand such "reference point" should be more flexible to locate the diaspora within a transnationally mediated context (Castles, 2017; Vertovec, 1999). To put it simply, scholars need new approaches and methodologies to understand people's spatially and relationally constructed feelings that are attached not just to a certain social space, but to multiple social spaces, and these social spaces may constantly fuse with each other.

Beijing儿 Changeling in Japan ｜feminist, artist, fencer 4段｜she/her
✦ views my own ✦

在日｜本人 🔗　　　　　　　　　　🗓 Joined July 2011

Following　　Followers

Figure. 3 A screenshot of Dan's Twitter profile
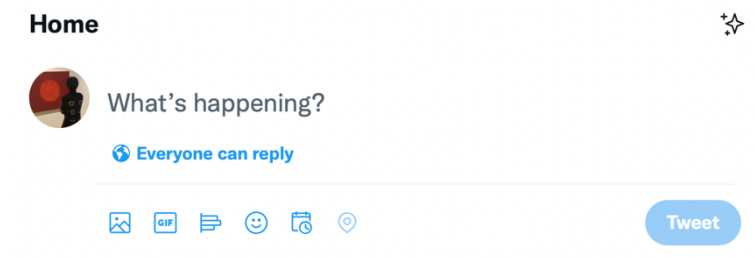
Figure. 4 Twitter's inviting posting column

Second, digital media also provide diasporas with opportunities and possibilities to "increasingly participate in explicit discourses of identity and identity construction" (Livingstone, 2002: 301). The word "explicit" here means that digital communication channels such as SNSs offer diasporas a platform to publish narratives about themselves in a way that builds up an image of a particular individual being which reflects "what their hearts desire" and at the same time, tells others about "who they are/ who they are not" (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 202). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LINE, WhatsApp, WeChat, and Weibo, through their interfaces and other types of technological affordances, encourage diasporas to "have a public presence…to construct an objectification of oneself" beyond their "bodily presence" on a daily basis (Couldry, 2012: 50). Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 3 and 4 below, the material infrastructure of digital media constantly invites its users to produce identities and to make their identities explicit. For example, my informant Dan, a 22-year-old art student, "take max" out of her 'profile' section on Twitter, "so people know who I am, and know my viewpoint". As shown in Figure. 3 above, the profile section on Twitter encourages her to verbalise, visualise, and perform her identity in a publicly visible domain. Then, as a mainland Chinese living in Japan,

what kind of image and self-identification is she trying to produce through the mixed use of

Mandarin Chinese and English? What is her intention to use a separation mark to make pauses

in "在日本人 (a person in Japan)" and turn it into "在日I本人 (in Japan I genuine)"? Why does

she describe herself as a Beijing-er who is "changeling" in Japan? Although I do not intend to

analyse her online identity making/ performance in this section, it is clear that the material

infrastructure and technological affordance of digital media fundamentally changed the way in

which self-images and narratives are produced and constructed. I use the word "changed" here

to indicate a comparison between the more traditional way – i.e. diary writing - and the digital

way of individual's identity and belonging construction through the production and projection

of self-narratives (Braidotti, 2006). While in both contexts one reflectively produces

biographical narratives to "tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are

not) (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 202), the way of storytelling and its audiences are different. The ability

of digital media to transmit and stream live text, images, audio, and videos means that

biographical narratives produced online are increasingly networked and shared with a much

wider range of audiences compared to more traditional self-narrative production through

writing[2]. Digital media's functions, such as sharing, commenting, and forwarding also mean

that one's self-production and projection are now constructed in a "networked form of mass

self-communication" (Castells, 2009). Such production of self-narratives is no longer simply a

process of self-(re)confirmation in an enclosed manner, but more like a public plea to other

users as well. In this sense, the image of "self" is not only more explicit but also more discursive

and dialectical. In addition, digital users' ability to control their posts and edit their online profiles

in a way "their hearts desire" means that mediated narratives, identities, and senses of

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[2] The word "writing" here is essentially a metaphoric way to describe any self-narrative productions that are not digitally mediated. It can be narratives produced via handwriting, as an example offered by Braidotti (2006); or the production of self-narratives through 'print capitalism', as termed by Anderson (1991), for instance in the form of newspaper articles, novels, memoirs, or autobiographies.

belonging always have room for manoeuvring and revision. Digital media give individuals

certain levels of agency and power to do so, leading to an endless loop of narrative production

– revision/updating – re-production.

Figure. 4 above and Figure. 5 and 6 below further develop this argument. Whether it is

Twitter's "What's happening?", LINE's "今何してる？ (What's up?)", Facebook's "What's on

your mind?" or Weibo's "有什么新鲜事想分享给大家？ (Got something new to share?)", the

logic and affordance of digital media (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013) operate in a way that

Figure. 5 LINE (left), Facebook (top right) and Weibo's (bottom right) posting column

Figure. 6 Weibo's interface

constantly invites users to produce updated, explicit, reflective and revised self-narratives. And,

as shown in Figure. 6, during this narrative production process, digital users are also constantly

exposed to narratives – or in Foucault's (1980) words, powers that are everywhere – produced

by others. Hence, when we think the construction of diaspora identity and belonging through

the lens of digital media, it is important to acknowledge that this process is not just about

dialectical realisation of sameness and otherness, but also a negotiation within a power setting. This power setting is digitally mediated and contains various, discursive "powers" (ibid), which operate as a reference point of resistance or assistance (Foucault, 1982), or in fact, a mixture of both, for an individual to reflectively build an explicit self-image.

It is worth noting that the above arguments are not meant to say that more "traditional" reflective self-making lacks a process of power negotiation. The difference, however, is that while we understand the power setting in a less-digitally-mediated environment as more an abstract system (Giddens, 1991), digital media's material infrastructure offers users a more

精选留言	写留言
斐	👍 136
那就是美国下毒的，不希望俄乌合谈	
Nancy花唯	👍 72
一个以色列国籍没用啊！觉得，该老板此时充分应了我们一句：个人利益与集体和国家利益具有一致性。	
嘉菲猫	👍 56
想说第四个人很值得怀疑😼	
Ajet	👍 27
阿布是本命年吧	

谷爱凌在谈到国籍问题时回应：「中国和美国我都想感谢，体育让我们团结在一起」如何看待她对此的态度？

知乎 · 3,297 个回答 · 6176 关注 >

deisler jjl
睡觉会露肩   ＋关注

830 人赞同了该回答

我就直说了，我不太认可包括谷在内的绝大部分归化者。

不认可的原因不是因为他们不优秀，而是因为他们并没有展现出国家教育我们成为进步青年应该具备的"社会主义优越性带来的自豪感"

Figure. 7 The comment section on WeChat (left) and Zhihu (right)

direct and clearer view of these power settings. As shown in Figure. 7 above, digital platforms' common functions such as "like", "comment" and "highlighted comments" are simple but effective, straightforward approaches to visualise and quantify mediated power relations through concrete, and sometimes enumerative expressions. In this sense, traditionally "abstract" powers now have a tangible visibility through digital media's technological affordances, which can affect digital users' reflective construction of self-narratives online. Some of my informants, such as Chenghua, a 34-year-old real-estate agent, reflected on his digital usage experiences and indicated:

"Well, I can't say this is always the case for me, but for most of the time, I check the comment section (of each post). And yes, I do tend to pay attention to the number

of 'likes' each comment has, or actually the number of comments of each post… and I'll read those 'top comments (置顶评论)' quite thoroughly…sometimes I will reply to those top comments, just to have my own say".

Chenghua's experience really sums up my previous arguments quite efficiently. It does not only manifest how powers are mediated and visualised in the digital realm through its affordances, but also how the digital diaspora's self-narratives produced online can indeed be seen as a response to those tangible powers. More importantly, his experience highlights the agency of digital users, demonstrating the way narratives are produced as a result of his navigation through various mediated powers, rather than something that is passively produced as an outcome of him being manipulated by those powers. In this sense, exploring the identities and senses of belonging of the Chinese diaspora through the digital perspective allows me to better understand how these constructions are dialectically produced through their "mass self-communication" (Castells, 2009). By observing the digital diaspora's self-narrative production and performance on different digital platforms and/or when they are dealing with different powers, it offers me a window to see not only how their identities and senses of belonging are explicit yet multidimensional, but more importantly, how these constructions are actually executed through their digital engagement (Cover, 2012).

Belonging and the imagined community[3]

In this section, I want to further expand earlier discussions on the digital diaspora's ability to "co-presence" in multiple localities (Tsagarousianou, 2019). Exploring the meaning of "place" and "locality" has always been an important task for studies concerning the sense of belonging

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[3] Part of this section is from my paper "Chinese migrants' sense of belonging in Japan: Between digital and physical spaces" in *IOM Migration Research Series* (No. 61), 2020; and "Digital Technology, Physical Space, and the Notion of Belonging among Chinese Migrants in Japan" in *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 7(2020), 2020.

among those who are globally mobilised. This is quite natural given that when talking of belonging, we tend to cling to the notion of "home" (Liu-Farrer 2020), a concept that in a very narrow sense, is always defined by geographic markers. With the process of globalisation, the way we interpret "home" has become increasingly fluid and transnational, and the wide application of digital media has only contributed to further nurturing this transnationally conceptualised notion of "home" and belonging. In this context, the concept of co-presence is introduced to acknowledge the diaspora's social interactions and "home/ belonging" building at the transnational level through increased "accessibility" on a "multilocality" plane (Georgiou, 2011). With the ease of digital communication, "multilocality" refers to the increased engagement of the diaspora's social lives across national boundaries, which inextricably places them within a transnational context (Castles, 2017; Vertovec, 1999). These transnational lives are in turn supported by the accessibility of digital media that maintains and actualises the diaspora's transnational practises (Tsagarousianou, 2019). Digital media thus provide a sociocultural environment in which diasporas live their everyday migratory experiences (Misa, 2014), allowing them to negotiate a transnational sense of belonging through the reconstruction, regrinding, and transferring sets of social, economic and political traits and meanings from specific geographical and historical points of their homelands to remote locations (Beck and Cronin, 2014). Therefore, the diaspora are given the new possibilities of building and maintaining transnational homes in multiple localities, without the need to physically move between the homeland, destination countries, and elsewhere (Candicatu et al., 2019).

An important concept that is frequently adopted by digital diaspora studies scholars to illuminate the relationship between digital media – as a newly emerged material and practical condition – and the diaspora's transnational belonging formation is the concept of imagined community, which was initially proposed by Anderson in 1983 (=2006). In his book *Imagined*

Communities, Anderson illustrates the role of printing, or as he calls it, "print capitalism", as a powerful medium that enables people without face-to-face interaction to imagine the nation and their relations with the nation. He argues how the medium of print can bring to life the imagined community of contemporaries through a depiction of identifiable characters, expressions, and activities by words and images, while also indicating that the rapid spread of print technology magnifies existing ties and social imaginaries (Calhoun, 2016). Taking his concept of an imagined community as inspiration, this thesis looks at the implications of digital media – a modern medium for information transmission and communication – for social and cultural imagination among the Chinese diaspora in Japan.

It is important to clarify that the word "imagined" should not be misread as "imaginary". As Eriksen (2016) explains, "imagined" is not about "fabrication" and "falsity", nor the making up of things. Instead, it is the "envisioning" of something that "we cannot see, but which is nonetheless real" (4-5). The imagined community, in Anderson's time, is a community that is mediated by print technology and then becomes alive for the readers. He famously shows how a realistic novel of a city, through its depiction of social rituals and behaviours, urban landscapes, and social environments, gives readers who are from the city but physically remote a sense of familiarity, allowing them to identify recognisable scenes and activities, hence producing a shared imagination of the city among the readerships. He consequently argues that the fast spread of print capitalism and the increased literacy rate have become the material condition of state formation, and such formation has the potential to magnify through technology. In this sense, I employ Anderson's idea to explore how digital media, as a technology that escaped from the print feudal empires (Eriksen, 2016: 8) given its world-scale readership, mediates shared symbols and emotions, social practises and ritual behaviours. And more importantly, what kind of "imagined community", or "imagined sphere of Chineseness" would digital media engender among the Chinese diaspora in Japan?

4. The Chinese diaspora in Japan

Diasporas who try to settle in the destination country often have to face and negotiate public suspicions that result from some undesirable social movements such as anti-immigration sentiments, racial discrimination, the retreat of multiculturalism, and the popular fear that accepting the diaspora would increase crime rate, housing price, and labour market competition while decreasing social stability and state welfare provision. Perhaps an excessive example, this can be partially seen from how some local Kyoto citizens feel the COVID-19 pandemic is not a completely bad thing as "since the poorly mannered foreigners are not allowed to enter the border…the quiet and peaceful Kyoto of the past has returned. And it feels just right" (Takada, 2020). In addition to these factors, studying the Chinese diasporic community in the context of the Japanese society has its own importance and particularity, and the reason is fourfold.

The first reason concerns the complex Sino-Japanese power relationship. Although 29 September 2022 would mark the 50-year anniversary of Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalisation, we can still see a strong conflict in national identity building strategies between these two countries, which is intrinsically associated with how the two countries respectively interpret a particular history, namely the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) (He, 2007). Yinan He argues that while Japan promotes a national identity that emphasises historical revisionism and democracy, China builds its nation based on the name of national reinvigoration, the socialist value, and the resolve to defend its core interests (Schneider, 2016; He, 2007). In this context, through the constant illustration of Japan's atrocities during its aggression against its nation, China cultivates its modern national identity through the lens of national humiliation (He, 2007). The rationale for seeing Japan's aggression as a "national humiliation" is not only due to China's defeat during the Sino-Japanese War, but also to how

its Sinocentric doctrine was consequently repudiated. Until the late Qing era, the way China had perceived its relationship with foreign countries, such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand, was largely guided by the Sinocentrism logic, also known as 華夷思想 (hua-yi sixiang in Chinese, kai-shiso in Japanese). Under this doctrine, China (or "hua"), as the world's cultural, economic and political centre has an ultimately superior status compared to other countries that were considered barbarians (indicated by the Chinese character "夷"). Although Japan used to be a tributary state of China – the manifestation of the superior "hua" v.s. inferior "yi" ideology, this Sino-Japanese power relationship gradually weakened, though its ultimate overthrow was marked by China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894 (Paine, 2003). Consequently, the "national humiliation" narrative emerged to mark this reverse in power between the "hua" and the "yi". This narrative has then been used as a political leverage for the Chinese state to promote a collective memory of "suffering and struggle" experienced by millions of Chinese people during the war (He, 2007).

More importantly, this 'collective memory' is used to emphasise the glory of defeating Japan's aggression under the alleged leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which allows the CCP to project its vision of national cohesion by claiming that the nation's "prosperous future" can only be defended under its leadership (Billig, 2009). Therefore, it is clear that Japan is of paramount political importance to the CCP's ruling regime, and the country has been portrayed as the most significant "other" in China's strategy of nation-building and identity construction. In this context, I am particularly interested in how Chinese digital diasporas make sense of their human mobility to Japan, and how they negotiate different and often conflicting ideologies and discourses produced by variant interest groups and parties in Japan and China through digital media.

The second reason is related to how Japan has been defining itself as a non-immigrant country. While accommodating more than 2.82 million foreign residents (MOJ, 2021), Japan

still politically refuses to identify itself as an immigration country and institutionally excludes migrants in its policy frameworks (Liu-Farrer, 2018). This is evident in how former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, while indicating the importance of "importing" more international migrants so as to ease Japan's labour shortage due to its ageing population, still firmly indicates that "we are not adopting the so-called immigration policies" in a National Diet session (Liu-Farrer, 2020: 3); as well as how the "i-word" – immigration/immigrant, still has not yet made its way to the official vocabulary of the Japanese government (Roberts, 2018). Japan's exclusionist perspective on the migrant population is further emphasised by its ongoing efforts to promote a cultural nationalist discourse of racial homogeneity, underlining the uniqueness of its social values and cultural heritage that are only fully perceivable to people with a Japanese blood tie. In this context, some empirical research indicates that migrants are culturally, socially, and politically considered foreign and alien in Japan, and their diasporic experiences to a certain extent can thereby be understood as a negotiation and response to their perceived unacquaintance and marginality in the host society (Liu-Farrer, 2018; 2020).

As an extension to the first and the second point, the third one deals with how those Sino-Japanese conflicts left by history have been constantly re-articulated, remembered, and re-imagined together with contemporary Sino-Japanese disputes. Issues such as the portrayal of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan's history textbooks, the visit of Japanese officials to the Yasukuni Shrine, the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and Japan's recognition of Taiwan as an independent sovereign state, while are all historically-related issues, serve as the perfect vehicle for the CCP to ensure that previous generations' collective memory of suffering caused by Japan's invasion can be shared, memorised and embodied by the current generation, even though that they have never actually experienced the war themselves. As Schneider (2018) argued, the anti-Japanese essence of these issues is repetitively reinforced through China's school curricula, museum exhibits, and a wide range of

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media products such as books, TV programmes, computer games, maps, and paraphernalia (2018: 4). Through various channels of propaganda, the CCP therefore manages to remind all generations of its citizens to "never forget" Japan's atrocity during the Second Sino-Japanese War, viewing modern Chinese history through the lens of national humiliation (Cohen, 2002; Wang, 2012), and consequently promoting a "Chinese Dream" of national reinvigoration.

However, the CCP's strategy of nation-building and identity construction often subject the Chinese diaspora to an ongoing struggle to make sense of their lived experiences in Japan between what they have acquired pre-immigration and what they are exposed post-immigration amid Japan's exclusionist and cultural nationalist vision of its own national identity (Wang, 2022a). In this context, many of my informants talked about how their living experiences in Japan as mainland Chinese often bear an intricate and somehow indescribable feeling of ambivalence. For instance, 56-year-old Changying, a single mother and an owner of an interior design studio, talked about struggles in reasoning her human mobility to Japan:

> "This country has a particular meaning to Chinese for obvious reasons. I believe for many of us, processing the identity as a Chinese living in Japan is difficult, because you need to justify your reasons for migrating to Japan… to yourself in particular. Because as mainlanders, the patriotism education we received teaches us to dislike Japan…but for me, I realise that what matters to me the most, my home, is still in China. I'm just here to earn better money so I can provide for my daughter and parents…my daughter studies in the US, you know. The world's most expensive country, so, yea".

Her narratives illustrate how the diasporic experiences of many Chinese who have built a life on the soil of China's ultimate other (Wang, 2022a) are situated at the centre of the Sino-Japanese conflicts. The way they deal with such feelings of ambivalence, as Changying narrated, is to use economic or other non-politically related motives to account for their

decisions of migrating to Japan. Other examples include how Xinni, a 23-year-old who came to Japan for higher education, indicates that his migration to Japan is "purely rationally motivated" because "Japan's education quality is decent and the living expenses is affordable"; and 51-year-old Youan, the owner of a logistic company, who stated that:

> "…I came to Japan with my family to start a business, so migrating to this country doesn't equate me with taking either countries' side on the never-ending Sino-Japanese battle… It's for more practical and rational reasons".

These narratives clearly demonstrate that for many Chinese diaspora in Japan, articulating their migratory experiences in a reductionist manner, in the sense that only their non-political, non-nationalistic motives are used to justify their decisions of migrating to Japan, has become an alternative to process "the feelings of ambivalence", as only in this way they no longer need to "take sides in the never-ending Sino-Japanese battle". I once joked about those narratives with one of my informants, saying that "sometimes I feel your experiences are really the perfect manifestation of the neoclassical economic model of migration". However, it is indeed in this way that many of them are able to find a balance point between the role as a Chinese who is educated to view Japan as pernicious, and the role as a Chinese who wants to live a good life in this pernicious Japan. This finding also resonates with some existing empirical evidence showing how The Chinese diaspora tend to see their China-Japan movements as a representation of their ideals of success and the hope of achieving a better life (Coates, 2019) – something that "is more rational" rather than political. In addition, as mentioned by Gracia Liu-Farrer in one of her comments on this thesis, the way The Chinese diaspora process their "feelings of ambivalence" also inspires us to think about how the younger generation of mainland Chinese, who are fond of Japanese pop culture and see Japan as an attractive tourist destination (also the popularity of Japanese cuisines in mainland CHina), make sense of their preference for Japan while they are constantly subjected to the Party-

state's political and nationalist discourses. Although I did not interview Chinese diasporic youth because they are not the target population of this study, I once asked Yishan, a female entrepreneur who owns an export trade company, about her opinions on Chinese young people's preferences for Japanese cosmetic products. Yishan explains:

"I think sometimes people think having money means justice…They may feel proud when buying in a big way in Japan, you know, to show that China is now prosperous and rich, 'we can buy up the whole Japan so our country is better now' sort of way of thinking."

She further added that:

"If you think about the reason that Cangjing Kong (Aoi Sora, a Japanese adult video actress) managed to gain such popularity in China… I think it is because by consuming this 'female figure of Japan' the Chinese men have the illusion that Japan is now weaker than China, because it is consumed by them. So this consuming behaviour itself gives them a feeling that China is strong and masculine".

While I hesitate to draw conclusions from these narratives without interviewing the population concerned because they are Yishan's anticipation, combining her narratives with the analyses presented in Chapter 4, what we can potentially argue is a shift in the way China articulates its national identity. In the context where the CCP is fully aware of Japan's popularity among China's younger generations (Schneider, 2018) and praises for its centenary of founding[4], what we can see from its recent years' political discourses is the repetitive emphasis on China's achievements under the CCP's leadership. This marks a shift in the CCP's strategy to justify its ruling regime and unite the nation: that instead of collecting and centralising people's support by articulating the "collective struggles brought atbout by Japan's atrocities"

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[4] The Chinese state celebrated the centenary of the founding of the CCP on 1st July 2021.

on a platitude, more recent discourses have focused on articulating a sense of pride and the cognition that China has regained its glory and achieved the dream of national rejuvenation (Wang, forthcoming). In this context, Japan may no longer be considered as the only "ultimate other" by China, leading consequently to the (increasing) popularity of Japan and its pop culture among Chinese youth. And while this argument is pretty much my assumption and awaits future investigation, from Yishan's narratives what we can still clearly see is the complexity of not only the Chinese national identity but also how this national identity could be interpreted and internalised differently by mainland Chinese.

Fourth, the importance of studying the Chinese diaspora in Japan is related to how digital forms of communication have made the previously mentioned three reasons even more complicated. As I demonstrate above, the lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora are mutually shaped by narratives mediated in both the online and the offline realms. Empowered by digital media, the Chinese digital diaspora are provided with new possibilities to stay in touch with the homeland in an instantaneous manner while negotiating the ongoing surrounding reality in Japan. As their daily lives are infused with (often conflicting) discourses coming from both the home and the host societies, it is therefore important to study how these transnationally mediated territories may simultaneously and complementarily impact the way diasporas understand and negotiate their daily experiences. A good example can be observed from a piece of news released by Tokyo-Sports Web on 24 August 2020. It reports that a male Chinese who lives in Tokyo and tested positive for coronavirus self-claimed to be an "anti-Japanese expert (抗日小能手, *kangri xiaonengshou*)" and proudly admitted in a WeChat group[5] that he has been frequently visiting local supermarkets and Yamanote-sen[6] so to get

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[5] If we leave all the add-in functions aside, WeChat is similar to Whatsapp where people can carry out individual and group chat with others. For a more comprehensive description regarding WeChat's functionality, see Chapter 6.

[6] One of Tokyo's busiest and most important underground lines.

as many Japanese infected as possible (Tokyo-Sports, 2021). The comment section of this news is flooded with nationalist sentiment comments written in both Japanese- and Chinese-language. Some popular ones include vitriols from Japan's side that call for "an immediate deportation of all mainland Chinese residing in Japan", because "those CPC people (中共人民)' are 'the inheritor of Ah-Q (阿 Q の一子相伝伝承者)", who are "all like him, pretending to be heroes of the anti-Japanese war, but are just bio-terrorists (抗日戦争の英雄気取り、ただのバイオテロ)".

On the other side of the discussion, comments made by Chinese users are polarised. Several appeared like Chinese diaspora in Japan describe him as "the shame of overseas Chinese in Japan (在日中国人の恥)", urging "Japanese not to generalise and assume all Chinese are alike (不要以偏概全，不是所有中國人都這樣 *buyao yipiangaiquan, bushi suoyouzhongguoren douzheyang*)", that "as his fellow Chinese in Japan we are equally unable to forgive him (同じ同胞である在日中国人が同じように許せない)'". Meanwhile, supporters of the male Chinese praised for his action: "previously we had the Nanjing Massacre, now we have the Tokyo Massacre (古有南京大屠殺，今有東京大屠殺 *guyou nanjing datusha, jinyou dongjing datusha*)", writes one Twitter user. This comment is echoed by other Chinese users with similar narratives, who also associate the ongoing pandemic with that particular historical event, indicating that "so many Chinese died in the Nanjing Massacre, and now it's time to make you guys pay (南京大虐殺でそんなに多くの人が死んで、今回は中国はあなた達に命を償わなければいいです[7])".

The heated comments derived from Japanese and Chinese users on a social networking platform illustrate how conflicting ideologies and discourses between China and Japan can be mediated transnationally with the presence of digital media, how the Chinese

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[7] I suspect that this comment is made by a Chinese user and is translated from Chinese to Japanese using a translation software, as the comment, although written in Japanese, is oddly phrased and grammatically incorrect.

diaspora are often placed in the very centre when a Sino-Japanese conflict occurs, and how diasporic individuals can respond differently to those conflicts. In this context, while the study of how power dynamics and ideologies are digitally mediated to and from diaspora remains a less sufficiently explored field, focusing on the Chinese diaspora in Japan offers a good entrance point, which demonstrates how the interaction between digital mediation and socio-political conditions is manifested in a diaspora context.

5. Structure of this thesis

As mentioned in Section 1, the rationale of this thesis is to understand the way the Chinese diaspora in Japan claim identity alignments to the Chinese nation in relation to their experiences navigating through various online and offline contexts. Within the existing frameworks of digital diaspora and intersectionality, chapters in this thesis explore the Chinese diaspora's digital media habits, investigating how they actively use digital media as a tool to negotiate their "rights to the city" through various identity-making strategies and belonging-forming practises. Together, they shed light on the relationship between digital media and the construction of a particular kind of diasporic Chinese and diasporic Chinese identity in a time marked by continuous Sino-Japanese conflicts and China's expanding transnational governance.

The chapters were written and organised in a way to speak to one or some of the following objectives. The first objective is to understand how the ways of Chinese-language diasporic media content producing, distribution, and consumption in Japan have changed over time and how the introduction and popularisation of digital media have revolutionised these processes. Secondly, my objective is to investigate how ideological, cultural, as well as geopolitical forces shape the Chinese diaspora's digital practises. Thirdly, I assess the role of digital media in shaping the Chinese diaspora's self-positioning and understanding, to see how

they negotiate between a pre-determined, politicised PRC Chinese identity as articulated by the CCP and their current status as ethnic Chinese in Japan who are exposed to various narratives and discourses including those that are not aligned with the CCP's overarching political frameworks. Fourthly, I seek to account for digital media and the Chinese diaspora's network- and community-building practises as well as identity politics. Fifthly, to highlight the intersectionality among digital connectivity, ethnicity, and gender, exploring the gender dimension of identity and belonging construction.

These objectives help to manifest how digital media are utilised by the Chinese diaspora in Japan as an essential tool to make sense of their diasporic experiences. In particular, by employing the analogy of "the right to the city", I underline the agency of the informants and investigate how they strategically take up resources in variant digital spaces to make identity and belonging claims that can best reflect their personal visions and desires as ethnic minorities in Japanese society. In this way, the chapters in this thesis also illustrate identity and belonging constructions as context-based and spatially articulated.

Following this chapter, Chapter 1 and 2 review theories and methodologies in the field of digital diaspora studies respectively. First, I explain the theoretical and methodological trajectories in the field in Chapter 1 as an attempt to see how scholars from different disciplines conceptualise the digital space in relation to the physical space, and how they study diaspora's online and offline interactions. Then, Chapter 2 lays out the methodologies I employ for this research and clarifies the empirical research process. I explain my decision in employing qualitative interview and digital ethnographic observation as the main data collection methods while using quantitative survey to collect supplementary data in order to present a nuanced argument in this thesis. I also elaborate on the difficulties I have encountered during the data collection process and the approaches I have adopted in order to overcome those challenges. Finally, I discuss some specific concerns regarding safeguarding the informants' privacy when

using digital ethnographic observation as a method of data collection, as well as the measures I have adopted to ensure their anonymity.

After this chapter, Chapter 3 decomposes two important concepts of this thesis, namely "The Chinese diaspora in Japan" and "Chinese-language diasporic media in Japan". From a historical perspective, I first of all provide an overview of the Chinese community in Japan from a historical perspective, and then discuss the concept of "Chinese national identity" by analysing how the meaning of this concept has changed over time, and how different Chinese ruling regimes politicise it differently towards their overseas subjects. In this way, this chapter serves to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the Chinese diasporic community in Japan. In addition, it also examines through the historical context of the long-lasting Sino-Japanese conflict to understand the roots of China's strategy of portraying Japan as its ultimate and forever rival.

The changing demographic structure of the Chinese community together with the dynamic Sino-Japanese relations also lead to a shift in media consumption behaviour and demand among The Chinese diaspora. As a matter of fact, the ethnic Chinese mediascape in Japan has experienced a significant change not only in terms of its readership, but also its context, reach, and medium. Therefore, in Chapter 3 I also map out the history of ethnic Chinese media in Japan, from its emergence to its golden age, then to its decay, and now gradually losing its place among The Chinese diaspora to Chinese social media platforms.

While this PhD project focuses on the diaspora's identity performance and belonging construction, it is equally important to understand how these constructs are narrated by the state. Therefore, I analyse both the state's and the Chinese diaspora's interpretation of the Chinese national identity in Chapter 4 through the lens of digital media. Given that critical social events such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic generally heighten social instability and

provide a test for the political performance and legitimacy of the ruling regime (Schneider, 2021), I first of all explore how/whether the ongoing pandemic is entangled with the Chinese national identity and the Chinese Party-state's overarching political frameworks. Then, I introduce the state's articulation of national identity during the 2003 SARS crisis as a comparative case, with the aim of examining how Chinese national identity could have been politicised differently back then. While analysing these two cases, I also focus on investigating the role played by digital media that allows CCP to wave these crises into its repertoires of governance. Specifically, I explore how digital media are leveraged by state actors as a way to globalise the reach of its regime to overseas Chinese in Japan. Following this, I also present findings that illuminate the Chinese diaspora's responses to the state's interpretation of national identity. Throughout the analysis, I highlight the importance of digital media for the Chinese state, arguing that to a certain degree, the heavily politicised Chinese national identity can be seen as an outcome of technological affordances, political incentives, as well as policy choices.

In Chapter 5 the focus is on the collective imagination of the "Chinese" identity on digital media. Firstly, I address how and why digital media should be understood as a continuum of physical and digitised life experiences. I illustrate the way digitally mediated narratives shape offline social engagements of the Chinese diaspora, as well as how offline events and contexts feed back to their imagination of the Chinese identity in the online domain. Then, I discern the link between online-offline engagement and the formation of a sense of belonging, arguing how digital media alongside physical spaces mutually influence the process of constructing a sense of belonging among Chinese digital diasporas in Japan. Specifically, I focus on presenting the way research participants mobilise variant mediated resources as a response to encountered offline events, and thereby exemplifying their senses of belonging as a multi-dimensional and constantly changing construct.

Chapter 6 focuses on the performance of hypertextual identity and the construction of belonging on a particular ethnic Chinese social media site namely WeChat. The uniqueness of WeChat is that itself can be seen as a digital repertoire that is deeply enmeshed with the offline Chinese social environment. It is also a heavily politicised site, not only in the sense that information transmitted on WeChat is carefully monitored by the Chinese Party-state, but also in the sense that this site, although privately owned, is heavily employed by state actors as a means to enact its political narratives and social policies. In this context, performing and representing "self" and "belongingness" at this particular site can be seen as an act that signals each informant's unique interpretation of a set of multiple power axes, allowing me to understand how they construct "us v.s. others" narratives for the sake of identity differentiation, and why they express their identities and belongingness in certain ways. Additionally, I also observe how the Chinese digital diaspora strategically utilises various functions and resources of WeChat for the sake of their identity expressions.

In Chapter 7, the focus is on queer Chinese individuals and their online-offline engagements, exploring how they interpret Chineseness and the Chinese national identity in relation to their gender. In the context of the CCP's increasingly discriminative and repressive political discourses against the LGBTQ+ community, I triangulate gender, ethnicity, and nationalism, explore how the queer Chinese diaspora make sense of their relationships with the homeland, the host society and the transnational Chinese community through their everyday online-offline practises. I also shed light on the way they understand their gender identities, and manifest how they perform their gender identities in various online and offline spaces when facing different audiences and dealing with different contexts.

Finally, I synthesise the main findings in the concluding chapter and consider broader consequences of the Chinese diaspora's everyday digital media practises in relation to their identity construction and belonging formation. On the one hand, The Chinese diaspora

increasingly rely on Chinese ethnic social media to obtain/exchange information, maintain emotions and intimate relations. On the other hand, we have also witnessed an increasingly intensified control of the Chinese state over its digital territory, hence a deepening digital divide. In this final chapter, I consequently explore the implications of a constantly deepening digital divide on the Chinese diaspora's self-identification and senses of belonging and place them within China's broader political agenda and discourses. In summary, this thesis contributes to existing studies of diaspora identity and belonging in that it acknowledges the importance of digital practice, as well as its transnational dimension. By placing them at the forefront of the analysis, I manifest identity and sense of belonging as a process that constitutes the contexts and acts of both the physical and digital spaces.

Chapter 1   Theoretical and methodological trajectories

Historically speaking, human mobility has always had an intrinsic element of technology. However, in a time when flows of ideas and ideologies, cultures, and emotions are mediated through digital media instead of letters and boats, the technological applications that the contemporary diaspora enjoy fundamentally differentiate them from their counterparts that of other periods in history. In tandem with the technological development from the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s to the rise of digital media and big data today, the theories and methodologies that scholars use to investigate migration have also become diversified, leading to increasing adoption of theoretical and methodological approaches inspired by computing and digital technologies. Therefore, in this chapter, I try to map out the development trajectory of theoretical approaches in the field of digital diaspora studies and see how it has led to the emergence of digital methodological approaches.

Meanwhile, from a more top-bottom perspective, we also see nation-states employ evolved, smart technologies to both control and privilege certain types of human mobilities. China's recent policy of using the "health code (健康码，jiankangma)" a state-issued digital service encoded in the privately-owned smartphone application WeChat – to control both internal and external migration during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a good example that illustrates how movements are constantly monitored, restricted, and sometimes criminalised through technology. One of my informants, Yang, talked about how her health code information was leaked:

> "Somehow [my personal information] got out from the border control to my resident committee, and later the whole neighbourhood learned that I just recently returned from Japan…One day I bumped into my neighbour, and the old lady said to

me, 'you shouldn't have returned at this point…you are not of good quality'".

Therefore, it is clear that digital media not only reshape the human mobility process and experience, but also ultimately connect individuals with the actions of other actors. This potentially poses new challenges in studying human mobility, as researchers need to think about data access and collection, research ethics, and protecting the privacy of their research participants. Therefore, in this chapter, I also discuss concerns regarding research ethics for studies that employ digital research methodologies.

1.1 Conceptualising and researching the digital space

Existing research in the field of digital diaspora studies is interdisciplinary, mobilising theoretical approaches from variant subject areas, such as media studies, migration studies, cultural studies, gender studies, sociology, and anthropology (Leurs and Smets, 2018). Furthermore, parallel to the development of new technologies, the increasing digital literacy of researchers also leads to the adoption of methodologies from computing and digital technologies, such as the use of big data to map the digital access and connectivity of diaspora communities (Sandberg et al., 2022). In this section, I try to map out the shift in theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches in digital diaspora studies in a chronological order, from the introduction of the Internet to the expansion of the World Wide Web, the rise of Web 2.0 and social media, and now the entrance of big data. I then try to have a general survey on different methodological approaches and their corresponding paradigms, explaining how I perceive and study digital media in this PhD research project.

Technology development phases	Methodological Approach	Key authors	Corresponding paradigms	Corresponding theoretical frameworks	Critiques
Internet	Virtual ethnography	Porter (1996); Markham (1998); Mitra (1997); Turkle (1997); Rheingold (1993,4); Miller and Slater (2000); Hannerz (2003); Mitra & Gajjala (2008); Everett (2009); Madianou & Miller (2011)	Media-centric: diasporas in cyberspace	Cyberspace; cyberspace as a cultural form	Limited; Utopian
World Wide Web	Connective ethnography and online-offline integrative research	Mitra (2006); Hine (2007); Christensen (2012); Hepp et al. (2012); Nedelcu (2012); Madianou (2014); Yin (2015);	Non-media-centric: digitally mediated everyday diasporic experiences	Mediatisation; Online-offline continuity; internet as a cultural practice	Descriptive; small scale and field-sensitive
Web 2.0 & Social Media	Media ethnography and everyday media practises	Georgiou (2006); boyd (2011); Szulc (2012); Leurs (2014); Dhoest (2016); Lorenzana (2016); Kok and Rogers (2017)		Mediation; everyday practises; internet as a cultural practice	
Big Data & AI	Digital humanities and data mining	Diminescu (2008); Narayan et al. (2011); Diminescu & Loveluck (2014); Sánchez-Querubin and Rogers (2018);	Media-centric digital approach: diasporas as data trace	Network theory; medium/platform analysis	Flat ontology; close-ended; ethical concerns

Table 1.1 Overview of methodological approaches and their corresponding paradigms, theoretical frameworks, and critiques in digital diaspora studies

As shown in Table 1.1 above, researchers' understanding of the digital diaspora has become diversified depending on their scholarly position. In general, digital diaspora studies tend to have either a media-centric or a non-media-centric focus. The former focuses on mediated social networks and online participation, whereas the latter focuses on online-offline social interactions. Consequently, apart from digital humanities studies, Christine Hine (2000)

argues that these paradigms tend to theorise digital media in two ways, that is, either as a cultural form or as a cultural practice. Theorising digital media as a cultural form perceives the online world as a virtual empirical site where specific forms of cultures, practises, values, and powers emerge, just as they develop in the offline world. On the other hand, seeing digital media as a cultural practice analyses the digital domain as a "cultural artifact" and implies that the research focus is on social practises that are not necessarily specific to digital media but the fusion of different online and offline dimensions (Murphy, 1999). However, as Witteborn (2014) pointed out in her article citing Hymes (1968), both theorisations explore how media practises are "meaningful social life in situated locales" (77). In this context, media ethnography studies have been a well-established research method to investigate both "cultural forms" and "cultural practises". Focusing specifically on the relationship between the theorisation of the research site and media studies, I categorise methodologies identified from reviewed literature into four groups.

Virtual ethnography and the online-offline separation

Virtual ethnography was introduced by scholars such as Rheingold (1993) in the 1990s, together with the emergence of the Internet. As I discussed in the Introduction Chapter, the Internet was conceptualised as a brand new social space, namely the cyberspace. The "cyberspace", given how it used to be understood as a space detached from the offline world and, therefore, the representation of freedom and liberty, provides scholars with 'new' social and cultural patterns to explore (Porter, 1996), leading to the birth of virtual ethnography. At the early stage, virtual ethnography was mainly used to investigate properties of the cyberspace, such as virtuality, disembodiment and detachment, properties that were considered as the major shaping power to form new modes of social interactions and activities (Slater, 2002). For instance, cyberspace's anonymity was conceptualised by activists like

Barlow (1996) and scholars like Rheingold (1993) as a novel electronic frontier that would make the online world essentially different from the offline world, in the sense that the former is free from discrimination, social stratification and social class.

Two important works that established the "cyberspace" as a valid site for ethnographic research, as argued by Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz (2014), are Howard Rheingold's (1994) book *Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*; and Sherry Turkle's (1997) *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. Rheingold's work studies the formation of a collective sense of belonging and the creation of a new online community through his own experiences participating in an electronic Bulletin Board System (BBS) called *The WELL* (1994). Turkle, on the other hand, investigates the multidimensionality of online identity performance through her observation of Multi-User Domain users, exploring to which extent such online/virtual identities were free from the social constraint of "real life" (1997).

Their works, by illustrating the potential of digital users to create a "new, virtual identity" through their entry into the "cyberspace", provide an example of how to use ethnographic methodologies as the proper tool to study the digital realm. This is because anthropology is traditionally considered an appropriate approach to explore "unexplored territories" (Herring, 1996). And the cyberspace, as a newly established "territory", consequently needs a methodology that can best study it as a "primitive culture" (Escobar, 1994). It is worth mentioning that in anthropological studies, for researchers who need to do fieldwork in a community, it often underlines the importance of not bounding a community to a single territory (Marcus, 1995; Hannerz, 2003). However, given that the online space used to be seen as the "new world of Cyberia" (Escobar, 1994) and people who associate with this "Cyberia" were described as "natives of the Internet Islands" (Bakardjieva, 2005), most empirical findings collected in the 1990s tend to focus on the socio-cultural dynamics of a certain community in a given cyberspace field, such as BBS, online forums, chatrooms, and websites. For instance,

Porter (1996), Markham (1998) and Miller and Slater (2000) illustrate how individuals form online communities via computer-based interactions and formulating the community with rules, values, norms as well as culture. By practicing those elements, individuals can live a life "on the screen" and form a sense of belonging to the community. The analytical approaches for scholars adopting this methodology can generally be put into two categories. In the first category, most studies focus on audience participation research, aiming at making sense of 1) the diaspora's active participation in online activities, such as the creation and distribution of information; and 2) how such online activities contribute to sustain existing social ties and create new social relationships for diasporas. For instance, Porter (1996) and Markham (1998) analyse how the internet-based virtual community is the significant site for netizens in terms of cultural production and transformation, and how netizens, through their active production of online content, create a desired "virtual body" that they use to occupy the "virtual community"; Miller and Slater (2000), by focusing on different cyberspaces such as websites, email and online chat, examine internet users' online cultural production and consumption in different social, cultural and political contexts; and Mitra and Gajjala's (2008) study explores how Indian queer diasporas negotiate their sexual identities with cultural identities and mobility status through online blogging.

In the second category, scholars focus on audience reception research, investigating how internet users, by taking mediated content and narratives such as blog posts, news, TV shows, music, and other types of popular culture as their referent, construct meaningful online interactions and communities (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz, 2014: 5). For example, researchers such as Baym (2000) and Georgiou (2012) explore the formation and in-group interactions of diasporas' online fan communities of soap operas. Jenkins (1992) discusses how diaspora film and TV series fans construct online communities to make sense of their cultures and values. Hannerz (2003) points out that many audience reception works focus on exploring a single or

multiple online sites. The underlying logic of these studies is that they try to establish a contrasting comparison between the online and the offline sites, or to be more specifically, between virtually established social relations and the face-to-face relationships. In this sense, virtual ethnography naturally attracts criticisms regarding its cyberspace-offline separation *a priori* standpoint. However, methodologically speaking, virtual ethnography contributes to validate the Internet as an ethnographic site to observe users' social life. Studies that I have mentioned so far, while their arguments are often criticised for being utopic, demonstrate how internet mediated social interactions are culturally rich, which overturned some earlier conceptions that consider the internet (and the internet community) as "less real" and weak (Walther and Burgoon, 1992).

Connective ethnography and online-offline integrative research

Parallel to the introduction of the World Wide Web in the early 2000s, the second ethnographic approach to study the internet user's online engagement can be called connective ethnography. This term was coined by Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000) in their book *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*, where they abandon the idea of cyberspace and discuss how the Internet is used by individuals in their everyday practises. By situating their studies in a particular social context, namely Trinidad Island, Miller and Slater investigate how various social and cultural practises occur both inside and outside of the "screen". By arguing the relationships between online and offline social activities and interactions, they also blur the boundary between the online and offline field. Bakardjieva (2008) points out that this online-offline fusion is largely led by the popularisation and change in usage of the Internet. Although more people, groups, and communities started to use the internet, the emergence of the World Wide Web together with portable internet devices such as cell phones means that the internet can move with the users when they are travelling across different offline spaces. This is

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essentially different compared to the way people used to use the Internet back in the 1990s, when the Internet was only accessible via unportable devices such as desktop computers. Consequently, authors such as Miller and Slater (2000), Hine (2007) and Bakardjieva (2008) commonly point out that methodological wise, instead of studying the Internet as something that is detached from the offline society:

> "It is exactly the place where the online and offline meet. Its study should mean keeping the vision on both sides at the same time, especially because very occasionally internet is only a bridge between one offline and another" (Bakardjieva, 2008: 54).

In this context, "connective ethnography" as a methodological concept was developed as an attempt to integrate the online and offline research site (Hine, 2007). Following Hine's (2007) proposal, scholars such as Burrell (2009) further emphasise the need to delink the association between an ethnographic field and a place-focused concept when studying the use of the Internet, because Internet users now conduct their lives in both the physical and the virtual dimension. In this way, scholars with a connective approach often combine online and offline methodological approaches together to integrate these two spaces (Burrell, 2009; Christensen, 2012). For instance, Mitra (2006) and Christensen (2012) analyse narratives and discussions they collected in online forums and websites together with qualitative data collected via participant observations, in-depth interviews, and fieldwork in the physical spaces. Similarly, researchers like Nedelcu (2012) and Yin (2015) combine classic ethnography and digital ethnography in their studies by interacting with their informants through mobile phones, various social media platforms, as well as in various physical locations to collect narratives about their social networks and diasporic experiences. These studies therefore integrate the focus of media studies on semiotic analysis of text and image contents with anthropological approach to study individual's social practises. In this way, connective ethnography helps overcome virtual ethnography's "media centric" approach to study the online domain. As Bird

(2003) argues, connective ethnography allows the researcher to "move beyond the audience", in a sense that different from virtual ethnography that situates media studies based on "audience response" to specific media sites, connective ethnography, by integrating Internet users' online and offline experiences, 'can begin to answer questions about what people really do with media' (191).

Media ethnography and everyday media practises

Closely following the emergence of Web 2.0, social media, smartphones, and wireless networks in the latter half of the 2000s and early 2010s, media ethnography was introduced to make sense of new patterns in communicative forms (Andersson, 2019: 164). This communicative form is "new" not only because "common to all SNSs is the implicit assumption that people want to share information…to provide content to the web…in an unprecedented manner" (Oiarzabal, 2012: 1470); but also in the sense that with the expansion of practises related to or oriented around the media (Couldry, 2004: 117), our communicative ecosystem has been almost entirely digitalised (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz, 2014: 7). This consequently means that a new methodology is necessary to explore the social, identity, and cultural practises of individuals, because these activities are now deeply associated with our use of digital media. As Deuze (2011) once famously pointed out, "media have become so inseparable from us that we no longer live with media, but in media" (137).

Media ethnography reflects the proliferation of digital media and media practises in everyday life. As Couldry (2004) points out, it sees individuals' digital media practises not as something that is specific to the digital space, but as a part of a whole set of social practises that individuals do to engage with the society. On the one hand, media ethnography is similar to connective ethnography, in the sense that both approaches integrate classic anthropological methodologies, such as face-to-face interview, fieldwork, and participant observation with

digital methodologies, such as audience response analysis, network analysis, and semiotic analysis.

On the other hand, it is also different from connective ethnography because it underlines the importance of exploring how individuals use various digital media platforms for their social practises, identity constructions, and cultural productions. For instance, while previous connective ethnographic studies tend to find a singular online site to do digital fieldwork, research with the media ethnographic approach tends to observe how individuals utilise multiple online sites to assemble, disassemble, and reassemble their "mediated everyday reality" (Deuze, 2006). In other words, media ethnography acknowledges the multidimensionality of individuals' digital access, usage, and engagement, and tries to understand how these multidimentionalities also make their identities dynamic (Andersson, 2019: 164). For example, researchers such as boyd (2011), Lorenzana (2016) and Kok and Rogers (2017) analyse informants' digital engagements by observing their online activities on multiple social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and discussion groups. In order to associate these online activities with their informants' offline social lives, they complemented their analysis of informants' online activities with surveys and interviews that enquiring about their offline diasporic experiences. Therefore, media ethnography suggests that in order to make sense of the diaspora's everyday practises, researchers need to perform fieldwork through and with digital media, combining multiple ethnographic methods to observe the diaspora's life experiences in a more comprehensive way.

Digital humanities and data mining

The digital humanities as a methodological approach in digital diaspora studies is quite new and still emerging (Boellstorff and Maurer, 2015; Sandberg et al., 2022). Digital humanities, while its concept is still broadly and vaguely defined, generally refers to computational

methodologies that depend on the so-called "big data" collected from variant social media platforms (Sandberg et al., 2022). As a methodological approach, it refers to scholars' possibility to extract, archive and programme social media data (Pozanesi and Leurs, 2014), to visualise, systematise, and patternise the diaspora's online social engagements. It aims to overcome some common critiques that ethnographic qualitative data often attract, such as small in scale, descriptive, and context- / site-sensitive.

Throughout the literature review, I identify three main digital humanities methods, namely hyperlink analysis, content analysis, and network analysis. These methods correspond to the data-mining techniques they have employed. For hyperlink analysis, the research focus is to investigate how digital users move from one site to another. The "site" here often refers to the "website", and researchers are able to map, analyse and archive digital users' movement across multiple sites through digital tracing. The so-called "digital trace" refers to the trace left by hyperlink data stored on the website and indicates the interactions between and among the websites.

For instance, by analysing the number of incoming and outgoing links of a certain website, scholars can map the "flow" of its users and link this website to other websites. By performing this analysis for multiple times (that is, a longitudinal study on a given individual's digital traces), researchers can eventually obtain a data set showing a certain user's online network. Therefore, as Carpenter and Jose (2012) point out, hyperlink analysis is essentially a form of network analysis. Some well-known hyperlink studies include Narayan et al.'s (2011) analysis of Indian-origin students in the UK and the US, in which they analyse student diasporas' digital traces on "nation-specific websites" to examine their ethnic identity construction process; and Therwath's (2012) analysis of the incoming and outgoing links of a corpus of Hindu websites, exploring how these links can be seen as a discursive strategy of "online and long-distance nationalism".

Following this, the next method in digital humanities is quantitative content analysis. Based on the training I have received from a short PhD course as part of the Digital Asia - 12th Annual Nordic NIAS Council Conference back in 2019, this method is particularly well used for analysis of textual big data produced by social media platforms that are rich in textual data, such as Twitter, Facebook and Weibo. This method allows scholars to not just quantify but visualise the presence and relationship of variant media contents, therefore understanding online contents in relation to the authors, consumers/audience, and ongoing social events. It is worth mentioning that this method is often used in combination with other methodologies, such as hyperlink analysis. For instance, in order to illustrate the link between online and offline musical practice among Pakistani-Americans living in Boston, Hsu (2013) combined methodologies such as hyperlink analysis, content analysis, and participant observation. As Andersson (2019: 166) pointed out, Hsu's (2013) study illustrates the potential of utilising big-data oriented methodologies in sociological/ migration research, that is, to visualise the "geographical coverage and the dynamics of social interactions" in the online space.

Finally, in terms of network analysis, perhaps one of the most well-known studies that are based on data-driven methods is Dana Diminescu and Benjamin Loveluck's (2014) *e-Diasporas Atlas* project. This longitudinal study is based on 30 diaspora individuals' engagements with approximately 8000 diaspora websites, in which Diminescu and Loveluck mapped, analysed, and archived their "digital traces" in order to find out how these diasporas make connections with diasporic communities online. To explain how these "traces" can actually be seen as valid evidence for understanding diasporas' online social networking, they explain that the "digital traces" left by the diaspora precisely show how they want to be associated with certain online communities while avoiding any association with other communities. In addition, given that "digital traces" also show the user traffic – a data that illustrate the number of visitors to a given site and the frequency of their visits – from these

data, scholars can also tell to what degree a certain diaspora wants to be associated with a certain online community. Moreover, since the network analysis of a certain "site" stores not just textual and graphical but also audio and visual information, a longitudinal network analysis is therefore useful to understand how a certain group of diaspora users construct a shared

Methodological Approach	Corresponding method paradigms	Focus
Virtual ethnography Connective ethnography and online-offline integrative research Media ethnography and everyday media practises	Humanities and social science methods developed before the introduction of the Internet but adapted to studying the Internet as a valid social site	Individuals
Digital humanities and data mining	Digital methods developed after the availability of big-data – a method that is "born digitally"	Individuals/ Collectives

Table 1.2 A general review of digital diaspora studies methodologies

imagination of their diasporic community on a certain website, and how this shared imagination may change over time.

In conclusion, it is clear that the development of methodological approaches in the field of digital diaspora studies is in parallel with the proliferation of digital technologies. As summarised in Table 1.2 above, approaches derived from humanities and social science methods are considered as useful for exploring individual digital users' online engagement. Whereas the digital method, which Leurs and Smets (2018) describe as "method that is born digitally", is native to digital media studies and often adopted to explore large(r)-scale online interactions.

Digital methodologies and some ethnical concerns

There are two critiques that are commonly mentioned by media and diaspora studies scholars

regarding digital methodologies presented above. The first critique is what Appadurai (2016) described as "knowledge-based imperialism". He argues that those big-data based methodology shares a similar connotation to early-stage migration studies. On the one hand, in early-stage migration studies, we often see a "Global South – to – Global North" migratory pattern, which contributes to the construction of an image of a developed, liberal, and egalitarian Western society. On the other hand, as big-data was made available first in the "Global North", the big-data based methodologies essentially represent Western intellectual traditions and resources (Appadurai, 2016). And by universalising the adoption of these methodologies in academic debate, scholars who come from societies that are less privileged in terms of the availability of big-data (i.e. the Global South) are marginalised and are expected to 'catch-up' with data-driven methodologies (ibid).

The second critique is raised by Leurs and Smets (2018) in their article *Five Questions for Digital Migration Studies: Learning from Digital Connectivity and Forced Migration in(to) Europe*. Apart from echoing with Appadurai (2016) in terms of how big-data methodologies in digital diaspora studies are essentially Eurocentric, Leurs and Smets (2018) ask a crucial question to digital diaspora scholars: Where is the human in digital diaspora studies (9)? This question highlights two main concerns in big-data methodology. The first concern is rather commonly seen in quantitative sociological studies, that is, through datafication, individual diaspora's human body, online interactions and diasporic experiences are largely overshadowed by "descriptors" that illustrate the "pattern" and "trend" of a given diasporic community's online/ offline activities. In this sense, studies employing this methodology tend to produce a flat ontology and lack emancipatory ideals.

They also pointed out that during the datafication process, individuals are put into different identity categories, such as ethnicity, race, class, religion, age, gender, sexuality, language, and migratory status (Leurs and Smets, 2018: 10). Although these identity

categories are useful for analysis, big-data-driven studies tend to reproduce those categories through their analyses rather than interrogating how the boundaries of those categories are often not defined in a clear-cut way. Big-data studies' affection for categorisation is especially criticised by studies concerning queer diasporas and digital culture (Szulc, 2021). As Fortier (2002) points out, given that one of the essences of queer theory is to reject the dichotomic understanding of gender and sexuality, i.e. the dichotomies of female and male, homosexual and heterosexual, hence to "challenge the very idea of single, stable and static identities" (Szulc, 2021: 221), it is questionable not only in terms of to what extent can we grasp the profile of queer diasporas via big-data, but also whether we should use it at all.

In this sense, scholars should be cautious to not to undermine the fact that diasporic individuals can often fit into multiple "categories", and the boundaries of those "categories" are not absolute and may be subject to change over time. As Luibhéid (2008: 170) argues:

> "All identity categories are burdened by legacies that must be interrogated, do not map neatly across time and space, and become transformed through circulation within specific, unequally situated local, regional, national, and transnational circuits".

Crawley and Skleparis (2018) describe big-data based methodology's "affection" for categorisation as "categorical fetishism". They use the example of two categories, namely the "refugee" category and "diaspora" category, to problematise big-data's "categorical fetish", as if "they (categories) simply exist…as empty vessels into which people can be placed in some neutral ordering process" (49). Personally, I tend to agree with this critique in the sense that although it might not be the intention of the scholar to reproduce and reinforce categories through their analysis, they are essentially doing so by basing their analyses and findings on a categorised data set. In doing so, it is not only difficult for big-data inspired scholars to "research beyond categories" (Bakewell, 2008: 432), through the reproduction of categories,

but their studies may also risk of contributing to reinforcing the "normality and legality of everyday life" as praised and defined by policy makers and government officials (ibid).

The second concern raised by Leurs and Smets' (2018) "Where is the human in digital diaspora studies" question is less methodological but more ethical. They encourage researchers to think about "to whom and to what is research on migration a contribution" (Sandolval García, 2013: 1429 cited in Leurs and Smets, 2018: 10), indicating how big-data methodology can compromise the safety of the targeted migratory group. For instance, studies that employed big-data methodology can reveal diasporas' digital traces, which "may be transferred into undesirable local and national initiatives" (Leurs and Smets, 2018: 10). For example, Fischer and Jørgensen (2022) show how data presented in a given research paper that reveals the digital traces of a closed Facebook group[8] with about 330,000 Arabic-language-speaking members could actually be collected and used by FRONTEX[9] to further enhance its border control. In this context, while big-data and big-data methodology were used to be praised for "doing no harm"[10] by some scholars, we can see that this methodological approach actually has the potential to "do a lot of harm" (Fischer and Jørgensen, 2022: 151-153).

This critique is particularly relevant to my PhD research project. As I often need to ask my informants questions about the Chinese nation, the CCP, their sense of belonging to the homeland, as well as China's censored digital space, some of my informants were concerned about whether the Chinese government would be able to pinpoint their personal information

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[8] "Closed" means that in order for one to access to this Facebook group, they need to obtain the permission from the group manager.

[9] The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, tasked with guarding the militarised border of the European Schengen Area.

[10] "Doing no harm" in a sense that personal information become less visible in big-data pool. This quality is of course not always 'praised' by researchers. For instance, Fischer and Jørgensen (2022) indicate that some scholars argue big-data methodology is "killing in the name", in a sense that the 'human' in migration is killed by data (less visible), which is similar to Leurs and Smets' (2018) critiques as discussed earlier.

based on the content included in this thesis after it is made publicly accessible. If they are already quite concerned about their privacy for qualitative interviews, I anticipate that they might be more concerned if I ask them to fill out an online questionnaire, as their digital traces, such as device information and IP addresses, will be stored by the online survey service provider. Although someone may criticise that I would not be able to know for sure whether these digital traces will be collected by the Chinese government or not, what I know for sure is that I can best safeguard the privacy of my informants if this study does not include any digital trace data in the first place.

In addition, due to online censorship, I also had some difficulties publishing my surveys using Chinese online survey platforms. For instance, when I attempted to publish a survey that contains questions such as "How do you feel about Chinese government's continuous efforts in producing anti-Japan TV and film works?" On one of the most popular survey websites in China called "*Wenjuanxing* (wjx.cn)", I received an error message and was unable to publish the survey. As shown in Figure 1.1 below, the error message indicates that "my survey includes topics that are considered as politically sensitive", therefore, it is not allowed to publish "according to relevant laws and regulations". After contacting the administrative office of the survey website, I received two additional notices, as shown in Figure 1.2 below, indicating that if I insist on publishing this survey, firstly I will need the permission from government trusted agents (without specifically indicating which agents); and secondly, this survey will then be placed in records and submitted to relevant authorities that monitor the website. Judging by the information provided by the online survey platform to me, it is rather clear that the survey,

its responses and the participants who answered the survey will be monitored by "relevant government agents". In this context, I have decided to use only the quantitative survey to collect information on topics that are not considered as "politically sensitive", such as survey
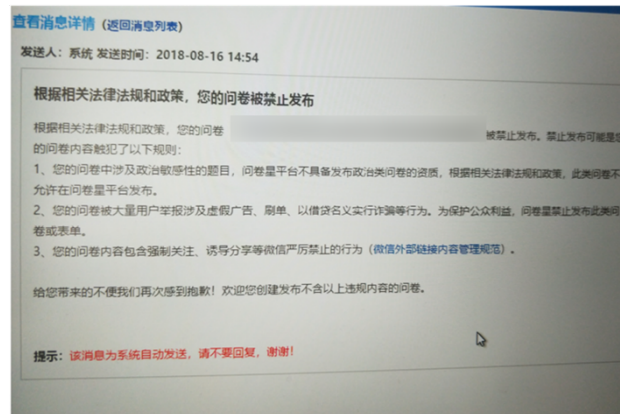
Figure 1.1 A message from *Wewnjuanxing* titled "in accordance with the relevant laws and policies, your questionnaire is prohibited to publish"
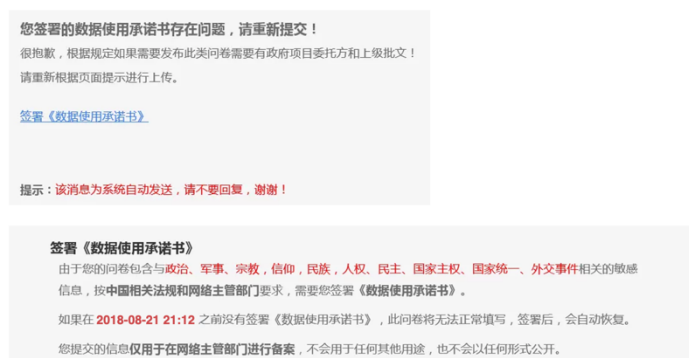
Figure 1.2 Messages from *Wewnjuanxing* underlining that surveys published on its platform are subject to censorship

participants' basic demographic profiles (i.e. age, gender, place of origin) and their digital media usage behaviours (i.e. "which of the following social media platforms do you use most often on a daily basis?"). Of course, for researchers who have access to research fund, they can always opt for non-Chinese, paid survey platforms and companies to conduct their surveys. However, since I do not have the economic capital to use these alternative options, I have decided to use qualitative methodologies as the main data collection approach and supplement

it with descriptive quantitative data that illustrate the Chinese diaspora's digital media usage behaviours.

1.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this section provides an overview of the methodological approaches and paradigms in digital diaspora studies. From the literature review, it rather clearly shows how digital diaspora methodologies, its emergence and development, are in parallel with the development, proliferation, and advancement of digital media. The introduction of new media types (such as social media, smartphones, and smartphone-based apps) as well as communicational practises (such as FaceTime and live-streaming) have been constantly shaping the research area of digital diaspora studies, and the change in this field is more clearly expressed in research methodologies. Ever since the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s, we have seen an evolution of digital diaspora research methodologies from making sense of the "site" to exploring the nature of digital media usage through virtual ethnography, then to exploring how such usage shapes the diaspora's migratory and daily experiences as well as their relationships with the homeland, the host society, and the diasporic communities through methodologies focusing on media practises. What has been clearly manifested through these methodological shifts is the importance for researchers to recognise both the distinction between and the need to bridge the online and the offline space in order to understand how multiple digital media platforms and sources are embedded in the diaspora's everyday norm, becoming a "mundane" feature for them.

Chapter 2   Methodology

Following the previous chapter that shows how different scholars tend to rely on different

epistemologies (i.e. qualitative or quantitative methods) to conduct their research, in this

chapter, I explain methodologies that I adopt for this research project. For sociological research,

some scholars (i.e. empiricist researchers and theorists) value quantitative methodologies for

their neutrality and value-freeness[11] – that "quantification is esteemed as the best method for

achieving certain knowledge" (Code, 1991: 160) – and others (i.e. constructionist researchers)

credit[12] qualitative approaches for their interdisciplinarity, comprehensiveness, and reflexivity

(Griffin, 2011; Harding, 1991).

However, we also see a growing number of studies adopting the mixed method of

qualitative and quantitative approaches. As Lobe et al. (2008) and Sandberg et al. (2022) point

out, because those two methodological paradigms have their own pros and cons, that the

former are often open-ended and therefore welcome unexpected data but could be small in

scale; while the latter are close-ended, good for showing the whole picture but lack narratives

– the best or the most ideal way to do research is then to employ both of them, so they can

compensate each other and allow researchers to understand both subjective opinions and

objective facts. Therefore, for my research, my objective is to take an in-between position by

utilising tools from both approaches, so that I can avoid articulating only a "partial vision"

(Haraway, 1991) in my study and the possibility of causing 'a lot of harm' to the research

participants. In the following sections, I explain different methodologies that I have adopted at

different stages of this research. First, I reflect on designing and conducting the quantitative

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[11] For instance, Griffin (2011) explains how empiricist researchers tend to see their strictly methodologically led studies as "good research".

[12] And deal with critiques from empiricist researchers who often see theory-driven qualitative studies as "unscientific" (Code, 1991: 60).

survey, followed by explaining the methodologies I used to collect qualitative evidence. Then, in the next section I discuss some issues concerning research ethics and considerations I have adopted to deal with those issues.

2.1   The survey

While I do not claim that my research is "neutral" and "value-free" (Code, 1991: 160) by incorporating quantitative survey into the analysis due to its limited sample size and the limited scope of collected data, the value of quantification in this project is that it maps out trends and patterns of digital media usage among The Chinese diaspora in Japan, which serves as a complement to the qualitative evidence.

From 2018 to 2019, I have conducted three trial surveys and a formal survey research, and I was able to distribute the survey to 438 Chinese diaspora and managed to collect 413 valid data. After designing a typical detailed and structured questionnaire in English, I translated it into Chinese and asked several Chinese-speaking contacts to proofread it. I then transferred the questionnaire to the Chinese survey website *Wenjuanxing* and distributed it to the research participants by either emailing them the survey link or sharing them the QR code via WeChat. Most of the participants were able to complete the questionnaire in ten to 15 minutes. In this section, first of all I explain the construction process of the questionnaire. Then, I show the survey sampling and recruitment procedures. Next, I present some descriptive data to show the demographic profile of the survey participants. Finally, I discuss how my quantitative surveys shape the subsequent qualitative data collection processes.

Designing the survey

Given that my objective is to understand how the Chinese diaspora in Japan use digital media in their daily lives, I developed the survey in a way that focuses on their social networks, both

online and offline and at the same time to make sure I can carry out comparisons to find out similarities and differences between different in-groups, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and Japanese language proficiency. After reviewing the survey constructs that were adopted by existing studies, I also added the dimension of digital divide into the survey, so I can address the relationship between participants' material access to the digital realm and their digital media usage behaviour. As pointed out by Nakamura (2008), investigating the linkage between material access and media usage behaviour is a common research focus among some early survey-based quantitative studies in the field. However, as I elaborated in the Introduction section in the Digital Divide subsection, scholars should also be aware of the uneven distribution of digital media access among their targeted diaspora communities. Therefore, I also added several questions to further investigate the Chinese diaspora's media consumption trends and patterns, how they maintain their offline social lives online, and how they establish new online social networks.

In terms of its structure, the survey is divided into two sections. The first section collects information on the participants' basic demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, and place of origin. It is worth mentioning that although Chapter 7 focuses on the digital media usage experiences of the Queer Chinese diaspora in Japan, since what I wanted to understand from this survey does not concern the queer population, the question concerning research participants' sex only has three categories, namely Female, Male, and Not Listed. While this section of this survey was not designed in a more inclusive way given that the gender dimension is not a crucial part of my data analysis plan, I still reflexively think about how its design may shape the way research participants respond to the survey. It is indeed possible that some informants may consider this survey as exclusive and, therefore, discouraged from answering the questions in a fully devoted manner. Guided by this experience, I eliminated the gender question from my in-depth qualitative interviews. Instead, I gave the agency to my

informants, asking them to provide me with the gender label(s) and pronouns that they most strongly identify.

The second section covers questions related to the participants' digital literacy and their material access. As I indicated in the Introduction chapter, existing studies argue that digital media have become an intrinsic part of today's social infrastructure (Retis and Tsagarousianou, 2019). In order to verify whether this argument is applicable to a particular population, namely the Chinese diaspora in Japan, I did not control for factors such as digital tool ownership, frequency of digital media usage, nor digital literacy when recruiting research participants. Instead, I invited participants to answer questions that ask, for instance, the number of digital tools they own and whether they know how to use digital tools to execute certain tasks. For a complete list of survey questions, see Appendix 1.

In addition, the questions in this section also explore the Chinese diaspora's digital practises. Given that I perceive the digital space as the continuum of the physical space, I was mainly interested in exploring 1) how their digital practises reflect offline power dynamics through questions such as: "Which of the following news agencies serve as your main information source? mainland Chinese news agencies; Japanese news agencies; Chinese diaspora news agencies; English-language news agencies"; and 2) how digital media constitute an important part of their offline lived experiences by asking questions such as "when I'm sad or anxious, I will need to contact my families and friends back home".

Furthermore, the questions in this section also examine the research participants' personal networks, both online and offline. I start by asking about the number of contacts they have on different social media platforms. In addition, because platforms such as WeChat, LINE and Facebook are often considered as semi-closed spaces in the sense that a large part of their digital functionality is designed to maintain one's existing social and interpersonal

relationships rather than to facilitate public engagement (such as Twitter, Weibo and Instagram), I also asked the research participants to identify the types of contact they have on those platforms. Furthermore, I also invite them to answer questions such as "Here are five options that describe one's motivation to use WeChat. Please rate them according to your situation: 1) To keep in touch with left-behind families and friends; 2) To maintain business and other types of formal relationships established in the homeland; 3) To interact with The Chinese diaspora in Japan; 4) To interact with friends and/or families in Japan; 5) To maintain business and other types of formal relationships established in Japan". Although these five options cannot fully represent one's motivation to use a certain social media platform, they allow me to have a general understanding of how the research participants tend to use different media platforms to interact with different audiences. I was also able to polish my qualitative interview questions concerning the Chinese diaspora's online identity performance based on the finding collected from this survey question.

As mentioned above, to ensure that the survey is easily accessible to the respondents regardless of the type of digital tools they use, I decided to develop an online survey by making use of the online survey website *Wenjuanxing*. One of the advantages of this survey platform is that it allows me to easily distribute the survey to my research participants. For instance, I was able to directly share the link of the survey via emails and on social media platforms (such as in a few group-chat rooms on WeChat), and the participants were able to answer the survey simply by clicking the link without the need to register an account with *Wenjuanxing* or download its app. Moreover, once they completed the survey, I was also able to see the types of digital tool they used when completing the survey. For the 413 valid surveys collected, I distributed 153 surveys through WeChat, 44 surveys through LINE, and the rest 216 surveys through emails. Although 153 respondents completed their surveys on WeChat, only eight respondents (1.94%) completed their surveys using digital devices other than the mobile

phone. This result in turn validates arguments that describe portable digital tools, such as the mobile phone, as the extension to the human body, making our lived experiences something that is constantly digitised and mediatised.

One minor challenge that I had experienced when trying to make use of this survey platform was account registration. *Wenjuanxing*, like most other Chinese digital services, requires its users to provide it with authentication information (市民认证信息 in Chinese, literal meaning: real name verification information) before they can open an account. In order to do so, one needs to provide the platform with their mobile phone number[13], as in China the mobile phone number is associated with their ID information (身份证信息 in Chinese). Therefore, initially, I was unable to register an account because I do not own a Chinese mobile phone number. Later on, I was told by a personal contact of mine that I can open an account without registration, as I can use my WeChat account to log into this survey platform. The logic is that if you already have an account with other designated apps[14], such as WeChat, it means that you have provided your ID information to those apps. Therefore, by using those apps to log in to the *Wenjuanxing* platform, your ID information will be shared among them, and therefore you are exempted to provide your ID information "again" to the *Wenjuanxing* platform. In this way, I was able to open an account with *Wenjuanxing* through WeChat.

However, it is worth to mention that this is rather a way to exploit a loophole, because I was able to register a WeChat account without having a Chinese cellphone number. As Sun and Yu (2022) point out, the social media platform WeChat has two versions, Weixin and WeChat. The former (Weixin) targets domestic Chinese users, whereas the latter (WeChat)

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[13] Or you can register an account with them via other designated apps such as WeChat and Weibo.
[14] Currently there are only two designated apps: QQ and WeChat. Both apps are developed and managed by Tencent, one of the biggest internet companies in China.

targets overseas/international users[15]. Although one needs to use their Chinese mobile phone number when registering an account with Weixin, back in 2018 when I was opening an account with WeChat, I also had the option of using an email address or Facebook account to register with WeChat. In this way, I was able to use WeChat, and then using WeChat to log into *Wenjuanxing* without the need of having neither a Chinese ID card nor cell phone number.

On the one hand, this experience allows me to better understand the concept of digital divide, and how this divide, although promoted by state actors of a certain nation, can extend beyond the nation's physical borders. On the other hand, I was able to reflect on the comprehensiveness of China's online censorship, how future researchers may not be able to conduct a survey study using Chinese websites such as *Wenjuanxing* once the authorities spotted the loophole, and more importantly, the significance of researchers to protect the research participants' privacy as well as how researchers should carefully evaluate their capacity of safeguarding research participants' privacy before deciding to adopt the online survey as the main data collection channel.

Revising the survey

When designing and testing the survey during the pilot research stage, one thing that I have clearly realised is the asymmetrical power relationship between the researcher and the respondents. On the one hand, surveying, as a data collection method, entitles the former with greater power (compared to the latter) in the sense that it is the researcher who designs and distributes the survey, who gets to select the research participants and has the power to define the answer categories. On the other hand, as someone who is "invited" to the research after being selected by the researcher, whose personal characters and profiles would become less

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[15] For iPhone users, Weixin is only available to download via Apple's Mainland China App Store whereas WeChat is available in App Stores of other regions and countries.

visible once they completed the survey and got submerged in the data pool, the research participants are ultimately placed in a less powerful position.

In this context, after conducting the first trial survey, I invited some participants (on a voluntary basis; N=12) to take part in the development, shaping, and distribution of the questionnaire. For instance, I asked them whether they think the use of language is easy and clear to understand and whether they think the answer categories make sense. I also asked for their opinions about the flow of the questions as well as the length of the survey. Based on their feedbacks and comments, I was able to edit the survey so that it can be more easily comprehended by the respondents. In addition, I also received the help of one respondent, who majored in Chinese modern literature at a prestige Chinese university before coming to Japan, to ensure that the language of the survey reads naturally. I am especially grateful for this help, given that although I am a native Chinese speaker, I was not academically nor professionally trained in the Chinese language and therefore sometimes have difficulties in using easy-to-understand and "modern"[16] expressions when writing.

After the survey was more or less finalised, I also asked the 12 participants if they could help me distribute the survey. This not only allowed me to further expand the sample pool but also gave some participants a "true" feeling that they were actually engaged in my research project:

> **Yuanyuan***: I'm very proud of both you and me…I mean, you are doing this research about this community, and I feel nice when inviting my friends to answer the questionnaire and telling them that I actually "edited" the survey a bit. They were all like, "how come you knew a scholar?!" (laughing)*

> **Xin***: Well, there is still a long journey ahead of me to become a proper scholar,*

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[16] This is one of the comments I received from the informant who checked the language of the survey for me.

and I couldn't thank you enough for helping me edit the survey.

Yuanyuan*: Actually, I should thank you for inviting me…previously I couldn't understand the value of your research and felt that it is a quite boring survey…but now, I feel I can, and I will answer the survey seriously and genuinely.*

Xin*: Genuinely?*

Yuanyuan*: I mean, sometimes I couldn't understand the meaning of some questions… Like this one, "How many dianzi-meiti-shebei[17] do you have?", I couldn't understand what sort of devices count as a "dianzi-de" "meiti", like, how about a dianzi-xiangji (which means digital camera in English)? Do you count it as a "dianzi" device?*

Xin*: I see, that's why you changed it to "zhineng-meiti-shebei[18]". Actually, I wasn't aware of this expression. But what did you mean by "genuinely"?*

Yuanyuan*: Oh, I didn't mean that I lied when answering the questions… Well, I kind of (lied), but not for bad intentions…like, when you ask, "How much do you use your smartphone per day?" I mean…*

Xin*: Yes? You mean that it was hard for you to tell?*

Yuanyuan*: No, it was easy for me to tell because I use it (smartphone) a lot, like, at least 7 hours per day according to the annoying iPhone function[19] (laughing), but I selected the "'3-5 hours" option box for this question…I'm sorry, but I didn't want to present myself as a helpless smartphone addict who has no real life…*

From Yuanyuan's experience, we can see the potential benefit of inviting and granting

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[17] Initially, I translated "digital media devices" as "电子媒体设备" in Chinese.

[18] "智能媒体设备" in Chinese, can be literally translated as "smart media device" in English.

[19] On Apple devices such as iPhone and iPad, there is a function called "Screen Time" and it monitors the way users use their Apple devices. Users can tell how much time they have spent on certain devices, app categories, and specific apps, as well as how many times they have picked up their iPhone in a given time period (like within an hour, within a day).

research participants with agency when shaping and distributing the survey. Activities such as briefing the research participants with the aim and the intention of the research project in greater detail, asking them to distribute the survey via their own social networks, as well as incorporating their comments and feedbacks when polishing the survey serve two important roles. Firstly, those activities allow them to realise that they are an active actor for a particular research project, and that their voices and opinions will be heard and respected. As a result, they are encouraged to answer the survey questions "seriously and genuinely". Second, as Foucault (1980) once pointed out, the power of language should be properly acknowledged, as through the use of particular terminologies, phrases, and expressions we are constructing a world with a certain set of visions and values. In this way, he argues that the use of language is essentially a process infused with power. In this sense, by inviting research respondents to edit the survey, it consequently reflects the "visions and values" of both the researcher and the research participants. Although I, as the researcher, still have the privilege (greater power) to have the final say in terms of the design of the survey, the asymmetrical power relations between myself and the respondents have been more or less improved. Furthermore, since research participants were able to invite their contacts to respond to the survey, this process also reduces my power in the respondent selection process.

Sampling and accessing the survey respondents

For any study, whether qualitative or quantitative (or mixed-methodological), it is important to come up with control factors and justify the reason to control certain factors when recruiting research participants. Given the particular research interests of my thesis project, for both my qualitative and quantitative data collection, I tend to only recruit those who enjoy a stable and economically independent life in Japan. The rationale is to highlight the impact of digital media on research participants' sense of belonging; therefore, I naturally exclude the voices of those

who are less financially privileged and/or those with less socio-cultural capitals to use. For this reason, I acknowledge that neither my qualitative nor quantitative data can represent the Chinese diaspora community in Japan, but it was never my intention in the first place to produce arguments and narratives that can be generalised.

For this research, I controlled for four indicators, namely 1) relative earnings (those whose income level is higher than the national average[20]), 2) Japanese language proficiency (those who acquired a N1-level certificate on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test[21]), 3) level of educational attainment (those who attended higher education and above), 4) years of residence in Japan (at least three years).

In addition to those criteria, I tried to diversify the sample in terms of gender and age[22]. Among 413 valid survey entries, more than half (N=225, 54.48%) of them were female, and most of the survey respondents (N=229, 55.45%) lied in the 30-40 age group. Back in 2019 when I conducted the survey, the female-to-male ratio among the Chinese diaspora community in Japan was approximately 1.28, which means that among 958,257 mainland Chinese in Japan, about 56% were female (MOJ, 2019). Therefore, although I did not control for gender when distributing the survey, the gender of the research respondents corresponds to the gender ratio in the Chinese diasporic population in Japan at that time. Regarding the age distribution of the survey respondents, as shown in Figure 2.1 below, although my respondents were not as demographically diversified as the Chinese diasporic community in Japan as I was not able to recruit those over 60 years of age, the distribution of the age segments was generally the same in the sense that the majority of the respondents were made up of those

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[20] The average income level was calculated based on the 2018 average monthly earnings nation-wide as published by the Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/youran/roudou-nenpou/03.html.

[21] For an explanation, see Japan Foundation (2012).

[22] It is important to clarify that I only distributed the survey to those who aged 20 and above back in 2019. At the time I distributed the survey, the legal age of adulthood of Japan and China was 20 and 18 years old respectively.
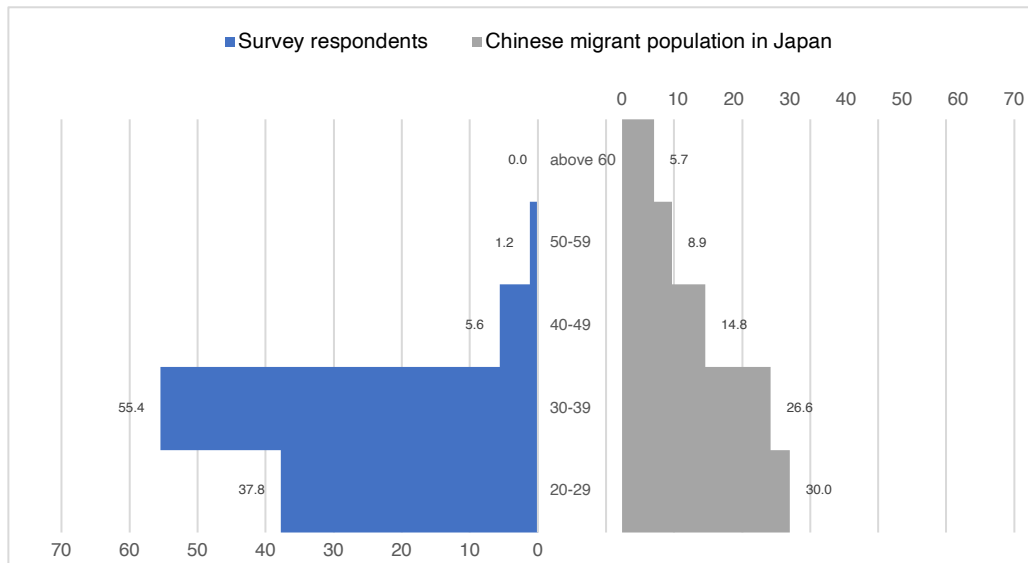
Figure 2.1 The age distribution of survey participants and Chinese diasporic population in Japan

*Note: I visualised the demographic structure of the Chinese diasporic population in Japan based on the data "Foreign Residents by Nationality/Region, Age and Sex as of December 2018 (国籍・地域別　年齢・男女別　在留外国人　2018 年 12 月)" released by the Ministry of Justice in 2019 (MOJ, 2019).

who aged 30-39 (55.4%), followed by those who aged 20-29 (37.8%), 40-49 (5.6%), and 50-59 (1.2%), which is in parallel with the demographic structure of the Chinese diasporic community in Japan.

In terms of the recruitment of the survey respondents, I was heavily dependent on my personal connections and networks. Around the beginning of 2019, I contacted five Chinese in Japan and asked them to help me distribute the survey through their social networks. Among those five research participants, two of them, Rong and Qintian, were Chinese student migrants in Japan. I first got to know Rong back in 2015, when I was working for an investment bank in London, and Rong was an intern there for a year. In 2016, while I had decided to quit my job, Rong had finished her internship and migrated to Singapore as she received a full-time job offer from a bank there. We managed to keep in touch through WhatsApp, and when I came to Japan in spring 2018, Rong surprised me by saying that she also migrated to Japan because she was "tired of the fancy but inhumane banker's life" and wanted to "go back to the simple and pure university life". I reached out to Rong and asked for her help in distributing the

survey because she is the founder of two WeChat chat groups. According to Rong, she established these two groups because she wanted to create a platform for Chinese students who are attending higher education in Japan to interact and help with each other, as well as to exchange information, because "those needs were what I needed the most when I arrived in Japan with little-to-no knowledge of the Japanese society and the Japanese language". Therefore, the two WeChat chat groups created by Rong are mainly made up of mainland Chinese students who have already migrated to Japan. The first group had 89 members, and the second group had about 40 members. As Rong kindly agreed to help me distributing the survey in her chatting groups, 81 chatting group members filled the survey for me and eventually I managed to collect 66 valid survey data.

My other key contact, Qintian, also helped me distribute the survey, though I have never had the opportunity to meet him in person. I got to know Qintian by chance before he migrated to Japan. Back in the late summer 2017, after I was accepted for my PhD application, while I had (almost) no firm idea about what to study, I was sure that I wanted to focus on the Chinese diasporic community in Japan. Therefore, I started to do some research about the community to see whether there are any online forums and chatrooms created by and for the Chinese diaspora, and this is how I found *Xiaochunwang*. One day, while browsing through *Xiaochunwang*, I saw someone with an ID name called "Qintian" posted a new thread, asking about the time it would take for the Japanese Embassy to issue a student visa. After I replied to the thread, I received a DM (direct messaging) from Qintian in which he asked for my WeChat account, and this is how we got to know each other. Initially, I did not plan to ask him to be my research participant, because Qintian settled in Kansai (Western Japan) which is quite far from Tokyo (this is also why we have not yet met in person). However, he seems to be quite good at expanding his social networks. After settling in Kansai in 2018, Qintian quickly managed to join the Overseas Chinese Association in Western Japan (西日本新華僑華人聯合

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会) as well as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Kansai (関西中華総商会). According to Qintian, he has more than 800 personal contacts on WeChat, and most of them are young entrepreneurs in Japan. Since he knows that I am a PhD researcher, he offered to help me distribute the survey among his contacts. In this way, I collected 318 valid survey data thanks to his personal network.

The remaining three participants who kindly supported my research are my family relative and my mother and father's personal contacts. Given the age of the participants, I was able to collect survey data from more senior diaspora individuals, which helps to diversify the sample pool.

Conducting the survey

When the five research participants distributed the survey for me via their personal social networks, I asked them to send out the link/QR code of the survey together with a document explaining the purpose of the survey and how the data collected from them will be used. The document also explained that their anonymity would be protected, and that the survey does not collect any identifiable personal data. After the survey respondent clicked or scanned the QR code, they would be re-directed to the survey website (*Wenjuanxing*) and can start answering the survey questions right away.

Given the fact that the survey was sent to each respondent from someone they personally know or is from the same online community (i.e. WeChat chatting groups) as they do, I did not experience much issue of trust. However, I experienced two main issues, and those issues are related to the digital functionality of WeChat (the survey distribution channel) and *Wenjuanxing* (the data collection channel). The first issue concerns how some survey respondents tried to have a personal contact with me by adding my WeChat account and asking personal questions that are not related to the survey nor my research project. For

instance, some survey respondents acquired my WeChat account from the survey distributor by claiming that they have some questions about the survey questions, but then asked me questions such as "are you married" or trying to "invite" me to their "investment projects" or demanding me to distribute information regarding their businesses to Chinese students I know at Waseda University, my home institute. Expectedly, after I rejected answering their questions, some of them decided to leave the research project.

The second issue was raised to me by some survey respondents, that they were not able to continue answering their surveys after taking a break. As the survey website does not save unfinished/unsubmitted surveys, some respondents were therefore discouraged to "fill the answers once again from the beginning". In addition, some also mentioned that they were unable to invite their family members to attempt the survey by using the same digital device. I suspect that this is because *Wenjuanxing* records the IP address of each digital device and does not allow multiple submissions sent from the same IP address in order to prevent duplicate submissions.

Although the above issues experienced by both the researcher (i.e. myself) and the research participants limited the scale of the sample pool, this experience in turn makes me realise how quantitative data collection, though often perceived as an objective and rational process, does involve very personal experiences and reflect different power relations. In addition, it also inspires me to think about how researchers should manage their relationships with the survey respondents. As I demonstrated above, through digital media such as WeChat, survey respondents were able to make a rather lasses-faire contact with the researcher, both in a sense that they can contact the researcher freely given the technical affordance of digital media in facilitating interpersonal communication, but also the fact that their anonymity may encourage them to make contact with the researcher for non-research related purposes. Therefore, although digital media can facilitate research by allowing the researcher to easily

recruit research participants and to distribute the quantitative survey, we should also be aware of its potential to bring new challenges to both the researcher and the participants.

2.2   The in-depth interview and media ethnographic observation

Following the survey research and based on its general but informative data, I was able to curate my interview questions in a way that investigates how The Chinese diaspora experience different digital spaces differently for different purposes and when facing different audiences. The reason I have chosen semi-structured interviews as the main channel for data collection is that this technique is known for its openness and therefore the ability to collect "unexpected", detailed and more layered data – something that can potentially answer the 5W1H (What, Why, When, Where, Who, and How) question, which is different from the standardised, formalised data acquired through a closed-end quantitative survey research (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz, 2014). This is not to say that between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies one is better than another, but that data collected from different methodological paradigms have their own pros and cons, and they may compensate each other so the researchers can have a more comprehensive understanding towards the research subjects that they are observing.

In addition to the qualitative interview, to visualise how the informants interact with the digital realm, I also conducted media ethnographic observation on the digital field site of WeChat. Therefore, in this section, I first explain how I curated my interview questions and conducted the interview sampling. Then, I reflexively discuss how the interviews were carried out and critically discuss the power relations between the researcher and the interviewees. Finally, I explain how I conducted the media ethnographic observation on WeChat.

A "biased" sampling

In this section, I explain some general background information about the interviewees and how

I managed to invite them to this research. As the title indicates, I also reflexively discuss how my samples can be considered "biased" and therefore have a "representational crisis" (Nabhan-Warren and Wigg-Stevenson, 2021), and how I perceive my "biased" sampling in relation to the goals and objectives of this research project.

In terms of recruiting the informants, I was able to motivate ten survey respondents[23] to participate in the qualitative interview. In addition, I also used the social networks of my own and my family members to recruit informants. It is for this reason that many of my informants are rather mature and were in their 30s to 50s when they were interviewed. I consider this to be a good sample to balance out the quantitative sample pool, given that most of the survey participants are in their 20s and 30s. I am also fully aware that this research sample is highly biased, not only in terms of age, but also in terms of other social traits such as income level and social class. On the one hand, the informants I managed to recruit through my own social networks are mainly artists and those who work in the art industry, such as painters, sculptors, graphic designers, interior designers, museum curators, art collectors, sake (Japanese rice wine) makers, and film producers. On the other hand, most of the informants who were referred to me by my family members (mainly my mother and my uncle) are entrepreneurs, business owners, as well as those who are generally considered as highly skilled professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers in higher education institutes.

In this context, those who are less economically and socially privileged are excluded from the interview sample pool despite my intention and efforts made to try to have a more balanced and well represented group of research participants. However, I do not want to discourage myself to pause the research nor to paralyse myself because of potential criticisms. As Becker (1967) and Hammersley and Gomm (1997) pointed out, every study has its own

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[23] And one informant decided to withdraw from the research later on so I ended up with nine informants.

bias. No matter how hard a researcher tries, there will always be systematic and unmotivated biases that they cannot avoid (Hammersley and Gomm, 1997). Therefore, as Howard Becker (1967) points out, instead of grabbing on the fantasy that "it is indeed possible to do research that is uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies" (239), I acknowledge both the bias and the value of my research. I can still remember that at the end of my interview with the research participant XiXin, he mentioned that:

> "Do you think that foreigners with wealth in this country are exempted from being socially discriminated against on a daily basis? No. Japan is not like the US. In the US, you can stand on a moral high ground and have social justice on your side as long as you are rich. This is not the case in Japan. Actually, don't you think the fact that both the poor (Chinese diaspora) and (the rich Chinese diaspora) are marginalised in Japanese society actually says more about the issue you are investigating?"

Leaving aside XiXin's rather elitism perspective and his opinions on the US, his narrative at least demonstrates the importance and necessity of incorporating the voices of those who are considered "economically better-off" and seeing how they interpret their daily experiences and perceived discriminations and marginalities in Japan. In this sense, although the sample pool of this study is biased, I consider this less as a weakness of my study but as a potential opportunity to enrich empirical insights on the Chinese diaspora community in Japan.

Eventually, using the snowball sampling method, a total of 69 Chinese diaspora participated in the qualitative interview stage of my research. All of them are first-generation Chinese diaspora who were born and raised in mainland China, and most of them initially emigrated to Japan as students. While the majority of the informants are based in Tokyo, the rest of them reside in cities spanning across Honshu (the main island of Japan), from east to west, such as Niigata, Saitama, Osaka, Kobe, and Fukuoka. The summary of the basic

demographic information of the interviewees can be found in Appendix 2. In general, all interviewees mentioned that they are quite confident in their digital literacy, especially the use of social media. Some of the informants, especially those of relatively senior age, specifically mentioned to me that sometimes they feel offended by some Japanese Flip phone (ガラケー in Japanese) advertisements that often feature seniors using some "feature phones with big buttons". For instance, Terada, who was 71 at the time of the interview, joked that: "My body is Showa, but I live properly in the present (ボディーは昭和ですけど、ちゃんと今を生きてますので)". Although no financial compensation was provided to the interviewees, all of them were given a small gift, usually a sweet box worth 1,000 – 2,000 Japanese Yen, and a beverage to show my appreciation for their time and help dedicated to this research. Interviews generally lasted between 30 and 120 minutes, with some exceptionally long interviews lasting about three to four hours. As mentioned above, all interviews were semi-structured with an open end, and I was able to continue the conversation with some interviewees via social media platforms such as WeChat, Twitter, and Instagram. Finally, with some informants, especially those who live in Tokyo, I was able to conduct follow-up interviews with them to acquire new narratives after the emergence of some critical social events, especially the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent heightened racial discrimination against mainland Chinese.

Conducting the interview: some reflections

In this section, I reflect on challenges and difficulties experienced during the interview, such as encouraging the interviewees to speak more, the issue of trust, and the power relations between the interviewees and the researcher.

To acknowledge the autonomy of the interviewees in this research, I asked them all to sign a consent form at the beginning of the interview. In addition, I asked all informants to suggest a pseudonym they prefer instead of allocating a random alias to them as an additional

attempt to recognise their autonomy. I encouraged the informants to come up with a random name, preferably a Chinese name, but also clarified that they were free to use any type of name they prefer. Here, I specifically asked the informants not to provide me with aliases/ ID names that they use for their social media accounts as one of measures to ensure that their privacies are protected.

Asking the informants to suggest an alias also proves to be a good strategy to open the interview in a relatively smooth and natural way. I was able to spontaneously ask the informants to explain their choice of name, especially those who opted for names that do not sound like a Chinese name, and this could lead to some unexpected answers that allowed me to better understand the complexity of their migratory experiences. For instance, Sakura, a transgender woman explained to me that this name was actually her *daihao* – meaning code name, when she was in a gender clinic in Thailand, where "doctors and nurses assign each patient with a code name so when they are called their real names are not exposed". From here, I was able to further inquire about her migratory experiences, for instance, whether she has experienced any difficulties when entering/ exiting China and Japan's border controls.

Another important issue to consider when conducting interview research is the relationship of trust between the interviewees and the interviewer. As I mentioned above, because I recruited most of the informants through personal and familial networks, I was able to easily acquire their trust in most cases. Many informants were able to freely express their perspectives and opinions even when discussing topics that are commonly considered as "politically sensitive" in China, such as topics related to Sino-Japanese disputes as well as the CCP's politicisation of "Chineseness" and the Chinese national identity. However, the issue of trust is crucial when conducting the interview online. I interviewed ten out of 69 informants online either due to the physical distance (i.e. informants who are based in Kansai) or the COVID-19 pandemic. For those online interviews, I suspect that the issue of trust is mainly

contributed by China's online censorship on its "digital territory". Although I was able to add all ten informants on WeChat, the majority of the informants who were interviewed online expressed concerns about answering interview questions on the WeChat platform, as they are fully aware how the platform is under the censorship and monitor of the Chinese state. To solve this issue, I registered two Skype accounts, one for the interviewees, and one for myself, by using two throwaway email addresses that I only use for making Skype calls with the informants. I explained to the informants that Skype uses the VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technology that ensures a peer-to-peer protocol, which means that when I call them via Skype, the two pieces of hardware (i.e. their smartphone and my phone) are connected with each other without the need for a server. This VoIP technology thus makes the phone call difficult to trace, as the data of the conversations are not stored on the server. Therefore, by using Skype, and later on Zoom after the pandemic hit Japan, I was able to collect narratives and easy informants' concerns on online censorship.

Some other challenges that I experienced during the interview include the articulation of interview questions. One of my research aims is to explore the Chinese digital diaspora's sense of belonging, and I am fully aware of the difficulties in discussing abstract matters with the informants, such as sense of belonging, identity, nationality, and Chineseness. This is not only because those questions are hard to explain for the researcher and hard to interpret for the research participants, but also because even if the research participants can understand the question, it might be difficult for them to provide a solid answer verbally. In addition, while scholars popularly argue that abstract notions such as the sense of belonging and identity are multi-layered and context-based, informants may experience some difficulties in anticipating different "contexts" and "layers" in their daily lives if the researcher simply throws them with the research questions, such as "How do you understand your identity" without providing any reference points (Narayan, 1993). In this context, I was careful when designing interview

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questions and tried multiple techniques to make "abstract" matters less "abstract" but more "grabbable" for the interviewees. One of the effective ways is to visualise those concepts. As
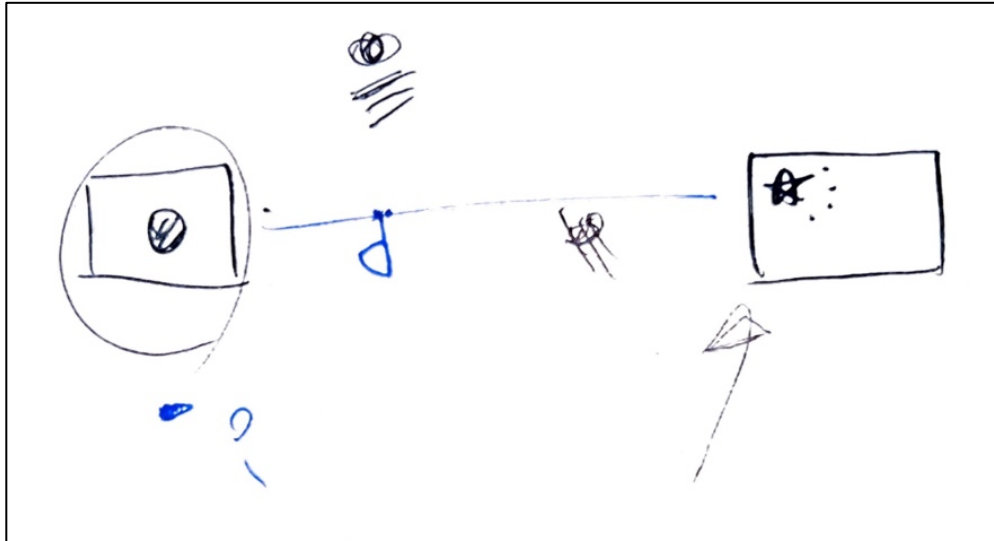
Figure 2.2 Self-positioning mapping by Changying, an entrepreneur who
was 56-year-old at the time of the interview

shown in Figure 2.2 below, after inquiring different "contexts" and "layers" of the informants' daily experiences[24], I would put a blank sheet on the table and draw two flags to represent the two countries. Then, I pass the sheet to the informants and ask them to put a dot (or some dots) somewhere on the sheet, explaining to them that the dot is supposed to indicate how they position themselves in relation to China and Japan. This technique was inspired by my training in painting growing up, from which I realised the power of the 'negative space' by studying artworks produced by abstract artists such as Lee Ufan. As Figure 2.3 illustrates, negative space is a concept that is often used in the field of fine art. It describes the empty spaces around the objects in a painting (Scott, 2019). It is considered as contentless but simultaneously rich in content, in a sense that the content is expected to be filled by the audiences using their own imaginations, because psychologically, the audiences inherently want to see something (Lasker, 2022). In this sense, the negative space is a space that is

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[24] See Appendix 4 for the list of interview questions.

Figure 2.3 *Dialogue* by Lee Ufan (2018), an internationally renowned
Korean abstract artist famous for his use of negative space

interpretive, actively engages the audiences in the process of content production (ibid). Given

that the negative space is well recognised for its potential to exploring the limits and

perspectives of the audience (ibid), I strategically present the interviewees with an almost blank

paper with only two flags on it with limited instructions in terms of what I want them to draw on

the sheet. For instance, although I explained to them that they are supposed to draw circles or

dots to illustrate their self-positionality, I did not clarify how many dots they can draw or where

the dots should be located at – either on the line joining those two flags or anywhere on the

sheet. By actively using the negative space during this process, I found that many informants

seem able to better interpret their thoughts regarding abstract matters such as sense of

belonging, as they can visualise those matters by drawing dots on the sheet while constantly

encouraged to produce narratives in order to explain what they have been drawing.

Throughout the interviews with 69 informants, an issue that I constantly need to deal

with is the power relations between the interviewees and myself due to my personal presence during the interview. Some of my personal identity traits, such as physical appearance (i.e. the physical features, how I dress and how my appearance does not match with the stereotypical image of a cisgender male), educational background, and as specifically pointed out by some informants, "strange accents" and "non-native use of words and expressions" can be picked up by the informants and used to emphasise the difference from them. In some cases, such as when interviewing those who are close to my age and those who do not belong to the binarily defined gender categories, I find my personal presence to be quite helpful in establishing a relationship of trust with the informants. Especially with informants who were referred to me by my key informants Rong and Qintian, since they do not know me personally before the interview, at the beginning of the interview some of them would carefully but curiously ask if I can tell them reasons for me to wear makeup and nails. By sharing my personal stories with them, I found that some informants became more open to share their life stories – as they also got to "interview me" by asking me personal questions, the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee was more balanced because they were no longer on the side of being constantly interrogated. With informants who are transgender, some of them clearly indicated that it was because of my personal identity facets that they accepted my interview requests. For instance, Tuna mentioned that:

"Before this (interview), I never accepted any interview requests. Sometimes reporters from news agencies reach out to me, you know, but I didn't (accept their requests), because I know they just want to produce stereotyped images of sexual minorities and foreigners, and they are just looking for novelty. My existence is not other's entertainment… Some (reporters) told me that they want to offer their help to me, but this is strange, is it? I never asked for their help in the first place. Why do they automatically assume that I need their help? Clearly, they just position themselves as

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someone who has a higher social status, and they are looking down on people like us. Besides, even if I needed help, I wouldn't reach to straight men and women who are clearly unable to sympathise with our struggles".

Although previously I indicated that the issue of trust was not something critical for this research because I share a pre-established personal relationship with most of the informants, this personal relationship also proves to have some cons during the data collection process. For instance, when I enquired the informants about some basic information such as their monthly income level, some of them would say "about the same level as your parents" or "you can just write a figure around 200,000 JPY" without providing me with a solid or rather accurate, genuine answer. For instance, Nique, an informant who was referred to me by my mother explains: "How can you talk to juniors about money matters?" Or Mange, whom I know personally and share a rather close relationship with, indicates that: "It just feels so weird to discuss income with you! I just couldn't (laughing). This topic is too uncool to discuss between us". It is for this reason that the majority of the informants indicate their monthly income to be within the 300,000 to 500,000 JPY range, which I suspect to be rather inaccurate. In sum, throughout the interview, I understand the power dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewees, and how such power relations have the potential to pose a significant influence on both the depth and the accuracy of the qualitative interview data. In addition, while the relationship of trust between the two parties is often considered crucial for collecting valid qualitative data, I also learned that such relationship also could potentially counteract the the effort of the researcher to collect accurate qualitative data. Although informants' basic background information such as income level is not considered a crucially important item in this particular research and I was able to more or less anticipate some informants' "real" income levels, these factors should be taken into account when conducting future qualitative studies.

WeChat as a field site for ethnographic observation

The survey and the qualitative interview provided me with a general understanding of the Chinese diaspora's digital literacy and practises. After conducting the interview, I was able to understand how the interviewees utilise various social media platforms for different purposes and audiences, as well as how they interpret their digital practises in relation to their everyday diasporic experiences. Consequently, I was interested in exploring how they perform their identities in the digital realm. Media ethnography, as explained in Chapter 1, is a methodology that allows the researcher to observe digital users' practises related to or oriented around the digital media (Couldry, 2004: 117). Therefore, in addition to the quantitative survey and the qualitative interview, I also conducted ethnographic observations on the digital field site of WeChat.

I consider WeChat to be the most ideal ethnographic field site for this research for three reasons. First, as explained in detail in Chapter 6, this application is the most popular among the research participants compared to other social media platforms such as LINE, Weibo, and Facebook. Therefore, choosing WeChat as a field site maximises the potential for me to acquire rich empirical data.

Second, I consider WeChat to be a suitable site for the ethnographic investigation because of its functionalities. As detailed in Chapter 6, this media platform is well recognised by media scholars as a "super-sticky all-in-one app and mega-platform" (Chen, Mao and Qiu, 2018 cited in Sun and Yu, 2022: 4) to the extent that some scholars see WeChat as a digital ecology that grounds the daily digital lives of many Chinese – both inside and outside China (Sun and Yu, 2022). WeChat's functions such as "Moments", which is similar to Facebook's "Wall" function, while allowing its users to share text, image, audio, and video content with others, also mean that it allows me to actually see how the informants consume, produce, and

disseminate information within their personal networks.

Third, given that I have been using WeChat to interview the informants, distribute the survey, and maintain the contact with the research participants, using WeChat as a field site for ethnographic observation is the most effective way for me to collect empirical data, as I already have some established social ties with the informants on this platform. Therefore, for the three reasons listed above, I conducted my ethnographic observation on WeChat between May 2018 and January 2022 and collected empirical data from 26 informants' "Moments" pages.

2.3 Issues concerning the privacy of the informants and research ethics

As Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz (2014) point out, the outcome of ethnographic studies is often a theory-oriented description of the subjects' practises in a particular field context. Therefore, the researcher needs to make decisions about how to present their findings to their respondents, and to think about who the potential audiences might be. In this sense, a common ethical issue faced by many digital and media ethnographic studies is that their field sites are often openly accessible online, meaning that protecting the research respondents' privacy and safeguarding their anonymity are difficult to do and failing to do so may introduce harm to the research participants. Specifically, if we think about how fast information is mediated online, a research project can shift from "doing no harm" to "doing a lot of harm" fairly quickly to its participants, (Fischer and Jørgensen, 2022: 151-153), as I briefly discussed in Section 1.1.

In this context, an advantage of choosing WeChat's "Moments" and group chats as ethnographic field sites is that both sites are rather closed and not searchable neither on search engines nor on WeChat, so the research participants' privacy and anonymity in a sense are already protected by WeChat's technological interface and design. However, this does not mean that doing ethnographic research on WeChat would raise no ethical concerns. Ardévol

and Gómez-Cruz (2014) and Fischer and Jørgensen (2022) summarise three ethical issues that are commonly faced by media ethnographic researchers, and I shall explain how I dealt with these questions for this research project.

First, Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz (2014) point out that a digital ethnographer may be criticised by the worries about putting a certain digital field in a public space and letting it to be examined by the audiences of the study. This issue particularly concerns digital field that is publicly accessible, because even the space itself is open, participants of the site may perceive their interactions within the space to be private. However, the same issue should also be considered by researchers who conduct their studies in a publicly inaccessible digital field, and the researcher needs to evaluate the potential ethical risks in conducting such research. For instance, the case I mentioned in Section 3 of the Introduction chapter illustrates this concern nicely. After Tokyo-Sports (2021) reported that a male Chinese who lives in Tokyo and tested positive for coronavirus self-claimed to be an "anti-Japanese expert (抗日小能手, *kangri xiaonengshou*)" and proudly admitted in a WeChat chat group that he has been frequently visiting local supermarkets and Yamanote-sen so as to get as many Japanese infected as possible, this male Chinese's identity and personal information, such as his real name and occupation, were soon revealed and exposed online. This is because someone who joined the same group chat took multiple screenshots of the male Chinese's chat history and shared them online without hiding his personal information, such as profile picture and nickname. Consequently, the profile picture and the nickname were soon identified by people who know the male Chinese personally in the offline world, and these people shared his personal and identity information online.

Collecting people's personal and private information and exposing them to public humiliation is commonly known as "doxing". And this case shows that 1) although WeChat is a rather private space, failure to protect informants' personal information could still compromise

their privacy and anonymity; and 2) it is important for the researcher to also take online audiences into consideration and think about "how will our results be received and discussed at / over a given time period…and how may they be used", as Düvell, Triandafyllidou, and Vollmer (2010: 235) pointed out. To deal with this ethical concern and better safeguard the privacy of the informants, I use photoshop applications on my smartphone to mosaic all potentially identifiable information in the ethnographic data (mainly screenshots) I have collected, such as informants' usernames, profile pictures as well as other identifiable information included in the screenshot. In this way, I aim to present meaningful ethnographic data without including any information that may compromise the privacy and anonymity of the group members as well as those who gave me permission to observe their "Moments" posts.

Second, Fischer and Jørgensen (2022) point out that in order to ensure a study is ethical, the researcher needs to think ethically as well, meaning that in addition to "do no harm", they also need to ensure that their respondents' autonomy is well acknowledged. Following their discussions, I made sure to obtain the informants' permission to use the collected data for research. I specified that I will only use those information for research purposes. In addition, I also showed them some examples to illustrate what kind of information I might be collecting – such as screenshots of their "Moments" posts, and reemphasising that I will not be collecting any information that contain their personal information and will make sure to anonymise the screenshots I took before using them for the study.

Thirdly, the researcher needs to think about who is the potential audience of the produced knowledge and whether the publication of knowledge would compromise the political rights and social justice of their informants. The case of how FRONTEX may have used the knowledge produced by a research project to improve its border control against Arabic-speaking asylum seekers that I have discussed in Section 1.1 illustrates this ethical concern well. As Fischer and Jørgensen (2022) point out, this issue is particularly relevant when the

research subject is vulnerable – either socially, culturally, or politically. Although the participants in this study are not vulnerable *per se*, given China's extensive and comprehensive online censorship, I was cautious when communicating with them on WeChat to make sure that I do not bring up "politically sensitive" topics, and often I would suggest of using other communication applications, such as LINE and Skype. I also made sure that I thoroughly anonymised all identifiable information from the empirical data that I collected, so even if the research is accessed by unintended audiences, none of the research participants could be identified based on information contained in this study.

2.4 Conclusion

In sum, in this chapter I reflect on the qualitative and quantitative methodologies that I have adopted for this research project. This reflexion not only demonstrates how this research project was developed systematically, but also allows me to understand that the knowledge production process of this research is always context-based, in a sense that the interaction between the researcher and the research participants is always subject to issues such as the relationship of trust and the power relations between these two entities. In this way, I also realise the persistent bias embedded in this research project, just like any other studies. The fact that all studies have their own biases should not discourage researchers from conducting their research. Instead, it simply manifests how knowledge is always a social construct and is more or less subjectively produced – it is impossible to acquire the so-called absolute truth, because even if we engage every member of a given society in the production of knowledge, such knowledge only reflects the intersubjectiveness of a given community in a given situation and in a given period of time. Instead, what is important for the researcher is to adopt proper methodological tools to reveal differently situated knowledge (Leurs, 2015: 101), and make sure that the knowledge is produced ethically and that the privacy and rights of their research

participants are well protected.

Chapter 3 Overseas Chinese and Chinese-language diasporic media in Japan

By the end of 2021, the Chinese diaspora, as the largest diasporic group in Japan has a population of more than 717 thousand, comprise 26% of Japan's total documented foreign demographic (MOJ, 2021a). Their significant presence in Japan poses an interesting question, that is, why do they see Japan as such a desirable destination country? This question is worth exploring particularly because of the complex power dynamics between China and Japan. As I explained in the Introduction chapter, if we think about how Japan is of paramount political importance to the CCP's nation-building and identity construction strategies, it is more reasonable for one to assume Japan for being the least preferred destination country for the Chinese diaspora. Because in theory, their national identity is supposed to build around a political discourse that sees Japan as China's ultimate other, a country that caused the collective memory of the suffering of millions of Chinese people.

Then, why did those 717 thousand Chinese diaspora decide to settle in Japan? It is clear that the reason for their settlement cannot be simply explained by the close geographical proximity between the two countries. Therefore, this chapter attempts to answer this question in a discursive, indirect way by exploring the geopolitical, cultural, social, and market forces that inspired and have been inspiring mainland Chinese to emigrate to Japan. In doing so, this chapter also serves to clarify the subject of this research project. While I mentioned previously that the study targets first-generation mainland Chinese in Japan, this chapter explains in detail about who they are. Answering this "who" question would provide some contexts for later analyses, because it allows us to see how the membership of the "overseas mainland Chinese" label is articulated differently (or similarly) between diasporic individuals and Chinese state actors. After answering this question, I then map out the Chinese diasporic media landscape

in Japan from a historical perspective – to see how the creation, distribution, and consumption of Chinese-language diasporic media contents have been changing and evolving over time. Finally, I associate the changing mediascape with China's attempt in harnessing its overseas populations in the contemporary networked society, and show how this evolving mediascape speaks directly to a broader debate of the de-construction and re-construction of the Chinese nation.

3.1 Overseas Chinese in Japan – Newcomers and Oldtimers[25]

Of today's 717,000 Chinese migrants, many came to Japan and acquired status as permanent residents (33.6%), skilled and unskilled workers (25.8%), students (17.7%) and family members (15.9%); smaller proportions came as long-term residents (3.5%), entrepreneurs (1.8%), as well as informal migrants (1.3%)[26].

From a historical perspective, the existing mainland Chinese diasporic community in Japan can be generally divided into two groups, namely the "oldtimers" (オールドタイマー) and the "newcomers" (ニューカマー) (Du 1966; Shiramizu 2004; Yin 2005). The "oldtimers" refer to mainland Chinese who migrated to Japan before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, as well as their second- and third- generation descendants. The roots of "oldtimer" Chinese diaspora can be traced back to the 1600s, when some Chinese businessmen landed in Japan via Yokohama, a major port city that hosted Sino-Japanese commercial trade back in the Edo era. However, the majority of the "oldtimer" cohort are Chinese citizens who emigrated to Japan for business or study before the second Sino-

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[25] Part of this section is extracted from my published manuscript titled 'Building a life on the soil of the ultimate other: WeChat and belonging among Chinese migrants in Japan' in Wanning Sun and Haiqing Yu ed., WeChat and the Chinese Diaspora, published in 2022 by Routledge in London. Some contents (i.e. the number of Chinese migrants in Japan) were edited to reflect the latest condition.

[26] Percentages of different documented migrant categories are calculated by the author based on data published by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ 2021a). The Percentage of undocumented Chinese migrants are is calculated by the author based on data released by Immigration Services Agency (MOJ 2021b).

Japanese war. During that war, tens of thousands of Chinese were forcedly brought to Japan as imported labour to support Japan's war industries (Nishinarita 2002). Finally, the "oldtimers" also include those who were forced to leave their homeland (mainland China) due to the Chinese civil war between 1927 and 1949.

The "newcomers" refer to Chinese citizens who migrated to Japan after the restoration of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties in 1972, and the first relatively large-scale emigration flow from China to Japan was mainly constituted by student migrants. The gap between 1949 and 1972 is marked by a halt of immigration from China to Japan due to the break-off of Sino-Japanese ties, triggered by Japan's signing of the Treaty of Taipei (日華平和条約) with Taiwan. And it is only until the mid-1980s, large scale inflows of Chinese migrants to Japan can be observed (Liu-Farrer, 2013). From 1984 to 2019, more than 680,000 Chinese students entered Japan under student visas as either foundation course students (including pre-university language courses) or university students. Today, with a population of more than 96,000, Chinese student migrants constitute about 46.5 percent of Japan's overseas student population (MOJ 2021a). This emigration flow was initially encouraged by China's reform and opening-up policy in 1978; its follow-up policy was announced in 1984 to support self-financed student migration[27]; as well as the Project to Accept 100,000 Overseas Students launched by the Japanese government in 1984[28] (Tsuboi, 2006). From China's side, the main incentive for

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[27] This policy is known as the Interim Regulations of the State Council on Studying Abroad at One's Own Expenses (国务院关于自费出国留学的暂行规定 in Chinese), which relaxes the ban placed on privately-funded student emigration. Before the launch of this policy, the majority, if not all Chinese student migrants were state-funded, and only those with a certain level of education attainment and work experiences were allowed to study abroad. In addition, this policy also permits self-financed students to apply for overseas scholarships and to purchase foreign currencies in order to support their diasporic lives as a student migrant. For more details, see Iguchi and Shu (2003) and Meng (2018).

[28] In the late 1970s, the anti-Japanese movement had peaked in many Southeast Asian countries due to Japan's mass export of industrial products to developing countries in Asia. Consequently, this project (留学生受け入れ 10 万人計画) was proposed by Japan's former president Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1983 as a key strategy to promote pro-Japan discourses among ASEAN countries. It was formally launched in 1984 as part of the "About the Development of International Student Policy in the 21st Century" project (二十一世紀への留学生政策の展開 について). For details, see Tsuboi (2006) and Shiramizu (2004).

supporting self-financed students was to harness the returned migrants for national development. For Japan, since the country experienced a labour shortage from the 1970s to 1980s due to its overheated economic market, its efforts to attract overseas students were primarily a policy incentive to address the need for workers, as well as to improve its international image after the anti-Japanese movement among southeast Asian countries in the late 1970s (Shiramizu, 2004). In this context, countries sharing a close geographical proximity to Japan, particularly East Asian countries such as China, South Korea and Taiwan, became ideal targets for importation.

For many Chinese newcomers, entering Japan as a student has become a primary channel to obtain long-term residence in Japan, mainly as skilled and highly skilled workers. Empirical research indicates that among the current Chinese diasporic population, about 70% are holding, or used to hold, a student visa when they first entered Japan (Yin, 2005). Furthermore, different from their "oldtimer" counterparts which include Chinese citizens of both Republic of China (ROC) and PRC, the term "newcomer" refers specifically to Chinese migrants from the mainland (i.e. excluding Hong Kong and Macau citizens). While most enjoy a stable lifestyle in Japanese society with a certain level of educational attainment, this migrant community, with its relatively significant population size, is also characterised by diversity in terms of not only gender, age and Japanese language skills, but also sending regions, legal status and social backgrounds (Liu-Farrer, 2017).

For instance, the latest available demographic data (which is from 2011[29]) (MOJ, 2011) shows a relatively heavy concentration of Chinse migrants from northeastern provinces such as Liaoning and Heilongjiang, coastal cities such as Fujian and Shanghai, as well as areas

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[29] There were 668,644 mid- to long-term Chinese migrants (including permanent residents) in Japan in 2011. Before 2011, an "Alien Registration Certificate" (外国人登録証明書) was distributed to eligible foreign residents; this recorded not only their nationality but also their regions of origin. Starting from 2011, this Certificate was replaced by a "Residence Card" (在留カード), which only displays migrants' nationality. Therefore, data regarding migrants' regions of origin were no longer available from 2011 onwards.

with heavy Japanese investment and Sino-Japanese economic exchanges such as Shandong and Jiangsu. However, in terms of regions of origin, the composition of the Chinese diaspora in Japan changed significantly from the late 1980s. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Chinese migrants in Japan were mainly from regions such as Fujian, Shanghai and Beijing, whereas almost no migrants originated from northeastern provinces. However, in the mid-1990s, with the bankruptcy of many state-owned Chinese enterprises in mining and heavy industries in northeastern provinces and consequently the introduction of Japanese and Korean investments, the need for Chinese citizens with either Japanese or Korean language proficiency increased significantly. As a result, not only did some Chinese schools of foundational education in northeastern provinces start to teach Japanese as the first foreign language instead of English; some Japanese universities and language schools also began to directly recruit Chinese students from these regions. Taking student migrants as an example, while in the early 1990s, students from Beijing (17%) and Shanghai (43.3%) dominated this population group and no students were from northeastern provinces, by 2004, the size of students from northeastern provinces (31.2%) had surpassed Beijing (6.4%) and Shanghai (15.9%), to become the largest student migrant community in Japan (Tsuboi, 2006: 12-13).

The Chinese community in Japan became even more diversified with Chinese citizens, mainly from southeastern coastal areas and rural areas, coming to Japan seeking economic opportunities between the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the return of descendants of Japanese war orphans in China from the late 1970s[30] (Itoh, 2010). In terms of the former, although many were granted a student or trainee visa, a significant portion of this group never attended educational institutes in Japan but used their visas as a means to enter the country's low-wage

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[30] Japanese orphans in China primarily refer to Japanese children left behind as a result of the Japanese repatriation from Huludao (in Liaoning, China) in the aftermath of World War II. Roughly 2,800 Japanese children were left behind in China, and about 90% of them were adopted by rural Chinese families in northeastern provinces and Inner Mongolia. Since the normalisation of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1972, more than 20,000 Japanese orphans and their descendants have returned to Japan.

labour market (Wakabayashi, 1990; Yin, 2005). Furthermore, following the expiration or revocation of their visas, many became undocumented migrants, suffering from social marginalisation, discrimination and violence due to their limited, if any, access to civic rights and legal protections. In terms of the latter, the majority of war orphans with Japanese blood ties regained Japanese nationality after returning to Japan, despite their limited knowledge of both the Japanese language and society. Their relatives (i.e. spouses and second- and third-generation offspring), however, often held a long-term residence visa (定住者ビザ), and only a small portion of them were granted either a permanent residence visa (永住者ビザ) or Japanese nationality.

Japanese war orphans are often considered to be a financially and socially vulnerable group in Japan (Okubo, 2006). Socially, war orphans—even their second- and third-generation descendants who have been living in Japan for a long time or were born in Japan—are often identified as "Chinese" by Japanese citizens and as "Japanese" by Chinese migrants (ibid), leading to difficulties in self-positioning and identity construction (Itoh, 2010). Financially, due to their long-term residence visa status, they are not eligible to receive benefits or financial aids provided to migrants[31], resulting in relatively low educational attainment and consequently concentration in the unskilled or lowly skilled labour market (Okubo, 2006).

The above review not only indicates a shift from "oldtimers" to "newcomers" as the main demographic composition of the Chinese diaspora in Japan; it also shows the complexity of this population in terms of historical roots and visa/citizenship statuses. Scholars such as Duan (2000), Yin (2005) and Shiramizu (2004) point out that among the first wave of Chinese newcomers, i.e. Chinese government-sponsored student migrants who came to Japan after

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[31] Benefits and financial aids include the "Special University Entrance Exam for Foreign Students" and scholarships/tuition fee waivers for foreign students. These benefits/aids are often only available to migrants who do not hold a "long-term" or "permanent" residence visa. At the same time, because most of these war orphans' descendants do not have Japanese nationality, they cannot access benefits/aids for Japanese citizens.

the 1980s, Chinese-language media have played a critical role in their diasporic lives. Due to their limited Japanese language skills and knowledge of Japanese society, Chinese-language media such as newspapers and magazines have been an important channel for them to seek support in life, (part-time) job opportunities and social relationships (i.e. intimate and marital relations) with other Chinese migrants, as well as to follow news and information regarding both the home and host societies. However, as I explain in detail in the following discussion, the Chinese-language media in Japan after the late 1930s and before the 1980s was largely in a vacuum due to the Sino-Japanese war and the subsequent breaking off of Japan-China diplomatic relations. In this context, the development of Chinese-language media in Japan reflected the political dynamics between Japan and China, and its first bloom coincided with the arrival of Chinese students after the restoration of diplomatic ties between these two countries.

3.2   Overseas Chinese in Japan and the CCP's transnational governance agenda

As mentioned in the previous section, after the founding of the PRC in 1949, emigration to Japan was halted due to the break-off of Sino-Japanese ties following Japan's signing of the Treaty of Taipei with Taiwan. However, despite the vacuum of diplomatic ties between these two countries, the Chinese state still had a strong incentive to establish its interaction with the "oldtimer" Chinese community in Japan for several reasons, such as the expanding Sino-Japanese trade, the repatriation of left-behind Japanese in China, and the return of Chinese people's remains in Japan (Ishii, Syu, Soeya and Rin, 2003). As I shall demonstrate in the next section, Chinese state's effort of establishing and strengthening its tie with the Chinese diasporic community in Japan also serves as a strong force shaping the Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan. Therefore, in this section, I focus on explaining how the Chinese Party-state managed to build its tie with overseas Chinese in Japan in the context of the absence of

Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties.

To put it simply, during the 23 years between 1949 and 1972, the Chinese state's interaction with the Chinese diasporic community in Japan (as a form of transnational governance) and allegedly informal interactions with Japan were made possible mainly because of the transnational networks of non-governmental actors, such as elite returned migrants from Japan. These interactions had a highly centralised form in the sense that the way they were conducted and facilitated was almost solely based on the guidance of China's then Premier, Zhou Enlai, and the Chinese Japan hands, which was a governmental branch under Zhou's direct supervision (Okabe, 2002). The Chinese Japan hands was later known as the *Japan Group*[32] (對日活動小組 in Chinese), which was established under the order of Zhou Enlai, with the aim of cultivating a close relationship with the Chinese diaspora in Japan so to deal with issues left by the history of Sino-Japanese wars in a nominally non-governmental manner (Wits, 2019). This strategy is later on popularly known as "民間先行、以民促官 (minjian xianxing, yimin cuguan, also known as People-to-People Based Approach)", a slogan proposed by Zhou, which means that Sino-Japanese intergovernmental relationships must to be grounded on civil/private exchanges.

Under this proposal of Zhou's, three groups of actors were mobilised. The first group consists mainly of elite Chinese returnees, who were privileged with transnational social networks spanning between China and Japan, as well as those who had experienced the Manchuria puppet regime (偽滿州政權) or were exposed to Japanese expansionism during the war, and therefore have some established connections with repatriated Japanese (Wits, 2019; Osawa, 2003). A good example is Liao Chengzhi, who was born and raised in Tokyo in

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[32] The *Japan Group* was established in 1953. In 1955, a new division called *Japan Activity Group* (日本活動小組) was created, which serves a different function to the *Japan Group*. With the gradual expansion of the latter however, the *Japan Activity Group* was dismissed. Later on, the *Japan Group* was also known as the 大日本組 (the *Main Japan Group*).

an elite family. After his return to China in 1928, he was appointed by Zhou Enlai as the deputy director, though the actual person in charge, of the *Japan Group*. Until the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Liao was the central figure in China's interaction with Japan due to his extensive personal networks in both countries, especially his connections with elite overseas Chinese in Japan. It was elite returned migrants such as Liao who contributed to bridging the Chinese state with overseas Chinese in Japan (Hu, 2013), paving the road for the former to incorporate the latter in its diaspora policy for China's economic and modernisation construction, as well as other national endeavours.

The second group of actors comprises non-governmental diasporic organisations in Japan established by the Chinese diaspora, such as the All-Japan Federation of Overseas Chinese Professionals (中国留日同学総会) founded in 1915[33], the Overseas Chinese Association in Japan (留日華僑総会, also formerly known as 留日華僑代表会議 (Overseas Chinese Delegates Conference in Japan))[34] founded in 1946, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Japan (日本中華総商会) founded in 1999, and the Union of Chinese Residing in Japan (全日本華僑華人社団連和会) founded in 2003. As a sidenote, at the time of writing, there are about 101 of such organisations, including 40 general public organisations, nine non-profit organisations, six academic associations, 21 foundations and general incorporated associations, 16 alumni associations, and nine associations for professionals and cultural activities[35].

Many of these groups have a long history of affiliation with Chinese official institutes,

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[33] Regrouped in 1999 and since then under the direct administration of the Education Department, Chinese Embassy in Japan.

[34] Reorganised in 1999 as Japan Overseas Chinese General Association (JOCGA) (日本華僑華人聯合総会(also known as 留日華僑聯合総会)).

[35] Data is based on author's own research. This number does not include sub divisions (for example, JOCGA has its regional division in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, and Yokohama), education institutes (i.e. Yokohama Yamate Chinese School 横浜山手中華学園 and Kobe Chinese Tongwen School 神戸中華同文学校), nor organisations established by Chinese migrants from Taiwan.

such as the Chinese embassy and consulates in Japan, after the normalisation of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties in 1972, and hence have been maintaining close cultural, economic, and political ties with China. For instance, the All-Japan Federation of Overseas Chinese Professionals (hereinafter referred to as the AJF) is affiliated with the Education Department of Chinese Embassy in Japan (中华人民共和国驻日本国大使馆教育处) and the United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee (中共中央统一战线工作部). The tie between these organisations and the Chinese nation was largely facilitated by members of the first group – the elite Chinese returnees, as most of them had established social networks with those organisations before returning to China.

Due to those Chinese diasporic organisations' extensive local networks, they were targeted by the Chinese state as an important actor to actualise its "民間先行、以民促官" initiative and to institutionalise different areas of overseas Chinese for the nation's development. For instance, through Liao's personal connection with the AJF, this organisation worked closely with the Chinese Ministry of Education (中国教育部) and the All-China Students' Federation (中华全国学生联合会) between 1950 and 1958 to implement China's policy in encouraging the return of highly educated Chinese migrants in Japan. Consequently, more than 8,000 Chinese migrants in Japan[36] returned to China, and almost all of them were either the member of or affiliated with the AJF. Other examples include the promotion of migrant entrepreneurs' direct investment to China through regional divisions[37] of the Overseas Chinese Association in Japan in 1955, and the additional effort to expedite the return and settlement of Chinese migrants through the Tokyo Division of the Overseas Chinese

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[36] While 8,000 may not sound significant, it is worth to mention that the population size of mainland Chinese migrants in Japan was about 40,000 people in early 1950s (Zhu, 2003). In this sense, AJF successfully motivated the return of nearly 20% of the total Chinese migrant population in Japan at that time.

[37] In Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, and Nagoya. See (Chen et al., 2004) for details.

Association in Japan between 1955 and 1956. In addition, these diasporic organisations also contribute to the fruition of economic, political and cultural communications between the two countries prior to the normalisation of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties, such as the signing of the 3rd Japan-China Private Trade Agreement (第 3 次日中民間貿易協定) in 1955 and the Memorandum of Understanding on Comprehensive Trade between China and Japan (日中総合貿易に関する覚書)[38] in 1962, the repatriation of Japanese between 1953 and 1956, and the return of Chinese people's remains in 1953.

The close tie between the Chinese diasporic organisations in Japan and the Chinese state consequently leads to the bureaucratisation of those organisations. Through rounds of reformation and the fade out of "oldtimer" members, many of those organisations now have key roles filled in by Chinese government officials, such as those who work for the Chinese embassy and consulates in Japan. It is in this way that the Chinese state has gradually been able to legitimately incorporate the Chinese diaspora in Japan into its national interests. And to further enhance and officialise its link with overseas Chinese, China mobilised the third type of actors, namely the allegedly non-governmental organisations within China, such as the Red Cross Society of China (中国紅十字会), the Beijing Opera Delegation (京劇代表団), and the Chinese Academy of Sciences Academic Inspection Group to Japan (中国科学院訪日学術視察団). I used the word "allegedly" here because although these organisations appear to be non-governmental, the key positions of these organisations were assigned to central figures and party cadres in the Japan hands, meaning that these organisations in fact represent China's state interests. For instance, the Red Cross Society of China was the first group to visit Japan after 1949. In October 1954, its delegation (中国紅十字会代表団) arrived in Japan under the leadership of Li Dequan, the first Minister of Health of the PRC who was appointed

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[38] Also known as the LT Trade Agreement (LT 貿易). The letter "L" and "T" respectively stands for the surname of the Chinese (Liao Chengzhi 廖承志) and Japanese (Takasaki Tatsunosuke 高碕達之助) representative who signed the agreement.

as the chairman of the delegation, and Liao Chengzhi, the vice chairman of the delegation in addition to his deputy director role of the *Japan Group*[39]. Li and Liao each took on different responsibilities. While Li took charge of issues around the return of Chinese people's remains in Japan (第四次中国人俘虜殉難者遺骨送還) and the organisation of the Joint Memorial for the Martyrs of the Chinese Prisoners (中国人俘虜殉難者合同慰霊祭), Liao's main focus was to enhance the connection between the homeland and local Chinese diasporas through various meetings with representatives of the All-Japan Federation of Overseas Chinese Professionals, the Overseas Chinese Association in Japan and their respective regional divisions in the name of the PRC and the CCP. In particularly, scholars such as Chen et al. (2004) point out that the talk[40] Liao delivered during the welcoming dinner[41] on 3rd November 1954 can be perceived as the CCP's first attempt to align the Chinese diaspora in Japan with its political discourses. According to Chen (2004), Liao's talk mainly promoted three themes, namely to encourage the return of Chinese migrants, to propagate the legitimacy of the CCP's regime as China's sole guarantor, and more importantly, to reinforce an emotional and symbolic link between overseas Chinese and the homeland so that the former's interests can be translate as the interests of the latter and vice versa.

The way China utilises these three groups of actors can be seen as its initial attempt to harness the Chinese diaspora in Japan for the sake of the nation's economic development and modernisation construction in the absence of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties. On the other hand, the bureaucratisation of diasporic organisations in Japan and the way their interests got aligned with the Party-state's overarching political discourses also reflect the CCP's broader

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[39] He was also the Deputy Director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission of the State Council (国務院華僑事務委員会副主任) and the Member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (全国人民代表大会常務委員会委員).

[40] The talk was titled "The Basic Attitude of Overseas Chinese in Japan (留日華僑の基本的態度)", later on also known as "Liao Chengzhi's Talk (廖承志談話)" (Wang, 2013).

[41] This welcoming dinner was organised by the Federation and was joined by more than 600 representatives of Chinese diaspora communities from different regions in Japan. See Chen et al. (2004) for detail.

political agenda in making use of the Chinese diaspora' transnational networks. After the normalisation of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relation in 1972, these three groups of actors still play a vital role in intergovernmental communication between the two countries. This is in part due to the ongoing Sino-Japanese conflicts, such as the way Japanese textbook portrays the Nanjing Massacre, Japanese officials' visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, and the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu Islands (known as Senkaku Islands in Japan) – these issues often take the form of diplomatic disputes, which largely limit the official communication between China and Japan (Baba, 2015). In this context, the Sino-Japanese exchange remains to be 'people-to-people' based with the idea of sustaining economic and cultural communications, but more importantly, to further set off the CCP's firmly anti-Japanese stance to its citizens within China, while maintaining overseas Chinese's affiliation to the homeland (Wits, 2019).

After reviewing strategies that the Chinese state has been adopting to harness its overseas citizens in Japan, one may ask why we need to know about these strategies and the actors involved. The reason why I have detailed those "people-to-people" interactions is because both elite migrants who often occupy key roles in Chinese diasporic organisations and Chinese state actors who are connected to those organisations contribute to shaping the Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan as presented in the following section.

3.3 Evolving Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan: From print to digital media[42]

In parallel with the increasingly diversified Chinese diaspora community and the gradual bureaucratisation of Chinese diasporic organisations in Japan is the constantly changing and evolving Chinese diasporic mediascape, from small-scale print media to mass media and now

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[42] Part of this section is extracted from my published manuscript titled "Building a life on the soil of the ultimate other: WeChat and belonging among Chinese migrants in Japan" in Wanning Sun and Haiqing Yu ed., *WeChat and the Chinese Diaspora: Digital Transnationalism in the Era of China's Rise*, published in 2022 by Routledge in London. I have added more empirical evidence to the original text.

to digital media. But the form of the distribution is not the only thing that has changed. More importantly, the nature of the contents and the purpose of the Chinese-language diaspora media have also changed. This section aims to associate with the previous two sections to manifest the changing Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan, and to explain the reasons behind those changes.

The emergence of Chinese-language diasporic media in Japan

The first Chinese-language media created and published by the Chinese diaspora in Japan can be traced back to 120 years ago before the 1911 Revolution, when some exile Chinese politicians such as Liang Qich'ao (梁啟超), Kang Youwei (康有為), Zhang Binglin (章炳麟), and Sun Wen (孫文) launched *Eastern Asia News* (東亜報) and *The China Discussion* (清議報) in Yokohama in 1898 with the funding provided by Chinese merchants in Japan. Following *The China Discussion*, other publications created by exile politicians and Chinese students who were sent to Japan by the late Qing governments including The Wisdom Guide (開智録 (Kaichiroku)) and Yakushō-ihen (訳書彙編), and in total, there were more than 79 [43] newspapers and magazines published before the beginning of the 1911 Revolution.

In terms of the content of those publications, the majority of them focused on criticising the Western imperialists' invasion of China as well as advocating nationalist revolution and attacking the corruption and degeneration of the late Qing government. Meanwhile, for publications edited by female Chinese diaspora, they mainly concerned on advocating the emancipation and liberation of Chinese women, as well as women's rights to participate in economic, civic and political activities (Boku, 2017).

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[43] I was only able to identify 79 publications from my own investigation. I am certain that there were more, but because most of them only published for a very short period of time and due to the following 1911 Revolution and the Second Sino-Japanese War, the physical copies of those publications got destroyed and therefore become unidentifiable. See Appendix 3 for the complete list.

After the 1911 Revolution and before the start of the 1937 Second Sino-Japanese War, about 29 Chinese-language newspapers and magazines emerged[44], partially provoked by the 1931 Mukden Incident (満州事変) (Nakano 1999), such as *Junsheng-zazhi* (軍声雑誌 in 1912), *Beifa-zazhi* (北伐雑誌 in 1926), *Wenhuazhiguang* (文化之光 in 1932), *Likelunye* (理科論業 in 1936) and *Xinjingji-zazhi* (新經濟雑誌 in 1936), with contents concentrated with discussions around political and military affairs between Japan and China, as well as modern western thoughts and literature translated from English/Japanese to Chinese (Duan 2003). While no human mobility was allowed between 1937 and 1945 due to the Second Sino-Japanese War, about four newspapers and magazines[45], such as *Yakugyō Gekkan* (訳業月刊 in 1938) and *Xuelian Banyuekan* (学聯半月刊 in 1938), were published during the period by Chinese migrants who came to Japan before 1937. Compared to publications released before the 1911 Revolution, the scope of the content of Chinese-language media between 1911 to 1945 tends to be broader, covering issues and topics concerning politics, law, economy, culture, art, education, as well as agriculture.

The contribution of the Taiwanese diaspora to the Chinese-language diasporic media

Immediately after the war, Chinese-language newspapers and magazines experienced two phases of short peak. The first peak was between 1945 to 1952 during the Occupation of Japan (GHQ 占領期 in Japanese), which was led by the Taiwanese diaspora in Japan following the 'Shibuya Incident' in 1946[46]. After the Incident, the majority of Taiwanese diasporas in Japan acquired Temporary Overseas Chinese Registration (臨時華僑登録証) and were treated on the same level as mainland Chinese in Japan who were considered as the

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[44] For details, see (Duan, 2003: 26).
[45] Per author's investigation.
[46] The Shibuya Incident was a violent confrontation between Japan's police force and Taiwanese diasporas in front of the Shibuya Station in June 1946. For details, see (Chen et al., 2004: 251-257).

citizens of the victorious nation. The acquisition of this status also means that news agencies established by them were exempted from the newsprint paper ration[47], which gave them a huge market advantage to bloom. Based on Chen's (2010) investigation, more than 30 newspapers and magazines, as well as approximately 20 bulletins from overseas Taiwanese and Taiwanese student organisations, were published within this relatively short period of time. Some famous publications include *The China Daily News (Taiwan)* (中華日報), *Guojixinwen* (國際新聞), *Huaciao Minpao* (華僑民報), *Chungkuo Kunglung* (中國公論), *Huaqiao Wenhua* (華僑文化), as well as *Chinese Students' Press*　(中国留日学生報)[48].

Content wise, these Taiwanese owned Chinese-language prints marked a shift in focus from Sino-Japanese relations to the antagonistic relations between the CCP and KMT (Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party (Taiwan)). Interestingly, a significant portion of them were actually pro-CCP judging by their content, such as *Guojixinwen* and *Huaciao Minpao*, which is different from the argument presented by some existing studies indicating that Taiwanese diaspora media was pro-KMT, whereas mainland Chinese diaspora media were pro-CCP. In fact, the rise of left-wing in Japan, the February 28 incident[49], the founding of the PRC, and the ROC government's speech control all contribute to the nurture of a pro-CCP Chinese-language media environment. On the one hand, following the founding of the PRC and the rise of Japanese Communist Party, the majority of elite Taiwanese diaspora, such as Chen Efang (陳蕚芳）and Wu Xiuzhu (吳修竹), saw the CCP's regime as a symbol of

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[47] Back then, Japan was short of supplies of goods, and many goods including papers for newsprint were rationed. News agencies founded by Taiwanese diasporas were able to obtain a rather large allocation of newsprint paper compared to their local Japanese counterparts, because of their status as citizens of the victorious nation of Second World War. For details, see He (2015).

[48] Apart from *Huaqiao Wenhua* which was founded in Kobe, the place of issue for the rest six publications listed here was Tokyo.

[49] The February 28 Incident (二二八事件 in Chinese), also known as the February 28 Massacre, was an anti-government uprising in Taiwan on 28th February, 1947. The Incident is regarded as one of the most important events in Taiwan's modern history as thousands of citizens were killed due to KMT's violent suppression. The Incident was triggered by a series of social issues such as "the tension between Taiwan's inhabitants and the new KMT rulers…the incompetence and corruption within the KMT regime…economic decline…unprecedented levels of poverty and unemployment" (Fleischauer, 2015: 373-374).

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democracy and an important force to "fight against the imperialist's aggression on the Asian continents" (He, 2015; Wu, 1950: 15). On the other hand, the February 28 Incident triggered a strong anti-KMT sentiment, and many of these Chinese-language prints, such as *Huaciao Minpao*, consequently claimed that their role is to "against KMT's imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism… (and) strengthen links with the motherland"[50].

The introduction of Party-sponsored Chinese-language diasporic media

The pro-CCP news agencies owned by the Taiwanese diaspora in Japan also attracted attention from the KMT. Starting from 1950, the ROC Delegation to Japan forcibly shut down several Chinese-language news agencies because of their pro-CCP stand (He, 2015), and following the establishment of Japan-Taiwan diplomatic relations in 1952, KMT started to introduce party- and government-sponsored Taiwanese news agencies to Japan. I describe the period between 1952 to 1972 as the second peak, and it is in parallel with the establishment and the breakup of Japan-Taiwan diplomatic relations, the Taiwan-Japan student emigration boom, as well as a vacuum of emigration from mainland China to Japan.

Following the KMT regime's suppression on Chinese-language media owned by the Taiwanese diaspora, through the ROC Delegation in Japan, the KMT regime had also attempted to exclude pro-CCP Taiwanese from Chinese diasporic organisations, since many Chinese-language media back then were either sponsored or owned by (members of) those organisations. Consequently, due to He Shiri's (何世禮, he was the then head of the ROC Delegation) intervention in the election of Overseas Chinese Association (華僑総会) between 1949 to 1950, the Overseas Chinese Association that used to welcome both the mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese diaspora in Japan was divided into two organisations, namely the Tokyo Chinese Association (TCA, 東京華僑総会) and the Overseas Chinese Union

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[50] For the original text in Japanese, see (Chen et al., 2004: 269-273).

Association (OCUA, 留日華僑連合総会), and these two organisations since then have been accommodating Chinese diasporas who are originally from mainland China and Taiwan respectively[51]. In this context, in order to continue the business, many news agencies owned by Taiwanese diaspora organisations were forced to produce media content in line with KMT's political discourses, which marks not only the decline of pro-CCP Chinese-language diasporic media in Japan, but also the diminishing of these Taiwanese diaspora-owned news agencies as they were unable to retain their readerships, which were mostly pro-CCP (Hong, 1968).

On the other hand, the KMT also introduced party- and government-owned news agencies to Japan together with the Taiwanese student emigration boom. Some famous ones including Taiwan Weekly Review (中華週報), *Huaqiao Xinbao* (華僑新報), *Liurizazhi* (留日雑誌), *Huabao* (華報) and *Dongjing Huaren Youbao* (東京華人郵報), and *Ziyouxinwen* (自由新聞). These newspapers and magazines were sponsored by KMT and served mainly as a propaganda apparatus of the party, and each issue was freely distributed to documented Taiwanese students in Japan. At the same time, while mainland China and Japan had no diplomatic relations, through its people-to-people based approach, the CCP was able to sponsor some newspapers such as *Dadibao* (大地報) and *Huaqiaobao* (華僑報). Similar to KMT's strategy, the CCP sponsored news agencies also served as a propaganda channel to popularise pro-CCP narratives. In general, during this period of time, although overseas Chinese, including both Taiwanese and mainland Chinese were still quite active in Japan's media market, the scale of their activities was significantly smaller compared to the first peak due to the fact that most of their activities were sponsored by either the KMT or the CCP regime. Content wise, the political stance of those newspapers was clearly and firmly defined, which means that those Chinese diasporic media mainly served the role of tools for political

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[51] See Arakawa (2022), Zheng and Huang (2008), TCA (2014) and OCUA (2021).

propaganda.

The rise and development of mainland Chinese diasporic media

Following the breakup of Japan-Taiwan diplomatic ties and consequently the establishment of Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization in 1972, the Chinese-language media have been mainly edited and/or owned by diaspora from mainland China, and one of the most widely spread Chinese-language newspapers is *Ryugakusei Shinbun* (留学生新聞)[52]. Although this newspaper is initially intended to provide Chinese student migrants with living information in the Japanese society, it has gained wide attention after reporting the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, and drastically switched to a newspaper with a heavy concentration on political contents regarding China, Sino-Japanese relations, Taiwan, and Japan-Taiwan relations. The success of *Ryugakusei Shinbun* initiated a rapid development of Chinese-language ethnic media in Japan. To date, there are about 35 newspapers and TV channels owned and/or founded by mainland Chinese diaspora in Japan[53], producing content related to four main categories, namely entertainment, political contents concerning the ROC, the PRC and Japan, study and work opportunities for Chinese students, as well as living information in the Japanese society. With the development of media technology such as the popularisation of TV and radio, the mediation channel also became more diversified. Some famous ones are Rakuraku China (楽々チャイナ), CCTV Daifu (CCTV 大富), CCCh, as well as China Television (チャイナ・テレビジョン).

Compared to Chinese-language media in other regions such as North America (Zhou and Cai, 2002) and Australia (Yu and Sun, 2019; Sun, 2019), mainland Chinese ethnic media

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[52] It is worth to mention that while its main audiences are Mainland Chinese student migrants, many issues of this newspaper are co-edited by student migrants from Mainland and Taiwan.
[53] If we include Chinese ethnic media companies owned by migrants from Taiwan, then the number would be around 40.

in Japan have its own particularities. Firstly, while empirical evidence indicates that in countries such as Australia, the main audience of Chinese language newspapers has shifted from Chinese-reading migrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan to those who are from the mainland due to the significant inflow of the latter during the past few decades (Yu and Sun, 2019), the main audience of Chinese ethnic media in Japan has been predominantly constituted by migrants from the mainland ever since its emergence in the late 1890s (Yin, 2005; Shiramizu, 2004). I argue that the reasons for this phenomenon are partially contributed by the population size of the Chinese diaspora in Japan. As briefly illustrated above, whether it is before or after the establishment of the PRC, the majority of ethnic Chinese migrants in Japan are made up of mainland Chinese. If we think about Chinese migrants from Greater China (i.e. Hong Kong and Taiwan), different from countries such as the UK and Canada, Hong Kong migrants never had a predominant presence in Japan. And in terms of Taiwanese emigrants in Japan, its largest population share of the ethnic Chinese community in Japan in history was in the year 1948 when it accounts for 42.3 per cent of the total Chinese population in Japan[54], which is still smaller in size compared with their mainland counterparts.

Secondly, although in regions such as North America, Europe and Australia, the language of Chinese ethnic newspapers has largely shifted from traditional Chinese characters to the simplified one due to the increasing number of Chinese migrants from the mainland, the majority of Chinese ethnic media companies in Japan (29/35) still use traditional Chinese characters for content production, even though their main audiences are, and have always been mainland Chinese migrants. Scholars such as Yin (2005) and Shiramizu (2004) argue that the reason for the dominance of traditional Chinese character in Japan is twofold. Firstly, although traditional Chinese characters are officially abolished in the mainland since 1986, due

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[54] In 1948, the Chinese population size in Japan was 35,379, where 14,958 people were from Taiwan and 20,421 people were from the Mainland China.

to the fact that many first generation newcomers have migrated to Japan prior to 1986, they still opt to use traditional Chinese characters in their daily lives. Therefore, the use of traditional Chinese character is mainly to accommodate the needs of oldcomers and to include the readership of migrants who originate from traditional Chinese character societies such as Taiwan. Secondly, as Duan (2003) points out, Chinese-language media in Japan are largely operated in a way to attract advertisement and serving business-related purposes. Most of these newspapers and magazines are distributed free of charge because their main income sources are advertising fees paid by restaurants, karaoke shops, firms, churches, NGOs, and language schools run by Chinese migrants in Japan. Duan (2003) finds that for some newspapers, more than 48 per cent of their content is advertisements and the content published by each newspaper are often the same as they duplicate each other's articles. Therefore, using traditional Chinese characters over simplified ones is mainly a business strategy to attract the attention of Chinese-reading business owners and to encourage them to purchase advertisement slots so the news agencies can obtain financial gains (ibid). Under this condition, the main functionality of these print and mass media has gradually shifted from offering livelihood related information to promoting business information.

As a result, the Chinese diaspora need to find alternative channels to obtain critical information to sustain their lives in Japan, and in tandem with the introduction of Web 2.0, some newly emerged Chinese diasporic media started to enter the digital space. Furthermore, we can see a change in terms of the nature of ownership of those media compared to their counterparts founded before the invention of Web 2.0. While many Chinese diasporic media founded after the founding of the PRC were owned by Chinese diasporic organisations, companies, or local Japanese companies, those web-based Chinese diasporic media were often created by Chinese diasporic individuals[55]. A good example is *Xiaochunwang* (小春網:

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[55] Of course, the managing/operating entity may be cooperate.

Figure. 3.1 *Xiaochunwang*'s top banner (screenshot took on 29th June, 2020)

incnjp.com), a website that was founded in 2003, by the once was student migrant and now

migrant entrepreneur Wang Yiyan, a mainland Chinese originally from Jilin Province who

migrated to Japan in 2001. This online community is popularly known by many Chinese

diaspora in Japan given that it had a membership of 1.3 million registrants by 2018 (Zhou,

2018). While *Xiaochunwang* has become one of the largest social networking sites created by

Chinese migrants for Chinese migrants in Japan, it was once nothing more than an online

platform that its creator Wang Yiyan used to expand his waste recycling businesses (ibid). The

website has two main functions: as an information distribution platform as well as an online

socialisation space.

In terms of the former, as shown in Figure 3.1 above, *Xiaochunwang* distributes

business information related to topics such as real estate investment, job opportunities, and

the study abroad programme[56]. In terms of the latter, *Xiaochunwang* has a "forum" section

which is designated as a digital community for the Chinese diaspora in Japan[57] to socialise

and exchange information. The founding and development of this website manifests the

entering of Chinese diasporic media into the digital space, how the Chinese diaspora needed

an alternative channel to obtain/exchange information, as well as to satisfy their social needs,

and how individuals are no longer simply the consumer, but could also be an active producer

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56 On the top banner (in Figure 3.1), from left to right, services provided by Xiaochun include: "门户"(menhu: home page), "咨询" (zixun: news and information), "论坛" (luntan: online forum), "春卷" (chunjuan: information sharing and dissemination), "房产" (fangchan: real estate information), "工作" (gongzuo: work information), "中古" (zhonggu: second-hand market), "生活服务" (shenghuo-fuwu: life service), "留学" (liuxue: studying abroad), "旅游" (lvyou: travelling), "签证" (qianzheng: visa service), "商城" (shangcheng: online shopping), and "便民" (bianmin: useful/affiliated links).

57 Or anyone with Chinese language capability. However, it is worth to mention that according to some of my informants, several sections of this online forum cannot be accessed from Mainland China, such as "华人感闻 Huarenganwen" and "情感之家 Qingganzhijia".

of the information following the rise of Web 2.0.

Next, the emergence of digital media triggered some significant changes in the Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan, such as the constitution of the readership, the types of information distribution and consumption channels, as well as the role these media serve. First of all, as Sun and Yu (2022) point out, compared to Chinese-reading diasporas originate from regions of Greater China such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau, those from the mainland now constitute the main body of the ethnic Chinese diaspora community, which means that they are also the main readership of Chinese diasporic media content. Moreover, partially due to their significant population size, the inflow of them also leads to the introduction of Chinese ethnic digital media in the host society such as Weibo and WeChat, and later on the dominance of those platforms as the main channel for acquiring and distributing information of the ethnic Chinese diasporic community. In the case of Japan, as I argued in somewhere else, following the fade out of Chinese diasporic print and mass media, ethnic digital platforms such as WeChat and Weibo have become the most popular platforms for the Chinese diaspora to acquire the necessary information (Wang, 2020a). Furthermore, as I detailed in the Introduction chapter, digital media is not only a platform for information consumption and distribution, but also a key space for diasporas' social interactions, i.e. to maintain their existing social networks with the homeland. While none-Chinese ethnic digital platforms such as LINE and Facebook are also popular among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, the fact that they are banned in the mainland for public access means that ethnic digital platforms such as WeChat are the dominant if not the only space for the Chinese diaspora to remain connected with the homeland and to bring ideas, emotions, rituals, as well as cultural and political imaginaries emanating from both the home and host society together (Yin, 2013: 556-572).

In this context, I argue that the dominance of Chinese ethnic digital platforms among the Chinese diaspora in Japan is essentially a construction and expansion of a digital sphere

of Chineseness. This is not only because those platforms are "Chinese" as they mainly carter ethnic Chinese and Chinese-speaking audiences but also because they are placed under the direct supervision and governance of the CCP. In this way, these platforms together constitute a politicised Chinese sphere where one can only access censored narratives, discourses, and ideologies, while anything that is not aligned with the CCP's overarching political framework is kept outside the wall of digital divide. Therefore, what I mean by the "digital sphere of Chineseness" is that those ethnic Chinese digital media in essence are China's digital territory. Such a digital sphere is no different from the offline Chinese nation-state, only that it is even more extensive as it has the potential to keep both migratory and non-migratory Chinese individuals within the digital divide and is offering leverages to the CCP to harness them despite their physical locations.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on decomposing two important concepts of this thesis, namely the Chinese diaspora in Japan and Chinese-language diasporic media in Japan. Understanding who are "the Chinese diaspora" allows me to see the development trajectory of the overseas Chinese community in Japan and to clearly define the research subject of this study. Meanwhile, through the investigation of the constantly changing and evolving Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan, this chapter elaborates its complexity in relation to the political dynamics among China, Japan, and Taiwan, which I consider to be an important contribution to existing studies as it accounts of overseas Chinese media beyond purely stating the historical fact of how they rise and fall. Instead, by investigating various historical events in post-war Japan, China, and Taiwan, I was able to see how, and more importantly, why 1) some Chinese-language media owned by Taiwanese diasporas were actually pro-CCP and played an important role in propagating mainland China's political discourses during Japan's

Occupation era; 2) the CCP was able to recruit some Chinese-language news agencies owned by Chinese diasporic organisations and use them for political propaganda despite a vacuum of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations between 1952 to 1972; 3) the Chinese diasporic mediascape in Japan is further complicated with the development of media technologies. While the development of Chinese diasporic media in Japan in terms of how it has been consumed, distributed, and produced is in parallel with the development of information technology from print, to mass, and now to digital media, this chapter shows how such diasporic mediascape is also a space that manifests the short rise of feminism movement in the modern history of China, a space of contestation (i.e. between the CCP and the KMT), and a space of social interaction.

By tracing the development history of Chinese media in Japan, this chapter also illuminates the transformation of Chinese mediascape in Japan. From the retreat of mass Chinese media that was mainly owned by the Chinese diaspora to the entrance of Chinese digital media surveilled by the Chinese state, this process marks several significant shifts. First of all is the introduction and the integration of the mainland Chinese digital realm into the social space that the Chinese diaspora engage with on a daily basis. Consequently, as the Chinese digital media gradually dominant channels that the Chinese diaspora use for content consumption, production, and distribution, this also signifies that an increasing number the Chinese diaspora now live within the Chinese mediadom that operates in accordance with the CCP's overarching political frameworks. Therefore, these shifts not only manifest how the Chinese diaspora's media consumption behaviour has changed over time together with the development of digital technology, but also manifest the construction and expansion of a digital sphere of Chineseness that retains the Chinese diaspora within digital divide despite the fact that they are no longer based on mainland China's physical territory.

However, this is not to say that the Chinese diaspora are simply a group of passive

people who have little agency but to use digital media in a way that is told by the Party-state. As showed in earlier discussions in this chapter, the emergence of digital media fundamentally changed the role of the Chinese diaspora from primarily being the media consumer to the media producer. In this sense, the findings of this chapter inspire me to acknowledge and explore the agency of individual media users in this research project, to see how they use digital media to make sense of their lives in Japan while within the confine of the CCP's digital governance.

Chapter 4 Transnationalising Chineseness: Pandemics and the construction of a digitised sphere of Chineseness

Figure 4.1 A screenshot Ho-fung Hung, a public figure on Twitter's
comment to an article published on 1st August 2022 by *Xinhua News*
Source: see (Hung, 2022)

The single English word "Chineseness" sometimes causes confusion, as it could potentially connote racial, cultural, ethnic, political, and national attributes, identity facets, and memberships. Ever since the Han dynasty opened the Silk Road more than 2,000 years ago, this term has been interpreted in various ways throughout Chinese history by diasporas of Chinese heritage and successive Chinese ruling regimes. For instance, as shown in Figure 4.1 above, when Xi "calls for the union of the Chinese home and abroad for national rejuvenation"[58], who exactly is the "Chinese abroad" to which he refers to and why does his statement sound like China by default has the ruling power over those "Chinese abroad" and is their *de facto* home?

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[58] During the central conference on the united front work in Beijing on 29th July 2022.

These questions speak directly to Chinese national identity, the scope of the sphere of Chineseness, as well as a broader debate of the de-construction and re-construction of the Chinese nation-state. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore the kind of sphere of Chineseness as well as Chinese national identity that have been produced by the Chinese state. In other words, I aim to answer the question of how the Chinese state constructs, and consequently defines the membership in the sphere of Chineseness, and specifically who can claim such membership? Unriddling how the sphere of Chineseness is interpreted by the Chinese state is inevitably important for this research. After all, this sphere and the membership it entails are all politicised notions that work toward the CCP's "us v.s. others" discourse, therefore playing a vital role in the Chinese diaspora's self-identification process.

Therefore, following the last chapter that answered the question of "who are overseas Chinese in Japan" from a historical perspective, this chapter first of all tries to see "who is considered as overseas Chinese" and "who can be called as a 'Chinese'" from the Party-state's perspective. After this, it explores how the sphere of Chineseness is constructed by the state to harness the Chinese diaspora and more importantly, how it has been constructed differently by different Chinese ruling regimes over time. I explore these research questions in the context of the Chinese diaspora in Japan, not only because Japan is the research site for this PhD study, but also because this country serves as one of the most significant foreign others to the PRC, hence to the Chinese nation's construction, symbolisation and politicisation of Chineseness and its sphere. In order to see whether the Chinese state's manifestation of these concepts has changed over time, I decided to compare two times of crisis – the 2003 SARS crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (but mainly 2020 to 2021) – given that times of crisis are considered as crucial periods for any regime, because people's heightened anxieties about their lives triggered by uncertainties in the society often challenge the legitimacy and trust of ruling elites (Devine et al., 2021; Schneider, 2021). Another reason for

me to do this comparison is to see the role played by digital media: how state actors utilise various digital platforms to propagate the politicised notion of Chineseness and Chinese national identity, and how those platforms help the state to construct and then expand the digital Chinese space for harnessing overseas Chinese. I consider the comparison of these two time frames to be helpful in illustrating the role played by digital media, precisely because 2003 is just a few years after the emergence of digital technology and the media market (as well as the state's propaganda strategies) back then was still largely based on Web 2.0 and mass media (Eckholm, 2006). Therefore, the 2003 SARS crisis case serves as a foil to set off the advance and importance of digital media for the Party-state's construction of a digital Chinese territory.

4.1   Overseas Chinese, Chineseness and Chinese identity – Who is, and who is not Chinese?

In Chapter 3 where I discussed overseas Chinese in Japan, the timeline of discussion starts from the late Qing dynasty in 1890 – after the Opium Wars of 1840 and before the 1895 Sino-Japanese War. However, the history of Chinese emigration (though not necessary to Japan) is long and Chinese ruling regimes' perception towards those emigrants has changed over time, largely because those regimes articulate the notion of Chineseness rather differently.

In its early stage, the concept of Chineseness took a rather narrowly defined form, especially prior to the late Qing period when emigration was very much prohibited and criminalised. In this context, the scope of the Chinese sphere is almost the same as the geographical territory of the Chinese nation, and the membership in this sphere is therefore defined by the static national border with the Chinese, or more specifically, the Han-ethnicity as the prerequisite. For instance, in Ming and early Qing time, overseas Chinese were officially called "沿海逃民 (*yanhai taomin*, escapees from coastal areas)" and "罪民 (*zuimin*, sinner)",

and those who not only emigrated but also colluded with Japanese pirates were pinned to the term "漢奸 (*hanjian*, traitor to the nation)" (Danjō, 2004). On the one hand, it is clear that the overseas Chinese identity back then has a negative connotation, as derogatory terms such as "逃民" and "罪民" inevitably exclude them from the Chinese nation. Nakajima (2011) argues that this is contributed by China's tribute system (朝貢体制 *chaogong tizhi*) and the Sinocentrism ideology (華夷思想 *huayi sixiang*) that position China as "the Celestial Empire" (天朝上国 *tianchao shangguo*), while surrounding countries especially Japan are considered as "lands outside of civilisation" (化外之地 *huawai zhidi*). While these ideologies lead to the construction of a "superior China versus inferior non-China" narrative, they also distinctively tie the Chinese identity to the nation-state territory, in the sense that relocation to another country is articulated as escaping to the "lands of uncivilised", hence those "sinners" no longer have the membership in the "Celestial Empire" and become the "traitor" of the nation. On the other hand, the concept of overseas Chinese had a clearly defined geographical demarcation and ethnic boundary. While the term "沿海 (*yanhai*, coastal areas)" often exclusively refers to two regions namely Guangdong and Fujian (Danjō, 2004), the term "漢奸 *hanjian*"[59], although can be translated as "traitor to the nation", has a literal meaning of "traitor to the Han people". In this way, it exclusively and directly associates "Chinese" with the Han ethnicity (漢族 *hanzu*), while communities and tribes with other ethnicities are classified as "蠻夷 *manyi*" or "蠻族 *manzu*" (both terms mean barbarians in Chinese).

While it was until the early years of the Republic did the ruling regimes began to expand the sphere of Chineseness by constructing a Chinese membership that associates Zhonghua-minzu (中華民族, Chinese as an ethnic category) with Zhongguo-ren (中國人, citizens of China) (Chun, 1996), earlier Chinese states had leveraged this "superior celestial China versus

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[59] This term is constituted by two Kanji chatacters. The first character "漢 *han*" refers to "漢人 *hanren*", meaning people with the Han-ethnicity and the second character "奸 *jian*" means traitor.

inferior uncivilised non-China" state of mind to transcend boundaries brought by repeated invasions, rebellions, and the consequent rise and fall of dynasties, as well as the absorption of different ethnic and political entities (Chun, 1996). In this sense, for the pre-Republic regimes, it was actually the "China as a *non*-diaspora state" ideology that defined the sphere of Chineseness and provided the centripetal force to bring together different Chinese "tribes", constructed a sense of sovereign totality, and established the imagination of an "unbroken historical continuity of 5000 years (中華民族上下五千年 *zhonghua minzu shangxia wuqiannian*)" in the context of constant dynastic iterations.

Moving to the late Qing era, the conceptualisation of Chineseness changed rather drastically ever since the Qing Empire sent the first 13 state-sponsored Chinese students to Japan in 1896 after its defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Given that Qing expected those student migrants to return to their homeland after studying abroad so as to save the nation from foreign aggression, the term "華僑 *Huaqiao*" was introduced into the official vocabulary for the first time in history in an attempt to rekindle the loyalty of these students (Nyiri, 2002). This move, to some extent, can be seen as an important turning point that marks not only the Chinese state's first attempt to construct a pan-Chinese ideology to build a shared notion of Chineseness based on the blood tie[60] (Lum, 2014), but also an ideological shift from "China as a non-diaspora state" to "China as a diaspora state" given by the Qing government's desperate to maintain its sovereign totality under the foreign aggression, hence can be seen as a complete makeover of the sphere of Chineseness.

By the time the Republican government took over China in 1912, the state further expanded the sphere of Chineseness, and the membership in this sphere was largely employed as a tool to consolidate diverse Chinese groups within territorial China into one

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[60] However, this Chineseness articulated by Qing still categorises Chinese diasporas linguistically and by place of origin. See (Lum, 2014) for details.

single nation (Chun, 1996). On the one hand, this 'new' sphere of Chineseness blurs the in-group differences, such as language and place of origin, among the heterogeneous Chinese population within territorial China, and therefore managed to associate the term "Chinese" – as an ethnic category, with both the concept of "China" – as a territory, and "Zhongguo-ren" – citizens of China. On the other hand, given the fact that a significant number of Chinese were residing in Japan, by instituting a "where there are Chinese, there is China" narrative (Barabantseva, 2011), the Republic was also able to transnationalise the border of "Chineseness" beyond territorial China by reconciling the notion of ethnicity with national identity. This not only gives it the political legitimacy to govern overseas Chinese in Japan, but also politicises the latter so that each overseas Chinese individual can serve to epitomise the Chinese nation and the collective solidarity of the nation.

With the founding of the PRC in 1949, the CCP followed the Republic's approach to articulating a vaguely defined Chineseness, initially informed by the absence of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties between 1949 and 1972. As discussed above, during this period, China's interactions with Japan were carried out in a nominally non-governmental and informal way, mediated and facilitated by migrant elites and Chinese diasporic organisations in Japan. This is famously known as the people-to-people, "民間先行、以民促官 (*minjian xianxing, yimin cuguan*)" diplomacy approach as proposed by Zhou Enlai, the previous Chinese premier, meaning that the Sino-Japanese intergovernmental relationship must to be based on civil/ private exchanges. In this context, it is crucial for CCP to associate different overseas actors with China's national interests, so they can serve to sustain China's economic and political interests with Japan (Wits, 2019), also to compete with KMT in what I call the "war of public discourse" among overseas Chinese in Japan, as can be seen in its efforts to bureaucratise Chinese diasporic organisations and sponsor pro-CCP news agencies[61]. In this sense, the

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[61] See Section 3.3 in Chapter 3.

CCP's initiative of adopting a vaguely defined sphere of Chineseness is rather easy to understand, which is due to its needs of recruiting as many diasporic individuals as possible to achieve China's political and economic interests with Japan in the absence of official ties.

Another trait of the CCP's sphere of Chineseness is how it is sustained by the repetitive articulation of continuous Sino-Japanese conflicts, which are largely left over by history, such as the portrayal of the Nanjing Massacre in Japan's history textbooks, the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and Japan's recognition of Taiwan as an independent sovereign state (Baba, 2015). These historical events contribute to the CCP's strategy to construct and then to politicise a sphere of Chineseness that serves its political interests (He, 2007). As I have argued elsewhere (Wang, 2021), memories of these histories have now become the icon that encodes Chineseness, the rallying points for the collective imagination of the sphere of Chineseness, and the basis that justifies the ruling legitimacy of CCP. Narratives of the suffering and struggle experienced by many Chinese during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the victory of the Chinese state against Japan's invasion under the leadership of the CCP, together with language, ethnicity, custom, and ideology are now fused with each other, becoming the shared national myths, and the symbols that define the notion of Chineseness (Wang, 2022). Meanwhile, the so-called shared memory of suffering and struggle provides an emotional binding force to this notion of Chineseness, something that is not subject to the difference in terms of language, ethnicity, custom, and ideology among different tribes of Chinese. Therefore, on the one hand, for some Chinese, "being a Chinese" could mean patriotic fervour against Japan, as illustrated in the example at the beginning of this article. On the other hand, as Chun (1996) argues, this Chineseness contributes to uniting the diversified overseas Chinese populations culturally, politically, historically to politically affiliate them with CCP's nationalist discourses. In this way, it contributes to the expansion of the sphere of Chineseness by constituting and implementing not only ethnicity but also anti-Japanese

sentiment – a politicised emotion and history, as part of the Chinese national identity, something that defines one's membership in the Chinese nation-state.

Therefore, for many diasporic Chinese, no matter "how deeply they were actually assimilated into the indigenous society", they could continue to claim "an innate sense of Chineseness" (Chun, 1996: 123), and establish a sense of belonging to the "imagined Chinese community" based on their "Chinese blood". Indeed, as elaborated by Xi Jinping at the 7th Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations in 2014 (Lü, 2014), the Chinese membership includes "tens of millions, generation after generation of overseas Chinese", who are all "members of the Chinese family…and bear the distinctive imprint of Chinese culture", with a "shared roots…spirit…and dream", united together by the "common spiritual gene". In this way, the Chinese identity conceptualised by CCP accommodates transnationalism and produces a sense of belonging to and a connectivity with the homeland based on a common ethnic ground (Wang, 2020), allowing it to unify the highly diversified "Chinese family" by homogenising any sub-categorical boundaries, whether linguistical, geographical, territorial, or generational.

The above review, while illustrating how Chineseness and the sphere of Chineseness have been changing over time and under different ruling regimes, delineates a process of "de-territorialisation" and "de-construction" of the Chinese nation as argued by Duara (2003). It is clear that the border of this Chineseness sphere has been increasingly fuzzily articulated by the Chinese state as a strategy to overlook and homogenise any sub-categorical boundaries within the highly diversified "Chinese family", so members of this ethnically defined "Chinese family" all have a "shared roots, spirit, and dream".

This ethnicity and nationalistic emotion based Chineseness, however, is ultimately about the construction of an "us v.s. others" narrative (Wang, forthcoming). On the one hand,

what the "us" refers to can be rather flexible – in Qing, it is the Han-ethnics who live in "the Celestial Empire"; in the Republican era, it includes those who emigrated but under the state's direct governance; and now in CCP time, the membership of "us" is further extended to include "generation after generation" of overseas Chinese who share a "common spiritual gene", despite "how deeply they were actually assimilated into indigenous society". On the other hand, it is clear that the "others" have always been those who do not share the designated Chinese "roots, spirit, and dream". This us-others ethnic dichotomy, together with a Chinese nationalism built on a collective memory of suffering caused by Japan's atrocities, can encourage the formation of a strong emotional commitment to the nation-state, thus unifying the Chinese nation (Schneider, 2021).

4.2   2003 SARS crisis: The Chinese nation as a victim to the past

Its subjects' nationalist emotional commitment is indeed a mixed blessing to the PRC. While it resonates with the political discourse of the CCP and helps to construct a sense of national unity (Schneider, 2018), it can also pose potential threats to the ruling legitimacy of the CCP, especially in times of crisis (He, 2007) and with the presence of digital media. Heated online debates regarding domestic and international affairs can promote narratives that are different from the official ideology, therefore challenging the CCP's ruling legitimacy by shaking the public's trust and producing "unwanted" public discourses depending on its political performance (Schneider, 2021).

For instance, at the beginning of the 2003 crisis, the CCP attempted to cover up the outbreak due to the upcoming Two Sessions (两会, lianghui) scheduled to be held in March 2003 (Zhang, 2003). By the time when WHO (World Health Organization) was informed about the SARS outbreak on 14th February 2003, voices circulated online, such as on *Qiangguo Luntan* (強國論壇, an online forum managed by People.cn (人民網, *Renminwang*, one of the

official information dissemination channels of the Central Committee of the CCP), one of the largest online forums in China at the time, started criticising the legitimacy and accountability of the CCP, although soon were censored and banned (Li, 2018). In addition to public discourses that circulate online, Huang (2003) found that print media such as *Beijing Star Daily* (北京信报), *Life Weekly* (三联生活周刊), and *Caijing* (财经) also criticised the CCP's initial cover-up and the following poor governance in containing the spread of the SARS virus, indicating that the epidemic is caused by corrupt officials. When the news of the SARS epidemic finally reached Japan, some Chinese-language news agencies such as *Chūbun Newspaper* (中文導報) also criticised CCP for "prioritising economy, prioritising politics", "advocating sovereignty over human rights" and thus "putting the stability of its own regime at stake" (Zhang, 2003).

Back in 2003 when the Internet-based media just started to emerge, above empirical evidence shows that in China's case, the CCP's lacking of both the presence on the digital media platforms as well as the awareness of the importance of media control present challenges to maintain the stability of its regime. Domestic and overseas media narratives that criticise the CCP for prioritising its political interests over people's human rights and well-being indicate that the CCP's self-claimed ruling legitimacy and the self-granted status as China's sole guarantor are not powerful enough to align or to unite its local and international subjects with the Party's interests in a time of crisis, hence "putting the stability of its own regime at stake".

However, as the crisis progressed, we can see how the CCP manages to overshadow these voices of criticism, and in turn, uses the crisis to its advantage largely by leveraging state-owned mass media to mitigate and divert public criticism. The CCP was able to do so through a two-pronged approach, and the first step is to put health officials and frontline

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workers in the centre of the media spotlight and portray them as heroes of the Chinese nation

(Schneider, 2021). For instance, state media agencies put their main efforts into praising

healthcare and medical service workers as "angels in white" and "soldiers" who joined "the

Long March of the Red Army" in order to save the Chinese nation, indicating that in order to

overcome SARS, "all Chinese need to unite as one" (Katsuda, 2008). These narratives not

only help to articulate the crisis as a "test of national solidarity" (Schneider, 2021: 3), but also

transfer the responsibility of combating the crisis from the Party-state to "all Chinese", so as to

counteract criticisms that the former has received due to its poor crisis response. This narrative

is also linked to the CCP's second approach, which is to render the image of the Chinese

nation as the victim of the pandemic that needs the help of "all Chinese".

By victimising the Party-state, CCP justifies its much criticised government performance

by indicating how the Chinese nation has been struggling for economic and social development

ever since the founding of the nation due to foreign aggressions in the past[62]. In this way, the

CCP is able to link the struggles caused by the SARS outbreak in the present with the

sufferings at the hands of foreign forces in the past, and therefore legitimising its "prioritising

economy, prioritising politics" political agenda as "a desperate move given the situation in

China"[63]. This approach was proven to be a success, given that the CCP has long been

associating the notion of Chineseness with previous foreign aggressions, as mentioned earlier.

Consequently, with the help of state media, the public discourse circulating within the Chinese

community both at home and in Japan has also changed, evidence in the increasing number

of pro-CCP narratives published in Chinese-language media, as well as the emergence of

grassroots actions organised by Chinese diasporic organisations, such as the donation event

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[62] See the talk delivered by Zhang Liguo, Consul General of the Chinese Embassy in Japan to representatives from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Japan (日本中華総商会, *riben zhonghua zongshanghui*) (Le, 2003); and the talk Qiu Guohong, Minister of the Chinese Embassy in Japan, delivered at the 99th Japan-China Club Symposium (第 99 期日中俱樂部座談會, *di 99qi rizhongjulebu zuotanhui)* (Yang, 2003a).
[63] See above.

organised by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Japan (CCCJ), in which many donors, who are second- or third-generation Chinese migrants, indicated that their donations are not simply about supporting the homeland materially, but also about showing the "love" to the homeland, "just like how a child loves its mother" (Yang, 2003b). These narratives illustrate how the notion of Chineseness, with its state of mind that emphasises the allegedly shared "struggles" and "spiritual gene", was leveraged as an essential tool for the CCP to evoke national sentiments, thus providing an emotionally charged narrative to redirect criticisms against its poor initial responses to the virus outbreak, reinforcing its relationship with overseas Chinese, and justifying its political legitimacy during the time of crisis.

4.3 2020 COVID-19 pandemic: Parading the achievements of national reinvigoration

In the PRC context, the ongoing 2020 COVID-19 pandemic shares many similarities with the previous SARS crisis in terms of how information on the outbreak was initially banned, followed by portraying key frontline workers as national martyrs and heroes, such as Li Wenliang[64] and Zhong Nanshan[65]. The main difference between the two crises, however, is driven by the construction of China's digital sphere of Chineseness and how it allows the CCP to govern its subjects residing both inside and outside of the Chinese nation-state.

Back in 2003, digital media was still in its early development stage, and the digital way of communication, although available, mainly took the form of online forums and some instant messaging apps with limited functionalities, such as QQ[66] and SMS (short message service). In this context, CCP mainly utilised mass media, such as newspapers and TV programmes to

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[64] The doctor who first warn the general public about the early COVID-19 infections in Wuhan. He was initially accused and arrested for 'spreading false information' but then honoured by the Chinese government as 'martyr' after his death on 6th February 2020.
[65] The leading advisor for managing the COVID-19 pandemic.
[66] An instant messaging application developed by Tencent, the same company that also developed WeChat.

shape public discourses (Zhang, 2006), and its overseas presence was not significant, especially in countries such as Japan where the majority of mass media channels are privately owned, with only a few having a loose tie with the Chinese state (Zhu, 2003). This lack of media presence, together with CCP's coercive strategies to ban SARS-related online public discussions soon posts a threat to CCP's political stability, as elaborated earlier.

Moving from 2003 to 2020, the Chinese mediascape is marked by a rapid development and popularisation of digital media platforms, as well as the state's thorough presence on these platforms, such as Weibo and WeChat. As demonstrated earlier in Chapter 3, these digital tools, with their extensive userbase and advanced technological affordances, have become a preferred channel for Chinese users within and beyond China for information consumption and distribution, leading to the decline of diasporic media in terms of both its popularity and importance among diasporic Chinese from mainland China (Sun and Yu, 2022). More importantly, the popularity of digital media also means an expansion of China's digital sphere of Chineseness. This is not only because those digital media mainly serve Chinese users who are from the PRC but also due to the fact that all the mainland Chinese digital media are under the thorough surveillance and the full control of the CCP, granting it with the power to continuously politicise this digital sphere. In this context, what really leads to the CCP's different responses and articulations between the two pandemics is precisely this expansion of China's digital territory, as it gives the CCP more leverage and control over its overseas subjects, as I shall explain in detail in the following section.

Nationalism and the mediated censorship

Unlike the 2003 SARS crisis, the presence of the digital sphere of Chineseness sustained by mainland Chinese digital platforms allows CCP to deploy the COVID-19 pandemic for its nation-building, which firstly includes constructing and popularising the alleged fact through

various mainland Chinese digital platforms. While the extensive userbase of applications such as WeChat[67] ensures that information can be effectively delivered to overseas Chinese, the most important point here is that these ethnic media platforms operate under the Internet censorship instituted by the CCP. This means that although Chinese migrants live outside the "wall"[68], by using those popular digital platforms they are still retained within the digital sphere of Chineseness where only the officially sourced, sanctioned, and censored information are allowed to circulate.

A good example is how COVID-19 related news is distributed through "WeChat subscription accounts"[69] that are owned by Chinese state actors in Japan. In terms of the content, while from time to time these accounts release information about changes in public policy (i.e. entrance restriction policies of Japan and China) and the infection status of their consular districts, the main focus has been propagating disease-based political narratives. This includes not only establishing a pandemic timeline to show that "China has always been open, transparent and responsible for informing the WHO and other countries, including Japan, about the outbreak", praising the CCP for "uniting all Chinese as a collective effort to control the epidemic", but also condemning "certain Japanese media" for "wrongfully undermining China's world-renowned achievements in combating the pandemic"; that "their blatant denigrations against the CCP" are "full of ignorance, prejudice, and arrogance", hence "unobjective, unethical" and "unacceptable to all Chinese people"[70].

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[67] It has more than 1.2 billion monthly active users as of June 2021 (Statista, 2021).

[68] Commonly known as the Great Firewall (防火長城, *fanghuo changcheng*) which bans the access of mainland Chinese internet users to certain foreign websites and digital services.

[69] A news subscription service embedded in WeChat, which allows the account holder to directly distribute information to its subscribers. At the time of writing, the Chinese embassy in Japan and consulate-general in Osaka, Sapporo, Nagasaki, and Nagoya all have their own WeChat subscription accounts.

[70] Quotes are extracted and translated by the author from several news posted on Chinese embassy in Japan's WeChat subscription account. Corresponding information can be found from news released on 18th January, 6th February, 31st March, and 14th April 2020 in the Embassy News (使館快訊, *shiguan kuaixun*) section on Chinese embassy in Japan's website (http://www.china-embassy.or.jp/chn/sgkx/).

These narratives serve two purposes. First of all, they can be seen as a combination of coercive and discursive strategies to create a sense of factuality and justify the authenticity of information disseminated from China. To fully understand this point, it is necessary to understand that in the PRC context, information and news sources regarding events that are deemed to be "crucial" or "politically sensitive" – such as this pandemic – are either provided exclusively by state news institutes, such as *Xinhua News* and *People's Daily,* or come directly from state offices, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Council Information Office (Schneider, 2018). For instance, the embassy's denouncement against "certain Japanese media's" "blatant denigration against CCP" originally came from the official response made by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This denouncement was widely recited by state news agencies, and later on distributed to non-state news agencies such as *Tencent News* and *Sina News*. In this way, CCP ensures a unified articulation of a given event in its digital domain, which ultimately creates a sense of pro-China factuality and authenticity.

Furthermore, by the repetitive use of phrases such as "all Chinese (全体中国人 *quanti zhongguoren*)", news and narratives mediated through the Chinese mediascape not only further reinforce such sense of factuality and authenticity as if the narratives have already been commonly acknowledged by "all" who has a Chinese ethnic ties, but also serve as a strong rallying point for the state to articulate a sense of collective solidarity, something that is similar to how it has been articulating a sense of collective suffering and struggles due to certain historical events. This is further enhanced by implementing inherently nationalist, emotionally charged and clear-cut wording and phrasing for online media content, such as China's "world-renowned achievements" and "unobjective and unethical" Japanese media.

These coercive strategies together serve the crucial purpose of justifying the information gap – the digital divide – between narratives that circulate inside and outside China. The use of emotionally charged terminologies together with the propaganda of a unified discourse

constructs a sentimental nationalist frontier, something that can be seen as the border of the Chinese sphere, classifying any narratives that are not aligned with CCP's overarching political discourse as China's "other". By utilising the readily established "us v.s. others" narrative and the history of Chinese people's suffering caused by foreign aggressions, this sentimental nationalist frontier normalises the digital divide as if it is meant to be like this: after all, if the "others" are always against "us", of course their discourses are going to be different from "ours". As one of my informants, Yang, 29, who came to Japan in 2019 elaborates:

> "If the entire Internet reports the same, then I choose to believe it…I know what you are talking about (online censorship), but after all, it would have been impossible to have pro-China narratives coming from Japan's side anyway…To put it nicely, they have been working against us for years".

Yang, as a privately funded PhD student majoring in German literature at a privileged university in Tokyo, while self-claiming as a "non-political person" who "normally don't engage in any sort of political conversations", impressed me from her narrative that shows how her perception on online censorship, or digital divide, is actually very political as it helps her to claim a membership in the sphere of Chineseness. To her, the digital divide serves less as a symbol of the CCP's authoritarian regime but as a reference point for Yang to make sense of who is "us" and who is "others". In her case, as something that is interwoven with a larger historical and nationalist narrative grounded in the Sino-Japanese history, digital divide is able to provide Yang with moral and emotional ground to justify censorship and propaganda in today's PRC. By distinguishing how *they*, namely Japan, is something that "has always been working against *us*", she automatically grants information mediated from China with credibility and resonates with the core feature of CCP's nationalism – the "us v.s. others" political narrative.

Throughout the interview, I found that Yang's perspectives resonated with other informants from time to time, especially those who came to Japan rather recently as student migrants. They indicate that "much information outside the "wall" is fractured" so "[it] has no credibility in the first place" (Huahua, 24); that news against China "is often produced by right-wing Japanese parties or anti-Chinese haters" (He, 21); that "it's not as if the Japanese have been fond of altering facts for just a day or two" (Xiaotao, 23), so "screening these information out may not be an entirely bad thing" (Lili, 29). Although without a quantitative dataset, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to establish whether Chinese student diasporas are particularly admissible to digital divide, these narratives indeed demonstrate that with a deeply rooted "us v.s. others" nationalist discourse, how nationalism and digitality in China mutually feed to each other and serve to reinforce the CCP's digital sphere of Chineseness.

The second purpose of these narratives is to construct a moral order and hierarchy between "us" and "others". Although "China's achievements" in combating the crisis have been "widely renowned throughout the world", "certain Japanese media" are ignorant, prejudiced, and arrogant, and their criticisms are wrongful and unethical. These terminologies not only contribute to attributing China and Japan with a positive and negative connotation respectively, but also provide a moral framework for overseas Chinese for how the morally superior "us" and morally inferior "others" should be judged when discrepancies occur. In addition, by illustrating "all Chinese" as a "collective effort" while generalising specific Japanese media agencies as "certain Japanese media", these narratives help reinforce the CCP's "us v.s. others" nationalist dichotomy by attributing certain actions to either "China" or "Japan". In this way, the CCP links its moral framework not only to the ongoing crisis, but also to other Sino-Japanese disputes, as illustrated by Xiaotao for seeing Japan as "fond of altering facts", which apparently alluding to its historical revisionism regarding issues such as the Nanjing Massacre and sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

The empirical evidence above clearly illustrate the importance of digital media for the CCP to achieve its political interests. The presence of the digital sphere of Chineseness sustained by the digital technology has become the precondition for it to establish a uniformly articulated "fact" during the time of crisis. This allows the CCP to not only protect itself from the public criticism, but also to establish a moral order that classifies who can and who cannot claim a membership in this sphere of Chineseness. As demonstrated above, this membership is defined by the amalgamation of both the digital divide as well as the CCP's emotionally and nationalistically charged political discourse that portrays China as a victim that suffers greatly at the hands of foreign forces in the past. In this way, the pandemic is less of a challenge to its ruling regime, but more of an opportunity that fuels CCP's nationalistic Chineseness, thus mobilising both diasporic and non-diasporic Chinese individuals for the sake of the stability of its ruling regime.

China Aid, Health Kit, and the facemask nationalism

As I discussed earlier, narrating a "us v.s. others" discourse by portraying Japan as China's ultimate other has a long tradition in the Party-state's political thought. However, this is not the only political ideology that China has articulated. Other discourses can be seen from a few themes that have attracted heated online discussions between China and Japan throughout the pandemic, which are all somehow related to the facemask.

Back on 1 February 2020, an event that gained more than 300 thousand "like" overnight on Weibo was a tweet with pictures showing donated goods from the Chinese Proficiency Test Bureau in Japan to Hubei Province. What triggered such attention was a line of poetry printed on the donation box: "mountains and rivers are different, but we share the same wind and the moon (山川異域 風月同天, *shanchuan yiyu fengyue tong tian*)". The grassroots voices on China's social networks praised high of this donation, which soon was followed up by various

Chinese state actors and news agencies, such as the Chinese Embassy in Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Disciplinary Committee, *People's Daily*, and *Xinhua News*. These state actors interpret this donation as a sign that signifies "the unification of the Chinese and Japanese people", underlining that "China and Japan stand on one united front against the epidemic war – the common enemy of mankind…if some countries were to take advantage of the pandemic, would they not be on the same side as the virus?" (China's Daily, 2020).

Moving to late February, some new political narratives emerged, partially triggered by Yukio Takemoto, the major of Toyokawa, when he approached Wuxi city asking for the return of previously donated 4,500 facemasks due to the lack of facemask market supply in Japan. State news agencies soon reported that China has arranged couriers to deliver 50,000 facemasks to Toyokawa, and more than 100,000 facemasks to Japan to thank for its help when China was at the most critical moment of the pandemic, calling it "China Aid (中國援助, *zhongguo yuanzhu*)".

Interestingly, echoing with this "China aid" propaganda, the Chinese Embassy in Japan reached out to Chinese students through its WeChat subscription account on 3 April 2020, indicating that the Embassy will soon distribute the "Health Kit (健康包, jiankangbao)"[71] to them because "the motherland is always concerned about your wellbeing" especially "given that the pandemic in Japan is still spreading while the domestic outbreak has been contained".

Actually, China sent facemasks not only to Japan and to Chinese students in Japan, but also to other regions such as Italy, Iran, and Pakistan. The distribution of facemasks appears to be an important and recurring theme throughout the pandemic, in which I argue that this "facemask diplomacy" signifies some crucial changes in strategies that the CCP adopts to

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[71] According to some of my informants, this kit contains some facemasks, disinfectant supplies and some medication.

leverage nationalist sentiment, articulate Chineseness, and legitimise its ruling regime.

As I discussed earlier, portraying Japan as China's ultimate other plays a central role in the CCP's construction of the sphere of Chineseness. The "malicious Japan" not only allows the Chinese leadership to leverage nationalist sentiments based on its "us v.s. others" narrative, it also grounds the CCP's articulation of Chineseness as a collective memory of suffering and struggle due to past wars, as well as a "Chinese Dream" of national reinvigoration. Although this narrative has been a persistent theme throughout the pandemic, its scope has potentially expanded, evident in how the "others" no longer only refers to Japan, but those who do not "stand on one united front with China"; and the "war" is no longer the second Sino-Japanese war, but the "epidemic war" – an enemy of all mankind.

This expansion of the membership in the Chineseness sphere through the new imagery of "us" and "others" serves several purposes, and one of them is to put China on a moral high ground by articulating itself as the leading actor by default in combating the "epidemic war". In this way, the pandemic has become a means of expressing a moral judgement (Gernet, 1972: 96), and any voices that question China's anti-epidemic measures are considered morally reprehensible and are "on the same side as the virus", hence the "enemy of all mankind". This moral foundation is further strengthened by narratives that use other countries' somehow "poor" performances during the pandemic as a foil to set off China's "world-renowned achievements", such as how "the domestic outbreak has been contained" while "the pandemic in Japan is still spreading". These narratives in turn contribute to justifying and legitimising issues for which China has long been criticised for, such as censorship and information control discussed above, by crediting these mechanisms for playing a positive role that leads to China's success in fighting the virus. For instance, throughout the interviews, narratives such as "given Japan's condition and American's ridiculous anti-vaccination movements, I'm actually pro of censorship" (Ajin, 26) are constantly mentioned by some of my informants.

Together with Japan no longer being portrayed as China's only ultimate "other", the way Chineseness is expressed has also changed, arguably informed by CCP's propaganda of China's "facemask diplomacy". Many informants, such as 47 year-old Laoli, read this as "China's global pledge" (Bing, 30), expressing a feeling of pride because "it marks China's rise" (Haoran, 30):

"I used to feel a bit guilty about coming from a country with dictatorship, but not anymore...look at Japan and the world's strongest country the United States. They haven't been able to bring it [COVID-19] under control, but we did it in just three months and can even afford to spare them facemasks…I used to have an inferiority complex, but now I'm very proud to be Chinese".

In order to make sense of why "China's global pledge" evokes a feeling of pride among many interviewees, it is important to first of all clarify that Haoran's narrative is not necessarily accurate. As repeatedly mentioned in the CCP's 'China Dream' propaganda, this dream is about "to reinvigorating the nation", which means that it perceives China as a returning power, not a rising power. And knowing the difference between these two ideologies is particularly crucial in understanding China's nationhood, or Chineseness. While CCP has a long history in leveraging the second Sino-Japanese war to construct a nationalistic Chineseness sphere based on a collective memory of suffering and struggle, the roots of this "memory" can actually be traced back to late Qing, when the first group of Chinese students was sent abroad to Japan. This event carries a lot of weight in modern Chinese history, as it marks a swap in the power hierarchy between China, "the Celestial Empire", and other countries, "the lands outside of civilisation" (Tanaka, 2013). Because it used to be the other way around – that surrounding countries, especially Japan, would send tribute envoys to China to "learn from its wisdom", but

now it is China that is forced to "learn from the West in order to resist the invasion of the West"[72].

Thus, sending students overseas in the late Qing signifies the beginning of China's decline in

its modern history, both de facto and ideologically, and it is when this "collective memory of the

struggle against adversity" begins to build up. Consequently, the sphere of Chineseness, for a

long time, has emphasised an emotionally charged narrative and is largely viewed through the

lens of national humiliation, portraying it as a victim at the hands of foreign forces. This is

evident in how the 2003 SARS pandemic is entangled with patriotic sentiment in the PRC, and

arguably explains why Laoli "used to have an inferiority complex" of "being Chinese".

In this context, for many Chinese including the interviewees, the "China aid", "health kit",

and "facemask diplomacy" pertain a much deeper meaning than simply showing "China's

global pledge". Instead, to some extent, it symbolises China's gradual regain of its "historical

glory". Because different from the 2003 SARS outbreak, China managed to "bring the

pandemic under control in just three months" and can even afford to spare facemasks to

countries such as Japan and the US – foreign forces that brought the Chinese nation with

memory of suffering and struggle – hence a transition from a nation in crisis that is constantly

struggling and "inferior" to a nation in aid that is "rising", as perceived by the interviewees. This

transition is also something that the CCP heavily propagates on, because 2020 is an important

benchmark in the PRC history: 2019, a year before 2020, is the 70th anniversary of the

founding of the PRC; and 2021, a year after 2021, is the 100th anniversary of the founding of

the CCP. In this context, the importance of the CCP in portraying China's success in combating

the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and associating it with the the regain of the nation's "power,

status, and historical glory" is apparent: it helps to evoke a strong nationalist sentiment of

solidarity and pride, to inspire a sense of unity within the Chineseness sphere, thus lumping

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[72] "師夷長技以製夷, *shiyichangji yizhiyi*" in Chinese. An ideology proposed by Wei Yuan, a politician in late Qing. The character "夷" means "夷人 (barbarian)", which echoes with previously mentioned Sinocentrism ideology in dynastic China (see Section 4.1) .

"all Chinese" into one unified imagery. More importantly, this also helps to (re)justify the CCP's ruling legitimacy over this sphere, because it is the CCP that "brings a shattered China to an age of prosperity", "leading a humiliated nation to the centre of the world stage"[73]. In this way, the core of this Chineseness sphere is less about how China's prosperous future can only be defended under its leadership (Billig, 2009), but more about how such a future has been gradually achieved under the CCP's leadership. In this sense, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic serves as an opportunity for the CCP to interpret the meaning of Chineseness in relation to its political regime. Throughout this process, we also see the vital role that digital media play. On the one hand, ethnic Chinese digital platforms help to diffuse and legitimise the CCP's repertoires of social control, making sure that only the "official" narratives can be propagated online, thus creating a sense of factuality that can emotionally unite its subjects in a time of crisis. On the other hand, those platforms combined with the digital divide have become one of many elements that constitutes and symbolises the sphere of Chineseness. For many informants, acts such as using those censored platforms and consuming digitally divided information are something that differentiates the "us" from the "others". In this sense, digital media and digital divide have become a key for them to claim their membership in the sphere of Chineseness.

Some further discussions: Cabin hospital, COVID-19 testing and some challenges to China's pandemic nationalism

While the previous discussions demonstrate China's success in turning the pandemic from a crisis into an opportunity to further expand the scope of the Chineseness sphere, some recent events, such as the construction of cabin hospitals[74] (方舱医院) and the implementation of

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[73] See (Xinhua News, 2021) for original text in Chinese.

[74] The cabin hospital is for isolating those who are tested positive for coronavirus infection.

massive COVID-19 test[75] (全员核酸检测), have inspired some different articulations of the CCP's pandemic Chineseness among the informants.

On 13 August 2022, my informant Dan, a 22-year-old Chinese student in Japan, retweeted a photo of some newly built cabin hospitals in Sichuan on her twitter account and commented that:

"Why does the Chinese government continue to build cabin hospitals? The answer is simple: to show the 1.4 billion *daluren*[76] (大陆人, which means mainlanders) how good the party is for them, with free hospital, free tests, free quarantine, all for the good of everyone, so they will be fully convinced of China's success. And by the time the truth is revealed, they wouldn't believe it, and that will be enough for the party"[77].

Furthermore, in the comment section of this tweet, while one of her followers commented that "in the future those sent to (cabin hospitals) may not just be those who are tested positive", Dan replied that "lol, they can do whatever they want to do. I've already managed to escape that (country)".

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to arrange a follow-up interview with Dan enquiring about her tweets, her narratives show that the CCP's strategy of entangling the pandemic with nationalist sentiment may be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this strategy contributes to legitimising its ruling regime and curating unity as discussed above. On the other hand, adopting this strategy also means that disapproval of its anti-pandemic

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[75] The mass COVID-19 testing is part of China's Zero-COVID policy (清零政策，also known as FTTIS (Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support)) which aims to stop community transmission of COVID-19 by conducting COVID-19 testing to everyone living in the community.

[76] It is worth to mention that this word is rarely used by PRC citizens to refer to themselves. Instead, it is a heavily politicised, derogatory term that is commonly used by Taiwanese, Hongkongers and citizens of Macau when they are talking about PRC citizens. For details, see Cheng (2016).

[77] Dan's tweet was written in simplified Chinese. To protect her privacy, I did not include the original text in Chinese here.

measures can fuel the rise of unwanted voices, disrupting its objective of uniting the Chinese diaspora under the sphere of Chineseness. Although the reasons for Dan using the term "daluren" to describe the 1.4 billion PRC citizens remain an important question for future exploration, her language, such as using "they", "them", and "that (country)" when discussing the nation-state and the Chinese people indicates how the same components that nurture a sense of solidarity and align the Chinese diaspora with the party's nationalist project can actually become an inspiration for them to claim a disengagement from the Chineseness sphere that they were supposed to be part of. As someone who currently holds a student visa as a PRC citizen in Japan, calling her non-diaspora counterparts as "daluren" who "wouldn't believe the truth" and describing her emigration as an "escape" clearly shows Dan's rejection to take in the pandemic fuelled, nationalistic Chineseness. However, it is worth mentioning that while Dan seems to actively exclude herself from Chinese membership judging from her tweets presented above, on her Twitter profile she still describes herself as "a Beijing-er in Japan". Although without an interview I cannot discuss more about her self-identification and interpretation of the CCP's pandemic Chineseness, her case indeed illustrates that neither the pandemic nor the CCP's presentation of its anti-pandemic measure is the omnipotent solution to legitimate itself and lump all Chinese in one single unit.

Similar to Dan, another informant Micha, a naturalised Chinese shared a photo of the massive COVID-19 test at night in a small Chinese city named Yiwu on his WeChat "Moments" and commented in Japanese that "Oh, this looks so heartwarming on a 40-degree day. Over here we might think this looks like Schindler's List, but over there this is definitely the China power lol"[78].

From the way Micha parallels "the China power" with "Schindler's List" and sarcastically

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[78] His original text in Japanese: "ああ、40 度にもかかわらずとても心温まる光景だな。こっちではシンドラーのリストに見えるけど、向こうでは間違いなく中国力量だよね草。"

describes the mass testing as "heartwarming", we can see how CCP's anti-COVID measures, while serving as a nationalist trope and meaning making for some, can also stir up strong sentiments that go against CCP's nationalist project. Although the massive COVID-19 test, just like other measures, is supposed to justify China's social and political institutions, setting off a sense of unity and making the Chinese "feel proud", in Micha's case it has become the inspiration for boundary making and differentiation. His wording of "Schindler's List" and the use of words such as "over here" and "over there" when referring to Japan and China respectively show his resilience to both China's pandemic governance and its strategy of using this pandemic to reinforce the sphere of Chineseness.

It is also worth mentioning that one should be careful of drawing definite conclusion from the empirical evidence presented in earlier sections, such as to argue that the Chinese diaspora in general are eager to claim the membership in the CCP's sphere of Chineseness. While those narratives partially represent what I found at the time of the interview, we should keep in mind the heterogeneity within the Chinese diasporic community and that the way people relate to different ideologies and discourses is not static but multidimensional and reflexive. A good example to illustrate this point is how Shaotang, a 28-year-old entrepreneur, produces some very different narratives online commenting on China's "Zero-Covid" policy. On the one hand, one of his posts on WeChat states that "The government is having a hard time. It's been scolded for providing medical resources to everyone, and then it will be scolded if it plans to ease the anti-pandemic measure. We should be more understanding [of the government]".

On the other hand, the narratives posted on his Twitter manifest some very different perspectives. Shaotang often retweets news related to China's "Zero-Covid" policy and commenting on the mismatch between statements delivered by Chinese governmental officials and Chinese citizens' stories of struggle "cost by the inhumane, irrational, and never-ending

lockdowns". In one of his tweets, Shaotang criticised China's effort of "deploying online propaganda to cover up the fact and glorify failed policies", and further commented that: "if you want to read news from China you have to read it on your knees, because its only reserved for those who are *nucai*[79]. If you're already managed to escape but still read (news on) Weibo, then it means that you've made a worthless trip". During my interview with Shaotang, after enquiring about the reason for his dramatically different political stance on WeChat and Twitter, Shaotang first of all indicates that "please don't misunderstand me as some anti-CCP and anti-Xi leftist". And then, he stated that: "I'm a super patriotic person. I love China because my parents are still there". Here, it is important to clarify that the underlying notion that Shaotang's "I love China because my parents are still there" statement connotes is essentially different from similar narratives presented in earlier sections of this thesis, such as how the informant Changying sees China as her home because her daughter and parents are still in Shanghai[80]. In Shaotang's case, what he truly means is that due to China's extensive online censorship, he feels the need to perform a nationalist identity within the Chinese digitalscape, so that he will not cause troubles for his parents back in China because of what he has said or might say online. In Shaotang's own words, although he is "angry about the CCP's authoritarian regime which is clearly manifested during this pandemic", he feels that he is "also a *nucai*…You may see me as an active tweeter, but within the intranet[81] I'm actually quite weak. After all, what can you do if you don't kneel when you have families back in China?"

From Shaotang's narratives, we can see that on the one hand, he is similar to informants

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[79] "Nucai", in Chinese 奴才, means lackey or slave of unquestioning obedience.

[80] For details see Section 6.2.

[81] According to Shaotang, he uses the word "intranet" to refer to the Chinese digital space as its users have no freedom of accessing to nor distributing information.

such as Dan and Micha in the sense that it illustrates how CCP's anti-COVID measures could be a double-edged sword: while it could serve as a nationalist trope and meaning making for some, it can also stir up strong sentiments that shake the CCP's ruling regime. On the other hand, his case serves as a good example to illustrate that for many Chinese diaspora in Japan, the way they distinguish between "us" and "others" is often the outcome of the amalgamation of multiple factors and forces, such as their particular diasporic experiences, their awareness of and concern for online governance and surveillance, their feeling of worry for their loved ones who live in the authoritarian regime, as well as their desires to maintain emotional and intimate ties with their loved ones. In this sense, for informants such as Shaotang, describing their self-identification as multidimensional may not be perfectly accurate, because how they perform online might be indeed just a strategic performance, which does not necessarily represent how they truly define themelves. Instead, it is a kind of compromise and trade-off that they feel they are supposed to do in order to maintain their ties with the loved ones, as those censored platforms are almost the only communicative channel that could serve this role. Just as another informant, Sansan, an art consultant and collector narrates, "If there's still someone you care about back in there (China), then you need to play by the book and play by its (CCP's) rule in China's (digital platforms). After all, in China's case, every line is a red line, but that red line is also your lifeline. And personally, I'm not brave enough to cross it".

Consequently, in the context where "crossing the red line" can lead to being cut off from the "lifeline", while it encourages Chinese diaspora such as Shaotang and Sansan to self-regulate their digital media usage behaviour, thus contributing to the reinforcement of the CCP's digital territory, this fear of "crossing the red line" also contributes to the construction of some seemingly self-conflicting "us v.s. others" narratives among the Chinese diaspora. For instance, although Shaotang uses the rather derogatory term "nucai" to differentiate himself from those who are pro to the CCP's regime and criticising those who rely on censored

information post migration as someone who has made a "worthless trip", by reflecting on how he sometimes also needs to "play by the CCP's rule", eventually, he self-mockingly sees himself as a "nucai" as well. To some degree, this can be perceived as a re-classification between "us" and "others", and it shows the consequence when multiple factors come into play, that the Chinese diaspora like Shaotang can self-identify with both the "us" and the "others".

While it is reasonable to assume that this constant re-classification takes place in a reflexive or reactive way, it indeed highlights the importance of not seeing the Chinese diaspora in a binary way. They do not simply choose to claim or not claim a membership in the sphere of Chineseness. Instead, with the presence of digital media, their daily diasporic experiences involve the constant claiming and disclaiming of this membership, which is an outcome of the interplay between various realities derived from multiple spaces located both inside and outside of the CCP's censored and confined digital realm.

4.4   Conclusion

Through a historical approach, in this chapter I examine the trace of the constantly changing notion of the sphere of Chineseness by comparing the Chinese state's articulation of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis with the 2003 SARS pandemic. I argue that although since the establishment of the PRC the sphere of Chineseness has always placed an emphasis on the "collective suffering and struggle brought about by foreign aggressions", its focal point shifts to underlining "the pride in regaining historical glory" and how China has been able to gradually achieve its 'dream of national reinvigoration' under the leadership of the CCP. The rise of ethnic Chinese digital media and its popularisation both within and beyond territorial China allows CCP to leverage digital divide not only to maintain the sphere of Chineseness through the construction of manipulated factuality, unity, and solidarity, but also to define the membership

in the sphere by associating censorship with the readily established nationalistic sentiment. In this sense, digital media are not simply a tool that the CCP leverages to govern its online territory. Instead, it symbolises the membership in the sphere of Chineseness, determining who can and who cannot be a Chinese.

From the empirical evidence presented in this chapter, we can see that this strategy works out quite well. On the one hand, given that the need to belong is a universal human need, the combination of digital media and the nationalistic sentiment provide the Chinese diaspora in Japan something emotional to grip on. Therefore, the use of digital media is not just for information consumption and distribution, but it constitutes an experience in which diasporic individuals can engage in the constant feeling of being Chinese. On the other hand, in the context where the "others" are considered to have a long tradition of "working against us" as well as producing "blatant denigration against CCP", the ethnic Chinese digital media also serve as an emotional safe haven for many Chinese diaspora in Japan. In this way, these ethnic Chinese digital media also help mobilise diasporic individuals to actively defend and justify the CCP's authoritarian regime, instead of challenging and criticising it as witnessed during the early stage of the 2003 SARS crisis.

However, while COVID-19 may seem like a story that manifests the success of the CCP in leveraging the crisis for entrenching an emotionally charged and nationalistically defined Chineseness sphere, some new empirical evidence, while limited in scope, shows how disapproval of its anti-pandemic measures could also lead to the Chinese diaspora's self-disengagement from the Chineseness sphere, although this disengagement may be temporary and context-based. For those diasporic individuals, the pandemic becomes an inspiration for boundary making instead of a uniting force that fuses them into the CCP-defined sphere of Chineseness.

Overall, this chapter illustrates the historical roots of Chineseness, how the sphere of Chineseness has evolved over time, and how it is mutually informative with the increasingly complex political discourses of the CCP. In this way, this sphere essentially marks the construction of the "de-territorialised ideology of nationalism" (Duara, 2003) through ethnic Chinese digital media, illustrating the CCP's attempt to associate transnationally dispersed Chinese diaspora with its politics so as to accommodate the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalisation and digitalisation.

Chapter 5   Navigating through the online-offline continuum: The Chinese diaspora and the imagined sphere of Chineseness[82]

In this chapter I illustrate how, through their use of digital media, the Chinese diaspora in Japan interpret Chinese national identity and understand their relations to the Chinese nation. Guided by the theoretical review and current studies' emphasis on the fusion of online and offline realities, I present digital media as a continuum of physical and digitised life experiences, seeing it as a crucial tool for the Chinese diaspora to claim the membership in a transnationally imagined sphere of Chineseness.

The concept of online-offline continuum underlines the way that online and offline realms are continuous with and embedded in each other (Castles, 2017: 338), therefore investigating how the diaspora's everyday experiences can be seen as a continuous effort to respond to different digital and physical contexts. For example, Fangyi, a 27-year-old informant who migrated to Japan in 2014 takes pride in her diasporic life here in Japan. She often posts street view photos she took in Japan on WeChat and Weibo alongside some descriptive texts. Back in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic started to hit Japan, Fangyi shared several posts on her WeChat "Moments" page, expressing her feelings about some mainland Chinese tourists who insist on travelling to Japan despite the fact that they were already experiencing some fever before departure. She wrote in Japanese that: "It is precisely because of people like them that our (Chinese who residing in Japan) lives are getting harder and harder. The Japanese just couldn't trust us anymore, and this is not due to our actions…But of course, we are the ones who take all the blame". Together with this text, she posted a selfie with a sad face and attached a screenshot of the Japanese news reporting the incident of Chinese tourists. Around the same period, another of my informants, Dishu, a 22-year-old university student

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[82] Part of this Chapter is extracted from my published manuscript "Digital Technology, Physical Space, and the Notion of Belonging among Chinese Migrants in Japan" in *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 7(2020), 2020.

who received a caring package from the Chinese embassy in Japan, posted in Chinese on his WeChat "Moments" page that: "I'm so grateful that the motherland always has my back. It is during difficult times like this that you can really tell how lucky that we were to be born as Chinese." However, diverging from this narrative, later in 2020 after receiving the special cash payments from the Japanese government[83], Dishu stated on his "Moments" page that: "This (special cash payments) would never happen in China…I actually received cash, and I'm not even Japanese. This shows a difference. While our country keeps producing anti-Japanese TV series, Japan hands out cash to Chinese".

These narratives are good examples that show how one's online activities intersect with their offline experiences and other identity facets as explained above. Fangyi and Dishu's online posts reflect a particular configuration of not only cultural differences, but also the contradictory national ideologies between these two countries. Through these discourses, boundaries are drawn, leading to the construction of many different "us v.s. others" narratives. These narratives in turn encourage the Chinese diaspora to negotiate and reflect upon their positionalities differently among the homeland, the Japanese society and beyond when dealing with different contexts, either online or offline. Therefore, these examples also demonstrate the importance of understanding the Chinese diaspora's digital performance as a means to make sense of how they claim or disclaim their membership in the Chinese nation.

Before presenting the findings, in the following sections I first of all further explore the concept of online-offline continuum. I explain how this concept has emerged in tandem with the rise of digital technologies and clarify how I adopt this concept in this chapter and in the thesis. Because the focus of this chapter is to shed light on the Chinese diaspora's interpretation of the Chinese identity and their memberships in the Chinese nation, in the next

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[83] The "COVID-19 Special Fixed Benefit Payment" (新型コロナウイルス特別定額給付金) issued by the Japanese government.

section I then lay out a key concept that investigates the role of the media in shaping people's understanding of their memberships in the nation, which is the "imagined communities" proposed by Benedict Anderson. After reviewing key concepts, I then present some descriptive quantitative findings to illustrate the digital media usage behaviour among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, followed by some analyses of how they navigate through various digital-physical spaces. Following this, in the next section I take Anderson's "imagined communities" as an inspiration and discuss the Chinese diaspora's imagination of the Chinese nation and see how they relate to an imagined sphere of Chineseness. Finally, I conclude my key arguments in the Conclusion section.

5.1 From cyberspace to digital media: The online-offline dichotomy and continuum

An important point that deserves some clarification here is that while my objective is to investigate the way the Chinese diaspora use digital media to navigate through online and offline spaces, I do not consider the "online/ digital" and the "offline/ physical" as two separate realms. Similar to Mark Deuze's "we do not live with media, but in media" argument (2011: 137), in this thesis, I reject the online/offline dichotomy and instead underline that those two spaces are now intrinsically connected and complementary to each other. The way in which the digital space has been conceptualised differently by scholars is in parallel with the development of the internet technology. Initially, following the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s, the online space was seen as merely an "accessory" to the offline life in the field of media and digital diaspora studies. The online space, which used to be commonly described as the "cyberspace", was once understood as a distinct and separate realm from the physical world (Mitra, 1997; 2001; Rheingold, 1993; Everett, 2009). This perspective also produces some arguments that describe the digital space as utopic. For instance, activists like Barlow

(1996) and scholars like Rheingold (1993) see the "cyberspace" as the representation of a "new reality", the emergence of "a novel electronic frontier" (Rheingold, 1993), and an "escape" from the everyday, mundane social life, the "entrance" into a realm of progressive freedom and liberty (Barlow, 1996). In this context, the cyberspace was also portrayed as an egalitarian space where "all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth" (ibid). Two important research pieces that established the "cyberspace" as an idealised world that is free from discrimination and class are Howard Rheingold's (1994) book *Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*; and Sherry Turkle's (1997) *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. Both scholars investigated narratives and interactions produced by internet users of certain online communities, and argued that those users' online identities and interactions are free from the social constraint of "real life".

Interestingly, the "cyberspace" was not the only thing that studies back in the 1990s consider as detached from the "real life". While the online space was seen as the "new world of Cyberia" (Escobar, 1994), people who associate with this "Cyberia", such as the internet users, were also described as "natives of the Internet Islands" (Bakardjieva, 2005) who "live a life on the screen" and engaged with a completely different set of community rules, norms, values, and cultures (Porter, 1996; Markham, 1998). Internet users' computer-based interactions were therefore argued by scholars of being able to produce a distinct culture and "virtual community" that are free from the influence of the offline social, cultural and political contexts (Jenkins, 1992; Baym, 2000; Hannerz, 2003).

This online-offline dichotomous conceptualisation of the "cyberspace" started to attract criticisms since the early 2000s in tandem with the introduction of the World Wide Web. The so-called Web 2.0 Internet allows users to become active agents to voice out and be visible online (Thumim, 2012). Internet applications such as blogs, online forums and SNSs

transformed the way of our digital participation – a transformation from a mere information absorption to active participation and content production. In this context, scholars began to realise that individuals' online interactions are actually connected with their offline activities. The expression of how the online and the offline spaces are "connected" with each other was pinned down by Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000) in their book *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*. By situating their studies in a particular social context namely Trinidad Island, they found that Trinidad islanders' social and cultural practises "inside and outside the screen" are often associated with each other, hence arguing that the boundary between the online and offline field is rather blurred instead of a clear cut.

Some other empirical evidence that illustrate the fusion of online and offline spaces including Mitra's (2001) argument regarding how the cyberspace allows marginalised groups and racial minorities to produce alternative identities by giving them the chance to speak up and popularise their marginal voices; and Everett's (2009) 14-year research project that reveals how identities of African Americans are digitally manipulated by their cross-continental connections and interactions with their "fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts" (166). Why does the emergence of World Wide Web was able to inspire scholars to see the fusion between online and offline spaces? Bakardijieva (2008) argues that this was because of the simultaneous introduction of portable internet devices such as pagers (also known as beepers) and cell phones. With the popularisation of those digital tools, scholars were able to observe how the internet moves with the users when they are travelling across different physical spaces, hence starting to associate digital connectivity with human mobility.

Following this, Anna Everett (2009) pinned down the term "digital diaspora", by using it to refer to both the African diasporas as their connections and interactions reach across borders, and to the cyberspace since it is where these interactions take place. In this sense, the word "diaspora" to Everett evokes not only globalised and transnational forces (Bhabha,

1994: 245), but more importantly how these forces are mediated through the cyberspace, resurrecting stories that used to be overshadowed by the narratives produced by "the white man" (Everett, 2009). This observation of hers therefore challenges the earlier "utopian" illustration of the "cyberspace" that sees the digital territory as an equaliser to the offline world. Consequently, scholars started to ask: "are changing norms and expectations of presencing generating new types of political repertoire" (Couldry, 2012: 51)?

Apparently, the answer is yes. Similar to Anna Everett, many pioneering studies indicate that the prediction of Web 2.0 – self online representation, by default means that the digital realm is in tandem with the offline one. This means that the Internet is "an extension of life as it is, in all its dimensions, and all its modalities" (Castells, 2001: 118), and therefore the digital realm is organised in a way that is in parallel with offline space's deeply embedded hierarchical divisions (Leurs, 2015: 20). This point is particularly obvious when considering the online representation of ethnic minorities. Of interest is how marginalised diaspora communities with access to the cyberspace are sometimes metaphorically described as the "digital space invaders" (Leurs, 2015). The concept "digital space invaders" is adapted from Puwar's (2004) research on the presence of minorities in offline, institutionalised spaces. Puwar points out that because those spaces institutionally privilege the majority and are not "reserved" for the minorities, by entering into those spaces the minorities become "space invaders". For instance, she argues that women and racialised minorities could be seen as space invaders in elite organisations, such as government, civil service, judiciary, and police, because they are historically and/or conceptually excluded from those organisations (Puwar, 2004: 1). Taking her argument as an inspiration, Koen Leurs added a digital dimension to this metaphor, arguing that the online realm is just as gendered and racially institutionalised as the offline realm (2015). He observed how the young Moroccan-Dutch diaspora often experience ethnic discrimination in digital spaces such as online forums and video game platforms, therefore arguing that their

digital access to those ethnically white spaces can be seen as an "invasion" as those digital domains have not been reserved for them but for the ethnic majorities (Leurs, 2015).

Although I do not plan to adopt this metaphor in this research, during the fieldwork, it became apparent how racial discrimination and xenophobia are deeply embedded in the online space. For instance, my informant Dan, a 22-year-old art student, shared about her experience of being daunted on Twitter by some random Japanese users who said to her "what are you doing here on Twitter? You mainland Chinese should stay in the wall and lick the CCP's shoes". Some other informants, such as Toki, a gallery manager, shared with me the oddness she felt when seeing a Japanese online dating app for lesbians that racially categorises its user by Japanese, East Asians, South East Asians, Caucasians, Blacks, and Latinos. Their experiences illustrate how the online space might fuse with racism, discrimination, and stigmatisation, and how certain online spaces are cultivated based on the mainstream Japanese normative and ideology. In this context, their access to those spaces can be seen as an "invasion" in the sense that by default, they are not considered as the intended users of those online domains.

Now moving to the next phase of digital media development, after the introduction of portable digital devices such as smartphones and consequently smartphone-based social networking applications, the earlier argument of "in the digital place but out of the physical place" is further criticised for its online-offline separation character. Internet users' ability to communicate in an instant manner reminds digital scholars to be attentive to the digital-physical dichotomy, therefore shifting the analytical focus of diasporas' digital practises from a media-centric approach to a non-media centric approach (Candidatu et al., 2019). This shift means that the previous conceptualisation of the digital space as a distinct realm is now articulated in a more nuanced way, with arguments and empirical evidence focusing more on diasporas' online-offline experiences *as a whole*, hence seeing the digital space as a form of

mediated and mediatised every day, offline experiences (Morley and Robbins, 2002). The non-media centric approach opens up room to discuss how various forms of social relations can be constructed and maintained across distances by active digital users, as well as how we should understand the relationship between migration and digital media. Instead of focusing on portraying the digital space as a duplicate of the hierarchical offline world and seeing ethnic minority's online representation as "invading the digital space", this approach more effectively shows how diaspora individuals have now become "connected dots" (Diminescu, 2008), representing the virtual-real juncture (Miller and Slater, 2000) through their everyday relation-making across geographical distances (Morley and Robbins, 2002). In this way, they are seen as an "exceptional case of intense mediation" (Georgiou, 2011: 205), in the sense that they rely on mediated, digitalised mobility to link distant places, capitals and emotions. Throughout this thesis, the concept of the diaspora as "digitally mediated and connected" is debated and developed both theoretically and empirically, to explore what happens when the Chinese diaspora in Japan articulate identities and belongings between and across online-offline spaces.

5.2   Imagined community: Concept and critiques

As briefly explained in the Introduction chapter, one of the pioneers who investigated the role of the media in shaping people's understanding of their memberships to the nation is Benedict Anderson. His book *Imagined Communities* (1983) shows the power of media in allowing people who are physically remote to imagine the nation by giving them access to representations of identifiable characters, expressions, and activities, so they can form an emotional feeling of "closeness" and "connectedness" to the nation while abroad. Although the kind of media that I investigate in this thesis is different from Anderson's focus on print media, I take his concept of "imagined community" as inspiration and see how this modern medium

for information transmission and communication magnifies existing social ties and imaginaries, shaping the social and cultural imagination of the sphere of Chineseness among the Chinese diaspora in Japan.

At the same time, I am fully aware of the criticism of Anderson's approach to studying the imagination of the nation. For instance, some scholars argue that Anderson's discussion of the census, map, and museum in the second edition of *Imagined Communities* (2006) tends to over-emphasise the material underpinnings of cultural imagination and overlook the way in which ritual behaviours and symbols contribute to the construction of group affiliation (Breuilly, 2016). Indeed, various anthropological works, such as Turner (1967) and Cohen (1985), indicate a close relationship between rituals/symbols and the formation of existential meaning, emotional attachment to the nation, and sociality in a given community. However, from the perspective of investigating how a community is imagined and, through this imagination, given shape and solidarity (Calhoun, 2016: 12), I argue that the anthropology of ritual behaviours in social life does not undermine Anderson's argument about the importance of material underpinnings in the making of imagined communities. Although he uses print capitalism as an example of real material conditions to demonstrate that the imagination of community, nation, solidarity, and identity involves remembering or agreeing to forget shared symbols, he also indicates that the formation of a collective identity goes beyond communication, symbols, and public rituals (Anderson, 1992), and the material underpinnings do play a crucial role in mediating those symbols and rituals to people in remote locations. In this sense, I employ Anderson's idea of an imagined community to explore the circulation of shared symbols and emotions in the contemporary digital era and its impact on the Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging, while taking into account the influence of ritual behaviours, physical engagement, and the complex relationship between Japan and China, and exploring how those powers and dynamics are mediated and transmitted to the Chinese diaspora through digital media.

While understanding the diaspora's imagination of the nation investigates their self-positioning between home and host countries, such understanding has moved from a nation-state-centric form to arguments that emphasise transnational communities (Diminescu, 2008; Faist, 2000; Lash, 2002; Portes, 2010). Following the shift in analytical focus from assimilation and integration to multiculturalism and then to transnationalism (Castles, 2017: 335–336), emerging digital media, as well as means of transport, are increasingly considered crucial to these processes. By focusing on the diaspora's use of digital technology, scholars often perceive their sense of belonging as fluctuating or transnational, and the primary loyalty of the transnational community involves multiple cultural boundaries (Beck, 2000; Georgiou, 2013; Urry, 2000) or is based on a common ethnicity (Ang, 2004; Vertovec, 2003). The latter is extensively associated with discussions about globalisation, digital technology, and the Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging, with empirical evidence demonstrating that Chinese transnationalism and diasporic belonging are at the heart of their feelings about their co-ethnics in the homeland and destination societies (Sun, 2019; Wong, 2003). Although these studies do not necessarily aim to determine how to define "Chineseness" or what does "the sphere of Chineseness" entail, they illustrate that features of digital media could offer an alternative conceptualisation of "Chineseness" that accommodates transnationalism and produces a new sense of global connectivity among Chinese diasporic populations. Specifically, Dirlik (2004; 2013) and Duara (1993) highlight that globalisation and transnationalism allow Chinese populations in remote locations to claim membership in an imagined sphere of Chineseness that is defined by the Chinese ethnicity, the practise of the Chinese language as well as the historical and cultural heritages. In this sense, from a transnational perspective, the imagination of the sphere of Chineseness more closely resembles a mobile notion of homeness than one of disconnection and homelessness (Dirlik, 2013).

Although these studies are essential to clarifying the process of claiming membership

in the imagined sphere of Chineseness among diasporas in the digital era through a transnational lens, they have two problems. First, they give insufficient attention to the difference between transnational ways of being and belonging in a social field (Levitt and Schiller, 2006). While previous researchers have portrayed the formation of a sense of belonging by illustrating the Chinese diaspora's use of digital tools to engage with and maintain transnational social relations and practises (Ju et al., 2019; Sandel et al., 2019), they do not sufficiently demonstrate how these practises signal or enact identities with a particular conscious connection to a particular territory or multiple countries (Levitt and Schiller, 2006).

The second problem is related to the analytical focus on digital media. Although recent media and communication studies increasingly examine questions concerning the intersection between online and offline domains (Gillespie et al., 2014; Packer and Wiley, 2013; Willems, 2019), contemporary debates in migration studies over the impact of digital media on diasporas' transnational lives largely underestimate the interdependence of digital and physical spaces. It is important, in the information era, to study the process of building the Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging with a digital lens. However, by considering that the process of building a sense of belonging takes place almost exclusively in the digital domain, they fail to appreciate the increasing integration of the digital and physical spheres. Furthermore, some studies understand diasporas' sense of belonging by observing their use of one particular social media platform or digital device. This approach might overlook the fact that diasporas use different forms of digital technology in the course of their daily engagement with digital spaces (Ponsanesi and Leurs, 2014).

In this chapter, the analytical focus is the interdependence of the online and offline, digital and physical spaces, as well as the link between transnational digital practises and the sense of belonging signified by these practises. To this end, I approach digital media as a communicative environment in this chapter, rather than as a "catalogue of every proliferating

but discrete technologies" (Madianou and Miller, 2012: 169).

5.3   The Chinese diaspora in Japan and their media usage behaviour

Before I analyse the Chinese diaspora's online-offline engagement, it is important to first of all see how they actually use digital media in their everyday diasporic life. As discussed in the Chapter 2, in order to have a general understanding of the Chinese diaspora's media usage behaviour, I administered quantitative surveys to 413 survey respondents. Before presenting descriptive quantitative findings that illustrate the digital media usage behaviour among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, I first of all briefly explain the socio-demographic background of these survey participants.

As shown in Figure 5.1 below, the majority of the survey respondents were originally from Beijing (123), followed by those from Guangzhou (33) and Shangdong (31). While none

Figure 5.1 Overview of survey respondents' origin

of the survey respondents came from prefectures such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Heilongjiang,

the distribution of geographic origin of them may simply reflect the personal networks of the survey distributors rather than the profile of the Chinese diasporic population in Japan. Among the 413 survey respondents, 54.48% (225) of them are women and 45.52% (188) of them are men. None of the respondents chose the option 'Not Listed'.

Respondents to the survey were predominantly young. As shown in Figure 5.2 below, most of them (55.45%, 229) were in their 30-40s, and more than a third (37.77%, 156) were in their 20-30s. None of the survey respondents was over 60 years old at the time I conducted the survey.
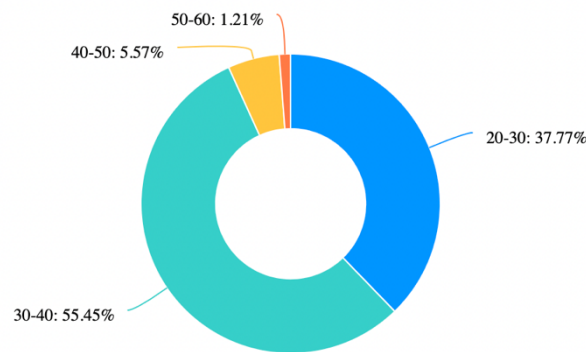
Figure 5.2 The survey respondents' age distribution

In terms of the level of educational attainment, most of the survey respondents have obtained a bachelor's degree (66.59%, 275). Among those who have a postgraduate degree, 116 of them (30.6%) obtained a master's degree and the remaining 12 (2.9%) respondents obtained a Ph.D. degree. Although most of the survey respondents were unmarried (52.78%) at the time of the survey, the gap between unmarried and married is very small, only about 5.56%.

In terms of their income levels and years of residence in Japan, the majority of the survey respondents' (58.35%, 241) monthly income falls within the range of 310,000 to 400,000 JPY. Following this, 33.17% of them (137) earn a monthly income between 410,000

and 500,000 JPY, 4.6% (19) of the respondents earn more than (or include) 510,000JPY per month, while only 16 respondents' (3.87%) monthly income levels are within the 200,000 to 300,000JPY range. Given that the average annual income level in Japan was 4.41 million JPY back in 2018 (NTA, 2019), which means that the average monthly income was 367,500JPY, it is therefore reasonable to assume that most of the survey respondents enjoy an economically comfortable life in Japan. As mentioned earlier, in terms of years of residence in Japan, I only recruited those who had lived in Japan for at least three years when I conducted the survey. In this context, the majority of the survey respondents are those who had lived in Japan for less than five years (41.65%, 172), closely followed by those who had lived in Japan for five to seven years (39.95%, 165). The remaining 76 respondents indicated that they had lived in Japan for more than seven years when the survey was conducted. In terms of respondents' citizenship status, only 74 of 413 (17.92%) of them are naturalised and have acquired the Japanese citizenship.

Expense categories	Subtotal	Proportion
Basic living expenses (housing, transport, food, clothing, and utility bills)	374	90.6%
Online learning, training and recreational activities (excluding online shopping)	249	60.3%
Offline learning, training and recreational activities (excluding shopping)	156	37.8%
Saving account	230	55.7%
Remittance	186	45.0%
Investment	163	39.5%
Health, beauty and medication	187	45.3%
Travelling (domestic & international)	145	35.1%
Child raring	130	31.5%
Pet and others	59	14.3%

Table 5.1 Major monthly expenditures

Following the items that enquire about the income level of the informants, I also asked about their monthly expenditures. As shown in Table 5.1 above, for this multiple choice question, while I was not surprised to see that "basic living expenses" was considered as a main expenditure category for more than 90% of the survey respondents, I was unexpected to learn that more than 60% of the respondents consider "online learning, training and recreational activities" as a main expenditure category. This also indicates the important role that online activities play in their daily diasporic experiences, especially given that I excluded "online shopping" from this category.

Next, in terms of the survey respondents' digital media usage behaviour, I first investigated their digital device ownership. In the survey, I define digital device as "Internet-based smart electronic devices. Typically, those devices include but are not limited to, desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, wearable smart devices such as Apple Watch, and internet-based gaming machines such as PlayStation and Xbox"[84]. It is worth noting that although the definition I provided in the survey may not be considered as comprehensive enough for academic readerships, instead of providing an exclusive and comprehensive definition, my aim here is to provide the survey respondents with a definition that is clear enough and more importantly, easy for them to understand. Based on the result shown in Table 5.2 below, it is

Number of digital devices you own	Subtotal	Proportion
I do not have any digital devices	0	0%
1	15	3.6%
2-3	141	34.1%
4-5	208	50.4%
6 and more	49	11.9%

Table 5.2 Digital device ownership

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[84] In Chinese: "此问卷中，'电子设备'均指基于互联网的智能媒体设备。通常，这些设备包括但不限于台式·笔记本·平板电脑、智慧型手机、可穿戴智能设备（如 Apple Watch）和基于互联网的游戏设备（如 PlayStation 和 Xbox）".

reasonable to argue that digital media has become an integrated part of the survey respondents' daily lives given the fact that they all own some kind of digital devices and the majority of them (50.4%) have more than four digital devices.

In order to understand the participants' digital device ownership, in the following question I asked them to choose devices that they own from specifically six types of digital devices, namely desktop, laptop, smartphone, tablet, wearable digital device, as well as Internet-based gaming device (hereinafter referred to as gaming). I chose these six types of digital device because I referred to the *2018 White Paper on Information and Communication* published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. In the White Paper, MIC included five out of six types of digital devices as I listed above, except for "laptop", as this type is merged with "desktop" and collectively referred to as "パソコン(pasokon)". By enquiring about the Chinese diaspora's ownership of these six particular types of digital device, I would therefore be able to compare the Chinese diasporic population with local Japanese citizens.
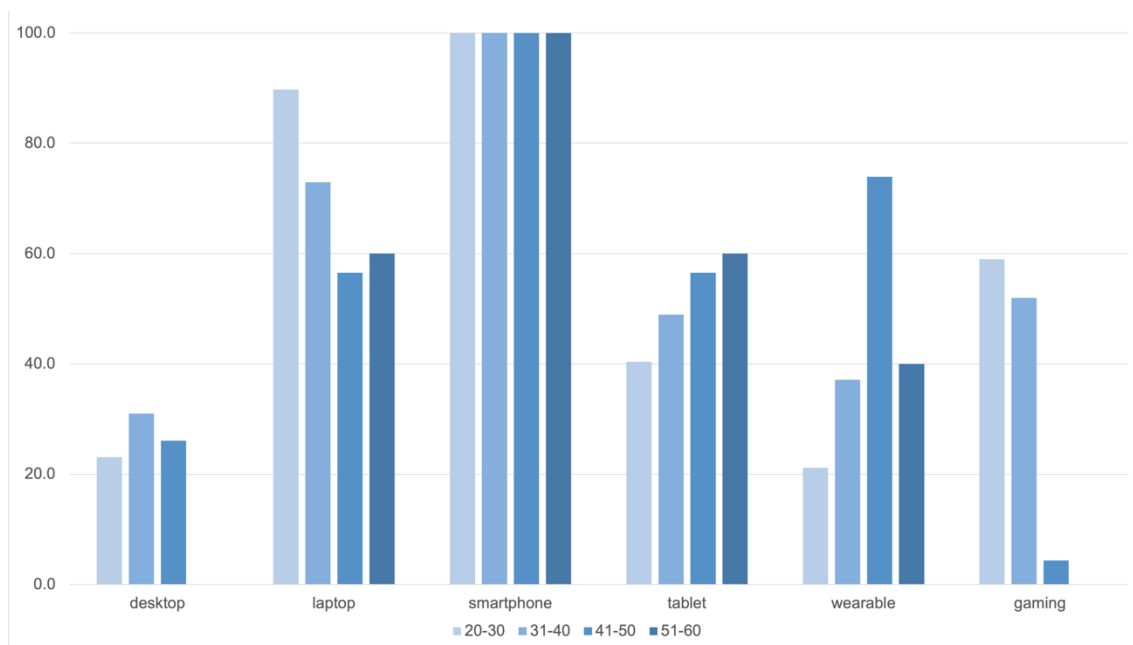
Figure 5.3 Digital device ownership rate by age group among the survey participants

Note: There are only three bars for 'desktop' and 'gaming' as none of the participants aged 50 to 60 reported owning those devices.

The data presented in Figure 5.3 above show a rather interesting ownership distribution

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among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. First of all, apart from the category of "tablet" and "gaming", it is clear that the relationship between digital device ownership and age is not linear. This result is quite different from what is reported in the *Blue Book of New Media – Annual Report on the Development of New Media in China No.12 (2021)* – in which it suggests a negative association between digital device ownership and age among mainland Chinese who reside in China. What I have found so far via the survey corresponds to some scholars' claim on the diaspora's special affection for the Internet in the sense that those digital technologies are often the essential for them to maintain intimacy and transnational familial relationships (Francisco, 2015), as well as to receive and/or offer social support within the Chinese diaspora communities (Chen and Choi, 2011). In addition, if we overlook the gaming device category as the gaming devices are not traditionally considered as a key communication channel for the diaspora, what we can also see is the Chinese diaspora preference over portable compared to non-portable digital devices, such as the desktop computer. For instance, among the survey respondents who age 20-30, while only 23.1% of them have a desktop computer, nine in ten of them (89.7%) own a laptop. Furthermore, although none of the 51-60 age group respondents owns a desktop computer, 60% of them own a laptop, and this age group has the highest tablet device ownership rate as well as a 100% smartphone ownership rate, indicating that their null desktop ownership rate does not mean that they are digitally disconnected but their preference of being constantly connected both at home and while on the move. Similarly, 41-50 age group's relatively low in desktop but high in wearable device ownership rate as well as 31-40 age group's low in tablet and wearable but high in laptop and desktop ownership rate illustrate not only the heterogeneity among the Chinese diasporic community in terms of the digital media usage behaviour, but also the fact that digital connectivity has become an inseparable part of their lives – they just have different preferences in terms of the types of digital device that they use to maintain such digital connectivity.

From the above analysis, while we can see the wide spread of digital device ownership among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, it is also worth situating the survey findings within a larger social context, for instance, by comparing it with the digital device ownership among Japanese citizens. To retrieve the data, I mainly refer to the annually published *White Paper on Information and Communication* by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. For instance, in its report for the year 2021 (MIC, 2021), MIC indicates that among its 31,958 surveyed local Japanese citizens, 83.4% of them own at least one electronic device. However, it is worth to mention that in the MIC White Paper series, the so called 'electronic device' also includes electronic tools such as fixed-line telephone, FAX, mobile phone, music player, and television. If we exclude those "non-smart" devices from the data pool, then only 73.8% of the surveyed population own a digital device, as indicated in Table. 4-2-1-8 in Section 2 of year 2021's *White Paper* (MIC, 2021). Although the *White Paper* does not have data that illustrate the number of electronic/digital devices that its participants own, it is clear that compared to local Japanese citizens, the Chinese diaspora have a much higher ownership rate – since no survey respondents chose the option "I do not have any digital devices" (as indicated in Table 5.2), it means that the surveyed group has a 100% ownership rate.

To further observe the difference in terms of digital device ownership rate between the Chinese diaspora and Japanese citizens, I visualised the data in Figure 5.4[85] below. Once again, if we overlook the gaming device category, then the most significant difference is regarding the research participants' desktop computer's ownership rate. Although both the Chinese diaspora and Japanese citizen participants share a similar rate in terms of smartphone and tablet ownership, the latter has a much higher desktop computer ownership rate compared to the former, while the former's wearable device ownership rate is higher than

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[85] In Figure 5.4, I removed the 'laptop' category for the sake of comparison as MIC's 2018 White Paper (and White Papers of other years) does not have this category in their data pool.

the latter for all age groups. Therefore, this finding potentially demonstrates a deeper

distribution rate of portable digital devices among the Chinese diaspora in Japan compared to
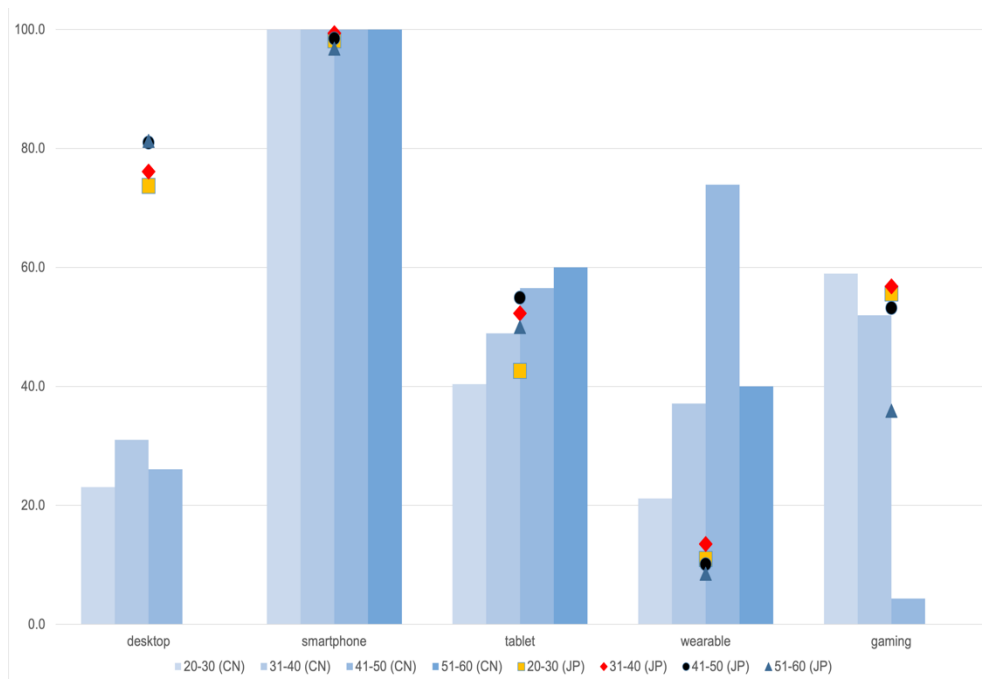
Figure 5.4 Digital device ownership between Chinese diasporas and
Japanese citizens by age groups
Source that shows Japanese citizen's digital device ownership rate by age groups: see (MIC,
2021: 306-307).

local citizens.

Next, in order to better understand the role that digital media play in survey participants'

daily experiences, I inquired about the usage frequency of different types of digital applications.

I came up with eight categories of digital applications and asked the survey participants to

choose the ones they use most frequently in their daily lives, and the result is shown in Figure

5.5 below.

Unexpectedly, the survey results show that the Chinese diaspora in Japan most

frequently turn to digital applications that are mainly designed for online shopping, such as

Amazon, Qoo10, Taobao and AliExpress. While I assumed that applications for social

networking and interpersonal communication such as SNSs would be the most frequently used
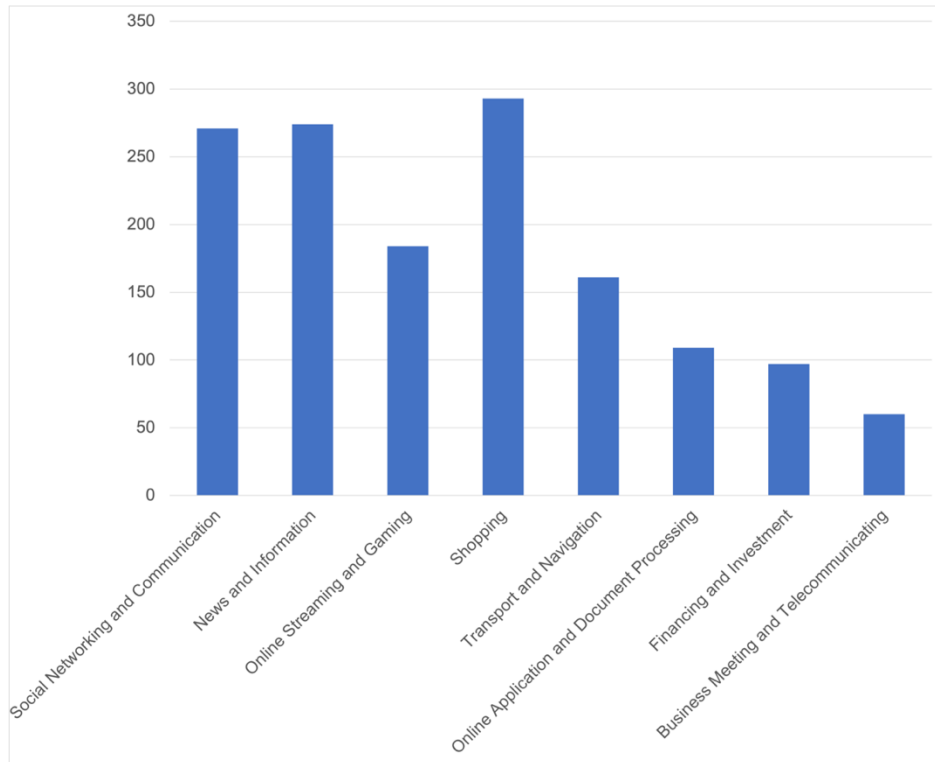
Figure 5.5 Usage frequencies of eight types of digital applications
among Chinese diasporas in Japan

applications for the survey respondents, this category was only selected by 271 of them

(65.62%[86]), which ranks third, closely follows the "News and Information" category (66.34%,

274). Other popular application categories include "Online Streaming and Gaming" (44.55%,

184), "Transport and Navigation" (38.98%, 161), and "Online Application and Document

Processing" (26.39%, 109), whereas two categories namely "Financing and Investment"

(23.49%, 97) and "Business Meeting and Telecommuting" (14.53%, 60) were the least selected

options.

Finally, I also asked them about social networking and communication applications that

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[86] In terms of how I calculate the percentage of multiple-choice survey questions: the percentage of a certain option equals to the number of times that the option was selected by the respondents divided by the number of valid surveys collected. For instance, for this survey research project, 413 respondents answered the survey question "Which of the following types of application do you use most frequently on a daily basis?", and 271 of them chose the option "Shopping". Therefore, the percentage of respondents who chose this option will be 271/413 = 0.6562 = 65.62%. The meaning of this percentage is the proportion of the number of times the option was selected out of the number of people who completed the survey. Therefore, for multiple-choice questions, the percentages may add up to more than 100%.

they frequently use on a daily basis as shown in Table 5.3 below. Given that more than 95% of the survey respondents use WeChat frequently, this data shows the importance of both pre-migration social ties as well as relations with other Chinese diasporas established post-migration to the research participants. This argument can be further backed up if we compare the survey data between WeChat and LINE – the most popular communication application among local Japanese citizens[87] – it is clear that the majority of the Chinese diaspora may consider themselves to be more closely connected with the homeland and the local Chinese diasporic community.

Applications	Subtotal	Proportion
WeChat	396	95.88%
QQ	195	47.22%
Weibo	302	73.12%
Facebook	70	16.95%
Twitter	81	19.61%
LINE	137	33.17%
Kakao Talk	46	11.14%
WhatsApp	4	0.97%

Table 5.3 Frequently used social networking and communication applications among Chinese diasporas in Japan

The above quantitative data, while descriptive, indeed illustrate the fact that for many Chinese diaspora in Japan, digital media and Chinese ethnic media play an important role in their lives in Japan. Following this, the next section reports on qualitative interview findings and presents the 'subjective truth' that each interviewee holds in terms of the use of digital media.

5.4 Digital media and the transnational way of being among the Chinese diaspora in Japan

The Chinese diaspora in Japan present a paradigmatic example of how divergent digital media are comprehensively used to create a transnational social field that connects not only home

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[87] For details, see ICPI (2021).

and host societies but also the local and the global, in which they actively seek links with their co-ethnics both in their local communities and elsewhere in the world. In this way, the use of digital media is an action that gives them the agency to actively cultivate short- and long-distance relationships that are valuable for the identification and formation of a transnationally imagined sphere of Chineseness that is subject to shared emotions and co-ethnicity. For instance, forty-year-old Qinhui, who has lived in Japan since the 1990s and works as a banker, was one of many who indicated that his daily use of digital media is multi-dimensional. Qinhui uses email for business communication, WeChat to maintain contact with his contacts in China, and LINE for "everyday chitchat" with his Japanese friends, reads news on his iPad, and uses online banking and Google Translate on his iPhone for business. He also employs the remote surveillance system on his computer to ensure that his home is secure while he is travelling. Qinhui offers an illustration of the Chinese diaspora making use of a range of digital tools in his daily practice in different social and emotional contexts (Madianou and Miller, 2012), and this was echoed by other research participants. For example, Yuxuan, a twenty-eight-year-old entrepreneur, explained:

> "I … definitely feel that the world today is totally digitised. I use various [digital] tools seamlessly and simultaneously, like email, video calls, and news feeds. … What cannot be achieved with one app can always be accomplished with other apps".

All the interviewees indicated that they use digital media daily for various purposes, including communications and remittances, which is unsurprising, given that 78.4% of Chinese diasporas in Japan employ digital media on a daily basis (KDDI Research Institute, 2005; MIC, 2016b). What is more noteworthy is that their overseas life experience is rearticulated in a broader, global context based on the recognition of fellow Chinese communities in East Asia and beyond. The life story of Chinese diasporas living farther afield, for instance, in East Asian regions, including Hong Kong, is often generalised and integrated into the narratives of those

who were interviewed, leading to the construction of a collectively interpreted Chinese identity that extends beyond the homeland and destination country to multiple territories. For example, Xuefen, a forty-seven-year-old businesswoman who has lived in Japan for 26 years, discussed her use of various social media platforms (i.e. Instagram and Weibo), and she touched on the ongoing 2019-20 Hong Kong protests against the Extradition Law Amendment Bill (USCC 2019). She expressed her sympathy for the Chinese diasporas and their children living in Hong Kong:

> "I have been following news about the protest on Weibo, but I didn't know how disastrous the situation is, until I saw pictures on Instagram. It seems as if when protesters find someone who is not a local citizen but a migrant from mainland China, they will intolerably insult that person … even a child. I feel so bad for them [mainlanders] because of how they were treated. As an overseas Chinese from the mainland just like them, their experiences really remind me about how we [Chinese diasporas in Japan] were severely discriminated against by right-wing Japanese nationalists back in the 1990s".

Xuefen's experience not only reveals the impact of digital media on the Chinese diaspora's sense of space but also illustrates how these technologies allow them to develop internalised grievances that are triggered by the negative experiences of fellow overseas Chinese in other regions. For instance, Peng, a forty-two-year-old technical director, said of the Chinese diaspora in the US who experienced the 2018 Alaska earthquake:

> "Their struggles after the earthquake, like the loss of loved ones or that completely puzzled feeling, really reminds me of what I experienced during the 2011 Tohoku earthquake—the feeling that we are always waiting for help but don't know who's going to help us. … It's as if I can actually feel their real sense of loneliness".

Similarly, twenty-five-year-old Yuanjie expressed sympathy for the Chinese diaspora in France who suffered because of the 2018 Yellow Vest movement[88]: "It's very hard to explain why I feel this way, but when I see their suffering or outrage, violence, and resentment, I feel as if I am the one hurt by those rioters". The compassion expressed by the interviewees reveals that, despite their diverse backgrounds, such as age, gender, occupation, and years of residence in Japan, they can integrate the narratives and experiences of other Chinese groups in distant locations, claiming a shared identity of "overseas Chinese from the mainland" based on empathy. To some extent, the way they make this claim is in tandem with CCP's articulation of the sphere of Chineseness as analysed in the previous chapter, that this sphere is the default home of anyone with ethnic Chinese roots regardless of their diverse social backgrounds and geographic localities, and members of this sphere all share some collectively experienced emotions and memories. In this sense, Xuefen, Peng and Yuanjie's claim of a collectively manifested Chinese identity can be perceived as their emotional attachment to the sphere of Chineseness. They are granted the right to access to this sphere by possessing recognisable and interchangeable diasporic experiences to which globally dispersed Chinese diaspora can commonly relate, despite living in different places, having different cultural practises, and becoming accustomed to different local conditions (Dirlik, 2013). The interviews help to consolidate this argument. When describing injustice and hardship experienced by the Chinese diaspora in other regions, the interviewees rarely note the differences among Chinese diasporic communities depending on "where they are based"; rather, the membership in the sphere of Chineseness is based on "where they are from". Hence, their identification is undifferentiated by residence in Japan, Hong Kong, the US, or France; instead, they speak

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[88] The Yellow Vest movement that began in France in October 2018 was initially motivated by rising fuel prices and a high cost of living, and later on widened to cover issues related to democracy, social and fiscal justice. Mass demonstrations began in November 2018, and the protests have involved the blocking of roads and fuel depots, some of which developed into major riots (Fansten, Le Devin and Halissat, 2018).

only of "Chinese from the mainland". Therefore, while we can argue that the Chinese diaspora's claim of a collectively interpreted identity marks the simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of the Chinese nation (Duara, 1993), such process is essentially the construction of a sphere of Chineseness – something that is transnational although ethnically defined, something that is in parallel to the Chineseness articulated by the Party-state.

Furthermore, if we consider the way the informants claim membership in this transnational Chineseness sphere in relation to existing studies that illuminate the struggle that the Chinese diaspora in Japan often experience in forming a stable sense of belonging[89], to a certain degree we can argue that this ethnicity-based membership which is reinforced through shared diasporic experiences of struggle, discrimination, and violence is an alternative way for many of them to make sense of their positioning in the Japanese society as Chinese. Instead of claiming their membership in the homeland using a Chinese identity themed by Sino-Japanese history and anti-Japanese sentiment, for many of them, the Chinese ethnicity serves as a less politicised and a rather stable means to claim membership as a part of this sphere of Chineseness. In this sense, the sphere of Chineseness articulated by the Chinese diaspora in Japan is rather different from the way the CCP articulates it given that the key element that binds this sphere is the shared emotions instead of the anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiment. For many of them, using digital media allows them to steer by the CCP's "us v.s. others" political discourse that is rooted in a particular Sino-Japanese history, which means that for them, being part of the anti-Japanese Chinese nation actually does not have much to do with its anti-Japanese essence.

5.5   Imagined sphere of Chineseness and the Chinese diaspora's notion of

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[89] For example, see He (2017).

belonging

As discussed earlier, when interviewees such as Xuefen and Peng indicate an identification with the Chinese diaspora elsewhere, the basis of this identification is often events that took place in physical spaces, which illustrates the importance of interaction between digital media and physical spaces for understanding the Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging through a transnational lens. However, different from them, other narratives show that experiences derived from the online-offline fusion do not necessarily lead to a sense of belonging to the sphere of Chineseness. For instance, twenty-four-year-old Mili, who is originally from Shanghai and initially migrated to Tokyo when she was fifteen years old for secondary education and now lives in Osaka for postgraduate study, initially indicated that whereas divergent "modern technologies" such as video calls, international banking, and remittances enable her to feel connected with family members back home, the similar physical environments of Osaka and Shanghai, such as "the weather, the landscape and the Tosabori-gawa"[90], help her to relate to her previous life in the homeland and adopt a transnational identity, in which she "can feel at home while living abroad". However, when Mili used the word "home" she was referring to Osaka more than Tokyo, as she explains that "the two cities [Tokyo and Shanghai] are just so different. … So I [resided] in Tokyo, but never really *lived* there". Although Mili could enact transnational ways of being in both cities using digital media, her sense of belonging differentiated the immediate physical environments in which she lived. Her experiences resonate with what Coates (2019) observed among his Chinese informants in Japan: they were "at home in the world". For the Chinese diaspora, a sense of "belonging" entails much more than just "being" in a "place or group"; rather, it encompasses feeling "the processes that constitute dwelling" (Coates, 2019: 471–473) through their daily actions and interactions, both

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[90] Tosabori-gawa is a waterway that flows along the south shore of Nakanoshima, an island area in northern Osaka.

online and offline. In this case, the physical locality is a key factor in Mili's feeling that she belongs, thus validating her overseas life as meaningful and a point of reference, rather than as simply being physically located in a place.

Castles (2017) notes that existing debates on the impact of digital media on diasporas' notions of belonging often suggest that belonging to a nation-state has been replaced by a sense of attachment to a transnational digital space. This emphasises the relevance of digital media to the construction of a sense of belonging. However, my interviews highlight the importance of a continuum between digital media and physical spaces, with both mutually contributing to the formation of a sense of belonging among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. Another example comes from fifty-two-year-old Jiayong, who migrated to Japan 20 years ago and works as a real estate broker. He describes the tension as follows:

"A part of my soul reminds me about my Chinese roots every time I chat with my family and friends back in China. … I feel as if chatting with them … enables me to still be a Chinese. [However,] I also constantly realise the difference between those who are back home and me… For instance, when I'm walking in the street and see all these 'welcome Chinese visitors' and 'discount for Alipay payment' signs, I know I'm no longer part of the country [China]".

When asked why those signs made him feel separate from China, Jiayong elaborates:

"Because [those signs are] hard evidence. Apparently, I'm not a Chinese visitor because my entire life is here [in Tokyo], nor do I use Alipay. … I wasn't even able to register an account [on Alipay] because I don't have a Chinese phone number or a Chinese bank account. … It's hard to tell which side I belong to—China or Japan".

Jiayong's case illustrates that whereas daily communication with those back home using digital media allows him to acess the sphere of Chineseness where he can "engage in

regular imagining of being Chinese" (Sun, 2019: 170), the physical surroundings act as a constant reminder that the fulcrum of daily life is in the host society: where Jiayong is physically located is the material basis for negotiating his digitised diasporic experience.

Furthermore, Jiayong finds it "hard to tell" which nation-state dominates his sense of belonging, which indicates that digital media alone are insufficient for explaining how a sense of belonging is constructed by contemporary the Chinese diaspora in Japan, precisely because their digitised everyday lives are not only empowered by technologies but also are coupled with "an ongoing material reality" (Ponsanesi and Leurs, 2014: 11). Selective engagement with the continuum of the online and offline environments by the Chinese diaspora in Japan illustrates that the sense of belonging can be based on the context or situation, so it is unattached to any particular sphere or nation-state. This argument is confirmed by many of the interviewees. For instance, Nanxing, a twenty-two-year-old university student who migrated to Japan with her parents in 2003, describes the key role of offline engagement:

> "I was born in Beijing…Now every time I go back, I need to use the navigation app, otherwise I will get lost…And it's funny that sometimes when my Japanese friends ask me about the city, I turn to my Chinese friends back home…And, yes, in terms of my passport, I'm still Chinese, but it's very hard to be related to places that you barely know about".

Nanxing's use of a map application to navigate her hometown illustrates the interdependence of digital media and spaces; this particular online-offline intersection validates her lack of familiarity with her homeland and thereby discourages a sense of belonging to it. At the same time, it also reveals that her digital engagement in transnational activities, such as communicating with both Japanese and Chinese contacts, does not necessarily lead to the construction of a sense of belonging to the supposedly transnational sphere of Chineseness.

The stories of Jiayong and Nanxing show that, for them, the use of digital media and the formation of an attachment to a particular nation-state or transnational social field is not linear or sequential, because of the impact of physical spaces. Rather, their sense of belonging oscillates between the home and host countries, depending on the situation and context.

Moreover, the interviewees' experiences indicate the multi-dimensionality of the Chinese diaspora's adoption of digital technology and its consequences. As demonstrated above, although diasporas use different types of digital media in their transnational lives, doing so triggers multiple understandings of the sense of belonging. This may be due to differences in the functionality, affordance, and accessibility of technologies and in many ways can be articulated as how diasporas perform different senses of belonging on various technological platforms, based on the physical environment in they are located. Hence, viewed through the lens of digital media, the sense of belonging among the Chinese diaspora in Japan should be interpreted with a focus on the interrelation between digital spaces and daily practises, emphasising the relevance of both online and offline environments. Although digital media allow the Chinese diaspora to continue "being Chinese" while performing transnationally through their engagement with the collectively imagined sphere of Chineseness, physical spaces enable them to validate their digital experiences and (re)confirm their sense of belonging, even when it is uncertain.

5.6   Conclusion

By focusing on the interaction between digital media and physical spaces, this chapter puts the Chinese diaspora in Japan into a transnational context and reveals how they use digital media to carry out various online and offline engagements, as well as the role of these practises in claiming and understanding their membership in the transnationally and collectively imagined sphere of Chineseness. The qualitative evidence presented in this

chapter indicates that the daily use of digital media allows individuals to claim a collectively manifested Chinese national identity on a transnational stage, feeling a sense of solidarity with fellow Chinese diaspora residing in other countries and regions. In this sense, digital media allow the Chinese diaspora to internalise and domesticate the narratives of other globally dispersed Chinese communities, making sense of the "shared experience of grievance and injustice" in the construction of a "shared imagination" of "we" (Tsagarousianou, 2019: 91). In effect, "we are all overseas Chinese from the mainland".

In this sense, I argue that when speaking of the Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging from a transnational perspective, this notion should be expected to be polyphonic and characterised by collectively interpreted experiences. However, the transnational imagined sphere of Chineseness constructed by the Chinese diaspora in Japan through their adoption of digital media remains overwhelmingly focused on their common ethnicity and is bound together by depoliticised emotions and sentiments. Therefore, the Chineseness sphere imagined by the Chinese diaspora in Japan is both similar to and different from the sphere of Chineseness articulated by the Chinese nation. They are similar in the sense that both spheres can be perceived as a "revalorisation of exclusionary ethnic identity" (Castles, 2017: 344), which is also known as "transnational nationalism" in Ang's (2004) words. However, they are also different in the sense that the anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiment, a core element of the CCP's articulation of Chineseness, has less of a defining power over the Chineseness sphere imagined by the informants. In this way, feeling Chinese has less to do with seeing Japan as China's "others", and this helps to untangle the Chinese diaspora in Japan from the CCP's national identity construction strategy.

At the same time, although the Chinese diaspora in Japan are able to enjoy a transnational way of being Chinese by engaging with the digitally mediated and transnationally imagined sphere of Chineseness, this does not necessarily mean that they can for a

transnational sense of belonging to this sphere. Instead, their sense of belonging remains predominantly influenced by physical spaces, with the Chinese diaspora's transnational, diasporic experience made up of a continuum of online and offline interactions. While digital media allow them to narrate their sense of belonging as rooted in the homeland, host society, or somewhere in between, the physical environment that they see and experience is a source of validation and confirmation of their sense of belonging. Therefore, although the research participants may be involved in various transnational ways of "being", this engagement does not necessarily lead to a transnational sense of belonging. The examples presented in this chapter do not show the "patterns" or "directions" in which digital media, in combination with the physical environment, promote a sense of belonging among the Chinese diaspora in a particular social field. Rather, these examples support the view in this thesis that, for the Chinese diaspora in Japan, the sense of belonging is an outcome of the online-offline fusion, which is negotiated and articulated differently under different circumstances for different individuals. Specifically, it is constituted relationally across platforms, territories, and spaces, and therefore should not be understood as something that is fixed or static.

These findings first of all illuminate how the Chinese diaspora in Japan try to claim a membership in the sphere of Chineseness. In relation to what I have discussed earlier that this Chineseness sphere is essentially a deterritorialised Chinese nation that is held up by commonly relatable social traits and diasporic experiences such as ethnicity, discrimination and marginality, we can see that digital media provide the Chinese diaspora a solution to claim a de-politicised membership in this ethno-centric sphere. However, the empirical evidence presented in this chapter also show their struggle of asserting a rather firm position within this transnational sphere, as the daily offline experience serves as a constant reminder to them that they are no longer familiar with this Chinese community. Consequently, many of them feel "hard to tell" which side they belong to, revealing a sense of lack of position both within

Japanese society and in the Chineseness sphere.

In this sense, my findings indicate the importance of altering the migration policy framework to correspond with diasporas' increasing involvement in transnational practises and new notions of belonging. The experience of the Chinese diaspora in Japan illustrates that, from a transnational perspective, host country engagement and enduring homeland ties are not incompatible (Levitt, 2004), although most Asian countries, including Japan and China, still fail to institutionally recognise diasporas' multiple affiliations and senses of belonging (Castles, 2017). Citizenship is still considered in a relatively static manner, based on the nation-state, and citizens have common cultural characteristics, ethnic homogeneity, and a shared heritage; diasporas in these countries are expected to adapt or assimilate to them (Castles and Davidson, 2000). This conflicts with the reality that diasporas live transnational and multi-dimensional lives, which need to be taken into consideration in future institutional frameworks in Japan and China. Legal recognition of dual citizenship, for example, would give diasporas more freedom to negotiate their transnational social ties.

Although such transnational frameworks could create new challenges regarding the rights and responsibilities of being transnational, such as determining which states are responsible for diasporas' social welfare and political and civic engagement, policy makers should nevertheless recognise that diasporas, like the local citizens, need "political stability, economic prosperity and social well-being in their place of residence" (Breton and Reitz, 2003: 228), with protection of their safety and dignity. In this sense, although this chapter focuses on the Chinese diaspora in Japan and the argument is based on findings from a qualitative project that is limited in scale, which creates some specificity, the analytical lens of transnationalism and online/offline interaction could apply to other diaspora populations. The examples presented in this research should not be viewed merely as a case study, as the use of digital media in relation to physical spaces is not a peculiarity or culturally unique behaviour by the

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Chinese diaspora in Japan but, rather, a common part of the digitised life for many diaspora and non-diaspora populations. This chapter sheds light on how diasporas, as transnational actors, actively make connections, form networks, and plant roots, through their engagement with daily digitised lives in an increasingly globalised society.

Chapter 6   "I'm Chinese – but not your typical, average Chinese": The Chinese diaspora and their identities manifested online[91]

Following previous chapters that demonstrate how online/offline social practises and mediated ideologies contribute to the construction of a collectively imagined and ethnically defined Chineseness sphere, this chapter demonstrates how this sphere should be understood in a rather nuanced way. By looking at the identity performance of the Chinese diaspora in a particular form of digital social networking tool, namely WeChat, my aim is to explore how this diaspora population articulates Chineseness through the use of digital media.

Although I indicated in the Introduction chapter that when studying the diaspora's digital engagements, one should focus on how they interact with the digital "realm" instead of with certain digital "platforms", I decided to focus on the particular platform of WeChat because I want to manifest how digital functionalities and technological affordance have a significant shaping power on the Chinese diaspora's identity construction process. By focusing on two specific functionalities of WeChat namely "Individual Chat" and "Moments", I investigate how they shape the way the Chinese diaspora negotiate their sense of belonging and see how the notion of "homeland" – as a key factor in the formation of diasporic belonging and agency – is constructed and interpreted by diasporas through their daily interactions with those left-behind in the WeChat-based digital realm.

Therefore, in this chapter, I see "Individual Chat" and "Moments" functions as key tools for the Chinese diaspora to negotiate their "rights" to the sphere of Chineseness. These functions provide them with the leverage to strategically perform a Chinese national identity in a way that best represents their personal interests in a particular "Individual Chat", "Moments",

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[91] Part of this section is extracted from my published manuscript titled "Building a life on the soil of the ultimate other: WeChat and belonging among Chinese migrants in Japan" in Wanning Sun and Haiqing Yu ed., *WeChat and the Chinese Diaspora: Digital Transnationalism in the Era of China's Rise*, published in 2022 by Routledge in London. Some contents were modified, and I added some new empirical evidence.

or context. In this way, they actively divide their notions of belonging between multiple temporal and spatial poles, which reflect their ideals of diasporic lives that are informed by and then reproduced through every communication with left-behind contacts. Therefore, just as the title of this chapter underlies, through those functions, the Chinese diaspora are able to be embedded in the digital sphere of Chineseness without firmly identifying with particular labels or cultural politics associated with this field.

Before proceeding to the discussion, I first of all explain more about the rationale for choosing WeChat, and specifically, its "Individual Chat" and "Moments" functions as sites of research. Choosing a digital media platform as a field site is a commonly adopted research methodology in media ethnography. However, this method is criticised for its liminality in two ways. Firstly, by observing one's social interaction within a single digital field, the researcher may risk overlooking the importance of not bounding a community to a single territory (Marcus, 1995; Hannerz, 2003). Secondly, it is well acknowledged that for most digital users, their online interactions often across a variety of platforms, therefore, take place in a "digital repertoire" instead of based on one particular platform. Therefore, in the following section, I shall explain how I deal with those criticisms and why choosing WeChat as a field site serves the interest of this research the best.

Secondly, I reflect on the way I access those field sites. In this section, I explain in detail the functionalities of "Individual Chat" and "Moments" as well as my research ethics considerations when accessing and reporting the findings collected from these two sites. In the rest of this chapter, I then present empirical findings and discuss the construction process of belonging among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. I manifest how this belonging construction process should be understood in the context of the complex Sino-Japanese relations and how the Chinese nation's national identity construction strategies are based on the "us v.s. others" sentiment that sees Japan as China's "ultimate other". The spread of digital media such as

WeChat means not only the establishment of new transnational links between these two countries, but also the mediation of conflicting Sino-Japanese ideologies and political narratives through these links. This, while it is the reason why I see the Chinese diaspora's belonging construction as a "process of strategic negotiation", also gives rise to the urgent empirical question of how they negotiate different—sometimes conflicting—ideologies and national imaginaries through the use of digital media in order to justify their decision to migrate to Japan and make sense of their diasporic lives in Japan. Although this process of negotiation may not be unique to the Chinese diaspora who live in Japan, for instance, those who live in the United States and Australia may also need to negotiate such conflicts due to their current geopolitical positioning *vis-à-vis* China, their uniqueness is that in addition to Sino-Japanese geopolitical powers, they also need to reckon with heavy historical baggage between these two countries. Furthermore, compared to other popular destination countries among the Chinese diaspora, Japan is a unique social field for studying the Chinese diaspora in the sense that it refuses to identify itself politically as an immigration country and institutionally excludes diasporas in its policy framework (Liu-Farrer, 2018). All these factors therefore encouraged me to look at how the Chinese diaspora in Japan negotiate both local and transnational socio-cultural, as well as political conditions in the space of WeChat.

6.1   Media ethnography and choosing WeChat as a media ethnographic site

As mentioned in Chapter 2, following the emergence of Web 2.0, social media, smartphones and wireless networks in the latter half of the 2000s and early 2010s, media ethnography was introduced in order to make sense of how individuals' "everyday reality" is assembled by multiple online and offline sites (Deuze, 2006). For example, researchers such as boyd (2011), Lorenzana (2016) and Kok and Rogers (2017) analyse informants' digital engagements by observing their online activities on multiple social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter,

blogs, and discussion groups. In order to associate those online activities with their informants' offline social lives, they complemented their analysis of informants' online activities with surveys and interviews that enquire about their offline diasporic experiences. Similarly, researchers such as Szulc (2012) and Dhoest (2016) combine textual and content analysis in their studies with qualitative methods such as in-depth interview and in-situ observation to explore queer diasporas' everyday experiences post migration. These studies not only illustrate how to do fieldwork through and with digital media to make sense of digitally mediated everyday practises, but also indicate the importance of combining multiple ethnographic methods to observe diasporas' life experiences in a more comprehensive way.

These existing studies also serve as inspiration for me when considering the methodologies that I should adopt for this research project. I therefore decided to choose a digital site for ethnographic observation, and interpret the collected ethnographic data together with empirical evidence acquired using other methodologies such as online survey and face-to-face in-depth interviews. Given that my research subject is the Chinese diaspora in Japan, I naturally think about using WeChat – arguably the most popular social media application among the Chinese diaspora (Sun and Yu, 2022: 4) – as the ethnographic observation site. Before making up my mind to use WeChat for this research, I firstly conducted a quantitative survey to see how 'popular' this digital platform is among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, so I can judge whether WeChat is the most suitable digital media to conduct media ethnographic observations. Therefore, in the following sections, I shall share the survey findings and explain the functionalities of WeChat as well as the reasons for me to focus on its "Individual Chat" and "Moments" functions.

Some descriptive survey data: Digital media usage behaviour among the Chinese diaspora in Japan

In order to understand the digital media usage behaviour and to see whether WeChat is the most suitable site to conduct ethnographic observation when studying the Chinese diaspora in Japan, I have conducted three trial surveys and a formal survey research between 2018 and 2019. For the formal survey, I managed to distribute the questionnaire to 438 Chinese diaspora and collected 413 valid data via a Chinese survey website named *Wenjuanxing*.

To understand the role that digital media play in facilitating the Chinese diaspora's social interaction with both the home and the host society, I asked about social networking and communication applications they frequently use on a daily basis as shown in Table 6.1 below.

Applications	Subtotal	Proportion
WeChat	396	95.88%
QQ	195	47.22%
Weibo	302	73.12%
Facebook	70	16.95%
Twitter	81	19.61%
LINE	137	33.17%
Kakao Talk	46	11.14%
WhatsApp	4	0.97%

Table 6.1 Frequently used social networking and communication
applications among Chinese diasporas in Japan

The fact that more than 95% of the survey respondents indicated that they use WeChat frequently shows the popularity of this media platform among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. Furthermore, these data also manifest the importance of both pre-migration social ties as well as relations with other Chinese diaspora established post-migration to the research participants. If we compare the survey data between WeChat and LINE – the most popular communication application among local Japanese citizens[92] – it is clear that the majority of the Chinese diaspora may consider themselves more closely connected to the homeland and

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[92] For details, see (ICPI, 2021).

the local Chinese diasporic community given their preference for WeChat over LINE. This argument can be supported by the next survey question asking who the respondents tend to contact on a daily basis.

Based on Figure 6.1, more than half of them (51.33%, 212) indicated that their daily communications through digital media are mainly with families and friends in the home country. Furthermore, when I asked them about the purpose of contacting their contacts in China and

Families, friends, and colleagues in Japan   Families, friends, and colleagues in China
Families, friends, and colleagues in other regions
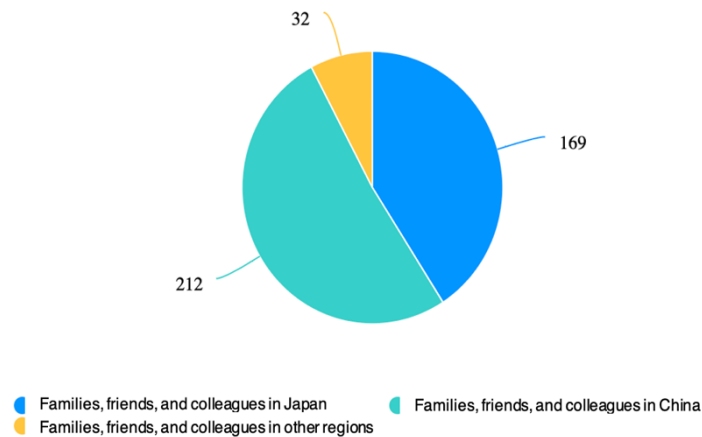
Figure 6.1 For survey question "Which of the following types of contact do you contact most frequently on a daily basis?"
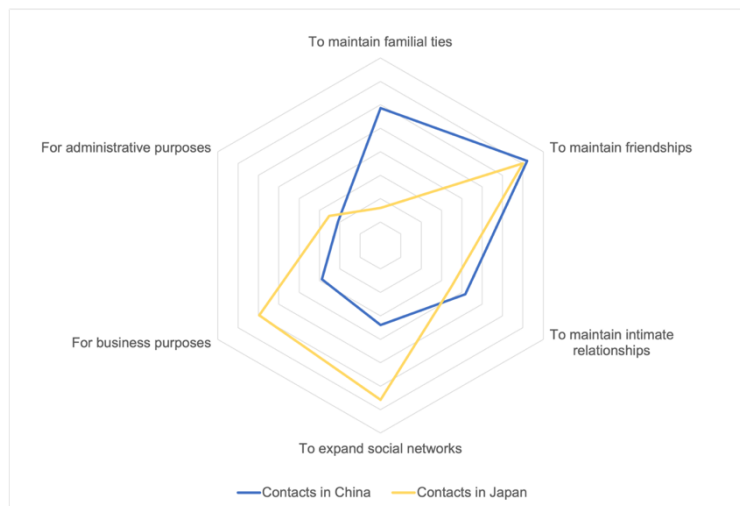
Figure 6.2 For survey question "What are the main purposes of you contacting people you know in China/ Japan?"

Japan respectively, we can see in Figure 6.2 above that while their main purposes of communicating with the former are to maintain familial and emotional ties as well as friendships,

whereas expanding social networks and for business communication were the two main purposes of their daily communication with the latter in addition to maintaining friendships. This result also corresponds to the survey question "Which of the following types of people do you know the most among your contacts in Japan?" as shown in Figure 6.3 on the previous page, in which most of the survey participants agree that the majority of their local contacts in Japan are other Chinese diaspora.

These descriptive survey data demonstrate the popularity of WeChat among the
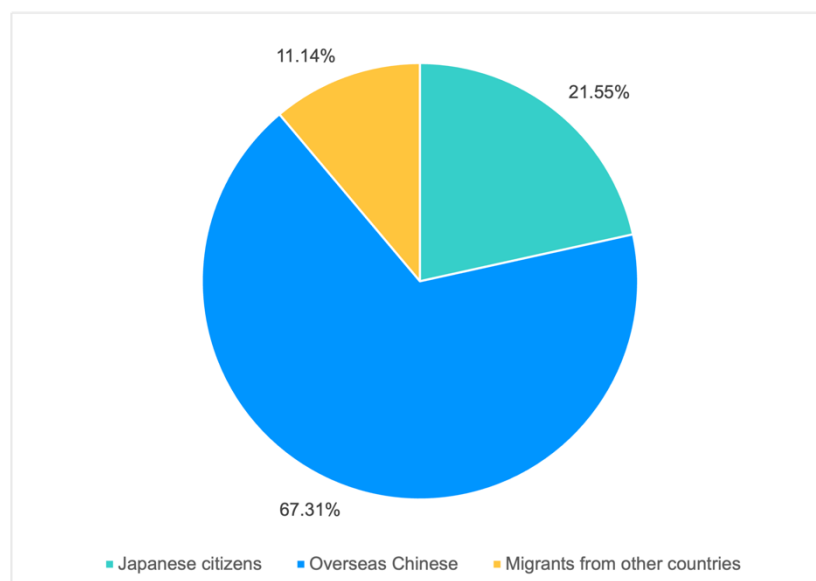
Figure 6.3 For survey question "Which of the following types of people do you know the most among your contacts in Japan?"

Chinese diaspora in Japan, showing that WeChat is the key site for the majority of research participants to maintain their social, familial, and emotional relations with their contacts both in China and Japan.

WeChat as a media ethnographic site

The survey data show the popularity of WeChat among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. Following this, I conducted a general observation on WeChat to understand its functionality and accessibility so to ensure that I can use it as an eligible field site. In this section, I first of

all introduce the background of this social media platform, and then explain its functionalities as well as how I observed the research participants' activities on WeChat.

First of all, it is important to clarify the background of this social media platform. While one may misunderstand WeChat as the English name of the app 微信 (Weixin), it is actually a different version of the latter. Both platforms are owned by the same Chinese supertech company namely Tencent, which also owns QQ, another SNS that enjoyed high popularity before WeChat, or Wexin was introduced. Unlike Weixin, which was launched in January 2011, WeChat was launched a year later in August as the 'overseas version' of Weixin. The digital functionalities of those two apps are essentially the same, while Weixin is only accessible for those who physically reside within China, whereas those who are physically outside of mainland China can only download WeChat (Sun and Yu, 2022). One of the essential reasons for Tencent to introduce two differently named apps to target different users, while sharing almost the same functionalities, is to practise the so-called self-surveillance and censorship. As I argued somewhere else (Wang, 2022), the Chinese state, although closely monitors China's digital domain via online censorship, does not provide clear nor comprehensive instructions to privately owned internet enterprises to indicate "baseline" – that those private sectors do not know what kind of users' information the state would like to collect, nor what kind of keywords, content, or events are not allowed by the state to circulate online. In the context that "crossing the (invisible) line" set by the State would result in severe damage to the business[93], private digital media sectors consequently introduce various mechanisms to voluntarily monitor users' online activities and collect their personal information. Therefore, although WeChat and Weixin share almost the same functionality, their terms and conditions of media services and privacy are different. Specifically, how these terms and conditions are

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[93] A good example to illustrate this point is how variant Hong Kong media agencies were forced to shut down or to suspend publication activities because they were accused of breaching the Hong Kong National Security Law. See (Lu, 2021) for details.

different remains less explored. This is simply because Tencent does not provide with detailed and explicit explanations to clarify why, how, and what kind of information and content could be collected and subjected to Tencent's monitoring and censorship[94].

In this research project, I use the word "WeChat" to denote both applications – WeChat and Weixin, because during the data collection phase I did not differentiate the research participants according to the application they use. Throughout the interview, I found that most of the research participants were unaware of the difference between those two applications, nor do they know which platform they are currently using. In addition, after explaining to the informants the difference between WeChat and Weixin in terms of how users are monitored and censored, a common reaction I received was informants' misdoubt about my explanation. For instance, Huairu, a financial consultant narrated that:

"Umm, I don't think this is true. No I'm not saying that the part about censorship is not true, but I think it would be naïve for Western scholars to think that only Weixin is heavily censored. They are both censored. In terms of the level of censorship, they are the same. If a Chinese company is allowed to launch an app to the public, then it's 100% censored, based on my knowledge. Actually, I think WeChat might be more heavily censored because it is for overseas users. Tencent just made its censorship difficult for one to identify, because if they want to do business with the West, then they need to pretend to be liberal and open".

Another informant Ren, although he did not directly comment on how WeChat and Weixin might be different in terms of monitoring and censorship, mentioned that:

"If I were Trump, I'd also want to block it in the US. I don't know how many users

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[94] For details, see The Citizen Lab's (University of Toronto) report (Kenyon, 2020). Accessible via: https://citizenlab.ca/2020/05/微信監控诠釋/.

Weixin has in the US. But let's say all Chinese migrants in the US use it. And then it collects their data and turns it in to 'departments concerned'. For the US this is like thousands and thousands of spies constantly helping China to collect its information".

These narratives, together with the fact that most informants did not know the difference between the two platforms made me realise that there is no need to treat WeChat and Weixin as two different ethnographic fields – after all, if the informants see those two sites as essentially the same and are equally subject to Tencent and/or the state's censorship, there is no ground to support the hypothesis assuming that their digital practises would be different between those two fields.

Reasons for me to choose WeChat as the site for media ethnography are threefold. Firstly, it is based on the fact that WeChat is the most used social media platform within China (Wang and Miao, 2021), and is equally popular outside China, especially among PRC diasporas (Sun and Yu, 2022). Based on the quantitative survey and qualitative interview findings that I have acquired so far, while 95.88% of the survey respondents (see Table 6.1 above) indicated that they frequently use WeChat on a daily basis, all 69 informants mentioned that they would access WeChat multiple times per day, if not constantly on it. Given the critical role WeChat plays in the informants' daily lives to maintain and expand their personal and social ties, I believe that compared to other social media platforms such as Weibo, QQ, Facebook, LINE, Twitter, and Instagram, WeChat would maximise the possibility for me to collect rich empirical data.

Secondly, I consider WeChat to be a suitable site for the ethnographic investigation because of its functionalities. Although digital and media ethnography studies are often criticised for limited research scope in the sense that scholars often situate their research based on a limited online space, such as a web form, a chat room, or a certain social media

platform such as Twitter and Instagram, I argue that WeChat, as a "super-sticky all-in-one app and mega-platform" (Chen, Mao and Qiu, 2018 cited in Sun and Yu, 2022: 4), has the potential to overcome such criticisms. In terms of WeChat's functionality, I argue that it is both communicative as well as socio-political. WeChat's communicative functionality is represented by its four main communicative channels, namely "Individual Chat", "Group Chat", "Moments" and "WeChat Subscription Accounts" (WSA). Through these channels, users are able to share text, image, audio, video, timed and chronologically ordered information[95] with their audiences, hence helping them to maintain pre-established emotional and social ties as well as to consume and disseminate information among their personal networks. It is for this reason that some scholars claim WeChat to be an essential tool for the Chinese diaspora, tourists and visitors because it is only via this tool that their emotional and social needs can be satisfied (for instance, see Lu, 2019; de Seda, 2020; and Yu, 2020). It is worth to clarify that WeChat is capable of fostering and curating its users' social ties partially because it is a rather closed digital space for socialisation, which differentiates it from other social media platforms such as Weibo, QQ, Facebook, and Twitter. Among WeChat's four communicative channels, apart from WSA, users' communication with others is either entirely private (i.e. via "Individual Chat" and "Moments") or semi-private (i.e. via group chats). In terms of "Individual Chat" and "Moments", the user and their intended audiences need to be "friend"[96] with each other – the ultimate precondition that allows them to have conversations and to share information with each other. Therefore, "Individual Chat" and "Moments" are entirely private digital sphere in the sense that unlike platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok, direct, one-to-one communication cannot be

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[95] Timed information means that a post on "Moments" is only available for viewing for a limited period of time, i.e. three days, a month or six months. Chronologically ordered information means that the user can modify the setting on WeChat in a way that their audiences are only able to see the latest ten posts they shared on the "Moments" page.

[96] Be "friend" means that they have each other added on their respective contact lists. Different from platforms such as Twitter and Instagram that without specific settings users can freely add other accounts to their contact lists, adding other contacts on WeChat requires the counterparts' permission by default.

established on WeChat through these channels without a pre-existing connection. Meanwhile, social media platforms that offer similar functionalities have a rather different social logic (Wang, 2022). For instance, while some scholars tend to see WeChat's "Moments" function as similar to Facebook's Wall function and LINE's Voom function, I argue that "Moments" are essentially different from the latter two because of publicity – which means who is considered the intentional audiences/ consumers of the information that a given user shared via those functions. As shown in Figure 6.4 below, while all three platforms allow the users to control the publicity of the contents they produce, the scope of the publicity is rather different between WeChat and the other two sites.

Facebook and LINE allow their users to customise the level of publicity of a given post from "Only Me (Facebook); 自分のみ (LINE)" to "Public (Facebook); 全体公開 (LINE)" [97],

Figure 6.4 Screenshots that show different levels of publicity when users sharing contents on Facebook's Wall (left) and LINE's Voom (middle) and WeChat's "Moments" (right)

WeChat defines "Moments" level of publicity from "私人 (siren, meaning 'only me')" to "可瀏覽的聯絡人-選擇的聯絡人可瀏覽 (Viewable contacts – selected contacts can view [your contents])", "被封鎖的人-選擇的聯絡人不可瀏覽 (Blocked contacts - selected contacts cannot

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[97] Public (Facebook) and 全体公開 (LINE) mean that the contents posted are accessible by all registered users.

view [your contents])", and "公開–全部聯絡人都可瀏覽 (Public – all contacts can view [your contents])". In this sense, the scope of publicity of Facebook and LINE's ranges from audiences that a given user personally knows and does not know, whereas WeChat's scope only creates various in-groups among audiences that are on the contact list of a particular user.

Furthermore, in terms of the group chat, I describe it as a semi-private environment in a sense that it is less closed compared to the previously discussed two channels but it is not entirely open. Based on the informants' narratives as well as my personal experiences in joining group chats via Rong and Qintian, who are two key research participants in this project, one can only join an existing group chat via the invitation of an existing group member or to be added by the founder of the group chat directly. Once a user has managed to join a group chat, they can then communicate and interact with other group members even if they are not mutually "friended" with each other. How group chat functions on WeChat differentiate it from other social media platforms that offer similar functions. For instance, on LINE and Facebook, while users can form private groups that only the invited users are allowed to join, there are also those group chats that are public and open[98], and users can find and join those groups simply by searching for key words to locate the group and then pressing the join button, as shown in Figure 6.5 below. Given that WeChat does not offer this function, namely chat groups

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[98] On LINE such group chat is called "OpenChat (オープンチャット)" and on Facebook it is called "Facebook Group (Facebook グループ)".
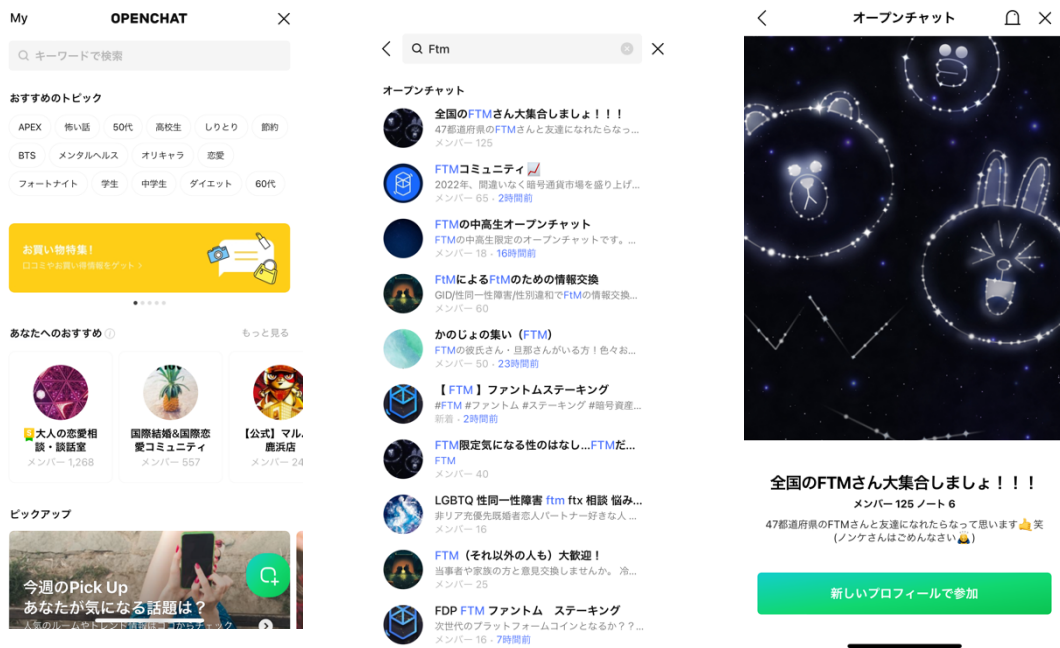
Figure 6.5 Joining an 'OpenChat' chatting group on LINE

that are openly searchable and joinable while it allows the users to interact with group members who are not on their contact list, it is in this sense that I use the expression "semi private" to describe WeChat's group chat.

By analysing WeChat's communicative functionality and comparing it with similar functions offered by other social media sites, it is clear that WeChat users' interpersonal interactions as well as the sharing of discursive statements and everyday life episodes are restrained in a closed sphere (Wang, 2022). It is in this sense that some scholars, such as Peng (2017), argue that the focus of WeChat is more about facilitating pre-existing social ties than expanding one's social networks or helping one to reach out to "strangers".

In addition to various communication channels, WeChat also has a social-political functionality that offers services that cover the users' social lives. For instance, Figure 6.6 below shows part of WeChat's "Service" menu. In addition to providing some basic electronic payment (收付款, shoufukuan) and wallet (钱包, qianbao) services, WeChat also offers

functions that can be grouped into four categories, namely Financial Services (金融理财, jinrong ricai), Daily Services (生活服务, shenghuo fuwu), Travel and Transport (交通出行, jiaotong chuxing), and Shopping and Entertainment (购物消费, gouwu xiaofei). Compared to

Figure 6.6 Built-in functionalities of WeChat (left) and LINE (right)

applications such as LINE that only offers financing and commerce related functions such as electronic wallet, utility bill payment and shopping, WeChat is therefore perceived as an:

> "…all-in-one app and mega-platform…a digital Swiss Army knife for modern life… a portal, platform, mobile operating system, as well as an infrastructural platform famed for its penetration of everyday life and expansive market power" (Sun and Yu, 2022: 4).

The reason why I describe WeChat's provision of those services as the socio-political functionality, instead of simply putting it as social functionality, is because those functions are closely associated with the Chinese state's informatisation and datafication processes, with the goal of using (big)data to discipline and monitor its citizens. While some more recent

empirical evidence show how the Chinese state introduced the "epidemic prevention health code (防疫健康码, fangyi jiankangma, circled in blue in Figure 6.6 above)" as a national anti-COVID-19 pandemic measure in WeChat and has been using it to collect personal data of its citizens (Liang, 2020; Wang, Ding, and Xiong, 2020), other studies point out that data collected via WeChat's other functions are fed into China's social credit system (SCS), a system that is introduced by China's State Council in 2014 to build a surveillance state by evaluating the "trustworthiness" of individuals, business and professional sectors and regulating their social activities and behaviours (Ding and Zhong, 2021; Creemers, 2018; Jia, 2020).

In this way, it is clear that the Chinese state not only monitors the various functions offered on WeChat, they also contribute to the state's surveillance system and uses them as a modern digital political instrument by the state. Hence, I use the expression socio-political functionality to manifest how WeChat, as an "infrastructural platform", has penetrated its more than 1.29 billion users' economic and social lives, and has been utilised by the Chinese state actors to achieve their political ambitions. Therefore, I consider WeChat to be a valid site for this research project not only because of its popularity among the Chinese diaspora in Japan, but also because it potentially allows me to see how they are economically, socially, and politically associated with China, thus understanding their everyday diasporic experiences in relation to their interactions with the home country.

Thirdly, using WeChat as the media ethnographic site allows me to better understand how the production, delivery, circulation, and access of Chinese-language (diasporic) media contents in Japan have changed over time. This argument specifically concerns the subscription account, one of WeChat's four communication channels. As shown in Figure 6.7 below, the subscription account is open to register not only for corporate and government users, but also individual WeChat users, and is used mainly for the dissemination of information. On

a side note, WeChat publishes the basic information of the WSA account holder. For instance, from Figure 6.7, we can see that the account holder of the WSA on the left is an individual person, who registered their WeChat account in mainland China (denoted by "Weixin ID" under 基础信息 (jichuxinxi, basic information)) and created the subscription account in Turkey; while the account holder of the WSA on the right is a corporate user, who registered its WeChat account outside of China (denoted as "WeChat ID" under "Basic Information") and opened the subscription account in the US.
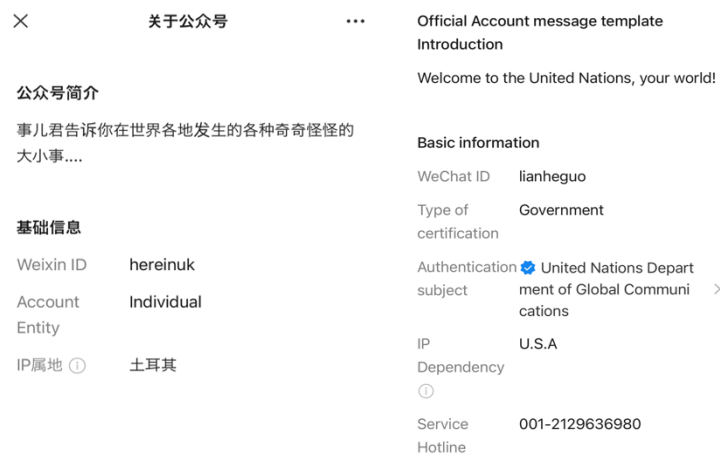
Figure 6.7 WSA operated by an individual user (left) and a corporate user (right)

A subscription account can publish once per day with a maximum of six articles/videos,
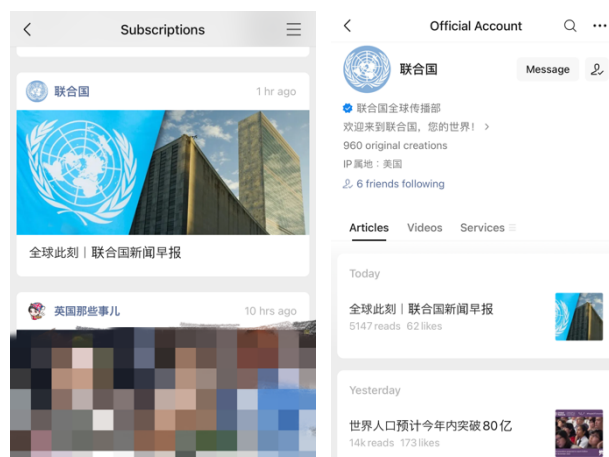
Figure 6.8 Screenshot of the 'Subscriptions' section on WeChat

and all updates are sent to the account's subscribed users[99], as shown in Figure 6.8 below. In this context, individuals can be both the consumer and the producer of media content.

As I argue in detail in Chapter 3 and 4, the introduction of WeChat and the availability of WSA not only represent the change in terms of how information is mediated to and among the Chinese diaspora – from legacy media (i.e. TV, newspapers and radios) to digital media, but also manifest, I argue, how a more complex cognitive world for overseas Chinese is actually constructed through the simplification and unification of the media landscape. In the context of Japan, the entity of Chinese-language ethnic media producers has shifted from political expatriates and Chinese (as well as Taiwanese) students who produced media contents that reflect different aspects of lives in Japan as well as the dynamic geopolitical relations between Japan and China through magazines, newspapers, and TV programmes, to Chinese entrepreneurs and business owners in Japan who mainly use those legacy media for accumulating business profits, and now to individual users[100] as well as government entities, who mainly relies on Chinese ethnic digital media, such as WeChat (and WSA), to distribute their media contents to the Chinese diaspora in Japan. In this context, what I mean by "simplification and unification" of the media landscape is less about the entity that produces media content, but more about what kind of information is produced and disseminated on WeChat and among overseas Chinese in Japan, and this has much to do with China's online censorship over its digital territory. As I explained above, the online censorship enforced by both the Chinese state and privately-owned enterprises such as Tencent ensures that *all* content circulating on Chinese ethnic digital media platforms are pro CCP and are aligned with the state's official and political discourses. For instance, based on his analysis of various online news articles reporting the Sino-Japanese disputes over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, Florian

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[99] Only WeChat users can subscribe to the subscription account.
[100] Who might be overseas Chinese in Japan or those residing in China and other regions.

Schneider (2018) found that all these articles use the same information resource and articulate the same story, based on one, single article released by *Xinhua News* – the official state press agency of China. In this context, "simplification and unification" indicates the fact that the Chinese diaspora in Japan are only able to consume monitored, screened, censored, pro-CCP information via Chinese ethnic digital media.

However, different from their counterparts who reside in China, overseas Chinese also have access to media content produced by non-PRC entities. In this context, what I mean by "a complex cognitive world" is how the ideological, social, and political values and messages disseminated between non-PRC and PRC media sources are often conflict with each other, situating overseas Chinese within the "volatile and uncertain political, trade and diplomatic tensions between China and their host countries", and making them "calling their political allegiance into question from time to time" (Sun and Yu, 2022: 4-5). In this sense, I believe that situating my ethnographic observation on WeChat provides me an entry point to explore how the popularisation of ethnic Chinese digital media not only reflects the changing geopolitical situation with respect to China's relationship with Japan, but also shapes the identity politics of the Chinese diasporic community in Japan.

6.2   WeChat, transnationalism and the Chinese diaspora's belonging

As I have argued in Chapter 5, digital platforms such as WeChat allow many Chinese diaspora in Japan to challenge the conventional state-centred logic that stresses the importance of geographical demarcations in their self-positioning and identifications. Although ethnic digital media produce culturally relevant and vital local information for them, such media have also become an alternative space alongside the existing social environment for the Chinese diaspora to bring together ideas, emotions, rituals, as well as cultural and political imaginaries emanating from diverse physical markers (Yin, 2013: 556–572). In this way, their identity and

belonging are not prefixed or determined but are essentially in flux, representing a sense of in-betweenness and hence placing them in the centre of the fluid topography of homeland-host society transnational networks (Appadurai, 1996; Scannell, 1996). Observing the usage of WeChat among the Chinese diaspora in Japan serves as an excellent window into this fluidity. In the following sections, I first of all examine "Individual Chat", and then "Moments", to illuminate the complex dynamics that characterise the lived experience of the Chinese diaspora in Japan.

"Individual Chat": Constructing Chinese identity in the land of China's ultimate other

Interviews with many of my informants started with an appreciation of WeChat's cross-national connectivity. For instance, Lufan, a male business worker who lives with his Japanese wife and their 12-year-old son, shared his thoughts regarding WeChat and transnationalism with me:

> "They (refers to more recent Chinese diaspora than him) are lucky for being able to use this app … back then, chatting with left-behind families was a luxury. You would either pay an extremely expensive rate for international phone calls or opt for letters, which were very slow. and you wouldn't even dare to imagine that you could see their faces while chatting with them … They are blessed. They can reach their families just like the way my son chats with me".

As Lufan narrated, the Chinese diaspora today are able to maintain continuous contact with the homeland through WeChat. This continuous contact has also become a characteristic on the basis of which he constructs an "us v.s. them" narrative. "Us" is the Chinese diaspora who migrated to Japan "back then" and "them" are more recent arrivals. Both are differentiated by their access to new media, or lack thereof.

More importantly, I argue that a feeling of close proximity to the homeland and Chinese political and national ideologies mediated through WeChat play an important role in the Chinese diaspora negotiating their identities as mainland Chinese living in Japan. This is intrinsically associated with ongoing Sino-Japanese disputes as well as conflicts in their strategies around building national identity. As discussed earlier, for China, Japan serves as an important "other". In this context, many of my informants indicate that living in Japan as a mainland Chinese often means to bear an intricate and somehow indescribable feeling of ambivalence caused by the fact that they are living on the soil of their homeland's ultimate "other". For instance, 56-year-old Changying, an owner of an interior design studio, talked about struggles in processing her Chinese identity as a single mother who emigrated to Japan alone:

"I'm naturalised, but I needed to think twice when you were asking me questions about my sense of belonging…This country has a particular meaning to Chinese for obvious reasons. I believe for many of us, processing our identity as a Chinese living in Japan is difficult, because you need to justify reasons for migrating to Japan to yourself. Because as mainlanders, the patriotic education we received teaches us to dislike Japan … I don't dislike Japan because of that, but I do question how I feel about this country… A Chinese woman running an independent company isn't easy, as you can imagine. Some clients I meet for the first time always ask me why I moved to this country as a Chinese, so you see, this is not just China's problem…but chatting with my family on WeChat definitely helps, as I realise that what matters to me the most, my home, is still in China. I'm just here to earn better money so I can provide for my daughter and parents".

Changying's narrative clearly illustrates the significant influence exerted by CCP's Chineseness on the way the Chinese diaspora understand their own identities. As briefly

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discussed in previous chapters, Japan to CCP is a foil that sets off the nationalistic boundary of the sphere of Chineseness. It serves as the adhesive that provides the Party-state with a much needed nationalistic emotional charge so that a sense of solidarity and unity can be formed among heterogenous Chinese tribes and communities, hence is ideologically placed at not just outside of the sphere of Chineseness, but on the opposite side to it. In this context, Changying's experiences manifest that for many Chinese who have built a life on the land of China's "primary enemy" (Callahan, 2010: 35), the process of self-identification can be perceived as less of a process of self-positioning or searching for belonging, and more as a process of self-justification and proclaiming a sense of belonging. As she indicates, such a process is in large part about how to justify one's decision to migrate to the antipole of the Chineseness sphere. According to Changying, one way to do so is through constant interaction with left-behind family members on WeChat. Its functions allow her to feel less engaged with the Chinese nationalist discourse and simultaneously provide her with justifiable reasons, such as economic motives and emotional and familial ties to claim that while she is physically reallocated to the ultimate opposite side of the Chinese nation, she is still a member to the de-politicised sphere of Chineseness.

It is in this way that her narratives manifest the struggle to claim a sense of belonging, an experience that is rather uniquely shared by the Chinese diaspora who live in Japan. As Changying mentioned during the interview, the reason why she often needs to "think twice" before she can answering the "belonging question" is because her daily diasporic experiences are constituted by both the experienced marginality as well as the politicised notion of Chineseness. While marginalisation and ethnic discrimination are not something uniquely experienced by the Chinese diaspora in Japan as they are rather commonly shared by the Chinese diaspora in other regions as well (Chun, 1996), what is unique is the fact that as someone who lives in a place that is described as "evil", "malicious", and opposed to the

homeland, the very process of living poses a cognitive or emotional burden, creating the need to constantly justify her emigration to Japan because "this country has a particular meaning to Chinese for obvious reasons". At the same time, this burden is also something that keeps the Chinese diaspora from forming a sense of belonging to the Japanese society. As manifested by Changying's narratives, although she is fully aware that it is the CCP's "patriotic education" that teaches her to "hate Japan" and she actively rejects this idea, being aware of this fact does not mean that she is free of the influence of the CCP's political discourses. Instead, as already elaborated, she still has the need to rationalise and justify her migration choice.

Meanwhile, her narratives also clearly show that the perceived marginality held by many Chinese in Japan is not solely contributed by the mix of Japan's ethnicity-based discrimination and the CCP's "patriotic education" that posits Japan as China's others. Instead, as Changying indicates, this experience of marginalisation also comes from the fact that for some local citizens, the Chinese diaspora are perceived as someone who should not come to Japan in the first place. Changying being asked about "why did you come to Japan as a Chinese" shows that this marginalisation is not something that is based solely on ethnicity, driven by Japan's myth of ethno-homogeneity, but it is also related to the complex Sino-Japanese power dynamics which is rooted in the Sino-Japanese wars. Although Japan is different from China in the sense that it does not promote a national identity centred around or themed on a particular Sino-Japanese history, from Changying's experiences we can see that issues derived from this history still shape the way Chinese and/or the Chinese diaspora are perceived in Japan, at least to a certain extent. In this sense, Changying's search for a depoliticised membership in the Chineseness sphere serves two roles. While it allows her to make sense of her emigration to Japan, it also helps her to process experienced marginality in the Japanese society so that she does not need to be bothered with questions such as "why did you move to this country as a Chinese"?

To a certain extent, this depoliticised membership can be considered as a strategy that Changying adopts in order to find a sense of solidarity with herself while being squeezed into the crevice between China and Japan. As someone who builds her life on the soil of China's "others" while constantly perceived as the "others" by the local society, this doubled "otherness" ultimately puts her in a place where she feels placeless so that she feels that she constantly needs to claim a membership in somewhere. In this context, digital media, or more specifically, the process of communicating with her families back in the homeland via digital media, becomes an effective way for her to feel "home". The digital space with mediated familial tie and relationship inspires her to realise the "us" that "matter to her the most", hence allowing her to finally answer the "belonging question".

Throughout the interviews, many informants echoed Changying's experiences, indicating that chatting with friends and families on WeChat is an effective diversion from the Sino-Japanese crevice, so that they can maintain a Chinese identity without being associated with a nationalistic Chineseness. For instance, Xinni, a 23-year-old who came to Japan for higher education, mentioned that he would undoubtedly identify himself as "Chinese … Because I feel WeChat keeps me close to my family". However, during the interview, he clarified that he is "a Chinese without any traits that are political or nationalistic", although he is a member of the Communist Youth League, a party organisation that is under direct management of the CCP. He further claims that his motives for migrating to Japan are "purely rational" because it is a financially affordable destination, and at the same time makes it clear that he only joined the Youth League to "survive within the system", indicating that "before emigration, engaging with CCP is the only way to stay away from it". According to Xinni, in his high school back in Fuzhou, a small city in Fujian Provence, becoming a member of the League is a necessary condition for any students who want to take part in the student union. As his teacher told him that experiences with the student union could be seen as a plus when applying

for overseas universities, Xinni consequently decided to join the League so "I can maximise my chances of leaving that place".

Xinni's experience resonates with the findings of existing studies on the Chinese diaspora who live in Japan and other parts of the world, that for many of them, the word "Chinese" represents a de-politicised identity (Sun, 2019). Self-identifying as a "Chinese" therefore more clearly manifests "where the home is" – a family and emotion-centred sense of belonging, and less of a conformity to a the CCP-articulated Chineseness. To a certain degree, his experiences manifest how human mobility can provide the Chinese diaspora with opportunities to claim different memberships to the sphere of Chineseness. While he had less leverage but to politically conform to the CCP's articulated membership via his participation in the Youth League, Xinni is able to disassociate himself from such membership as he no longer has the need to "survive within the system" post migration.

Similar to Changying and Xinni, 51-year-old Youan, owner of a logistic company, also shared his experience with me regarding how the individual chat grants him access to a depoliticised sphere of Chineseness. Despite the fact that Youan migrated to Japan more than three decades ago and now lives in Tokyo with his wife and two children, he stated that:

> "Chatting with friends and relatives on WeChat is the most intuitive way to feel my Chinese roots, you know, like how our cultures are always family-oriented, and the way we keep our friends close … I came to Japan with my family to start a business, so migrating to this country doesn't equate to me taking either country's side on the never-ending Sino-Japanese battle. It's for more practical and rational reasons".

Together with Changying and Xinni, Youan's narratives support the argument that for many Chinese diaspora in Japan, individual chat with its ability to mediate emotional and intimate relationships provides a vital channel for them to feel Chinese while bypassing its anti-

Japanese essence. Understandably, as a group of people who constantly face the dilemma of living in the land of China's opponent but still identify with their "Chinese roots", the everyday communication with closed ones via WeChat allows them to perform "Chinese" without being associated with the CCP's political and nationalistic discourses. As articulated by the informants, this feeling of Chineseness is further justified by various "rational reasons" and motives: something that both validates their diasporic experiences in Japan and does not necessarily induce a head-on confrontation with the Chinese nationalist perspective towards Japan.

The way overseas Chinese actively extricate themselves politically from the sphere of Chineseness while maintaining their socio-cultural ties to it has been extensively documented in empirical research concerning the Chinese diaspora living in different regions (Ong and Nonini, 1997). Previous studies have argued that part of such desire to separate is related to the ruling regime of the CCP: For many Chinese diaspora, being politically detached from the Chineseness sphere means political freedom and liberty (ibid). However, the narratives in this study suggest that such desires may also be shaped by other incentives. As a community that is placed at the centre of the Sino-Japanese power geometry, for many Chinese diaspora in Japan, opting for an identity position that is not "politically" or "nationalistically" defined has become an alternative that allows them to process "the feelings of ambivalence", thus establishing a Chinese identity without "taking sides in the never-ending Sino-Japanese battle". Constructing an identity in this reductionist manner—reductionist in the sense that only their cultural and emotional ties are emphasised—does not necessarily mean that they are aiming to achieve "political freedom and liberty". Instead, it reflects their positionality as Chinese living in Japan and their agency to find unity between the two conflicting roles they are constantly playing—the role as a Chinese who is educated to view Japan as pernicious (He, 2007), and the role as a Chinese who wants to live a good life in the "pernicious" Japan. Indeed, as

explained by another informant, Boya:

"…we (Chinese diaspora in Japan) are on the frontline to suffer from Sino-Japanese conflicts, so of course, I want to be indifferent to anything political about these two countries, so I can find peace within myself".

The narratives shared by my informants also indicate the important role that WeChat plays in the process of obtaining this depoliticised membership in the Chineseness sphere. In a context where many Chinese diaspora in Japan tend to identify themselves with apolitical and non-nationalistic traits, WeChat's individual chat function has become the key tool that actualises their emotional and cultural ties to the Chineseness sphere. The fact that many of them feel "WeChat keeps me close with my family" and communicating with left-behind contacts through WeChat "is the most intuitive way to feel my Chinese roots", clearly exemplifies that WeChat for them means much more than a technical configuration for instant communication. Instead, it represents a notion of homeness, carries an emotional charge, and brings up associations with memories that are intimate, familiar, shaped by cultural ideologies and experienced at a sensory level by each diaspora individual, so they can explicitly feel their "Chinese roots" and perform "family-oriented Chinese culture". In this sense, WeChat's individual chat function has become one of many components that immerse the Chinese diaspora in Japan in the social practises and ideals of the homeland.

"Moments": (Re)constructing and defining membership in the Chineseness sphere

WeChat's "Moments" function has a unique social logic. Many existing studies indicate that it constitutes a private sphere where discursive statements and everyday life episodes are shared in a restrained and selective manner (Peng, 2017; Schneider, 2018). As my informant Wenwei explained, the "Moments" function represents some sort of selective engagement, in

the sense that WeChat users have full control over the horizontal and vertical publicity of each post they share with their lists of friends:

"Basically, you can choose who can see your posts, like you can group your friends into different sub-groups, so only selected groups can see the contents you designated … you can also decide for how long you want your posts to be visible to others, like for three days, a month, six months, or longer".

Content posted on "Moments" is like a private and exclusive art show, as only selected audiences (vertical publicity) are allowed to enter into the venue for a designated period of time (horizontal publicity). Moreover, although similar to Twitter and Instagram in that invited audiences can "like" a post and make comments under a post, they would not be aware of each other's existence unless they are also on each other's friend list and are mutual friends of the post creator. In this way, WeChat's "Moments" allows the user to develop a "personal online profile full of everyday episodes" and encourages users to "maintain their relationships with friends and family" (Peng, 2017: 8). And more importantly, my two-year digital ethnographic observation suggests that "Moments" provides the Chinese diaspora in Japan with new possibilities to develop diversified and potentially non-interfering emotional and intimate ties with their contacts who belong to different sub-groups, and hence the performance of their multidimensional, negotiated self-identities.

A good example to illustrate this argument is that of my informant Fangyi, who migrated to Japan five years ago and works as an interpreter specialising in the field of medical treatment. During my three-month digital ethnographic observation of her "Moments" page, I found that by frequently uploading her everyday diasporic experiences on "Moments", Fangyi is able to appeal to different audiences and cultivate a multifaceted self through the strategic (mixed) use of different languages, such as Japanese and simplified Chinese. Figure 6.9 below

今観恩師からの教えに心が痛れた🌿🌿

<他者に尽くす事は、見えぬ自分の真心に尽くす事だった>と
今の私にやっと分かった事
感謝🙏

♡ いいね　☐ コメント　　　　　　　♡☐

同事給的義理チョコ

♡ いいね　☐ コメント　　　　　　　♡☐

Figure 6.9 Two screenshots of Fangyi's "Moments" posts

represents two classic types of content that Fangyi uploads on her "Moments" page. On the left-hand-side screenshot, Fangyi shared a photo of her garden, together with a thank you message to her previous university supervisor written in Japanese. In the other screenshot, Fangyi is holding a box of chocolates that she received from her colleague on Valentine's Day, together with a short text written in a combination of simplified Chinese and Japanese. The extensive use of Japanese as a language medium for content creation serves as one of the most distinctive features of Fangyi's "Moments". Throughout 154 "Moments" posts she created during my three-month observation, only 19 (12.3%) posts were fully written in simplified Chinese, and the rest were written either in Japanese (94/154 = 61%) or a mixture of Japanese and simplified Chinese (41/154 = 26.6%). The language choice is part of Fangyi's strategy to articulate her membership in the sphere of Chineseness as something that is transnational. She groups her WeChat contacts into three types, namely Chinese in Japan, left-behind family and friends and business contacts in China. And she selectively shares different "Moments" posts with different groups. WeChat enables one to choose what content to share with which group(s). This allows Fangyi to cultivate a multi-layered personal profile that best aligns her interests with each group of her contacts.

Fangyi explained her use of Japanese instead of Chinese in her "Moments":

"I make my Japanese content mainly accessible to my friends at home (China) … As someone who lives in Japan, I feel naturally I should write things in Japanese, because I'm part of its culture … and so my friends know that I'm abroad … Among overseas Chinese, we often say "xianghuiguo, huibuqu" (wanting to go back to China, but can't go back), and I do agree with it … I may not necessarily enjoy a better material life here in Tokyo compared to my friends in Shanghai, but we are different. I'm not your typical, average Chinese who has never seen a different world".

When it comes to the occasional use of simplified Chinese and the mixed use of Chinese and Japanese, Fangyi explained that:

"Oh, those Chinese posts are only for my family in Shanghai, as I want them to know that I'm having a nice life here in Japan, so my parents wouldn't worry too much … and I don't know why I use a weird mixture of two (languages) in one sentence … I guess it is because I mainly show these posts to my Chinese friends and colleagues here in Japan … I mean, I'm still a Chinese, so I guess it would be best to keep that part of me as well".

Similar to Fangyi, many other informants such as 28-year-old Zhong, a programmer, or 25-year-old Jingjing, a hairstylist, often use Chinese and Japanese interchangeably to create "Moments" content to demonstrate their transnational identity (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 Mixed use of Chinese/Japanese kanji characters

While Fangyi constantly stresses her feelings of "still" being "a Chinese", she also actively emphasises an overseas Chinese identity as being "part of the Japanese culture", being "abroad", and being "different from those Chinese who are immobile". Fangyi's experience is shared by other informants, such as Chengrong, a 29-year-old therapist, who claims that "I need to group them because some narratives can only be comprehended by overseas Chinese". Similarly, Miao, a magazine editor, indicates that "many of my friends don't like Japan so I'll have to separate them from contents that advocate the good side of Japan … so we can maintain a good relationship".

It is clear that for them, their membership in the sphere of Chineseness cannot be simply defined by the Chinese ethnic roots. Instead, it more importantly entails their transnational and intercultural routes, something that makes their membership different from the one claimed by Chinese who "have never seen a different world", something that can only be exclusively claimed by overseas Chinese. This implies that movement itself can sometimes be a source

of creating meanings that are crucial for diasporas' self-identifications, as highlighted by Clifford (1997). Transnational migration is an experience that separates diasporas from those who are "at home". It gives them a license to de-homogenise a uniformly articulated Chineseness and redefine their membership in the sphere of Chineseness as uniquely transnational and transformational, setting themselves apart from those who do not enjoy the privilege of international human mobility. Consequently, many Chinese diaspora in Japan feel the dilemma of "huibuqu" (cannot go back): not physically (back to China) but psychologically and ontologically (back to the "authentic" or "pure" Chineseness), alluding to a difference between themselves and their non-diaspora counterparts.

6.3   Conclusion

Through "Individual Chat" and "Moments", WeChat plays a critical role in the ongoing negotiation of belonging and self-positioning among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. On the one hand, in the context of contested Sino-Japanese relations and their respective officially sanctioned national identities, "Individual Chat" helps them to claim a membership in the sphere of Chineseness without affiliating with the CCP's national discourses nor political traits. On the other hand, by categorising their contacts and creating diversified "Moments" contents, the Chinese diaspora differentiate their memberships to the Chineseness sphere from the one held by their non- diaspora counterparts based on their transnational human mobility. In this way, they construct a Chinese identity based on the recognition of differences between the homeland and the host society in terms of socio-cultural practises and ideals. The meanings implicated behind each "Moments" post may vary. However, the foregoing empirical findings indicate that both the Chinese diaspora's "Moments" practises and consequently the way they relate to the sphere of Chineseness are indeed informed by a sense of cultural complexity (Hannerz, 2008). This cultural complexity not only calls for recognising WeChat's "Moments"

as a transnational Chineseness sphere; it also suggests that a hybrid membership in this shphere is strategically constructed through the selective use of Japanese and selective content sharing among groups in order to demarcate the difference between them and those left behind. By providing them with assorted technological functions such as friend list grouping and multi-linguistic support, WeChat's "Moments" allows the Chinese diaspora in Japan to claim, negotiate, and delicately construct a membership in a way that reflects their personal desires and transnational experiences.

Chapter 7 The queer Chinese diaspora in Japan and their lived experiences online and offline

In this chapter, by addressing the intersectionality of digital connectivity, gender, and ethnicity, I investigate the everyday online-offline social practises of male-to-female (MtF) transgender Chinese diaspora in Japan so as to see how they interpret the notion of Chineseness. Following previous chapters that explore how the Chinese diaspora in Japan claim membership in the Chineseness sphere through everyday online-offline practises, this chapter aims to do the same but targets on one subgroup, namely transgender women, who come from a particular population (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people [LGBTQ+]). While I use "LGBTQ+" as an umbrella term to refer to the broader community of sexual minorities, I designate the informants as 'transgender woman' and use the pronouns "she" and "her(s)" when referring to them, as these are the gender labels with which they most strongly identify. In addition, as explained in detail in the following sections, I use the term "queer" when referring to them to emphasise the fact that their lived experiences as well as perceived marginalities are the outcome of the interplay among numerous systems that privilege heteronormativity, such as marriage, family, biological reproduction, and nationality, including but not limited to gender.

In this sense, the word "queer" signifies my intention of incorporating the identity axis of gender into the issue that this thesis has been addressing so far, and this chapter further develops the arguments concluded from previous chapters, in order to find out how queer Chinese diaspora understand the notion of Chineseness and their membership in the Chinese community. I find the case of queer Chinese diaspora fascinating, as it reveals the lived experiences of a particular population, who are both the ethnic and the gender minority in the heteronormative, self-claimed ethno-homogeneous Japanese society.

I organise the sections in this chapter in the following way. First of all, I clarify the use of the term "queer" throughout the chapter, explaining how I interpret this word in this thesis. Next, I briefly present how queers as digital diasporas, in other words, how the intersectionality among queerness, mobility, and digital connectivity has been researched and explored in the field of migration and diaspora studies. Following this, in order to provide some context for later discussions, I explain how "queerness" and "transgender" are perceived in the Chinese society and are intersected with various social institutions that privilege heteronormativity. Then, I illustrate the role of digital media in queer Chinese's everyday diasporic lives in Japan, exploring how they negotiate their gender identities in ethno-nationalist Japan. Next, I examine the interplay between digital media, queerness and Chineseness, shedding light on the particular form of Chinese national identity interpretation based on being queer Chinese in Japan. Finally, I summarise these empirical findings in the conclusion section.

7.1 "Queer" and why "queer"?

In this section my aim is to clarify the use of the term "queer diaspora" throughout the thesis. At the same time, I also explain what I mean when I refer to some research participants as "queers".

The title of this section poses an important question for any studies that focus on a particular population, namely diasporic queers. This question is important because while those research, like this PhD study, investigate the lived experiences of those who move across borders and who are considered gender and sexual minorities, the term "queer diaspora", or queer diaspora studies as a discipline does not simply refer to the "conjoining of the queer subject and the diasporic subject" (Wesling, 2008: 31). What does this mean is that queer diaspora studies, while having a particular interest in gender and sexuality, does not consider them as the exemplary subject in the study of diaspora or migration. To put it simply, queer

diaspora studies, with its aim to understand "the complexity of differentially lived experiences" (ibid: 34) of diasporas who are identified as gender and sexual minorities, praises that scholars should stop treating gender and sexuality as the central figure of the analysis. Instead, they should consider the interrelations of gender, sexuality, and other social traits such as race and ethnicity "in a transnational context" (ibid: 34), hence bringing gender and sexuality together with, instead of isolating them from other dimensions of social experiences.

Indeed, as Kimberly Crenshaw argued in her *Black Feminist Critique*, the diasporic experiences of queers is like a car accident at a crossroad – such experiences "can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them" (1989: 149). A single car without external forces cannot crash itself, therefore, for any scholar who attempts to capture the actual, complex queer experiences and politics, they should address the intersectionality of different forces – gender and sexuality with other social traits and identity facets, and see queer "as a point of departure for a broad critique that is calibrated to account for the social antagonisms of nationality, race, gender, and class as well as sexuality" (Harper et al., 1997: 3). In this sense, in tandem with the arguments presented in the existing literature, I would like to make it clear that in this thesis, expressions such as "queer diaspora" and "queer Chinese" are used *not to* underline the specificity of gender and sexuality in my analysis, but rather to see queerness as an element that constitutes part of their experiences of migration along with other social traits. In this way, what I see as an essential category of analysis is neither queerness nor gender nor transgender. Instead, what I want to centralise in this chapter is the particular amalgamation and intersectionality of queerness with human mobility, digital connectivity, and Chineseness.

After answering the question of what does "queer diaspora" mean, I then want to explain my intention to refer to the informants as "queer", "queer Chinese", and "queer diaspora". When reading through existing literature on the queer diaspora, a common issue that I notice is that

some scholars tend to: 1) deploy the queer term to highlight the specificity of gender and sexuality of their studies and use it as an interchangeable term with other words such as LGBTQA+, tomboys, and queens, among others; or 2) use the word "queer" as an umbrella term to refer to those who self-identify or become identified by others as LGBTQA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and other gender and sexual minorities). I argue that scholars should be cautious when using the word "queer" in those ways for several reasons.

First of all, as discussed above, centralising gender and sexuality when conceptualising the diasporic experiences of gender and sexual minorities risks overlooking the intersectionality of multiple social traits and facets, such as ethnicity, mobility, connectivity, and nationalism. This not only produces unrealistic assumptions that diasporic queers' experiences are predominantly determined by their gender identities and sexual orientations but also somehow makes diasporic queers an isolated group from other migratory populations simply because of their non-heteronormativity. Consequently, critical discourses presented in these studies may only insufficiently manifest the complexity of queers' diasporic experiences and struggles by treating gender and sexuality as the sole significant intervention element and fail to attend to the nuance of differently lived experiences of queers who are facing different contexts and conditions.

Secondly, I argue that using the word "queer" as an umbrella term to lump individuals with different genders and sexualities under this single terminology may counteract the very goal that queer diaspora scholars would seem to want to achieve, that is, to answer the question of "who is queer diaspora" by exploring the individual heterogeneity among individuals and capturing the complexity of their lives (Collins, 2000; Zack, 2005; Luibhéid, 2008). As Luibhéid (2008) argued, "… inscribing migrants from extraordinary diverse backgrounds within a developmental narrative of LGBTQ identities…ignore the fact that all identity categories…do

not map neatly across time and space, and become transformed through circulation within specific, unequally situated local, regional, national and transnational circuits" (Luibhéid, 2008: 170). Instead, she proposes that scholars should "deploy the term queer to acknowledge that all identity categories are burdened by legacies that must be interrogated", arguing that "queer" signifies the outcome of multiple, intersecting relations of powers that include not only gender and sexuality, but also race, ethnicity, class, citizenship status, and geopolitical location (ibid: 170-171).

Her argument echoes with those of other queer studies scholars who see queer "as a point of departure for a broad critique" that is calibrated to make sense of the intersectionality of various identities and powers (Harper et al., 1997: 3). For instance, Harper et al. (1997) and Manalansan (2006) point out that "queer" is not a term that to be used interchangeably with words such as "LGBT", "gay", "lesbian", among others, and neither does it "make redundant notions of gay, bisexual, or lesbian experience". This is because such an articulation reinvests the homo-hetero binary logic that subconsciously perceives "queers" as deviant from people and things that are defined as "normative" or "normal" (Luibhéid, 2008: 171-172). Instead, they argue that scholars should understand "queer" in relation to the concept of heteronormativity, that "queer" is a consequence of normalising regime's production of heterogeneous individuals and their marginalised positionalities within a social structure that is defined by "valorised standard of reproductive sexuality between biologically born male-female couples who belong to the dominant racial-ethnic group and the middle class" (ibid: 171). In this sense, "queer" represents a standpoint that a scholar adopts when researching the experiences of migration, that the analysis does not (always) centralise, but never leaves out, gender and sexuality.

In addition, as Eng and Hom (1998), Muñoz (1999) and Wesling (2008) illustrate, conceptualising "queer" in relation to the concept of heteronormativity helps scholars to better understand "the queer subject as the diasporic subject", instead of simply adding gender and

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sexuality to the study of human mobility. What they mean by this is that, on the one hand, recent works on heteronormativity increasingly emphasise the importance of conceptualising gender and sexuality as notions that are fluid and constantly negotiated. In this sense, "queer" is a mobile term that challenges the presumed fixity of gender and sexuality (Martin, 1997=2012) as well as the boundaries and limits imposed by the male-female, heterosexual-homosexual binary logic (Eng and Hom, 1998). On the other hand, "diaspora" as a travelling term also challenges the static notion of the nation as well as national, cultural and political borders (Wesling, 2008). So from here what we can see is that "queer" and "diaspora", both as terms that "constitute a mobile resistance" to the presumed boundaries imposed by gender, sexuality, and border, they share an analogous form of mobility, and are essentially against "static categories of being" and of the "hegemonic categories through which proper, normative subjects are produced" (Wesling, 2008: 33). In this sense, Hawley (2001) argues that "the queer subject" is essentially "a diasporic figure", and "queer diaspora", or the study of diasporic queers consequently has less to do with investigating the specificity of gender and sexuality but to investigate the transgressivity of individual lives and identities in the global context.

In line with arguments presented above, in this chapter I use "queer" and "queer diaspora" to refer to the research participants to emphasise the fact that the analytical scope of this chapter goes beyond gender and sexuality. "Queer" is not a term that reflects how the research participants self-identify, as I do not mean to use this term to add transgender identities and practises to my study of the Chinese diaspora in Japan. Rather, as Manalansan (2006) argues, this word manifests my perspective of seeing gender as something that is disciplined by "social institutions and practises that normalise and naturalise heterosexuality and heterosexual practises…by marginalising persons, institutions, or practises that deviate from these norms" (Manalansan, 2006: 225). Therefore, while the informants c use terms such

as "ts", "tg", "renyao", and "xyn"[101] to identify themselves, I refer to them as "queers" to see how their lived experiences as well as perceived marginalities are the outcome of the interplay among numerous systems that privilege heteronormativity, including but not limited to gender and sexuality. Therefore, the use of "queer", "queer diaspora" and "queer Chinese" in this chapter should not be understood as how the informants identify themselves. Rather, these terms manifest my goal to investigate how the intersectionality of gender and other social traits such as ethnicity, mobility, and connectivity play a constitutive role in the formation of the notion of Chineseness among a particular population of the Chinese diaspora, namely Male-to-Female transgender Chinese women living in Japan.

7.2 Queers as digital diasporas

In the field of diaspora and migration studies, early scholars often portray cross-national movement as a necessary condition for queers – gender and sexual minorities – to achieve their desired identities, because they are considered of having the fundamental need to reallocate from a queer-antagonistic to a queer-friendly society (Fortier, 2002; Carrillo, 2004). In this sense, queers' human mobility and sexuality mutually actualise and compensate each other, or as Fortier (2002) puts it, for queers, migration is a process of "home-coming" instead of "home-leaving". Similarly, Knopp (2004) underlines the ultimate linkage between sexuality and mobility, arguing that queers may find ontological security in the very process of movement itself. While he uses the word "placelessness" to denote the status of constantly being on the move, he sees "placelessness" not as an "embodied experience or practise that is or does

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[101] "Ts" stands for "trans-sex"; "tg" stands for "transgender"; "renyao" is often considered as a derogatory term that is used for transgender individuals or men who are considered as effeminate by others; "xyn" is the abbreviation for the Chinese word "xiaoyaoniang (小药娘)", which is often used by Male-to-Female transgender Chinese who are taking hormonal pills as a self-identifier.

anything" (Knopp, 2004: 130). Instead, it is an "embodied form of agency", something that resonates with queers' experiences of identity quest, thus allowing them to acquire a sense of ontological security in mobility (ibid).

Queers as digital diasporas were introduced to academic discussion after the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s. Compared to the more "traditional" conceptualisation of queers, the digital perspective underlines the formation of "global, diasporic consciousness" (Fortier, 2002: 191) among queers who enjoy both transnational human mobility and transnational digital connectivity. Furthermore, it also indicates a sense of shared belonging among queers to such global consciousness, hence the formation of a collectively imagined transnational queer community (Schimel, 1997). As Szulc (2019) argues, some earlier digital queer diaspora studies perceive the digital/online domain as an egalitarian haven for queers that contributes to their sexual identity formation and performance, as well as the construction of queer networks.

In parallel with the process of technological advancement and the rise of digital media, empirical findings increasingly indicate how the digital realm is far from being an equal and safe space. For instance, Gajjala et al. (2008) found that the categorisation of race, gender, sexuality, geography, and physical ability on queer social media platforms largely reinforces queers' diasporic experiences as socially marginalised groups. Based on her argument, Shield (2018) pointed out that by naturalising these categories as important for romantic and sexual relationships, digital technologies legitimise the discrimination and sexual racism against diasporas' queer body. In addition, while empirical evidence indicates that the online realm gives queer diasporas a sense of stability by providing continuous digital connections (Atay, 2017; Dhoest, 2018), the constant mediation of the queer body online can also lead to the collapse of social contexts, creating specific problems for queers generally, but especially for those who only came out partially (boyd, 2011; Duguay, 2016).

Another dimension that challenges the romanticisation of the digital domain is race and ethnicity. Quite opposite to how earlier scholars portrayed the online space as a "novel electronic frontier" (Rheingold, 1993) that provides an "entrance" into a realm of progressive freedom and liberty (Barlow, 1996), empirical research increasingly indicate how racism and race-based discrimination and marginalisation are mirrored online, too (Szulc and Dhoest, 2013). In fact, as Dhoest (2016) pointed out, technological affordances such as online anonymity could even promote racism, making the online space more racially discriminatory than the offline domain, leading to the exclusion and marginalisation of queers who are not "white, male, and middle-class" (Nash, 2005: 115).

These studies highlight how queers' mobility, digital connectivity and sexual identity may be mutually complementary to each other, manifesting how queer diasporas' sexual identity should be conceptualised as the outcome of the specific amalgamation of those identity categories, rather than as a mere sum of them. However, several drawbacks can also be identified. Firstly, arguments such as "move out, come out" and "home-coming v.s. home-leaving", while underlining the relationship between queerness and human mobility, largely conceptualise queer diasporas' sexual identity quest as a unidirectional, one-off process. As Gorman-Murray (2007) pointed out, an increasing number of recent works show that queers' sexual-identity performance as well as their motivations for migration are complex. In this context, we should avoid seeing their identity quest as one-off accomplishments or ontological closure as if their migration would necessarily endow them with a solid sexual identity.

Secondly, manifesting queers' migration to a "more queer-friendly society" as "home-coming" risks to glossing over the impact of their existing social relationships established pre-migration. As I have argued elsewhere (Wang, 2023), in today's globalised and digitised world, "moving out" does not mean queers are consequently cut off from their previous social relationships and networks that are considered "less queer-friendly". In fact, those established

relations and networks post a significant influence on how queer diasporas perform and interpret their sexual identities. Following on this critique, conceptualising queers' emigration to the country with a more queer-tolerant public attitude as a liberating process of "coming out" essentially overlooks how their sexual identity quest and performance may intertwine with and be influenced by other identity categories, such as ethnicity, class, and nationhood (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Gorman-Murray, 2009). Given that the social environment queer diasporas face is an amalgamation of multiple identity categories, emigrating to a society with higher tolerance toward queerness and gayness does not automatically grant them the freedom or liberty to perform their sexual identities without the constraint of identity categories other than gender and sexuality.

Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to recognise how the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity and nationhood frames Chinese transgender women's diasporic experiences in Japan by observing their social engagements in both the online and offline spaces. Through this process, I highlight how their sexual performances and interpretation of their sexual identities are multidimensional, in accordance with the specific context they are dealing with and/or facing.

7.3 Queerness and the construction of heteronormative China

Figure 7.1 A photo portraying a banner held by two Chinese university students that says "Protect Chinese traditional morals…and keep homosexuality far from the university campus"

Source: https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1000078/students-hold-anti-gay-banner-at-chinese-university

In this section, I explore how queerness is manifested in the PRC context, and how it intersects with CCP's nationalist discourses, contributing to its construction of a sphere of heteronormative Chineseness.

In China, the state's attitude toward the queer population is often considered discriminatory and repressive, as queer activities are censored, restricted, and often prohibited both online and offline (Li, 2020). For instance, one of the research participants, Mayumi, who closely follows news concerning queer communities in China, informed me that starting from July 2021, online university LGBTQ+ communities/accounts have been removed in bulk on popular Chinese social media platforms, such as WeChat and Douban[102]. Consequently, many Chinese universities start to order their colleges to investigate and report on any students who

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[102] The accuracy of her information has been confirmed by various news agencies that reported on this event. See China Digital Times (2021) and Gan and Xiong (2021) for details.

self-identify as non-heterosexual, saying that such an order is issued by "relevant agencies" while the purpose of it remains unknown (James, 2021; Ni and Davidson, 2021). In addition, Mayumi also showed me a tweet, which is about an online course distributed by a Chinese higher education institute that portrays LGBTQ+ as a "threat to the order of the human race" and "fundamentally against China's core social values"[103]. Although the amount of empirical evidence on the state's attitude towards the queer community is rather limited[104], given China's thorough effort to monitor and filter information mediated on its digital territory (Schneider, 2018), by observing what kind of information is allowed of/banned from transmission we can rather clearly sense Chinese state's attitude towards gender and sexual minorities.

While China has been consistent with its anti-LGBTQ+ stance, given what I have explained in the previous section that "queer" represents a complex intersectionality among multiple social traits instead of a synonym for terms such as "gender and sexual minorities" and "LGBTQ+", I argue that in order to understand the reasons behind China's anti-LGBTQ+ stance, one must examine the intersectionality between queerness and the CCP's articulation of Chineseness. Just as shown in Figure 7.1 at the beginning of this section, this is because in the Chinese context, "queerness" means much more than having a non-heteronormative gender and sexuality. Instead, it is a heavily politicised term and is inherently associated with CCP's "us v.s. others" political discourse. For instance, in Figure 7.1, we see queers are portrayed as fundamentally against "Chinese traditional morals…and socialist core values", and is an undesired result of "corrosion of decadent Western ideologies".

The so called "Chinese traditional morals" China's "socialist core values" as well as

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[103] For the original tweet, see Tony Lin 林東尼 (2020).

[104] Limited both in terms of the amount of news reports available as well as how there are no official documents nor legislations that can prove those anti-LGBTQ+ measures are directly ordered by the Chinese state. However, Schneider (2018, 2021) demonstrates how the Chinese state often implements its policy through "hinting"– that the local governmental and business sectors produce and implement policies that they consider as favourable/hinted by the ruling elites. In this sense, anti-LGBTQ+ measures mentioned above can indeed show the ruling elites' attitude towards the queer community.

"the decadent West" are some well-studied ideologies that serve as the foundation for the CCP's construction of the sphere of Chineseness (Kong, 2010; Wah-Shan, 2001; Lee, 2016). Similar to other national identity construction strategies, they help to establish a unified value and belief when it comes to identity categories such as religion, political and cultural practises, gender, and ethnicity, claiming that while there is heterogeneity among different tribes of Chinese (Chun, 1996), they are bound together by unified "morals" and "values" and thus embody the symbol of the nation (Gellner, 1983=2008: 12). In the context of the PRC, when we are talking about gender and sexuality, the unified value that the "traditional morals" and "socialist core values" entail, as Xuekun Liu (2021) pointed out, is essentially based on the CCP's arbitrary readings of Confucianism (432). Some particular Confucius ideologies, such as 孝 (xiao, meaning filial piety) and 傳宗接代 (chuan zong jie dai, meaning to carry on one's ancestral line) are strategically picked out by CCP and are used to associate heterosexual normativity, that is, heteronormative families that are biologically reproductive (Mole, 2011) with the survival and continuation of the Chinese nation as well as the nation's social and economic development. By constructing its heterosexual normative values in the name of Confucianism, CCP is also able to justify such values as something that is timeless, and more importantly, is indigenous to the Chinese people and nation, and therefore should be universally accepted by anyone with the Chinese heritage.

Queerness also helps to align Chinese with the CCP's political interests. The previously mentioned Confucius concepts of filial piety and the continuity of clan allow the CCP to claim that non-heteronormative people's inability to biologically reproduce is a threat not only to the Chinese nation but also to the Chinese family and family-oriented traditions (Kong, 2010, Wah-Shan, 2001). As Liu (2021) argues, in this way, CCP parallels its political interests with its subjects' familial interests, making "being heteronormative" a moral responsibility for Chinese individuals for the sake of both their families and the Chinese nation. Therefore, as

Wah-Shan (2001) argues, the main problems for queers in China is not just about "state oppression…religious fundamentalism…job discrimination", but also "the ones they love most – their parents" (34). As one of the informants Ivy articulated:

"…what is more resentful than being homosexual is being transgender. If I were gay, I can still contribute to nation building by having *xinghun*[105]. But what can I do as a transgender? Occupying a female body but couldn't bear a child...so there are times when I can understand people who call me out online. It's true that I'm not exactly filial to my parents or my country".

In this context, it is not really surprising to see how non-heteronormative people, such as the LGBTQ+ community, are commonly portrayed not only as "a violation of the Chinese social morality", but also of China's "nationhood" in the CCP's propaganda (Yang, 2014). By claiming that queers are unfilial to their families for "not being able to carry on the family clan" (ibid), CCP consequently describes them as "unqualified as a Chinese citizen" for "hindering the continuous existence of the nation" and "encouraging normal Chinese teenagers to form distorted sexualities", thus "threatening the bright future of the nation" (Fan, 2021)[106].

From the way in which the CCP associates queer people with "unqualified as a Chinese citizen" and "threatening the bright future of the nation" in its official discourse, we can see how sexual norms and heteronormative gender codes are weaved into the Chinese national identity and become something that defines people's membership in the sphere of Chineseness. As elaborated in previous chapters, considering that an important part of the CCP's articulation of Chineseness is about Chinese people's collective dream of national

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[105] In Chinese 形婚. This word literally means a marriage of formality. It is often used to describe Chinese gays and lesbians' marrying with unknowing heterosexual partners, or the marriage between a gay man and a lesbian woman, due to familial and societal pressure. For details, see Liu (2013).

[106] It is worth to mention that Yang (2014) and Fan's (2021) articles were published on party-owned newspapers. Considering the extent of the CCP's media censorship, public discourse control and propaganda, their narratives therefore reflect the CCP's standpoint towards the queer population.

reinvigoration, equating queers with a "threat" to the nation's future indicates that being queer in the Party-state is not only morally but also politically problematic. This kind of narrative leaves room for CCP to articulate that being queer means "going against the dream of Chinese people", and consequently ruling them as the "others" to the Chinese nation.

This othering first of all contributes to the in-group differentiation within the sphere of Chineseness based on stances of gender and sexuality, deeming that non-heteronormative Chinese people do not belong to the morally superior Chinese nation. Secondly, this gender- and sexuality- based othering is also increasingly connected to CCP's wider "us v.s. others" nationalist discourse, a discourse that sees the 'West' (西方 in Chinese) as China's "others". As shown in Figure 7.1, the fact that the LGBTQ+ community and the pro-LGBTQ+ ideologies and narratives are described as a "corrosion of decadent Western ideologies" explicitly manifests how non-heteronormativity in China is a political tribute and pertains a political meaning. In the PRC context, queerness is leveraged as a symbol of "Western" ideology and cultural imperialism, and therefore is utilised by the CCP for its nationalistic articulation of Chineseness.

While the CCP leverages queerness for its "us v.s. others" nationalist discourse, this chapter investigates how queer Chinese diaspora understand the ethnically and heteronormatively defined Chineseness in relation to their everyday interactions with contacts in the homeland through digital media. How do they understand their membership in a heteronormative Chineseness sphere as someone who is ruled as the "others" by the CCP? How do they interpret the notion of Chineseness as both an ethnic and a gender minority group that live in the ethnonationalist Japanese society – the land of China's ultimate other? I tend to answer these questions by first of all exploring how Queer Chinese diaspora interact with the homeland and the host society. Then, I investigate the intersectionality between queerness and Chineseness by analysing their lived experiences in the online-offline continuum.

7.4 Researching queer Chinese in Japan

For this research project, I recruited eight first-generation, MtF transgender Chinese diaspora residing in five prefectures of Japan, namely Ibaraki, Mie, Niigata, Tokyo (four), and Saitama. The interviews were conducted between April 2019 and May 2022. Due to the limited sample size of this research, I avoid drawing any definitive conclusions from this research, nor it is my intention to generalise the experiences of my informants and apply them to the wider queer communities. Instead, the aim of this chapter is to explore the multidimensionality of ways they perform queerness in various online and offline spaces, and to investigate how their gender identity reflect the fusion and/or tension between online and offline realms. Although all of the research participants had initially migrated to Japan from mainland China as students, their life experiences – including their migratory paths to, within, and beyond Japan – were highly differentiated, as indicated in Table 7.1 below.

Informant ID (aliases)	Age	Years of residence in Japan	Migration trajectory (geographical locations specifically mentioned by informants)	Current occupation
Coco	29	7	Shanghai – Tokyo – Bangkok – Shanghai – Mie	Translator, hostess (weekend)
Gumi	29	13	Guangzhou – Fukuoka – Bangkok – Seoul – Guangzhou – Tokyo	Owner of a tea-dealing company
Isabelle	25	5	Shenyang – Bangkok – Shenyang – Tokyo	Hotel administrator
Sakura	24	6	Shanghai – Tokyo	Office worker
Ivy	25	6	Chengdu – Bangkok – Tokyo – Niigata	Japanese rice-wine maker
Mayumi	27	5	Northern China – Tokyo – Northern China – Saitama	Office worker, hostess (weekend)
Raki	28	9	Xining – Hyoko – Bangkok – Ibaraki	Housekeeping service provider
Tuna	-	4	Hebei – Tokyo	Healthcare worker

Table 7.1 The informants' demographics and migratory trajectories

The interviewees were identified through two channels. Four informants (Coco, Gumi, Isabelle, and Raki) were recruited through the dating app "9Monsters", one of the most popular queer social media platforms in Japan. In addition, Ivy was introduced to me by a personal contact (Japanese) in Niigata, and Mayumi, Sakura, and Tuna were referred to me by one of the participants (a Japanese, FtM transgender person) from a different research project. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and the topics included 1) the informants' overall life experiences in both China and Japan, 2) their digital media usage behaviour and 3) the role of digital media in their daily lives in Japan. In addition, it is worth mentioning that despite Tuna, the rest of the interviewees had undergone gender reassignment surgery (GRS), although I do not take a dichotomous approach by treating GRS as a dividing point and asking about their life experiences before and after GRS. As discussed previously, I perceive these physical changes to the body as a continuous and progressive process of gender identity formation and actualisation, rather than as one-off accomplishments.

Although not particularly concerning queer Chinese in Japan, existing studies that focus on queers' daily experiences in Japan highlight how performing queer is considered as an invasion of Japan's heterosexual public space as well as the intersectionality between queerness and the country's ethnonationalist myth. Firstly, scholars argue that "doing queer" or performing the queer identity in Japan is often considered as space- or context-sensitive. For instance, Mackintosh (2009) and McLelland (2005) argue that queerness in Japan is often seen in a reductionist manner, as a "fetish' or a 'hobby", and therefore something that should only take place in explicitly queer spaces, without confronting the dominantly heterosexual public space. The so-called queer space can be either online, such as smartphone applications, websites and chatrooms (McLelland, 2005), or offline, such as the worldly famous gay neighbourhood Shinjuku Ni-Chōme (Baudinette, 2016). In this sense, by designating queerness as a space-sensitive performance, queers and their communities are foils to further

set off the heterosexual code that defines how women and men "should" behave in the hegemonically masculine Japanese society (McLelland, 2005). In Puar's words (2007), the seemingly tolerant attitude toward queers is therefore nothing more than a neoliberal sexual politics that leverages homosexuality as a "regulatory script" to uphold, reinforce and sustain heteronormative social institutions.

Another characteristic of queerness in Japan is its racially and ethnically defined boundary (Negel, 2003: 14). This is partially contributed by Japan's ethnonationalist discourse that narrates Japan as a mono-ethnic society with a nationhood based on ethnic homogeneity (Liu-Farrer, 2020). This myth of ethnic homogeneity contributes to the cultural, social, and institutional marginalisation of diasporas, as well as to promoting an ethnic divide in the queer community in Japan – something Nagel (2003) describes as the "ethnosexual frontier". This ethnosexual frontier encourages the formation of a sense of equivocal racism, stimulating a racial and racialised desire for Japaneseness and whiteness. This consequently leads to the rejection of queer people who belong to other racial groups, portraying them as "ethnosexual invaders", threatening the status quo of the "ethnically homogeneous" Japanese queer community.

Previous studies have shed light on the practise and performance of queerness among digital diasporas, but the majority of existing discussions do not see the online and the offline space as a continuum. Most debates tend to either glorify the role of digital media, claiming that it provides queer people with a safe space in which to perform queerness, or delineate queerness as merely an outcome of struggle against often hostile, offline social environment and structures. These arguments are problematic in three ways. Firstly, portraying the digital space as an egalitarian and safe space for queer diasporas romanticises the online realm, as if it is disengaged from the repression and discrimination against queers that we have been witnessing in the offline world (Everett, 2009). However, the digital space is far from being a

realm of progressive freedom and liberty, and existing literature show how the masculocentric logic that has been defining offline social relations is also mirrored in the online space (Roy, 2003: 180-197). In addition, such a romanticised argument about queer diasporas' affection for digital media – which might indeed be true for some, does not adequately examine what role digital media play in queers' identity quest and everyday experiences.

Secondly, arguments that illustrate queerness as an outcome of struggle against heterosexual social environment fail to recognise the queer identity quest as essentially a progressive self-discovery process. The word "outcome" indicates the intention of those arguments to perceive such a quest as a unidirectional movement and that there is a fixed, static end to the quest – as if accessing the digital world or moving out of a hostile physical place provides queers with a "one-off escape" from their identity "struggles", allowing them to achieve the freedom and affirmation of their gender and sexual identities. This latter argument was famously framed as "move out, come out" in some early queer migration studies debate (Fortier, 2003; Knopp, 2004), with some claiming that, for many queer people, "moving out" is necessary in order to "come out", thus redefining emigration to the country with a more queer-tolerant public attitude as a "home-coming" rather than a "home-leaving" (Szulc, 2020: 222).

Thirdly, claiming the queer identity quests as a "struggle" risk downplaying the autonomy of queer diasporas by describing them as gender-oppressed, passive, and vulnerable and at the mercy of heterosexual women and men (Dağtaş, 2018). While it is ultimately true that queer people form a gender and social minority group, scholars should avoid victimising them and, instead, focus on examining how queerness is deeply entangled with various power structures and online-offline realities (Patterson and Leurs, 2019). Therefore, in this chapter, I use the term "embodied search" to acknowledge the fluidity and multidimensionality of the queer Chinese diaspora's identity quest (Butler, 2004), so to investigate how they actively incorporate different online and offline resources into their identity-making processes.

7.5 Doing queer in the online-offline continuum

In this section, I explore how queer Chinese diaspora understand and perform their gender identities in the online-offline continuum when facing different contexts and audiences.

As previously discussed, studies that see queers as digital diasporas often highlight their "affection" for digital media and human mobility (Gross, 2003), arguing that these two factors are crucially important in order for someone to "come out", that is, to publicly reveal their queer identity. Guided by existing studies, I asked the informants what they think about this "move out, come out" concept. Coco, who migrated to Mie from Shanghai explains:

> "I'm not convinced by the 'move out, come out' idea, or at least this was not the case (for me) … Shanghai is quite liberal, but of course you don't tell people that you have had this (the GRS) … And Mie is in the countryside and very conservative. People here don't even like ordinary foreigners (futsūno gaikokujin), not to mention being a foreigner *plus* a transgender (gaikokujin purasu toransu-jendā). So, no – no 'coming out' for me (emphasis added by the informant)".

Coco initially migrated from her hometown of Shanghai to Tokyo, where she completed her post-graduate education while working part-time as a Chinese language teacher. After saving enough money, she travelled to Bangkok alone for the GRS and then moved back to Shanghai to change her gender status in various official documents, such as her passport and household registration (*hukou*). However, although Coco has been able to gradually actualise her gender identity through the movement of the embodied subject herself (Gorman-Murray, 2007), in the sense that her body is both the site for actualising her gender identity (through GRS) and the vector of her international mobility (by moving back and forth between different geographical locations), heteronormative realities in the offline realm in both China and Japan impede her "coming out" process. As she explained, while her hometown seems to be a

modern city with an inclusive attitude towards queer people, Coco chooses not to make her gender identity open to others, including her family and friends, stating that "(such) inclusiveness is only possible when it's not with someone you know or are close to". This opinion was common among other informants as well, such as Ivy, who stated: "like my family, if they read a story about a transgender on the news, they seem to be fine with it. But when it comes to me, their open-mindedness just evaporates into nothing". Heteronormativity remains a deeply rooted social value in Chinese society, and for this reason, many of the informants said they were determined to remain "in the closet", although such heteronormative social values may not be explicitly practised and publicly expressed in the everyday offline environment.

Coco's post-migration experiences illustrate how the intersection between gender and ethnicity can produce various forms of marginality for Chinese transgender women in Japan. To better understand Coco's struggle and the feeling that "no, (there was) no coming out for me", it is important to first show how the Chinese diaspora are a culturally and institutionally marginalised group in Japanese society, due to the country's exclusionist, culturally nationalist vision of its own national identity (Liu-Farrer, 2020). By refusing to identify itself as an immigration country, despite the increasing number of foreign residents, Japan institutionally excludes diasporas in its policy frameworks and promotes a culturally nationalist discourse of racial homogeneity. This exclusionist perspective proposes that Japanese social values and cultural heritage can be only fully perceivable to the Japanese, hence encouraging racial distinctions between Japanese and racial/national others (Wang, 2022). In addition, this ethnonationalist discourse serves to justify discrimination against racial others, particularly Chinese and Korean people, due to Japan's invasion of the former and colonisation of the latter (Baudinette, 2016). In this context, Chinese transgender women in Japan – such as Coco – are subject to double marginality because they are both a racially discriminated against and

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a gender minority group – "a foreigner *plus* a transgender", as she describes herself. In this sense, Coco's coming out issue actually represents her struggle of finding a "place" to belong as someone who is squeezed into the crevice between the heteronormative China and the heteronationalistic Japan.

Furthermore, the expression "come out" is often used to describe the queer person's revealing of their gender and sexuality to others (Patterson and Leurs, 2019). Fox and Warber conceptualised it into four "levels of outness", from "mostly in the closet" to "out", depending on how many audiences know about a queer person's sexuality (ibid: 92). However, the findings of the interview indicate that the term "come out" can also connote a more complex meaning than simply "levels of outness" for Chinese transgender women. For instance, Gumi, who has been receiving hormone therapy for nine years and had her GRS three years ago, states that,

> "I don't think I'm out. My friends in Japan know about it (her identity as a transgender woman), but my family in China still doesn't … So, I wonder, if I need to keep my (sexuality) a secret from people who matter the most to me, then how can I say I'm out"?

Gumi's narration clearly shows that the expression "to come out" is not only concerned with the status or the "level" of one's sexuality disclosure: it also involves something emotional, suggesting that the way Chinese transgender women interpret their sexual outness may be mutually shaped by their sexual identities and emotional ties. In Gumi's case, therefore, "coming out" is less about the dichotomy of whether she has revealed her sexual identity to others, but more importantly, it is about who these "others" are and whether she is emotionally intimate with them.

The movement of queer body across offline spaces

The fact that many informants perceived Japan as a heterosexist and culturally exclusionist society in which the expression and performance of queerness are often oppressed intrigued me and inspired me to explore the motivations behind their China-Japan migratory trajectories. During the interviews, many of them indicate that their decision to move to Japan had not been driven by their gender and sexuality, though some – such as Raki – pointed out that human mobility (the physical movement itself) provided the crucial context for her gender-identity-affirmation process:

> "I'm not from a wealthy family, so coming to Japan … was the only possible and viable option … Then I started receiving hormone therapy a few years later (after migrating to Japan). And of course, my parents still don't know (about the hormone therapy), so every time I move back and forth between the two countries it's like switching on and off my real gender identity".

Similar to other informants such as Coco and Ivy, Raki said that she kept her gender identity as a transgender woman a secret from her left-behind family, because "I'm sure my parents won't be able to take it". And for this reason, she felt it was necessary to dress up and act in a way that matched the stereotypical image of a cisgender man when travelling back to China, hence the "switching off" of her "real gender identity". Raki's experiences of performing different genders show how physical spaces can provide different contexts in which to ground and affirm her gender identity. While the precise social traits of Japan and China that inform her decisions to "switch on and off" her gender identity were not fully explored, her experiences indicate a dynamic correlation between gender and mobility. Importantly, Raki's continuous context-based affirmation and performance of gender identity – even after the hormone therapy – implies that the formation of gender identity is not simply actualised through the

queer body, but "also a psychic quest" – in Gorman-Murray's words (2007). This psychic quest is spatially realised, in the sense that it is ultimately linked with the movement of the body through different geographical locations, leading to an essentially fluid queer identity. As a result, the gender identity of Chinese transgender women is interwoven with different spaces' social contexts and power structures, reflecting their own life stories, experiences, and mobilities.

Discussing the affirmation and performance of gender identity together with their diasporic experiences, Mayumi – who received her GRS in Beijing three years ago – narrated stories quite different from those of Raki. In particular, she explained the reason for revealing her transgender identity to her family and close friends back in China while keeping it a secret from her contacts in Japan:

> "It's not because I'm afraid of discrimination or peer pressure. I just want to live a life as an *ordinary* woman. I mean, I went through so much, so why do I have to be proud of being a transgender person? … This (meaning her life in Japan) is a fresh start, as no one knows my past … My (body) is also a new chapter (of my life)". (Emphasis added by the informant)

It is clear that, for Mayumi, her understanding towards gender identity is shaped by her offline social engagements as well as the way she understands gender in relation to her membership in the heteronormative offline space. Although she is comfortable with openly identifying herself with her left-behind contacts as a transgender woman, she voluntarily maintains an identity as a cisgender woman in Japan, where "no one knows my past" so that she can have "a fresh start" in the hegemonically patriarchal Japanese society. When I further inquired about this claim of "fresh start" in Japan, Mayumi stated that, to protect her cisgender identity, she had "tried hard" by transferring to a different university and consequently moved

to a different city after the GRS so that she could truly open "a new chapter" in her life. For Mayumi, whether or not she performs or acknowledges her transgender identity is less about whether or not to "come out" or not. Instead, it is more about an autonomous search for ontological security in an essentially heteronormative sphere. By saying "I went through so much" and consequently questioning "so why do I have to be proud of being a transgender person?", her narratives not only reflect a heteronormative ideology that devalues non-heteronormative gender identities but also manifest her belief that all the "hard works" she went through are supposed to grant her a membership in the heteronormative sphere so that she can enjoy new life chapters and join the gender majority group.

Although Mayumi and Raki perform their gender identities differently, their stories articulate that gender identity and the issues surrounding it, such as coming out, are not just something that is intrinsically linked to their offline experiences. It also determines their membership in the offline sphere where heterosexuality is constantly perceived as default, normative, and predominant. Therefore, for them, "moving out" is not simply a step toward "coming out", and the gender identity formation is not – in all cases – a linear journey towards being "out". Instead, the so-called "moving out" – or the peripatetic movements between different physical spaces – inspires queer diasporas to think about how they want to define themselves and be defined by others as well as how they want to live their lives.

Queer Chinese and their digital media practises: Who is the member of the queer sphere?

To understand the role of digital media in queer Chinese's everyday diasporic lives in Japan, and then to see how digital media usage shapes the way they understand their gender identity, this section begins by illustrating the role of digital media in their everyday diasporic lives. Not surprisingly, all the interviewees indicated that digital tools – especially smartphones and

tablets (devices that are easily portable) – have become parts of their bodies that contribute to shaping their lived realities. As Isabelle neatly articulated, "I have my phone, therefore I am" (机在人在 in Chinese, can be directly translated as "my phone is here, so I am here"), which underlies how the use or possession of a smartphone contributes to the way in which she makes sense of her existence, as well as life experiences in general.

Isabelle's experiences with smartphones were echoed by other informants. Ivy, who works as a Japanese rice-wine maker in Niigata, a prefecture famous for its rice production, underlines that she rarely parts from her smartphone: "I often put my phone in my pocket at work … though I'm not allowed to use it … I don't (use it), but at least I can feel it so I'm reassured". Although Ivy did not state how often she uses digital media on a daily basis, it is clear that they mean much more to her than simple communication tools. Instead, digital media have an emotional value, to a degree that Ivy feels reassured by confirming their presence and knowing that she is digitally connected whilst interacting with different offline realms. Their experiences and perceptions of digital media not only illustrate a fusion of online and offline experiences (Candidatu, Leurs and Ponzanesi, 2019), but also indicate how such fusion may create new possibilities for queer people to reinterpret their migratory experiences, something that is complicated by the intersection of gender.

Although Isabelle's "I have my phone, therefore I am" statement may appear to be a rather unique case of how the "ongoing material reality" of Chinese transgender women is empowered by digital media, her opinion often resonated with the other informants. For instance, Gumi – a naturalised Chinese transgender woman who owns a tea-dealing company in Tokyo – showed me some old photos posted on her Ameblo[107] and Instagram:

"These are (photos) I took when I was still a man … This one, I took it in Thailand

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[107] A popular online blogging service in Japan.

before the grand surgery … This one is when I was in Seoul for plastic surgeries to make my face appear more feminine … I'm quite open and happy to share my multinational, transformational journey with my followers (on social media platforms) … Those (previous experiences) made me who I am".

Gumi's narration shows how digital media form an embedded part of her diasporic experiences, since the mutual influence of digital and physical interaction puts her diasporic life in a global context – or, as she said, a "multinational, transformational journey". Although Gumi travels to different geographic locations to seek and progressively actualise a desired sexual identity through the body, the use of digital media serves a crucial role in revealing that such movements are indeed an embodied quest for gender identity. By re-mediating memories of the past into the ongoing everyday reality, her transnational migratory paths are no longer simply territorial displacements among various geographic points (Appadurai, 1996). Instead, multiple remote localities are reinterpreted and reimagined through the digital realm, and experiences derived from specific geographical points are brought together, becoming synchronised and interrelated. Therefore, Gumi is able to collectively interpret and internalise her variant migratory paths through digital media as something that is "transformational" and that "made me who I am". In this way, digital media are intrinsically linked with the physical, as they provide queer diasporas with new possibilities for narrating and understanding their gender identities by bridging and infusing digitally mediated memories with current, ongoing, physical realities. In this way, digital media transform social actions and perceptions of gender identities, forging links with static geographical demarcations in the fluid topography of the transnational landscapes (Appadurai, 1996), so they are complementary and equally legitimising of Gumi's gender-identity-actualisation process.

Although digital media help the informants make sense of their transnational human mobility in relation to their gender, they also endow them with a sense of transnational

connectedness. When I asked Isabelle about the factors that encouraged her to go through

GRS at a very young age (19), she explained:

"Because this topic (MtF transition) is deeply discriminated against in mainland

China, so since I was young, like junior high, I've been relying on blogs and forums from

Taiwan and Hong Kong using a VPN[108]… Later on, I also visited some English forums

– that's how I obtained information about GRS and hospitals in Thailand … When I saw

the before and after pictures shared by others, I thought, oh, they look so pretty and

happy after the surgery. So, I thought that if they could handle it (GRS), then I should

be able to do so as well. I guess it's like I'm encouraged by my own people".

Before I analyse Isabelle's narration, it is worth mentioning that other informants – such

as Coco and Gumi – also talked about the difficulties they had experienced back in China in

terms of obtaining information on gender related medical treatment. According to Coco, this is

mainly because Chinese online platforms for the transgender community are often banned

inside China or filled with sexual content. For Isabelle, digital media were clearly crucial for

both negotiating information scarcity and searching ontological security in a non-hostile sphere,

where she could be connected with her "own people". While in previous chapters I manifested

how heteronormative the Chinese diaspora's emotional attachment to different spheres of

Chineseness is ethnically defined, Isabelle's narration demonstrates that in the context where

queerness is articulated as morally incompatible with China's core values and placed under

the digital divide, some queer Chinese can develop a sense of belonging to a sphere where

one's membership is defined by queerness instead of ethnicity. Isabelle's feelings of solidarity

with her "people" – that is, with transgender people living in other regions – not only implies

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[108] "Virtual network", a popular approach for mainland Chinese people to access to banned internet content. For more detail, see Beina Xu, "Media Censorship In China". *Zurich Council on Foreign Relations*, 25 September 2014, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177388/media%20censorship%20in%20china.pdf.

that this queer sphere is transnational but also underlines that gender can be just as validating as ethnicity in terms of providing individual queer diasporas with a basis on which to collectively and transnationally ground their sense of belonging.

However, throughout the interview, I find that the above arguments should be presented in a more nuanced way, because ethnicity, for some informants, is still a strong factor for them to differentiate "us" and "others", especially when online and offline realities collide and coincide. For instance, Ivy talked about how her life had changed drastically after moving to Niigata from Tokyo:

"You know Naimon (the dating app '9Monsters'), you can see people near you … I made so many friends with other transgender women on that (app) … and we sometimes will hang out in Ni-chōme, meeting other transgender people … but Niigata is just a conservative countryside. No queers live here. Well, I met one transgender person, but she's Japanese".

When I asked Ivy why she had specifically indicated that this other person is Japanese, Ivy explained that:

"Umm, it's just different. In Tokyo, I felt there was a community for me, and I never thought about (ethnicity). Maybe it's because the closest person to me is several kilometres away[109]? I don't know".

By using digital media to build new social connections with other queer people and navigate through the city, Ivy's experiences – like those of Isabelle – not only reflect how realities derived from online and offline spaces mutually shape one's sense of belonging but also illuminate queer diasporas' belonging quest is a process of negotiation. On the one hand,

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[109] Ivy was referring to the 9Monster app. This app use GPS information to indicate the approximate geographic distance between its users.

her feelings of belonging to the queer community indicate how the contradiction between digital and physical realities – such as feeling connected to the queer community via 9Monster, while the "closest person to me is several kilometres away" – can potentially lead to a simultaneously inclusive and exclusive definition regarding the membership in the queer community. When she lived in Tokyo, Ivy was constantly connected to the queer community – both digitally (through the gay dating app) and physically, when she hung out with friends – according to Ivy, both Chinese and Japanese – in Ni-chōme. This continuity between online and offline realities allowed her to belong to a relatively inclusive queer sphere, the membership of which included both mainland Chinese and transgender women of other ethnic backgrounds. However, since moving to Niigata, the absence of a sense of connectedness in the physical realm and the visualisation that she has been distanced from the queer community through the dating app's technological affordance have led to a change in her individual subjectivity toward this queer sphere, the membership of which is now ethnically defined.

On the other hand, this shift from a gender- to ethnicity-defined boundary manifests how queer diasporas like Ivy are constantly in search of a membership so that they can deal with different marginalities. When she was in Tokyo with easy access to both online and offline queer communities, she sees the queer sphere to which she belongs as a gender-based space where she does not need to negotiate her ethnic "otherness" in Japan or her moral "otherness" in China. However, when she is no longer able to feel queerness or interact with the queer sphere, she opts to claim a membership in a sphere where the boundary is ethnically defined so that she at least has somewhere to belong to in the ethnonationalist Japanese society. In this sense, queer Chinese's constant search and negotiation of membership is a reflexive response to their realisations that they are always some sort of "others", whether ethnic, gender, or ideological, or indeed, the mixture of all these otherness.

7.6 Queerness, ethnicity and national identity: Who is the member of the queer sphere of Chineseness?

Following previous discussions, in this section, I firstly explore how queerness is manifested in the PRC context, in particular, how it has been waived in China's political discourse, contributing to the building of a heteronormative notion of Chineseness. Following this, the remaining two sections illustrate the interplays among gender, ethnicity, nationalism and digital practises so as to see how Chineseness and the Chinese national identity are interpreted by queer Chinese diaspora in Japan.

"I want to be as filial as I can, although I'm like this"

Guided by the literature review, I often started the interviews by enquiring about the informants' migratory paths between China, Japan, and other remote locations, asking about their motivations for emigration. In contrast to some early studies that portray queers' relocation as motivated by their desires to "come out", none of the eight informants stated that their emigration to Japan was driven by it. During the interview, as all of them initially came to Japan as privately funded students, after explaining that they migrated to Japan for its "affordable but high quality" higher education, many of them talked about how they use digital media to maintain emotional and familial ties with left-behind contacts. During the interview, as all of them initially came to Japan as privately funded students, after explaining that they migrated to Japan for its "affordable but high quality" higher education, many of them talked about how they use digital media to maintain emotional and familial ties with left-behind contacts. For instance, Ivy narrates,

> "I text her almost every day, but of course wo don't do video calls. So until today, my mum still doesn't know about (me being a transgender woman).…Now after finding a good job, I work, and I work hard, because I want to send money back to support her.

I want to be as good as I can, although I'm like this".

Ivy initially migrated from her hometown of Chengdu to Tokyo, where she completed her postgraduate education while working part-time for several jobs. After saving enough money, she travelled to Bangkok for the GRS and then settled in Niigata, a prefecture in northern Japan as a Japanese rice-wine maker. At first glance, her narratives show her willingness to maintain transnational connections with left-behind contacts by using digital media, which is in parallel with empirical evidence presented in existing queer diaspora studies. However, by looking closer to her narratives, it manifests her struggles to remain digitally connected with her pre-established social ties due to interplay between gender and heterosexual normativity. Ivy's preference for textual over visual communication is a classic example that shows the conflict between Chinese queers' desire to remain connected and their concerns of losing such connection due to deeply rooted heteronormative ideology. As Ivy further explains:

> "I'm already very sorry for my parents. I know I shouldn't keep lying to my parents, but… I can't afford to lose them, and I don't want to hurt them even more… I really miss my mum and I want to see her and hear her voice. But texting is enough".

Combining this narrative with her earlier statement about wanting to be "as filial as I can", one can clearly see how queerness in the Chinese context is essentially placed on the ultimate opposite side of moral values that promote stereotypical gender codes and productive gender and sexualities. The way Ivy assumes that "coming out" would lead to losing her parents shows firstly that she considers China as hegemonically heteronormative, and secondly that she is fully aware of the cost of being queer in the hegemonically heteronormative China. Furthermore, her statements such as "though I'm like this" and "I'm already very sorry for my parents" further indicate that the "being queer means being an

immoral and unfilial 'other' in the Chinese society" concept is already internalised by Ivy, so she sees herself as someone who caused harm to her family for not being able to continue the family clan, and a somehow less qualified citizen to claim a membership in the Chinese nation.

Throughout the interview, I found that most of the informants, i.e. those who have not yet come out to their families and friends back in China commonly share the same experiences with Ivy. In order to keep their transgender identity "in the closet", it is a common strategy for them to stay away from digital communicative channels that may compromise the heterosexual cover they have been trying to maintain in front of their closed ones, such as audio and video calls. While some may praise the digital media for offering alternative communicative channels to queer Chinese so that they can maintain their transnational ties on the one hand and sustain their heteronormative online profile on the other, what I have found from the informants' narratives often shows their struggles to deal with various unconformable realities. For instance, Gumi, who is only "partially out" to her friends in Japan and has been maintaining a heterosexual profile in front of her parents for almost a decade (nine years) wrote on her twitter that "So what if I'm transgender and was able to "make it" in Japan? I'm a *renyao* that my own parents don't recognise and I'm desperate for the world"[110]. Similarly to her, another informant, Tuna, who is currently undergoing hormone therapy referred to herself on Twitter as "kusaya"[111], one day tweeted that "Yuyu has no life at all. I couldn't be myself before I went abroad as I couldn't' have any candy. I couldn't be myself after going abroad as I have to

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[110] Her original tweet in Chinese: "做跨友'成功人士'又怎樣。不還是父母都不認識的人某妖 对这个世界已经绝望了".

[111] "Kusaya" is a fermented fish dish in Japan that has a pungent smell. Tuna explained that because it writes as "臭魚" in Chinese, she often adopts it to refer to herself to self-dispraise, as she interprets "臭" as "恶臭", which means stinky, and "魚" as "鹹魚", which shares a similar meaning as "the walking dead".

pretend I don't take any candy in front of my parents"[112]. What we can see from these narratives is that while digital media provide ways to communicate for queer Chinese without coming out, researchers should move beyond this point and investigate both the cost and the consequence of these "non-coming-out" ways of communication. It is clear that for queers such as Gumi and Tuna, instead of offering them emotional comfort and a sense of security knowing that they remain safely within the closet, the fact that they can only maintain their emotional and familial ties through limited digital functionalities due to China's heterosexual norms leads to emotional burden and self-loathing. In their cases, some seemingly ordinary and common digital practises such as the preference of texting over audio and video calls are therefore less "ordinary" in a sense that those practises highlight the discrepancy between "who they really are" and "who they have to be", which is something that many queers, especially those who are not fully out need to deal with. More importantly, by adopting those digital practises, queer Chinese are forced to become the guardian and the apologist of heteronormative institutions and practises that marginalise them, pushing them further away for being who they want to be and for "having a life", as Tuna puts it. In this way, these narratives can also be seen as the evidence that challenges the "move out come out" argument proposed by early queer studies scholars, as we can see that with the impact of digital media and the mediated, transnational social ties, moving from a less queer friendly to a more queer friendly place does not initiate nor facilitate "coming out". Instead, queers, or at least queer Chinese are experiencing continued engagement with heteronormative regimes of power that have been marginalising them way before their emigration.

In this context, some queer Chinese are left with little room but to conform to

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[112] Her original tweet in Chinese: "魚魚本來就沒有人生可言。出國前沒辦法做自己因為不能含糖。出國後沒辦法做自己因為要在父母面前假裝沒含糖". The word "糖 (candy)" refers to the hormone treatment pill.

heterosexual ideologies, such as Ivy who stated that she wants to be as good as she can, "although I'm like this". But then, what does the word "good" mean in particular? Upon my further inquiry, Ivy explains that:

"Good is about doing the right thing. You have to be filial and be worthy of your parents' unconditional love, right?...And you also need to be worthy of your homeland, since the local people may judge it based on your words and actions. So for people like me, maybe we need to do more and work harder to be a good person and to be recognised as a good Chinese".

The narrative above manifests how queerness in the PRC context can serve as a moral evaluation to gauge one's qualification of being Chinese. In Ivy's case, it is a reference point for her to self-evaluate and consequently come to the conclusion that as a queer, she needs to "do more" and "work harder" in order to be seen as a morally "good" Chinese, in which "good" refers to a set of values and ideologies that the heteronormatively defined Chineseness entails. The way Ivy believes that compared to her heterosexual counterparts she needs to do "more" and work "harder" in order to be "good" also indicates how queers are marginalised in the sphere of Chineseness in a default manner. Considering that this kind of ideology is propagated by the CCP as discussed earlier, her narratives manifest that, either intentionally or unintentionally, the Chinese state leverages queerness as a political instrument to reduce LGBTQ+ people's "value" and human rights as members of the Chineseness sphere.

Ivy's narratives are echoed by other research participants as well. Similar to her, informants such as Isabelle and Mayumi also mentioned how they feel "sorry for the parents" for being a transgender woman. For instance, Mayumi elaborates as follows:

"My parents still think I'm a normal male[113] working in Japan, you know, because

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[113] During the interview Mayumi used the term "正常的男性 (zhengchangde nanxing)", and "男性" denotes

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I still use my old profile picture on WeChat…and when I talk to them, I always feel that I'm bearing a huge amount of guilt…I know I'm living for myself, but I feel sorry for hurting them. I'm the only child in the family".

Mayumi and Ivy's experiences of using digital media, or WeChat in particular, show that while for queers who are still "in the closet", the digital platforms allow them to perform different gender identities through functionalities such as texting and profile picture, so that they can maintain their "in the closet" status quo while "living for (themselves)". However, it is also clear that these functionalities serve to visualise the difference between "who they are" and "who they are when facing the parents" for them, consequently creating emotional and psychological burdens. In this sense, Ivy and Mayumi's daily communication with left-behind families through digital media is also a process of self-realisation, that through texting and using old profile pictures, they realise that they are, in fact, belong to the side of the "other" within the heteronormative Chineseness sphere, and that an important part of being a "good Chinese" means to be biologically reproductive to carry on the family bloodline.

This argument is also confirmed by narratives such as "I know I'm living for myself, but I feel sorry for them". It manifests how gender identity in the Chinese context is deeply merged with traits that heteronormative Chineseness highlights, so queer Chinese's gender identity is a process of both self-identification as well as negotiation. Considering the way Mayumi indicated that she is the only child in her family, we can once again see how this negotiation stresses on and centres around the conflict between her desire of being queer and her desire of being a good Chinese – someone who can continue their family clan through heterosexual marriage and biological reproduction.

Something that Mayumi and Ivy have articulated in common is that they both feel they

gender so I translated it as "male" instead of "man" or "guy".

have caused harm to their parents, although they are still "in the closet". By asking Mayumi "How did you hurt them in the first place without even coming out", she explains: "Well, I changed the body that I received from them". Although her explanation may make someone feel puzzled, it is commonly mentioned by other informants, such as Isabelle, who indicated that the change in body due to the gender reassignment surgery makes her feel guilty to her parents:

> "If you think about it, your body is the first asset you've inherited from your parents. We have a saying that says 'shenti-fafu, shouzhi-fumu'[114]...so I'm not saying that being a queer is a crime, but I do understand why many Chinese wouldn't accept us (sigh). When I was about to receive the surgery, I was really looking forward to it on the one hand, but I was mentally burdened on the other".

In addition to carrying the family bloodline, Isabelle's statement shows how being filial in the Chinese context also means maintaining the body as how it has been since birth, because it is in some way a sacred inheritance passed on from the parents as well as an important asset to ensure the continuity of the family clan. In this way, maintaining the heteronormative body, similar to other "traditional" gender ideologies such as forming a heterosexual family and reproduction, has become an effective tool to evaluate one's moral stance and gauge their membership in the Chineseness sphere. Therefore, just like how Ivy believes that she needs to work harder in order to be "good" and how Mayumi feels sorry for hurting her parents, Isabelle also automatically positions herself as a less moral person who is against traditional Chinese values, thus feeling that it is understandable to be discriminated against by her heterosexual counterparts and marginalised in heteronormative China.

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[114] "身體髮膚 受之父母" in Chinese. A phrase from *Hundred Schools of Thought* (諸子百家). It means that people's bodies, to every hair and bit of skin, are received by them from their parents, and they must not presume to injure or wound them, which is the ultimate pre-condition of being filial.

Above narratives from Ivy, Mayumi and Isabelle manifest how queerness interplays with the "traditional" values and ideologies that the sphere of Chineseness embodies, such as filial piety and the continuity of the family clan. On the one hand, these values are internalised by the informants because of their pre-migration live experiences in China. On the other hand, they still serve as an effective moral evaluation for the informants post-migration, arguably because those ideologies are constantly mediated to them through their everyday interactions with left-behind families using digital media.

Queerness and its Chineseness manifestation

美满的婚姻 (a happy marriage)

安定的家庭 (a stable family)

我所抛下的一切 (all that I have left behind)

我所付出的代价 (the price I have paid)

你只需要看看所有你被剥夺的一切 (you only need to look at all that you have been deprived of)

就能懂得所谓的幸福并不是虚无 (to know that happiness is not intangible)

-- A poem written by Sakura[115]

Following the previous section, in this section I further discuss the intersectionality between queerness and Chineseness, investigating how the informants understand themselves as *queer Chinese* living in Japan. I highlighted the term queer Chinese here because the aim of this section is to explore the specific amalgamation of the identity axis of gender, ethnicity and nationhood. As Crenshaw (1989) discussed in her black feminist critique, if one wants to understand discriminations experienced by a black woman, they need to see the research subject as being a black woman instead of being black and being a woman. In tandem with her argument, in this section I focus on a unique notion of Chineseness and Chinese national identity interpreted by those being a queer Chinese in Japan instead of being a queer and

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[115] English translations in brackets are provided by the author.

being a Chinese.

During my interview with Sakura, she showed me a poem she wrote several years ago, as shown at the beginning of this section. According to her, she used to be a blogger of some renown on Weibo by sharing her writings and life stories as a transgender woman living in Japan. However, she decided to leave Weibo because this particular poem attracted her some heavy online violence and harassments:

"I used to check Weibo when I got up. And one day my private message box exploded as so many people DM-ed[116] me and scolded me for being shameless…they were like, 'who are you blaming for depriving you of your rights? You wouldn't be like this if you hadn't wanted to be a *renyao*[117] yourself'…and someone also called me as a 'perverted jingri[118]', saying that I'm like this because of my *ribenbaba*[119]…so I decided to leave this space. You can see how China's internet is full of those brainwashed *xiaofenhong*[120] and how scary they are. They can relate everything to being unpatriotic… If this is the kind of people China wants, then I'd rather not to be a Chinese. Anyway, I'm in Japan and I'm a *renyao*, so I'm the eternal sinner[121]".

While the above statement once again manifests how queers are heavily discriminated against, criminalised and immoralised, from it we can also see how it also fuses with China's "us v.s. others" narrative that sees Japan as China's ultimate other. On the one hand, this means that being a queer Chinese in Japan is equal to being a "renyao" and a "perverted jingri"

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[116] "DM" here means to send someone a direct message.

[117] In Chinese "人妖", literally means human monster. It is derogatory and discriminative term used for trans individuals and male individuals who are not aligned with stereotypical gender code (i.e. for not being "masculine").

[118] The term "jingri (精日)" is abbreviated for "jingshen ribenren (精神日本人)", means spiritually Japanese. It is a pejorative term referring to Chinese who are pro-Japan.

[119] In Chinese "日本爸爸", literally means Japanese Daddy. The word 'baba' (daddy) in the Chinese context is an internet buzzword, contains the connotation of worship and kneeling. It is similar to terms such as 'dada (大大)' but more demeaning, because it also has the meaning of 'sugar daddy'.

[120] In Chinese "小粉红", a reference to young Chinese nationalist.

[121] In Chinese "千古罪人", literally meaning a sinner who should be condemned through the ages.

– someone who is abnormal, unpatriotic, and worships Japan. On the other hand, these narratives that circulate online also make Sakura acutely aware of the marginality and discrimination against queer people. Consequently, by realising the fact that she is perceived as the "eternal sinner" to the Chinese nation, she actively disassociates herself with this sphere of Chineseness. Her experiences explicitly manifest how queer Chinese in Japan is subject to two "otherness" – they are the "other" within the Chineseness sphere for being a morally deprived Chinese, but also the "other" to the Chinese nation for being a "perverted jingri", condemned as the "eternal sinner" to the Chinese nation.

While Sakura actively detaches herself from "being Chinese", Tuna, who works as a healthcare worker argued differently, stating that:

> "Anyway, as a trans I think China is quite good. China never said that it won't let LGBT people to live, like Muslim countries do. I read an article on (WeChat) subscription account saying that to this day Muslim (countries) still stone gay people to death. This is like so barbaric…The LGBT community in Japan also baffles me. They want human rights and equal rights all the time. If they are really such human rights activists, why don't I see them going to Yasukuni Shrine less often?"

On the one hand, Tuna's statement shows how queers' human rights are reduced to the bare minimum under China's heteronormative political agenda that portrays queers as fundamentally against the country's "traditional" values and ideologies. She feels "good" about the status quo of the LGBTQ+ community in China simply because queers are allowed "to live". After I chased up on this point by saying that "Maybe they are allowed to live, but are they allowed to exist? As you can see, China recently blocked all LGBTQ+ communities on Chinese social media such as WeChat and Weibo?", Tuna answered:

> "Every country is different. You can't compare China to Western countries, right?

It probably couldn't be helped in our country, because the general public is very unaccepting of LGBT people after all. The state may also be doing this (blocking online LGBTQ+ communities) to protect the traditional virtues and social morals".

Tuna's response reminds me of the narratives I shared in Chapter 4 that illustrate how some informants are supportive of China's online censorship and are pro-digital divide. It shows how human rights in China's context are based on some allegedly "traditional virtues and social morals" that underline the individuals' moral responsibility to be heteronormative. This moral responsibility is also closely erlated to the nationalist, "us v.s. others" discourse that themes the sphere of Chineseness. By stating that "every country is different" and "you can't compare China to Western countries", her statements demonstrate that any discourse that advocates for queers' human rights or challenges the status quo of queers in China can be perceived as a challenge to the sphere of Chineseness, thus becoming China's "others" and consequently losing the right to claim a membership in the Chinese nation. By arguing queerness as a Western ideology that is inherently at odds with the Chinese values, Tuna in turn justifies the Chinese state's repression against the queer community in the name of "protecting traditional virtues and social morals". In addition, this "us v.s. others" discourse also strategically uses certain "others" – such as "Muslim countries" in Tuna's case – to construct a notion of ethnic superiority, thus further legitimising the state's repression against the LGBTQ+ population. In this way, we can see how gender and the notion of Chineseness mutually validate each other, contributing to the construction of a heteronationalistic Chineseness sphere.

Queer as China's ethno-cultural other

After discussing how queer Chinese's interpretation of queerness is fused with the notion of Chineseness, in this section I scrutinise how the informants narrate their membership in the

sphere of Chineseness in relation to their gender identity and digital media practises. Before conducting the interview, I thought this might be quite difficult to convey in an interview question. However, in most cases this topic has surfaced naturally during my conversation with the informants. For example, after Mayumi explained to me that online university LGBTQ+ communities/accounts have been removed in bulk on popular Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat and Douban, she further elaborated that:

"It's very disgusting that they (China) decided to do this. On the day they 404-ed[122] all (LGBTQ+) accounts and now I feel I no longer have a place in China, because those accounts used to be our home, spiritually and emotionally…And now why do we need to live a second-class life? Aren't we all the same people who just celebrated your birthday[123]? And then after using us the entire LGBT community is slapped into a 404 error, does this even make sense?…China doesn't deserve my love".

Mayumi's narrative shows the interplay between digital media, gender and national identity. The fact that CCP's "404" of LGBTQ+ communities/accounts on China's digital territory makes her feel like a "second-class" citizen in a country that "doesn't deserve [her] love" reminds me of the analogy of "the right to the city". By forcibly shutting down those online communities, China's digital divide erases her 'spiritual and emotional home' and consequently deprives her "rights" to access those online queer spaces as well as to live in China as a full right queer individual. In this sense, the reason that Mayumi perceives China as a country that does not deserve her "love" is rather self-explanatory: as discussed in the Introduction chapter, one needs to have a "home" in order to belong. Before the digital divide, she was able to feel

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[122] The term "404" originally means "web page not found". Mayumi used this term as a verb here to refer to the banning of LGBTQ+ community on China's social media sites.

[123] During the interview Mayumi used the expression "您的生日 (nin-de shengri)", a polite form of "你的生日 (ni-de shengri)", in which both expression means "your birthday". "Your birthday" here refers to 1st July which is designated as the Commemoration Day of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party. And the "404" happened right after this day on 6th July. Giving this context, I suspect that Mayumi used the term "您" sarcastically.

like "having a place in China" through her daily engagement within the online queer space – a "home" that is sexually and ethnically defined. When this "home" is taken away from her, she consequently loses the ground to construct a feeling of attachment. Her experiences therefore show that gender, ethnicity and digital connectivity can form a specific amalgamation that shapes queer Chinese diaspora's sense of belonging.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the analysis presented in Chapter 4 on the CCP's articulation of the membership in the Chinese community, Mayumi's narratives manifest that such articulation, with its heteronationalistic underpinning may well cause harm to CCP's ruling regime by disassociating non-heteronormative Chinese from the Party-narrated sphere of Chineseness. The contradiction between the articulated illusion of an inclusive, though ethnically-based Chinese membership and the experienced reality of a sexually exclusive Chineseness sphere makes Mayumi recognise the fact that she is constantly at odds with the so-called "all the same people". However, as presented in previous sections, if we take into consideration of the fact that Mayumi internalises heteronormative values and ideologies such as the moral responsibility of carrying on the family bloodline, we can see that her perception towards the Chineseness sphere and Chineseness is complex. In her case, being both the advocate and the victim of those gender ideologies are not incompatible.

Similar to Mayumi, many informants' perception about the Chinese nation is shaped by digital divide and online censorship. For instance, Gumi, a naturalised Chinese stated that:

"Don't you think China's online public discourses regarding the LGBTQ+ community are really scary? I always get comments like, 'oh you are 'jingmei'[124] and brainwashed' and 'oh your existence means that the Chinese society has been infiltrated by Western ideologies so we need a thorough ethnic purification[125]'…What

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[124] The term "jingmei (精美)" is similar to "jingri (精日)", means spiritually American.
[125] In Chinese "种族净化" zhongzu-jinghua.

kind of mentality is that? China and its wall[126] have made procreation for rights, ignorance for virtue, and discrimination for principle".

Similar to Mayumi, Gumi's narratives also manifest that in the era of digital media, queer Chinese diaspora's perception towards the membership in the Chinese nation is simultaneously shaped by their gender and digital experiences. This is different from the CCP's overarching political discourse that defines membership in the Chinese community by the so-called "shared blood, roots, spirit, and dream"[127]. Although this discrepancy makes queers heavily discriminated against in both China's online and offline territories, it also inspires Gumi to reflexively think about the CCP's heteronormative political agenda and realise that the Party regime is about "making procreation for rights, ignorance for virtue, and discrimination for principle".

In addition, the hatred comments Gumi received such as "your existence means…we need a thorough ethnic purification" manifest not only how queerness is deeply intertwined with ethnicity but also how it can actually be used to define the Chinese ethnicity. Therefore, queerness in the PRC context is both a cultural and an ethnic "other". It is China's cultural other because it symbolises Western cultural imperialism. It is also China's ethnic other because queerness is perceived as a different ethnicity that disrupts the "pureness" of the Chinese ethnicity, despite the fact that China has never been a homogeneous ethnic community.

Based on the narratives presented in this section, I argue that the membership in the CCP's sphere of Chineseness is not fixed, but includes different dimensions. It allows the Party-state to manoeuvre different identity axes so that this sphere can welcome different

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[126] She was referring to the Great Firewall (防火長城, fanghuo changcheng) which bans the access of mainland Chinese internet users to certain foreign websites and digital services.
[127] For details see Chapter 4.

people when necessary and exclude them at other times. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss in detail the purpose of CCP to do so, from the way that queer Chinese are both included and excluded from the Chineseness sphere, the least we can argue is that such strategy promotes a heteronationalistic sentiment and therefore reinforces the CCP's overarching "us v.s. others" political discourse.

7.7   Conclusion

The queer Chinese diaspora in Japan continue to be an underrepresented group in academic discussion, but this chapter sheds light on the way they interpret their gender and national identities. Qualitative evidence collected from eight Chinese transgender women residing in Japan illuminates the complexity of their gender and national identity brought about by China's heteronationalistic political agenda, reflecting the dynamic intersection between online-offline realities, transnational mobility, gender, ethnicity, and Chineseness. In this way, this chapter suggests that gender and national identities are something that is not fixed but constantly negotiated.

First, based on my informants' explanations of their transnational migratory paths, I argue that their gender identities have been largely shaped by the offline realities and informed by their international mobility. The queer Chinese diaspora's gender identity is not actualised through their queer body alone, but is also a psychic quest – something that is spatially realised and ultimately linked to the movement of the queer body through different geographical locations.

Second, by focusing on the informants' online engagements, I reveal that digital media is a crucial tool for Chinese transgender women who seek to make sense of their international human mobility in relation to their gender identity. It allows them to associate previous experiences with the current, ongoing, physical realities, hence transforming social actions and

perceptions of gender identity from something linked with static physical markers to the fluid topography of transactional landscapes.

Thirdly, by analysing queerness together with different axes of identification, this chapter manifests the specific experience of being a queer Chinese diaspora in the PRC context. It demonstrates that queerness is portrayed as China's cultural, social and ethnic other, representing western cultural imperialism, a conflict with China's traditional moral values and ideologies, as well as a distinct 'ethnic group' that disrupts the "ethnically homogeneous" Chineseness sphere. For some informants, while they are fully aware of the fact that they are heavily discriminated against and are perceived as a second-class citizen with deprived rights due to their gender, they also see those narratives as China's traditional moral values. In this sense, they are both the victim and the advocate of those narratives. For other informants, through their online-offline experiences they realise that queers in the PRC context represent an ethno-cultural otherness and are inherently at odds with the CCP's heteronormative political agenda. In this sense, I argue that queerness is strategically leveraged by the Chinese Party-state to include or exclude queer population based on its political interests.

Conclusion

To some extent, I was quite lucky, because when I was drafting this thesis between July 2019 and August 2022, issues related to ethnic minorities, the Chinese diaspora, China's official discourses regarding the notion of Chineseness, as well as the cross-national movement of people were brought to the fore by a series of seemingly unrelated but somehow interrelated events. The global outbreak of coronavirus, the consequent increase in xenophobia, and the grass-roots movements against discriminations, China's self-claim as the leading contributor to the global society for fighting against the COVID-19, as well as the ban on LGBTQ+ communities in its digital domain right after the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the CCP – events related to identity, belonging, ethnicity, citizenship, and gender were mediated, discussed, and contested on a global scale due to digital media. Meanwhile, the constantly changing border policies, the implementation of travel bans, and the use of technology to monitor and limit human mobility manifest the crucial role digital media has been playing in our lives and, actually, how it has already become a protogenetic part of our everyday lived experiences.

By exploring how different axes of identification are interpreted by different actors across different social and digital contexts, I illustrated the dynamics of the diasporic experiences among first-generation Chinese diaspora in Japan, and demonstrated how relationships between digital media, mobility, Chineseness, ethnicity, and gender are manifested among this particular diasporic group. The analyses that I have presented in this thesis made clear of one point that digital media has not just changed the way we live our lives. Instead, in many cases, at least for the informants, their experiences show that we cannot live our lives without digital media. For many of the research participants, it is a crucial tool for them to make sense of who they are. By using digital media, they are able to negotiate their ties with the homeland as well

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as their connections with the transnationally imagined but ethnically and in some cases, gender defined sphere of Chineseness; to deal with perceived marginalities and discriminations in their daily lives; and ultimately, to negotiate their memberships in the sphere of Chineseness, making sense of who they are and what does it mean to be a "Chinese (living in Japan)".

The events documented and the analyses presented in this thesis highlight the salience of the research focus of this Ph.D. project. By looking at the way the Chinese diaspora articulate their senses of belonging while dealing with different sets of power dynamics, we can better understand not only how digital media have been shaping the daily experience of the Chinese diaspora in Japan but also how it plays the crucial role in expanding the digital as well as the ideological territory of the Chinese nation. On the one hand, with the rise of mainland Chinese digital platforms, they help to facilitate various emotional, cultural, and social ties between the Chinese diaspora in Japan and the homeland. On the other hand, using those platforms also means that the Chinese diaspora continuously experience digital divide post-migration, and their diasporic experiences are still significantly shaped by censored and politicised narratives, discourses, and ideologies circulating on those platforms. In the context where many of those mediated discourses have a nationalistic essence that is based on the Party-state's "Japan as China's ultimate others" ideology, the use of digital media itself can put the Chinese diaspora in a dilemma. While it is an indispensable and integrated part of their lives, using it also puts them in the conflict between the anti-Japanese national identity and the reality as "Chinese living in Japan". This thesis addresses this dilemma uniquely experienced by the Chinese diaspora in Japan, which contributes to illuminate their live experiences in the era of digital media, China's rise, and the escalating Sino-Japanese dispute.

Taking inspiration from Lefebvre's writing on "the right to the city", one important aspect that I highlight in this thesis is the formation of a transnationally mediated sphere of Chineseness. By tracing the evolvement of the ethnic Chinese mediascape in Japan, I

manifest how the shift from print media, then to mass and digital media marks the rise of a transnational but digitally divided Chinese space where the boundary is defined by the notion of Chineseness articulated by the Chinese Party-state. At first glance, this Chinese space is inclusive as it is described as the default home for anyone with Chinese ethnic roots. However, the empirical evidence presented in this thesis show that this space is suffused with the CCP's "us v.s. others" nationalistic discourses, which is therefore essentially a sphere of Chineseness that aims to align its members with China's overarching political framework and maintain the CCP's ruling regime. In this sense, this sphere of Chineseness is rather exclusive, as it constantly separates the "us" from the "others" by producing boundaries that render multiple axes of differentiation: nationalistic and/or heteronormative ethnic Chinese who are transnationally mobile but reside within the confines of digital divide are found to be the preferred member of this sphere. In this way, membership in the sphere of Chineseness is thus ideologically loaded, particularly in its proposal that claiming this membership equals to praising and defending the CCP's ruling regime and "taking China's side" in its "never ending battle" with the "foreign others" and Japan in particular.

But then, what is the "right" that the Chinese diaspora in Japan have to this sphere of Chineseness? By empirically studying their everyday diasporic lives, this thesis shows that such "right" is about to use digital media as a tool to negotiate or as a stage to perform identity alignments with or against the CCP's Chineseness ideology. In other words, this "right" marks the Chinese diaspora's agency in claiming, disclaiming, and rearticulating their membership in the sphere of Chineseness based on their online and offline experiences of crossing through multiple axes of differentiation including ethnicity, digital connectivity, human mobility, and gender. In this sense, this "right" is about being able to feel belonging to somewhere and being able to identify with something while constantly facing different kinds of "otherness".

While this thesis makes a contribution to the study of the Chinese digital diaspora in

Japan, it also sheds light on how the Chinese diaspora and the spheres they interact with(in) should be approached in the era of digitisation and globalisation. I demonstrate the viability of studying this particular population by adopting a middle ground position that sees different social spaces, such as the homeland, the Japanese society, and the transnational Chinese community, not as isolated from each other. Instead, thanks to digitisation and globalisation, those spaces are fused together and the convergence of them constitutes the sphere of Chineseness that grounds the lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora in Japan. In this sense, this thesis manifests that the study of diaspora requires the researcher to reject several dichotomies.

Firstly, this dichotomy is about the division between the online and the offline realm. Different from early cyberspace studies, empirical evidence reported in this thesis illuminates that the online realm is neither utopian nor dystopian compared to the offline realm. Instead, those two realms constitute a digital-physical continuum, which means that they are equally suffused with different powers and forces and that they mutually shape the Chinese diaspora's everyday realities.

Following this, the second dichotomy is about the methodological division between the media-centric and non-media-centric approach when studying digital diasporas' everyday experiences. This means that by acknowledging the online-offline continuum, I do not see digital media as a mere "accessory" to one's offline life nor as a "distinct sphere" that replaces one's offline experiences with an online one (Everett, 2009), precisely because there is no such space or experience that can be classified as exclusively online or offline.

Thirdly, this thesis also rejects seeing the Chinese diaspora's self-identifying process as either active or passive. What I mean by this is that, on the one hand, digital media and using digital media do not grant the Chinese diaspora with an absolute freedom to exercise

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their agency when claiming their membership in the sphere of Chineseness. On the other hand, they should not be considered as someone who lives within an authoritarian regime and has little power to negotiate who they are. Different from this "active v.s. passive" approach, this thesis portrays a more nuanced picture that captures the way individual Chinese diaspora makes use of their limited agencies in negotiating their relationships with the sphere of Chineseness. While they are not entirely "active" during this process due to state's control and censorship, they are also not entirely "passive", because their transnational human mobility and digital connectivity provide them with new inspirations, opportunities, and leverages to challenge the confine and the readily available ideologies presented to them by the Chinese nation-state.

In this way, this thesis, as an outcome of extensive fieldworks and data collection from 2018 to 2022, was able to bring together different insights so as to answer the key research question of how Chinese digital diasporas in Japan articulate the notion of Chineseness as well as their relationships with the sphere of Chineseness. For the rest three sections of this chapter, I summarise and discuss the main findings of the thesis project in the first two sections. Then, I consider how this project could be further developed in the final section and point out potential future research directions.

1. *China and the sphere of Chineseness: Membership and territoriality*

In the context of globalisation and digitisation, many China studies scholars discuss the coming of a deconstructed (and consequently reconstructed) China where the border of this nation is no longer statically nor geographically defined, but sustained by the shared ethnicity, culture, and history (Barabantseva, 2011; Chun, 1996; Duara, 1993; Dirlik, 2013). In this sense, the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Chinese nation marks a shift in terms of what constitutes the core of China, from physical territory to the notion of common cultural links

(Duara, 2009). Consequently, Chineseness is defined as the "full participation in the economic, cultural, and social life of a Chinese community or civilisation" (Tu, 1991: 156), in which the "Chinese community or civilisation" clearly represents a Chinese cultural territory that goes beyond territorial China. By claiming that Chineseness is a notion with a culture instead of a territory core, these scholars therefore point out that it is possible for Chinese who are physically remote to engage in the regular imagining of being Chinese (Sun, 2019), because "the meaning of being Chinese is basically not a political" but a cultural question (Tu, 1991: 167).

However, as this thesis shows, part of the problem of meaningfully articulating China and Chineseness as culture-centred concepts is that many of the above-mentioned Chinese culture links are the result of official formulations by the ruling regime. The way the Chinese Party-state formulates this cultural core – by implementing strategies such as propagating the emotionally charged nationalistic sentiment – has real political implications because it aims at associating key elements of this core, such as ethnicity, history, and value, with the political agenda of the Chinese Communist Party, which is to portray it as the sole guarantor and leader, and consequently the foundation of the Chinese nation. In this sense, as discussed in Chapter 1 to 4, in the CCP's official formation both China and Chineseness have a political, or in other words, Party-centred principle, and the Party-state is able to leverage a comprehensive set of tools – including legal ones such as citizenship and ethnic categorisation, ideological ones such as the articulation of shared memories, spirits and dreams, and functional ones such as digital media, propaganda and digital divide – to repackage the political core of Chineseness as a cultural one. Therefore, different from some existing studies, this thesis illuminates that from the side of the Party-state, the meaning of being Chinese is fundamentally a political question. Claiming a membership in the Chinese nation means articulating an identity alignment to the politicised notion of Chineseness that is formulated and implemented by the

Party-state. In this way, I argued that China and the Chinese nation should be more accurately denoted as the sphere of Chineseness given their established political contour and membership.

To better answer the research question of what the notion of Chineseness entails, I adopted a historical and comparative approach in Chapter 3 and 4 and investigated how different ruling regimes of territorial China have produced particular representations of the Chinese nation as well as its residents and expatriates. In particular, I pointed out that the constantly evolving territoriality is a key attribute of the sphere of Chineseness. Initially, national territory is a salient feature in the state's articulation of Chineseness. This territoriality defines China as a non-diaspora state which reflects a notion of Chineseness that promotes the ideology of Sinocentrism and sees territorial China as the manifestation of power superiority. In this context, the membership in this non-diaspora sphere of Chineseness is defined in a rather straightforward way – it is for those who are physically located within territorial China with a Han ethnicity.

The first rearticulation of this territoriality occurred at a time when concepts such as "minzu" and "huaqiao" were introduced to the Chinese national idea following the invasion and aggression of imperialist powers. The introduction of these terms means that the membership of Chineseness now recognises ethnic Chinese who are in exile, meaning that those expatriates are no longer "traitors to Han-ethnicity China" but are members of the Zhonghua-minzu – Chinese as an ethnic category. In this way, the territoriality of the sphere of Chineseness shifts from "China as a non-diaspora state" that emphasises the geographical feature of territorial China to "China as a diaspora state" that highlights the common ethnic origin of Chinese worldwide. Furthermore, this shift in territoriality is also in tandem with the change in the Chinese national ideology that the Chinese nation is no longer a superior but a diminishing power.

When the ruling regime was passed on to the CCP, the evolvement of territoriality of the sphere of Chineseness can be divided into several stages. As discussed in Chapter 3, the first stage spans from 1949 to 1972, a period with the absence of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties. During this period, the way the CCP articulated the territoriality shares some similarities with former ruling regimes because it adopted the same strategy of leveraging the term "minzu" to formulate a Chinese nation that can accommodate ethnic Chinese from all over the world. However, evidence presented in Chapter 3 show that this territoriality is not entirely ethno-centric. As the main political interest of the CCP during this period is to defend its ruling legitimacy while implementing a "people-to-people based approach" so as to develop intergovernmental relationships with Japan without an established diplomatic tie. Consequently, the CCP on the one hand introduced a nationalistic emotional charge to the territoriality by repetitively articulating Japan's atrocity during the Sino-Japanese Wars and the alleged fact that it was the CCP who led the Chinese people to the victory of the wars. As a result, those politicised histories serve a foil to set off the CCP's status as the legit and sole guarantor of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, when facing overseas Chinese especially overseas Chinese in Japan, I demonstrated that the membership in the sphere of Chineseness was granted rather exclusively to elite Chinese diaspora who are willing to return to territorial China and contribute to the CCP's ambition of national modernisation. By portraying overseas Chinese in Japan as highly skilled and patriotic members of the Chinese nation who by default are supposed to devote themselves to China's national reinvigoration project, I argued that this territoriality is more of a class-based articulation of the membership in the sphere of Chineseness instead of an entirely ethnic-centred one.

The Party-state continues to experiment with ethnicity, the particular history of Sino-Japanese wars and the glory of its imperial past to construct various nationalistic notions such as "a shared root…dream…and spiritual gene". As discussed in Chapter 4 and 7, a key role

these notions serve is to firstly produce an officially formulated Chineseness and secondly to repackage this Chineseness as the Chinese culture that is timeless and indigenous to the Chinese people and nation, and therefore should be universally accepted by anyone with the Chinese heritage. In this way, CCP itself becomes part of what the Chinese nation entails.

However, by comparing two time frames namely the 2003 SARS Crisis and the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, I also show that this ethnically, emotionally, and nationalistically politicised sphere of Chineseness is not something that is unshakable and demands a lot of effort to sustain. This point is especially manifested during the 2003 crisis when the CCP was heavily criticised for its poor governance by both local and overseas Chinese. And although the Party-state relied heavily on state media to steer public discourses, the effectiveness of this strategy was not ideal especially among overseas Chinese in Japan given state media's limited international presence. From this case, what I have argued is that although the CCP has a vision to formulate a sphere of Chineseness with a transnational territory, this ambition does not mean that it is equipped to effectively govern this sphere, nor does the emotionally and ethnically articulated Chineseness be effective enough to form a shared sense of solidarity among ethnic Chinese to its ruling regime.

In this context, the rise of digital media and the popularisation of mainland Chinese digital platforms among ethnic Chinese both inside and outside the PRC provide the CCP with new leverages to govern the sphere of Chineseness. Digital divide ensures that although the sphere of Chineseness has a fuzzily articulated membership due to the CCP's implementation of a de-politicised identity politics, entering the loosely defined territory of this sphere means the entrance to a fixed, seemingly transnational territorial entity where boundaries are sustained by digital divide. In this sense, this thesis demonstrates that the territoriality of the sphere of Chineseness has an ambivalent feature, which is the outcome of the ruling regime's ambition to both expand China's ideological territory and restrain members of this territory to a

confine so that they can be governed and harnessed in a way that fuels the CCP's political interests.

In addition, I also illustrated how digital media introduce various coercive and discursive strategies to CCP to keep its diasporic subjects in the confine of digital divide. On the one hand, information screening, control, and surveillance allow the state to cultivate a unilaterally curated digital sphere of Chineseness where only the official narratives are allowed to be disseminated. On the other hand, given that China is a digitally divided territory where its residents' access to non-mainland Chinese digital platforms is largely restricted, regardless of the Chinese diaspora's intentions to claim or not claim an identity alignment with the sphere of Chineseness, the digitally divided media have become the only channel for them to sustain their indispensable emotional and familial ties with their homeland contacts.

Furthermore, by analysing a series of state policies that were implemented during the 2020 pandemic, such as the facemask diplomacy and sending health kit to overseas Chinese in Japan, this thesis also manifests a key transition of the sphere of Chineseness. The provision of assistance to its overseas subjects as well as to the "foreign forces" – such as Japan – marks a shift in the conceptual aspect of the Chinese nationhood from a nation in aid to a nation in rising. This shift is linked to the national celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, a key political event for the Party-state that is themed in China's gradual achievement of its goal of nation reinvigoration. In this sense, China as a nation in rising should be more accurately described as a nation in returning.

In summary, in Chapter 3 and 4 I answered the first main research question of this thesis by tracking the evolvement of the state's articulation of Chineseness from a historical perspective. This thesis shows that Chineseness represents the ethnic, cultural, historical, and conceptual aspects of Chinese nationhood and, different from some existing studies, argues

that it is fundamentally a "political question", although it can be packaged in a seemly apolitical way. In addition, the constantly evolving territoriality and membership of the sphere of Chineseness essentially represents ruling regimes' changing conceptualisation of the Chinese nation, from a celestial imperial power to a diminishing power, and now to a returning power.

2. The Chinese diaspora in Japan and their complex relationships to the sphere of Chineseness

The official formulation of the sphere of Chineseness delineates the expression of sovereign power in creating a politicised Chinese nationhood that homogenises diversity among the Chinese population, hence fostering a sense of unity and consequently associating it with solidarity to the CCP. However, how is the membership in this sphere of Chineseness articulated by the Chinese diaspora in Japan in relation to their lived experiences? The empirical evidence presented in Chapter 5, 6, 7 not only answered this question, but also attempted to reveal why they articulate their memberships in their own particular way.

The arguments I have made in those chapters illustrate that the urge of Chinese diasporas in Japan to negotiate their memberships to the sphere of Chineseness testifies to the shared struggle that the state has produced through its persistent articulation of a homogeneous notion of Chineseness. Chapter 5 and 6 illuminate that this Chineseness, with its anti-Japanese essence, makes the difficulty of asserting membership a uniquely pervasive experience among Chinese diaspora in Japan. On the one hand, this Chineseness, together with digital media, offers them a transnational stage, allowing them to engage in the regular imagining of being Chinese. This is because the "shared ethnicity, spirit, and dream" that the notion of Chineseness connotes allow them to sympathise with the discriminations and struggles experienced by other overseas Chinese, hence forming a sense of connectedness

to the sphere of Chineseness.

On the other hand, the imagining of "being Chinese" facilitated by digital connectivity does not equate to the claiming of "belonging" to the sphere of Chineseness. Firstly, the everyday lived experience serves as a reference for Chinese diasporas in Japan to rethink their connectedness to the sphere of Chineseness. The realities derived from both the offline realm – i.e. the cityscape of Japan and their personal social networks – and the online realm – i.e. not having access to certain Chinese digital platforms such as Alipay and the experience of using navigation apps to navigate through the unacquainted hometown – inspire them to question the CCP's "China as a default home" discourse, hence distancing themselves from the official notion of Chineseness.

Secondly, as a group of people who have built their lives in Japan, a daily task that many the Chinese diaspora need to deal is finding a way to balance the contrast between the two roles they are constantly playing – the role as a Chinese who is taught to view Japan as China's ultimate other, and the role as a diasporic Chinese who wants to live a good life on the soil of China's ultimate other. Therefore, the anti-Japanese essence of the CCP's Chineseness plays more of a centrifugal instead of a centripetal force that pushes the Chinese diaspora away from the nationalistic sphere of Chineseness. However, this is not to say that the Chinese diaspora in Japan tend to disassociate themselves from it completely. In the context where diasporic experiences of discrimination and marginality prevent them from aligning with the Japanese national identity (Liu-Farrer, 2020), the mediated emotional and familial ties offer them a much-needed place to belong – a re-articulated, de-politicised sphere of Chineseness in which membership in this sphere means to "keep the family close" and "not taking side in the never-ending Sino-Japanese battle".

However, an important point I have demonstrated in Chapter 6 is that being squeezed

into the crevice between an anti-Japanese China and an ethno-nationalist Japan does not mean that the Chinese diaspora are a group of people lacking agency. Just as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey pointed out, while we are "shaped by the city, we are also shaping the city in a way that our hearts desire". My observation on the Chinese diaspora's use of "Moments" function on WeChat delineates their agency of offering a different articulation from the official formulation of Chineseness. For some of them, Chineseness represents a Chinese membership that can only be claimed by Chinese who enjoy the privilege of international human mobility. Although the common use of Chinese language is an important element to the CCP's sphere of Chineseness (Duara, 1993), they are able to establish a class interpretation of Chineseness through the strategic use of Japanese language, therefore claiming a more transnational and transformational membership and establishing an "us v.s. others" narrative within the ostensibly homogenous sphere of Chineseness.

Another contribution this thesis has made is that it manifests the sphere of Chineseness as a heteronormative space and shows how the intersectionality of axes of differentiation in ethnicity, mobility, connectivity, and gender produces complex memberships among queer Chinese in Japan. For many of them, their diasporic experiences are a patchwork of multiple perceived otherness: they are seen as the ethnic and gender "other" in the hegemonically patriarchal Japanese society; and at the same time, they are perceived as a gender and consequently an ethno-cultural "other" in hetero-nationalistic China. This is because in the PRC context, queerness is not simply a gender and sexuality-related notion. Instead, it pertains a political meaning and entangles with the CCP's nationalist discourse.

First of all, with its aim to align the interest of family to the interest of the Party-state, familial events that manifest heteronormativity such as heterosexual marriage and biological reproduction have been repackaged in a way that represents the nationalistic notion of Chineseness. The CCP managed to do so largely through its arbitrary reading of Confucianism,

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in which it strategically picks out particular Confucius ideologies, such as "xiao – filial piety" and "chuanzong-jiedai – the continuity of familial clan", and conceptually associates them with the survival and continuation of the Chinese nation as well as the "shared dream" of national reinvigoration (Liu, 2021), hence its political interests become part of a traditional and timeless values that are indigenous to the Chinese people and nation. During this process, a nationalistic moral order is also established. Heteronormative Chinese with their ability to biologically reproduce are articulated as filial both to their families as well as to the Chinese nation. On the contrary, queerness is consequently portrayed as a threat to nation building, and is therefore immoral and incompatible to the shared virtue, values, and nationalistic membership. As a result, some queer Chinese identify themselves as an "unqualified Chinese", actively justifying their marginalised position within the sphere of Chineseness.

Next, given the way queers and queerness are described as a threat to the survival of the Chinese nation, they are consequently equated with notions such as "the West", as its previous aggression also threated China's survival. In this way, queerness is ultimately linked to the CCP's wider "us v.s. others" nationalist discourse, which means that it is not simply the "others" within the Chinese nation, but also the "others" to the Chinese nation. As the empirical evidence in Chapter 7 manifested, queers' experiences of being described as "hanjian", "eternal sinner", "perverted jingri" and "worshipper of Japan" clearly indicate how queer Chinese are denied a membership in the heteronormative sphere of Chineseness.

Meanwhile, above empirical evidence also illustrate the undesirable result one may receive if accidentally or unwillingly reveal their gender identity. In this context, some queer Chinese also actively disassociate themselves from hetero-nationalistic China or limit their interactions with contacts who reside within this hetero-nationalistic sphere. In this sense, for some queer Chinese in Japan, not claiming membership as a part of the sphere of Chineseness is both a consequence of and a response to their very sensitive positioning as

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the "others" within and to the Chinese society.

However, queer Chinese diaspora's membership becomes more complex when their "otherness" of the Chinese society intersects with their "otherness" of the Japanese society. As manifested by the informants' narratives, events such as the banning of online queer communities or reallocating to a place where neither online nor offline queer communities are accessible – this fusion of marginalised experiences derived from their interactions with the homeland, the receiving society, as well as the online and offline queer communities can lead to the formation of a sense of placelessness. Consequently, queer Chinese often struggle to conceptually develop a sense of membership given the absence of "place", a result of China and Japan's clear, albeit problematic marginalisation of the queer population.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 to 7 of this thesis contribute to answer an important but so far insufficiently explored question in the study of the Chinese diaspora in Japan, which is why the Chinese diaspora may or may not claim an identity alignment with the Chinese nation, and why do they do so differently. By investigating both the online and offline lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora, this thesis makes clear that they make complex membership (dis)claiming decisions to both benefit from their privilege of digital connectivity and international mobility and to respond to various marginalities emerging from the intersectionality of multiple axes of differentiation, such as ethnicity, mobility, connectivity, and gender. Together with other chapters, the value of this thesis is that it provides rich and much needed empirical evidence that contribute to conceptualise the diasporic experiences as well as the identity politics of the Chinese diaspora who live in a crucial era – while we have been witnessing China's rise and its transition from a diminishing to a returning power, as a response to this Japan has been continuously articulating a "China threat" discourse, which not only further promotes its ethno-nationalistic ideology but also directs the ethnicity-based marginality toward the Chinese diaspora in Japan. In this context, this thesis contributes to present that

while those events create complex Sino-Japanese power dynamics, the presence of digital media means that the Chinese diaspora in Japan are influenced by them in a new way – "new" in the sense that the digital mediation fills those power and forces into every dimension of their lives, making their daily reality a constant identity negotiation.

Finally, given that the Chinese diaspora's identity and membership issues are related to the question of what the Chinese nation represents and who the Chinese nation accommodates, as China's presence in the world and its conflicts with other countries – such as Japan – become more significant, these issues are likely to be more visible and pronounced. In this context, this thesis presents a timely discussion on these issues and can be used as an inspiration to further study the manifestation of Sino-Japanese power dynamics on the Chinese diaspora in Japan.

3. Some final remarks

This thesis presents several exciting opportunities to further the study of identity politics among the Chinese diaspora in Japan. Although I have invited participants with a wide variety of backgrounds to join the research, given that they all enjoy an economically stable life in Japan and have the ability to move freely across borders, this project leaves room for future studies to investigate whether the issues reported in this thesis persist among less privileged overseas Chinese, such as those who are categorised as informal migrants. Methodologically, in order to better manifest the complexity of the Chinese diaspora's lived experiences both online and offline, quantitative approaches such as big-data driven methods can be employed, and more digital platforms, especially platforms outside the PRC's digital divide, such as Twitter and Telegram, can be included as ethnographic sites. This also means that digital media as a continuum of the online and the offline realm should be recognised by researchers not only as a research site but also as a powerful tool to unpack ongoing social events and phenomena.

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Appendix – 1: Survey document

The original questionnaire was written in Simplified Chinese. The English translation follows the original text.

<div align="center">前言</div>

您好，我是早稻田大学亚洲太平洋研究科博士生。因毕业论文，需要针对在日华人进行关于电子媒体使用状况的问卷调查，主要探讨日常生活中智能媒体设备（例如智慧手机，iPad，笔记型电脑等）以及电子媒体（例如微信，Instagram，email 等）使用习惯议题；以下问题期望获得您的协助，欢迎您大方分享日常使用经验和想法。

本问卷为匿名填答并仅供学术研究使用。您的个人信息绝不搜集，绝不揭露，请您安心赐答。填答完毕后，希望您踊跃分享此问卷连结给身边的华人朋友填写。于此致上万分感谢！

<div align="center">Preface</div>

Hello, I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University. For my dissertation, I need to conduct a survey on the use of digital media among Chinese in Japan. The survey focuses on the use of digital devices (e.g. smartphones, iPads, laptops, etc.) and social media (e.g. WeChat, Instagram, etc.) in daily life.

This questionnaire is anonymous and is for academic research purposes only. Your personal information will not be collected or disclosed, so please feel free to give us your answers. Once you have completed the questionnaire, we hope you will share the link with your Chinese friends. Thank you very much!

第一节-基本信息 （Section 1: Basic information）

1.1. **请问您的性别？ (To which gender do you most identify?)**

- ○ 女性 (Female)

- ○ 男性 (Male)

- ○ 上列之外 (Not Listed)

1.2. **请问您现在的国籍是? (What is your nationality?)**

- ○ 中国大陆国籍 (People's Republic of China)

- ○ 日本国籍 (Japan)

- ○ 上列之外（请详述_____） (Not Listed, please specify_____)

1.3. **请问您的年龄段? (What is your age?)**

- ○ 20-29

- ○ 30-39

- ○ 40-49

- ○ 50-59

- ○ 60 及以上 (60 and above)

1.4. **请问您的婚姻状况? (What is your marital status?)**

- ○ 未婚 (Unmarried)

- ○ 已婚 (Married)

- ○ 其他 (Not Listed)

1.5. **请问您的最高学历为？ (What is your highest educational attainment?)**

- ○ 高中，技术学校 (Secondary (high) school / technical college diploma)

- ○ 本科 (Bachelor's degree)

- ○ 大学院生 (Master's degree)

- ○ 博士生及以上 (PhD degree and above)

1.6. **上记之学历是在何地点获取？ (Where did you acquired the degree indicated in Q4?)**

- ○ 中国大陆 (People's Republic of China)

- ○ 日本 (Japan)

- ○ 上列之外 (Not Listed)

1.7. **请问您出生于中国何省份？ (What province in China were you born in?)**

——————————————

1.8. **请问您现在居住于日本何县？ (Where do you currently live in Japan?)**

——————————————

1.9. **您最近一年的月收入为？ (What is your monthly income for this year?)**

- ○ JPY 200 – 300K

- ○ JPY 310 – 400K

- ○ JPY 410 – 500K

- ○ JPY 510K and above

1.10. 您来日多长时间？ **(How long have you been in Japan?)**

○ 3-4 年 (3-4 years)

○ 5-6 年 (5-6 years)

○ 7 年以上 (More than 7 years)

1.11. 您每月的支出主要用于下列哪些选项（多选题）？ （**Which of the following options do you spend most of your money on each month (multiple choice)?**）

○ 基本生活支出(例如气/水/电/网/食宿/交通费用)(Basic living expenses (housing, transport, food, clothing, and utility bills))

○ 线上娱乐，学习 （Online learning, training and recreational activities）

○ 线下娱乐，学习（Online learning, training and recreational activities）

○ 存款（Saving account）

○ 国际汇款（Remittance）

○ 投资理财（Investment）

○ 健康，美容，医疗（Health, beauty and medication）

○ 旅行 Travelling (domestic & international)

○ 育儿（Child raring）

○ 宠物及其他 （Pet and others）

第二节-电子设备^{注1}**使用状况** （**Section 2: Digital device usage behaviour**）

注 1：此问卷中，'智能媒体设备'均指基于互联网的智能媒体设备。通常，这些设备包括但不限于台式·笔记本·平板电脑、智慧型手机、可穿戴智能设备（如 Apple Watch）和基于互联网的游戏设备（如 PlayStation 和 Xbox）

Note 1: In this questionnaire, the term "digital devices" refers to internet-based smart media devices. Typically, these devices include, but are not limited to, desktop/laptop/tablet computers, smartphones, wearable smart devices (e.g. Apple Watch) and internet-based gaming devices (e.g. PlayStation and Xbox).

2.1. 据上述'智能媒体设备'之定义，请问您拥有多少台'智能媒体设备'？ **(According to above definition regarding 'digital device', how many digital devices do you own?)**

○ 我没有任何电子设备 (I do not have any digital devices)

○ 1 台

○ 2-3 台

○ 4-5 台

○ 6 台及以上 (6 and above)

2.2. 请从下表中选择所有您拥有的智能媒体设备（多选题） **(Please select all the digital devices you own from the list below)**

○ 台式电脑 (desktop)

○ 笔记型电脑 (laptop)

○ 智慧型手机 (smartphone)

○ 平板型电脑 (tablet)

○ 可穿戴智能设备 (wearable devices)

○ 连入网络的游戏设备 (internet-based gaming devices)

2.3. 请用 **1-5** 之数字标明您能在何种程度上完成下列任务 **(1: 十分不擅长； 5: 十分擅长) (Please indicate, using a number from 1 to 5, the extent to which you are able to perform the following tasks (1: very poorly; 5: very well))**

○ 使用文字编辑类软体 (Use of text editing software)

○ 在电子表格中插入/使用积分算数公式 (Inserting/ using integral arithmetic formulas in spreadsheets)

○ 使用软体进行高级数据分析和处理 (Using software for advanced data analysis and manipulation)

○ 使用演讲类软体 (Use of presentation software)

○ 发送带有附件的电子邮件 (Sending emails with attachments)

○ 在网路论坛上发帖/回复贴文 (Posting/ replying contents on forums)

○ 变更文件格式 (Changing file formats)

○ 搜索,下载并安装所需软件 (Searching, downloading and installing the required software)

○ 验证,更改软件认证和设置 (Verifying and changing software authentication and settings)

○ 制作和管理一个网站 (Creating and managing a website)

○ 安装,更改,替换操作系统 (Installing, changing and replacing operating systems)

○ 使用行政类软件 (Using of administrative software)

○ 和其他人在线上聊天，语音和视频 (Communicating with others online via text, audio and video)

○ 保护自己的在线个人信息 (Protecting your personal information online)

○ 保护自己的电脑不被病毒感染 (Protecting your computer from viruses)

2.4. 您经常使用的即时聊天工具是（多选题） **(Which of the following chatting app do you use regularly?)**

- ○ QQ
- ○ 微信 (WeChat)
- ○ 微博 (Weibo)
- ○ Instagram
- ○ 脸书（Facebook）
- ○ LINE
- ○ Whatsapp

2.5. 请问您的电脑使用频率是 **(How often do you use your computer?)**

- ○ 每天多次 (Multiple times a day)
- ○ 每天数次或几乎每天使用 (Several times a day or almost every day)
- ○ 比较少使用 (Less often)
- ○ 无电脑 (I don't have a computer)

2.6. 请问您的手机使用频率是 **(How often do you use your smartphone?)**

- ○ 每天多次 (Multiple times a day)
- ○ 每天数次或几乎每天使用 (Several times a day or almost every day)
- ○ 比较少使用 (Less often)
- ○ 无手机 (I don't have a smartphone)

2.7. 请问您通常会在电子设备上阅读中国媒体的新闻,杂志,报道吗? **(Do you usually read news, magazines and reports from PRC media agencies on your digital devices?)**

- ○ 从不 (Never)
- ○ 很少 (Rarely)
- ○ 偶尔 (Occasionally)
- ○ 经常 (Frequently)
- ○ 每天多次 (Multiple times a day)

2.8. 请问您通常会在电子设备上阅读日本媒体的新闻,杂志,报道吗? **(Do you usually read news, magazines and reports from Japanese media agencies on your digital devices?)**

- ○ 从不 (Never)
- ○ 很少 (Rarely)
- ○ 偶尔 (Occasionally)
- ○ 经常 (Frequently)
- ○ 每天多次 (Multiple times a day)

2.9. 您每天使用社交软体（例如微博，微信，Tiktok）的时间为? **How much time do you spend using social media (e.g. Weibo, WeChat, Tiktok) each day?**

- ○ 小于 1 小时 **(Less than an hour)**
- ○ 3-5 小时 **(About 3-5 hours)**
- ○ 5-7 小时 **(About 5-7 hours)**
- ○ 大于 7 小时 **(More than 7 hours)**

2.10. 您的微信好友数量 **(How many WeChat contacts od you have?)**

- ○ 100 人以下 **(Less than 100 contacts)**
- ○ 100-200 人
- ○ 200-300 人
- ○ 300 人以上 **(More than 300 contacts)**

2.11. 您的微博好友数量 **(How many Weibo contacts od you have?)**

- ○ 100 人以下 **(Less than 100 contacts)**
- ○ 100-200 人
- ○ 200-300 人
- ○ 300 人以上 **(More than 300 contacts)**

2.12. 您微信联系人以何种类型居多？**(What is the majority of your WeChat contacts?)**

- ○ 家人，亲戚 (Family members and relatives)
- ○ 工作及事业伙伴 (Colleagues and business partners)
- ○ 同学、朋友 (Schoolmates and friends)
- ○ 陌生人（例如淘宝店主，水电工之类不认识的人）(Strangers (e.g. Taobao customer services, plumbers)

2.13. 您的日常联系人中哪种人最多？ **(Which type of people is most represented in your daily contacts?)**

- ○ 在日的同事，家人，同学，朋友 (Colleagues, family members, schoolmates and friends in Japan)
- ○ 在中国的同事，家人，同学，朋友 (Colleagues, family members, schoolmates and friends in China)
- ○ 在其他国家的同事，家人，同学，朋友 (Colleagues, family members, schoolmates and friends in other countries)

2.14. 您所认识的居住在日本的人中哪种人最多？**(Which type of people is most represented among your contacts who live in Japan?)**

- ○ 日本人（不包含归化的中国人）(Japanese (excluding naturalised Chinese))
- ○ 中国人（包含拥有除中国籍以外国籍的中国人）(Chinese (including Chinese with nationalities other than PRC nationality))
- ○ 从中国以外国家来日的人 (Those who came to Japan from countries other than China)

2.15. 您和中国国内的人取得联络的主要目的是（多选题）？**(What is the main purpose of you contacting with people back in China?)**

- ○ 和家人保持亲情 (To maintain familial ties)
- ○ 和朋友保持友情 (To maintain friendships)
- ○ 和伴侣保持亲密关系 (To maintain intimate relationships with your partner)
- ○ 拓展人脉 (To expand social networks)
- ○ 工作需要 (For business purposes)
- ○ 生活需要（例如处理公关文书）(For administrative purposes (i.e. processing documents))

2.16. 您和在日本的人取得联络的主要目的是（多选题）？**(What is the main purpose of you contacting with people in Japan?)**

- ○ 和家人保持亲情 (To maintain familial ties)
- ○ 和朋友保持友情 (To maintain friendships)
- ○ 和伴侣保持亲密关系 (To maintain intimate relationships with your partner)
- ○ 拓展人脉 (To expand social networks)
- ○ 工作需要 (For business purposes)

○ 生活需要（例如处理公关文书）(For administrative purposes (i.e. processing documents))

2.17. 当我感到伤心,抑郁或痛苦的时候,我会需要获得家人,亲人和朋友的情感支持。您在何种程度上同意这个观点吗? **(When I feel sad, depressed or in pain, I need emotional support from family, relatives and friends. To which extend do you agree with this statement?)**

○ 1 完全不同意 (Completely disagree)

○ 2

○ 3

○ 4

○ 5 完全同意 (Completely agree)

2.18. 平均来说，您和中国的亲人，朋友取得联络的频率是? **(On average, how often do you get in touch with your family and friends in China?)**

○ 每天 (Daily)

○ 每周 (Every week)

○ 每个月 (Every month)

○ 很少联系 (Rarely)

○ 没有亲人，朋友在中国 (I don't have families or friends in China)

2.19. 平均来说，您和在日本的亲人，朋友取得联络的频率是? **(On average, how often do you get in touch with your family and friends in Japan?)**

○ 每天 (Daily)

○ 每周 (Every week)

○ 每个月 (Every month)

○ 很少联系 (Rarely)

○ 没有亲人，朋友在日本 (I don't have families or friends in Japan)

2.20. 您通常在什么时候使用聊天 **APP**（例如微信和 **QQ**）（多选题）**(When do you usually use chatting apps?)**

○ 工作学习时 (While working or studying)

○ 吃饭时 (While eating)

○ 睡觉前 (Being going to bed)

○ 上卫生间时 (When using the bathroom)

○ 上下班途中 (On the way to and from work)

○ 工作学习间隙时 (When taking a break during working/studying hours)

○ 其他 (other)

2.21. 您通常在什么时候使用资讯类 **APP**（例如微博，新闻 **APP**）（多选题）

○ 工作学习时 (While working or studying)

○ 吃饭时 (While eating)

○ 睡觉前 (Being going to bed)

○ 上卫生间时 (When using the bathroom)

○ 上下班途中 (On the way to and from work)

○ 工作学习间隙时 (When taking a break during working/studying hours)

○ 其他 (other)

2.22. 您使用什么类型的 **APP** 比较多？（多选题）**(What types of app do you use more often? (Multiple choice))**

○ 聊天类（例如微信）(Chatting apps such as WeChat)

○ 购物类（例如淘宝，京东）(Shopping apps such as Taobao and Jingdong)

○ 资讯类（例如微博，腾讯新闻）(News apps such as Weibo News and Tencent News)

○ 交通类（例如导航，打车软件）(Transport apps such as navigation and taxi apps)

○ 娱乐及视频类（例如抖音，BiliBili）(Entertainment and video streaming apps such as Tiktok and BiliBili)

○ 金融类（例如网上银行，在线投资理财，股票）(Financing apps such as online banking, online investment and stocks)

○ 社会保障类（例如社保金缴纳，公文处理）(Administrative apps such as paying social security and processing documents)

2.23. 您比较关心下列哪种类型的资讯？（多选题）**(Which of the following types of information do you care more about? (Multiple choice))**

○ 日本本地资讯，新闻 (Information and news in Japan)

○ 除日中之外的资讯，新闻 (Information and news in regions other than Japan and China)

○ 中国的资讯和新闻 (Information and news in China)

2.24. 您经常使用社交软体的那些功能？请依据您的具体情况打分，范围为 **1-5** 分，**1** 分为完全不使用，**5** 分为经常使用。**(Which SNS features do you use regularly? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being do not use at all and 5 being frequently use)**

○ 一对一聊天 (Chatting with others individually)

○ 群组聊天 (Chatting with others in group chat)

○ 使用语音和视频聊天 (Chatting with others using audio or video)

○ 认识新朋友 (Making new friends)

○ 关注好友朋友圈并进行互动 (Following and interacting with your friends' Moments)

○ 在朋友圈发布自己的动态 (Posting your own news on Moments)

○ 分享音乐、视频 (Sharing music and videos with others)

○ 分享讯息、资讯 (Sharing news and information)

○ 浏览公众号、看新闻 (Browsing Subscription Account and reading news)

○ 玩游戏 (Playing games)

○ 使用在线支付或购物 (Using online payments; shopping online)

○ 和工作上的人联络 (Contacting people at work)

2.25. 您对社交软体的依赖度如何？请依据您的具体情况打分，范围为 **1-5** 分，**1** 分为完全不依赖，**5** 分为完全依赖。**(How much do you rely on social media? Please rate on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not true at all and 5 being very true.)**

○ 无聊时使用会觉得有意思些 (It's fun to use when I'm bored)

○ 使用的时间经常超过自己原定的时间 (I often use it for longer than my intention)

○ 一天不使用会觉得不自在 (I'll feel uncomfortable if I couldn't use it for a single day)

○ 使用这些软体改变了我的作息时间 (Using these apps has disrupted my routine)

○ 使用这些软体让我在朋友之前有了更多谈资 (Using these apps gives me more to talk about with friends)

○ 使用这些软体改变了我对一些事物的原有看法 (Using these apps has changed the way I see certain things

Appendix – 2: Chinese-language diasporic publications released between 1898 and 1911

Note:
1. This list was compiled based on my own investigation.
2. Empirical resources I have used to compile this list including: Abe (1990); Boku (2017); Eto, Wang and Xiao (1991); Ishi (1983); Kamigaito (1982); Saga (1996); Shibata (2013); Suetugu (2009); Wang (2017); Yamamuro (2001); Yang (2019); and Zhou (2000).

Name of the Publication	Founder(s) / Editor(s)	Year of Issue	Place of Issue
農桑雑誌 (Nongsang-zazhi)	農友社 (Nongyoushe)	1888	Yamanashi
清議報 (The China Discussion)	梁啟超 (Liang Qichao)	1898	Tokyo
開智録 (The Wisdom Guide)	鄭貫公 (Zheng Guangong)、馮自由 (Feng Ziyou)、馮斯欒 (Feng Siluan)	1900	Yokohama
訳書彙編(Yakushō-ihen) (Later on renamed to 政法学報 (Zhengfa Xuebao) in 1903)	戢翼翬 (Ji Yihui)、楊廷棟 (Yang Tingdong)、楊蔭杭 (Yang Yinhang)、雷奮 (Lei Fen)	1900	Tokyo
国民報 (The Chinese National Magazine)	戢翼翬 (Ji Yihui)、秦力山 (Qin Lishan)、王寵恵 (Wang Chonghui)、沈翔雲 (Shen Xiangyun)	1901	Tokyo
新民叢報 (Xinmin-congbao)	梁啓超 (Liang Qichao)、馮紫珊 (Feng Zishan)	1902	Yokohama
新小説 (Xin-xiaoshuo)	梁啓超 (Liang Qichao)、趙毓林 (Chao Yulin)	1902	Yokohama
遊学訳編 (Youxue-yibian)	湖南省同郷会 (Chinese Alumni Association of Hunan Province)	1902	Tokyo
湖北学生界（漢声）(Student Community of Hubei (The Voice of China))	劉成禺 (Liu Chengyu)、李書城 (Li Shucheng)、王璟芳 (Wang Jingfang)、尹援一 (Yi Yuanyi(	1903	Tokyo
直説 (Zhishuo)	直隶(北京、天津、河南省一带)留学生 (Chinese students from Zhili Area (Beijing, Tianjin and Henan))	1903	Tokyo
浙江潮 (Zhejiangchao)	蔣智由 (Jiang Zhiyou)、蔣方震 (Jiang Fangzhen)、孫翼中 (Sun Yizhong)	1903	Tokyo
江蘇 (Jiangsu)	秦毓鎏 (Qin Yuliu)、張肇桐 (Zhang Zhaotong)、汪榮實 (Wang Rongshi)	1903	Tokyo
江西白話 (Jiangxi Baihua)	張世鷹 (Zhang ShiYing)	1903	Tokyo
『江蘇』の「女学論文/文叢」(Jiangsu – Nuxuelunwen and Wenye Section)	秦毓鎏 (Qin Yuliu)、陳彦安 (Chen Yanan)	1903	Tokyo
女学報 (Nuxuebao)	秦毓鎏 (Qin Yuliu)、陳彦安 (Chen Yanan)	1903	Tokyo
白話報 (Baihua Newspaper)	秋瑾 (Qiu Jin)	1904	Tokyo
日新月報 (Rixin-yuebao)	周金史 (Zhou Jinshi)	1904	Tokyo
海外叢学録 (Haiwai yexuelu)	由宗龍 (You Zonglong)、劉昌明 (Liu Changming)	1904	Tokyo
女子魂 (Nuzihun)	抱真女士 (Lady Baozhen)	1904	Tokyo
二十世紀之支那 (Nijyu seikino shina)	黄興 (Huang Xing)、宋教仁 (Song Jiaoren)、白逾桓 (Bai Yuhuan)、田桐 (Tian Tong)	1905	Tokyo
第一晋話報 (Diyi-jihuabao)	山西留日生同郷会 (Student Association of Shanxi)	1905	Tokyo
醒獅 (Xingshi)	李曇 (Li Yun)	1905	Tokyo
晨鐘 (CHenzhong)	蔣衍昇 (Jiang Yansheng)、丁鼎丞 (Ding Dingchen)	1905	Tokyo
民報 (Minhō)	胡漢民 (Hu Hanmin)、章太炎 (Zhang Tayan)、汪精衛 (Wang Jingwei)、陶成章 (Tai Chengzhang)	1905	Tokyo
音楽小雑誌 (Yinyue-xiaozazhi)	李叔同 (Li Shutong)	1906	Tokyo

法政雑誌 (fazheng zazhi)	張一鵬 (Zhang Yipeng)	1906	Tokyo
革命軍報 (Geming junbao)	旋亭 (Xuan Ting)	1906	Tokyo
復報 (Fubao)	柳亜子 (Liu Yazi)、高天梅 (Gao Tianmei)、田桐 (Tiantong)	1906	Tokyo
新訳界 (Xinyijie)	范熙壬 (Fan Xiren)	1906	Tokyo
雲南 (Yunnan)	呉琨 (Wu Kun)、張耀曾 (Zhang Yaozeng)	1906	Tokyo
鵑声 (Juansheng)	雷鉄崖 (Lei Tieya)	1906	Tokyo
直言 (Zhiyan)	直隶(北京、天津、河南省一带)留学生 (Chinese students from Zhili Area (Beijing, Tianjin and Henan))	1906	Tokyo
洞庭波(Dongtingbo, later on renamed to 漢幟 (Hanzhi) in 1907)	楊守仁 (Yang Shouren)、陳家鼎 (Chen Jiading)、仇亮 (Chou Liang)、寧調元 (Ning Diaoyuan)	1906	Tokyo
豫報 (Yubao)	河南留日学生 (Student Association of Henan)	1906	Tokyo
教育 (Jiaoyu)	藍公武 (Lan Gongwu)、馮世徳 (Feng Shide)、張東蓀 (Zhang Dongsun)	1906	Tokyo
官報 (Guanbao)	東京留学生監督処 (Chinese Student Supervision Office in Tokyo)	1906	Tokyo
法政学交通社月報 (Fazhengxue jiaotongshe yuebao)	孟昭常 (Meng Zhaochang)	1906	Tokyo
農報 (Nongbao)	Unknown	1906	Tokyo
学報 (Xuebao)	何天柱 (He Tianzhu)、梁徳龍 (Liang Delong)	1907	Tokyo
中国新報 (Zhongguo Xinbao)	楊度 (Yang Du)	1907	Tokyo
漢風 (Hanfeng)	時牲 (Shi Shen)	1907	Tokyo
牖報 (Youbao)	李慶芳 (Li Qingfang)	1907	Tokyo
医薬学報 (Yiyaoxuebao)	中国医薬学会 (Chinese Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences)	1907	Tokyo
大同報 (Datongbao)	叔達 (Shu Da)	1907	Tokyo
遠東見聞録 (Yuandong jianwenlu)	李士鋭 (Li Shirui)	1907	Tokyo
科学一斑 (Kexueyiban)	科学研究会 (Research Association of Science)	1907	Tokyo
秦隴報 (Qinlongbao)	陝西留学生 (Student Association of Shanxi)	1907	Tokyo
晋声 (Jinsheng)	景定成 (Jing Dingcheng)、景耀月 (Jing Yaoyue)、谷思 (Gu Si)	1907	Tokyo
政論 (Zhenglun)	蔣智由 (Jiang Zhiyou)	1907	Tokyo
粤西 (Yuexi)	卜世偉 (Bo Shiwei)、劉崛 (Liu Jue)	1907	Tokyo
大江報 (Dajiangbao)	夏重民 (Xia Zhongmin)、盧信 (Lu Xin)	1907	Tokyo
河南 (Henan)	杜潛 (Du Qian)、劉積学 (Liu Jixue)	1907	Tokyo
中国新女界雑誌 (Chinese New Feminine World Magazine)	燕斌 (Yan Bin)	1907	Tokyo
天義報 (Journal of Natural Justice)	何震 (He Zhen)	1907	Tokyo
二十世紀之中国女子 (Eshishijizhi zhongguonuzi)	恨海女士 (Lady Henhai)	1907	Tokyo
四川 (Sichuan)	雷鉄崖 (Lei Tieya)、鄧絜 (Deng Jie)、呉玉章 (Wu Yuzhang)	1908	Tokyo
学海 (Xuehai)	北京大学留日学生編訳社 (Peking University Chinese Student in Japan Translation Club)	1908	Tokyo
関隴 (Guanlong)	党松年 (Dang Songnian)、白毓庚 (Bai Yugeng)、范振緒 (Fan Zhenxu)、党積齡 (Dang Jiling)	1908	Tokyo
滇話報 (Dianhuabao)	劉鐘華 (Liu Zhonghua)	1908	Tokyo
夏声 (Xiasheng)	井勿幕 (Jing Wumu)、楊銘源 (Yang Mingyuan)	1908	Tokyo
衡報 (Hengbao)	劉師培 (Liu Shipei)	1908	Tokyo
武学雑誌 (Wuxuezazhi)	武学編訳社 (Martial Arts Translation Society)	1908	Tokyo
教育新報 (Jiaoyu xinbao)	留日湖北教育会 (The Hubei Association for Education of Chinese Students in Japan)	1908	Tokyo
支那革命叢報 (The Chinese Revolution Magazine)	清國革命黨 (Revolutionary Party of Qing)	1908	Tokyo
国報 (Guobao)	曹澍 (Cao Shu)	1908	Tokyo
江西 (Jiangxi)	湯増壁 (Tang Zengbi)	1908	Tokyo
日華新報 (The Nikkwa	夏重民 (Xia Zhongmin)	1908	Tokyo

Shimpo)

海軍 (Haijun)	海陸軍留学生監督処其編訳社 (Translation Office of the Chinese Student Supervision Department of Naval and Land Forces)	1909	Tokyo
湘路警鐘 (Xianglu-jingzhong)	焦達峰 (Jiao Dafeng)	1909	Tokyo
憲法新志 (Xianfa-xinzhi)	呉冠英 (Wu Guanying)	1909	Tokyo
学林 (Xuelin)	章絳 (Zhang Jiang)	1909	Tokyo
中国商業研究会月報 (Zhongguo shangyeyanjiuhui yuebao)	中国商業研究会 (China Business Research Association)	1910	Tokyo
教育今語雑誌 (Jiaoyu jinyuzazhi)	章太炎 (Zhang Yaiyan)、陶成章 (Tao Chengzhang)	1910	Tokyo
鉄路界 (Tielujie)	楊日新 (Yang Rixin)	1910	Tokyo
中国蚕糸業会報 (Zhongguo cansi yehuibao)	中国蚕糸業会事務所 (China Sericulture Association Office)	1910	Tokyo
南洋群島商業研究会雑誌 (Nanyangqundao shangyeyanjiuhui zazhi)	李文権 (Li Wenquan)	1910	Tokyo
浙湖工業同志会雑誌 (Zhehugongye tongzhihui zazhi)	東京浙湖工業同志会 (Industry Comradeship Association of Zhejiang and Hubei in Tokyo)	1910	Tokyo
中国青年学粋 (Zhongguo qingnian xuecui)	unkown	1911	Tokyo
留日女学会雑誌 (Liuri nuxuehui zazhi)	唐群英 (Tang Qunying)	1911	Tokyo

Appendix – 3: About the interviewees

	Female	Male	Total
Age group			
20–30	27	12	39
31–40	8	10	18
41–50	3	3	6
51–60	1	3	4
60 and above	1	1	2
Residential area			
Tokyo	23	15	36
Kanagawa	6	5	11
Saitama	7	5	12
Ibaraki	1	-	1
Niigata	1	-	1
Mie	1	-	1
Osaka	2	1	3
Kyoto	-	2	2
Kobe	-	1	1
Fukuoka	1	-	1
Length of residence in Japan			
3–5 years	15	9	24
6–8 years	15	18	33
9 years and above	9	3	12
Educational attainment			
Undergraduate degree	26	13	39
Master's degree	11	9	20
Doctoral degree and above	3	7	10
Monthly income level			
200,000 – 300,000 JPY	8	5	13
300,000 – 500,000 JPY	27	13	40
Above 500,000 JPY	5	11	16

1. Basic demographics of the informants

2. List of interviewees

Notes:

*1. The description of occupation may not match with the informants' legal residence status as indicated on their residence card. For instance, my informant Bali described himself as an 'entrepreneur', because at the time of the interview he was planning to establish his own business after graduating from a master's degree course. Therefore, although he self-identified as an entrepreneur, he was holding a student visa.

*2. For the English translation of the Status of Residence, see Immigration Services Agency of Japan (ISA), Ministry of Justice (MOJ)'s website (Accessible via

< https://www.isa.go.jp/en/applications/procedures/zairyu_henko10.html >).

Alias	Age	Gender	Occupation[*1]	Citizenship	Residence status[*2]
Interviewees referred to this study by key research participants Rong and Qintian					
Yishan	27	Female	Entrepreneur	China	Business Manager (BM)
Shaotang	28	Male	Entrepreneur	China	Highly Skilled Professional (HSP)
Chu	55	Male	Entrepreneur	Japan	-
Huairu	25	Female	Financial consultant	China	Engineer/ Specialist in Humanities/ International Services (ESHIS)
Wan	37	Female	Teacher	China	Professor
Mili	24	Female	Student	China	Student
Bali	24	Male	Entrepreneur	China	Student
Yaya	25	Female	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Qinxin	25	Female	Ceramic artist	China	Artist
Interviewees recruited via the researcher's personal and familial networks					
Lili	29	Female	Medical consultant	China	Medical Service (MS)
Tangyue	38	Female	Lawyer	Japan	-
Huahua	24	Female	Business worker	China	ESHIS
Xinni	23	Male	Student	China	Student
Qinhui	40	Male	Banker	China	Permanent Resident (PR)
Suica	23	Female	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Qintian	27	Male	Student / entrepreneur	China	Student
Changying	56	Female	Entrepreneur	Japan	-
Zhong	28	Male	Programmer	China	ESHIS
Fanyi	31	Female	Interpreter	China	ESHIS
Ziyu	31	Male	Art curator	China	PR
Bing	30	Male	Business investor	China	ESHIS
Yuxuan	28	Male	Entrepreneur	China	HSP
Lixi	39	Female	Entrepreneur	Japan	PR
Youan	51	Male	Entrepreneur	China	PR
Mayumi	27	Female	Office worker / hostess	China	ESHIS
Yong	36	Male	Doctor	China	MS
Sansan	29	Female	Art consultant	China	ESHIS
Ajin	26	Male	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Chengrong	29	Female	Therapist	China	MS
Terada	71	Female	Art collector	Japan	-
Jiayong	52	Male	Entrepreneur	Japan	-
Nanxing	22	Female	Student	China	Student
Nique	68	Male	Painter	France	PR
Mange	32	Male	Legal assistant	China	PR
Toki	43	Female	Gallery manager	China	PR
Jin	34	Male	Researcher	China	Professor
Miaomiao	22	Female	Student	China	Student
Dev	27	Male	Entrepreneur	Canada	HSP
Tuna	30	Female	Healthcare worker	China	Nursing Care (NC)
Isabelle	25	Female	Hotel	China	ESHIS

			administrator		
Rugby	32	Male	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Jingjing	25	Female	Hairstylist	China	SCJN
Sakura	24	Female	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Raki	28	Female	Housekeeping service provider	China	Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)
Mariko	26	Female	Medical consultant	China	ESHIS
Boya	31	Female	Painter	China	Artist
Yuanjie	25	Female	Student	China	Student
Ren	28	Male	Entrepreneur	China	BM
Laura	27	Female	Business investor	China	SCJN
Xiaotao	23	Female	Office worker	China	ESHIS
Yuemeng	35	Female	Doctor	China	PR
Peng	42	Male	Technical director	China	PR
Hening	33	Female	Accountant	China	HSP
XiXin	29	Female	Interior designer	China	ESHIS
Lufan	44	Male	Entrepreneur	Japan	-
He	21	Male	Student	China	Student
Laoli	47	Female	Teacher	China	-
Micha	36	Male	Lawyer	Japan	-
Pingzong	29	Male	Painter	China	Artist
Coco	29	Female	Translator / hostess	China	ESHIS
Ivy	25	Female	Rice wine maker	China	ESHIS
Gumi	29	Female	Entrepreneur	Japan	-
Miao	39	Female	Magazine editor	Japan	-
Rong	29	Female	Student	China	Student
Haoran	30	Male	Business investor	China	HSP
Xuefen	47	Female	Office worker	China	SCPR
Ningjing	44	Male	Mechanical engineer	Japan	-
Wenwei	37	Male	Film maker	China	Artist
Keikei	34	Male	Business investor	Japan	-

Appendix – 4: Interview script

Below are some sample interview questions. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the face-to-face in-depth interview is semi-structured, so I often came up with questions that are not listed here during the interview.

Introduction

Hello, I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University, you can call me Xin. First of all, I'd like to thank you for making the time to speak with me. I study the so called Chinese digital diasporas in Japan. Basically, I'm interested in how Chinese in Japan use digital media, such as social media services, and how digital media may change the way they see China and Japan. Later on, during the interview, I will be asking questions such as what kind of digital devices and apps you use and why do you use them. I'd also like you to talk about why you decided to come to this country and what is your understanding of being a Chinese in Japan.

- Before we begin, do you have any questions?

- If you have any questions during the interview, please feel free to let me know.

- During the interview, if there are any questions that concern you or make you feel uncomfortable answering, please feel free to indicate so.

Part 1: General questions

- Can you introduce yourself to me, like your age, origin, occupation, and length of residence in Japan?

- As someone who have been living in Japan for xxx years (replace xxx with the answer acquired from the previous question), how do you feel about your life in Japan in general? (If the informant demands clarification: for example, do you like your local community, are you satisfied with your income level etc)

- (If xxx exceeds 5 years for those who work on full-time basis): Have you ever considered to naturalise? (follow up with the 'why' question)

- Do you still remember factors that inspired you to come to Japan?

- Did you first come to Japan alone?

- Do you live alone? (if not follow up and ask about the household)

- Where do your family members live?

- How about your friends? If you think about those who are closest to you, where do they live? Are they Chinese?

- For those who are back in China, how do you contact with them?

- Do you contact them frequently?

Part 2: Digital media usage behaviour

- Earlier on you mentioned that you use xxx to contact your friends and families back in China. What are your most used apps apart from xxx?

- So I assume you do have a smartphone? How about tablet and laptop, do you have any of these devices?

- How many digital devices do you have? By digital I mean devices that are connected to the internet.

- Apart from keeping in contact with those back in China, what else do you use digital devices and apps for?

- I'd like you to think about an ordinary day in your life – From getting up in the morning to off to bed at night, what kind of digital devices and apps do you use throughout the day?

- Some studies have suggested that digital media have become part of our daily lives. Do you agree with this statement?

- Imagine if you do not have access to the internet nor those digital devices for a day. How would that make you feel? Would you feel unfordable?

- Among the digital devices you own, which one is the most important to you? (Follow up with the why question)

- How about apps? Which app is the most important one to you? (Follow up with the why question)

Part 3: Information consumption and digital divide

- What are the main channels for you to acquire news and information? (Follow up and ask about the contents)

- Would you say reading Chinese-language news make you feel closer to the homeland?

- Are you more interested in news and information related to China or Japan?

- Do you mainly consume Chinese language news? (Follow up with the why question)

- How about Japanese (and English) news, do you read them?

- Do you read overseas Chinese newspapers in Japan? (Follow up with the why question); Do you know any of those newspapers?

- Do you have a TV at home? (If yes: Do you watch China's domestic channels? Do you watch Chinese-language TV shows produced by companies such as Daifu?)

- Are you aware of China's great firewall? How do you feel about this internet banning?

- Are you aware that online contents are censored in China? How do you feel about online censorship? Will this censorship discourage you from using Chinese digital media, and why?

- Some studies argue that online discourse control and censorship can manifest an authoritarian regime. Do you agree with this statement?

- In general, to which extent do you think you trust information disseminated by Chinese state media agencies?

- Imagine a big event happened in the international society and you want to find out more about it. Would you mainly rely on Chinese or Japanese news resources?

- Imagine if that big event is something related to China and Japan – let's say disputes around Diaoyu Island – in terms of news reporting this event, would you say you trust news released by mainland Chinese agencies more compared to Japanese news agencies?

- Many Japanese media agencies often report on CCP's repression on Uyghurs and Tibetans. Do you read news like that? How would that kind of news make you feel?

- Imagine a big event happened in China, let's say some petitioners and police officers clashed and you found two Chinese-language news, one on Weibo and one on Twitter, reporting this event with different facts. Which news do you think you would trust more, and why is that?

Part 4: Social networking and online engagement

- How did you and your friends and other personal contacts in Japan meet in the first place?

- You mentioned earlier that you use xxx for keeping your contact with those back in China. What kind of apps do you mainly rely on for maintaining your personal contacts and networks with those in Japan?

- If you think about the way you interact with your friends and closed ones on social media platforms – how is this online interaction similar and different from offline interactions?

- What are the advantages of online and offline interactions respectively?

- Do you know any websites or forums dedicated to overseas Chinese in Japan? If so, do you share contents and reply to others' contents on those sites?

- To which extent do you think those sites are important to your life in Japan?

- Would you say your interactions on those sites make you feel like a member of the overseas Chinese community in Japan?

- Some studies show that for Chinese who are away from their homelands, reading Chinese news and books as well as watching Chinese videos, TV shows and movies make them feel close to the homeland. Do you agree with this statement, and why? If you have experienced any of those activities, how do they make you feel in relation to China?

Part 5: WeChat

- Imagine I don't know what WeChat is. Can you tell me what the app is for and its main functions? What do people do on WeChat?

- What is the difference between WeChat and Weibo?

- Are you subscribed to any subscription accounts on WeChat? (If so: what are those accounts and what kind of contents do they share?)

- Do you use other social networking sites such as LINE and Facebook? What kind of role does those apps serve to you?

- How is WeChat different from apps such as LINE and Facebook functionality wise?

- Why is WeChat important to you? What does it mean to you?

- Do you think WeChat is replaceable by other apps, and why?

- What kind of functions you most frequently use on WeChat?

- What kind of functions you don't or couldn't use, and why?

- Can you talk about your profile name on WeChat. Why did you choose it and what does it mean?

- Do you share contents on "Moments"? If so, what kind of contents do you usually share, and why?

- - If not, why not? Do you browse other people's "Moments" contents?

- When you put things on "Moments", who are your intended audiences? How do you decide who is and who is not your intended audiences?

- When you contact others, which communication channel do you prefer among text message, audio message, audio call or video call, and why?

- When you are homesick, do you feel chatting with your friends and families on WeChat help to ease it?

- What do you think you would lose if you suddenly lost your access to WeChat one day?

- Are you a group member of any group chats on WeChat that are for overseas Chinese in Japan? If so, how active are you in those groups?

- How often do you interact with other group members?

- Will you say information circulating in those groups are helpful for your life here in Japan?

Part 6: Chinese identity and Chineseness

- Among terms such as *huaren*, *huaqiao*, and *zhongguoren*, which one do you most strongly identify with, and why?

- (For those who naturalised): Among terms such as *riji-huaren*, *zhongguoren*, *huaren*, *huaqiao*, *ribenren*, which one do you most strongly identify with, and why? Are you able to identify yourself as a Japanese, and why?

- What does "being a Chinese" mean to you?

- How do you define the term "Chinese"?

- What is the particularity of "being a Chinese"?

- Are there any particular moments or scenes that make you feel, "ah I'm a Chinese"?

- How do you interpret the term "*huaren tongbao*"? Who do you think they are?

- What is the difference between "huaxia-minzu" and "zhonghua-minzu"?

- Imagine if you are from a family that has continued its clan in Japan for three, four generations. How would you identify yourself?

- Imagine someone without a Chinese heritage managed to acquire a Chinese citizenship. Will you consider they as a Chinese, and why?

- What does China mean to you? Do you consider it as your 'home'?

- What is your general impression towards the overseas Chinese community in Japan? Do you consider yourself to be part of it?

- Based on CCP's propaganda, a part of the Chinese identity is about "never forgetting the national humiliation" brought by Japan and other Western forces. How do feel about this statement?

- It is a common knowledge that a large extent of China's patriotic education is about anti-Japanese sentiments. In this context, how do you feel about your emigration to Japan? Why did you decide to come to Japan instead of other countries?

- Have you ever felt difficult to process the fact that you are living in a country that you are supposed to dislike?

- How do you feel about certain political landmarks in Japan, such as Yasukuni Shrine? Have you ever visited those places?

- "When I hear someone criticise China, I feel like if they were criticising me". To which extent can you relate to this statement, and why?

- How about if you encountered a news article criticising China from a Japanese news agency. How would that make you feel?

Part 7: Life in Japan

- In general are you satisfied with your current life in Japan?

- What aspects of Japan do you find more satisfying or better than China (and vice versa)?

- What do you think your living conditions are like in Japan?

- Do you think by coming to Japan you are enjoying a better life?

- Was Japan your first choice destination country, and why?

- Please think about your lived experiences in Japan and come up with three issues that you think the Japanese society has which bother you the most. (Asking the informant to explain each issue in detail)

- Are there any other issues you can think of or want to talk about?

- Why do you think those issues exist?

- Japan's former prime minister Abe stated that Japan is never an immigration country. How do you feel about his statement? Do you agree with his statement?

- After showing and explaining my own answer, putting a piece of blank paper on the table and draw two flags to represent China and Japan respectively: Please think about the concept of 'home' and draw a dot on this paper to indicate where your home is located at. Please also explain your drawing to me in detail if you can.

Part 8: Chinese identity and the pandemic

- Please recall some memories. Back in 2003 when China was hit by the SARS virus, where were

you and how old you were?

- Can you still remember some scenes back then? Was everyone in your local city quite stressed out because of the pandemic?

- Similar to the current pandemic, back in 2003 at the beginning of the outbreak China tried to cover it up. Do you still remember how you felt about it?

- Can you still remember China's anti-pandemic measures back then? What do you think of the government's response to the pandemic?

- Can you still remember who was the leading anti-pandemic 'hero' back then?

- Do you remember some of the slogans and calls that CCP made at the time to fight against SARS?

- Now if you think about the ongoing pandemic, how do you feel about the government's response to it?

- What is the difference between the Chinese and the Japanese government in fighting against the pandemic, and how does that make you feel?

- Do you think Japan should "copy China's answer" in order to better deal with the pandemic?

- Have you ever discussed with any of your contacts back in China regarding the Chinese and Japanese government's anti-pandemic measures?

- At the beginning of the pandemic the Japanese government has sent some facemasks to China, and later on China also sent some facemasks to Japan. How does this 'sending masks to each other' make you feel?

- Are you aware of the "shanchuan yiyu, fengyue tongtian" poem that attracted quite some attention on Weibo? How do you feel about it?

- Do you think China's supply of medical goods to Japan marks that its attitude towards this country is now less hostile?

- Do you know that the Chinese embassy in Japan sent some Chinese students and overseas Chinese with a health kit? How do you interpret this gesture? Will events like this one make you feel that "the motherland will always be your strong backing"?

- At the beginning of the pandemic some news reported that some Chinese people have travelled to Japan knowing that they have been infected with the coronavirus. What do you think about this kind of thing?

- When the pandemic hit Japan there were many anti-Chinese voices circulating both online and offline. How does that make you feel?

Part 8: Queerness and Chineseness

- How would you describe your gender and sexuality?

- Since when did you start receiving hormone therapy?

- Before you came to Japan, have you ever searched about information related to transgender?

- Do you know other transgender people back in China? Do you have any friends who are in a similar

condition as yours?

- Were you a member of any sort of LGBTQ+ groups and communities before emigration? And how about now?

- Some existing studies argue that for LGBTQ+ people, emigration is a necessary condition in order to come out. How do you feel about this statement? Do you agree with it?

- Would you say your emigration to Japan is motivated by your gender and sexuality?

- I would like you to think about your life so far and tell me about 5 important moments in your life. (After the explanation): can you think about 3 more important moments?

- Do you use any dating apps such as Tinder and 9Monster? What's your experiences on those apps?

- This may sound like a weird question, but on those dating apps have you ever pretended to be a Japanese?

- The reason I asked the last question is because racism is a serious issue in the Japanese society. In your life so far in Japan, have you ever experienced any sort of discrimination because of your gender or your ethnicity?

- Are you connected with any local queer communities and organisations?

- Do you have any LGBTQ+ friends in Japan?

- As a transgender woman in Japan, have you ever feel lonely? Do you know any other transgender women?

- Have you come out to anyone yet? If so, who are they, and why haven't you come out to the rest of the people you know?

- If you haven't come out to you parents yet, how do you think they may react if you come out to them? Do you think they will be able to accept your coming out smoothly?

- If you haven't come out to someone, in what way do you manage to stay within the closet?

- Some so-called traditional Chinese virtues and values have a strong emphasis on the continuity of family clan. How do you feel about it? Will you consider yourself as someone who betrayed those ideologies?

- Given that ideologies such as continuing the family's bloodline is considered as China's traditional moral value, how do you think about your Chinese identity? Do you think queer Chinese are less Chinese?

- How do you think about yourself in relation to those virtues, morals and ideologies?

- Do you think China should legalise same-sex marriage?

- Do you think China and Japan should simplify the gender change procedures?

- Do you think China and Japan should allow those who haven't undergone gender reassignment surgery to change their genders?

- Recently the Chinese government blocked all online LGBTQ+ communities. How do you feel about it? What kind of CCP's attitude and message do you think this signifies?

- Given China's rather unfriendly attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community, would you say you still

love your homeland, and why?

Part 9: Concluding questions

- Is there anything that is important and we have not covered yet?

- How do you feel about our interview today? Are those questions difficult for you to answer?

- In the future if I need your help would you mind if I get in touch with you again?

- Finally, do you have any questions for me before we end today's interview?

- Thank the informant.