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UCL Migration Research Unit
UCL Department of Geography
University College London
26 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AP

www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/mru



**Unbounding 'Chineseness': Placing *H a* Transmigrants
in London**

Jana d Lie Jian An

Spe i ed b D Clai e D e

This e ea ch di e a ion i bmi ed fo
he MSc in Global Mig a ion a Uni e i College London

ABSTRACT

Echoing postcolonialists' arguments that English is a language that is ill-equipped to capture the complexities of other cultural lifeworlds, this dissertation proposes using [redacted] as a semantical and conceptual corrective to 'unbound' the catch-all 'Chinese' lexicon from a particular state (PRC), race (the yellow emperor's seed) and essentialised culture. In so doing, perspectives that regard Chinese mobilities as an [redacted] phenomenon are [redacted]

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Although higher education is increasingly being fashioned into a major international industry (Findlay ., 2012), knowledge acquisition has long existed as a major rationale driving human migration. What have changed in the last few decades are the rate, scale and intensity of such movements. According to Kang (2013:1), UNESCO reports over 2.8 million students enrolled in tertiary educational institutions outside their countries of origin which is a 53 percent increase over the 1999 figures.

Despite increased competition from other 'cheaper' but no less comparable locales (e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore), the United Kingdom (UK) continues to exist as a much sought-after destination for higher education, attracting even individuals from the equally popular United States and Canada (British Council, 2014). London in particular outpaces

discerned.

Second, the correlation between mere presence and multicultural sensitivities is by no means automatic. The ostensible lack of alternative 'Chinese' identifications, compared to

3) What are the strategies adopted by huaren transmigrants to negotiate (re-invent, subvert or perpetuate) the ideals imposed upon them?

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FOUNDINGS

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review relevant literatures on (i) Chinese Migrations and Transnationalisms, (ii) International Student Mobilities and (iii) Everyday Encounters, all of which this study draws from, is positioned in and hopes to contribute towards. Following which, I explicate on how this theoretical trinity is apposite as the conceptual framework for this dissertation in addressing extant lacunae identified.

2.2 Chinese Migrations & Transnationalism (CMT)

In earlier studies such as Skinner's (1956; 1963) seminal explorations of the Chinese in

popular that 'flexible accumulation' (Ong, 1999) has emerged as a paradigm through which understandings on contemporary 'Chinese' migrations have been framed. For these scholars, a sense of ethnicity and national integrity as tied to a particular history and territorial border is unsettled by the cultivation of transborder ties, promoting what Kahn (1998:22) calls new kinds of 'post-national' identities (Soysal, 1994). Additionally not only is culture conceived as highly malleable under post-Fordist capitalism, proponents also insist that present-day Chinese mobilities must be seen as pathways or 'ungrounded empires' (Nonini & Ong, 1997) that migrants skilfully carve out for themselves rather than mere statistical events (Ley & Waters, 2004). From this perspective, the 'new' Chinese migrants differ from their predecessors – who move less readily but more permanently – and are markedly discerned by their propensity to forge transnational social, economic and familial lives across multiple countries (Mitchell, 1995; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). As Lin (2012:138) aptly outlines, "their mobilities radically challenge 'traditional' notions of citizenship and belonging, introducing a range of alternative spatial formations and modes of accumulation in different parts of the world" (Hannerz, 1996). Such conclusions however are largely modelled after the experiences of well-to-do Hong Kong and Taiwanese 'astronaut' elites (Li, 1995; Olds, 1998) or what Sklair (2001) terms the hypermobile transnational capitalist class who possess the requisite incomes and professional networks to do so.

As such, alternative currents have called for the need to consider migratory motivations that exceed financial gains (Studemeyer, 2015; Conradson & Latham, 2005a) and by extension, a broader and less definitive take on those culturally identified as 'Chinese' (Barabantseva, 2011). A case in point is Ho (2011b) who foregrounds migration as

'accidental' experiments that equip Singaporean-Chinese with outlooks that may not necessarily augment their future employability. As Pieke (1999) reminds us, what constitutes success and what migrants thus hope to achieve by moving away is discursively constructed and therefore varies with _____ and _____. Indeed, Preston _____. (2006) and Waters (2009) reject straitjacket theories of hypermobility and proffer that 'flexible citizenship' should be used more thoughtfully for the long-term, Canada-based Hong Kong emigrants they spoke to do subscribe to notions of settlement and rootedness. Drawing on expertise from different national contexts, Ma & Cartier's (2003:9) edited volume likewise argues that the spaces inhabited by ethnic Chinese transmigrants are not so much "'deterritorialised' structures of economic domination but place-centered and network-based ones with porous boundaries whose real extents are changeable in association with intra-diasporic contexts and events". Be it a focus on the decision-making phase (Teo, 2003) or settlement experiences (Waters, 2006), these scholars are unanimous in propounding ethnic Chinese transmigra

Although crossing borders for the pursuance of knowledge has always featured in both

understood include race/racism (Collins, 2006), class-specific exclusionary tactics (Xiang & Shen, 2009), social im/mobility and the reproduction of (dis)advantage (Brooks & Waters, 2009; Waters, 2005), neoliberalism (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011), gender and household strategies (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). Despite being conducted across varying contexts (and foci), these research have surprisingly yielded very similar conclusions, namely that the anticipated rewards associated with an international education are always apparent and in some cases only undertaken to avoid 'failure at home' (Ackers, 2008; Sin, 2009; Kajanus, 2015).

At the other end of the spectrum are studies that narrow in on the rather than migrant aspects. Typically written by communication specialists, psychologists and educators, this equally hefty body of work 'deals primarily with matters that arise in relation to the mobile student as a cross-cultural learning subject' (Yang, 2016:13). One corpus has looked into the academic and linguistic problems international students have expressed difficulties in, with PRC-Chinese students making up a considerable empiric (Huang 2005; Liu 2015; Arkoudis & Tran 2007; Lan 2015; Zhang 2011; Wang 2015). Also of concern are the apparent gaps that exist between international students' imaginaries and aspirations for cosmopolitan lifestyles and competencies on the one hand and their lived realities on the other (Liu, 2016). By far the majority has examined the various 'shocks' – 'culture shock' (Ward , 2001), 'communication shock' (Aveni, 2005; Flowerdew & Miller, 1992) –

that deserves perusal, particularly at the level(s) of everyday encounters where difference are most intensely experienced and negotiated (Findley 2012; Fincher, 2011).

2.4 Everyday Encounters (EE)

In a recent stocktaking account, Wilson (2016:2) (re)affirms the imbroglio between encounters and mobilities by underscoring how the former is 'central to understanding the embodied nature of social distinctions and the contingency of [migrant] identity and belonging'. Rather than reified or given, difference – including intra-categorical divergences – is taken to be always in the midst of (Massumi, 2002). Hence if static conceptualisations designating 'Chinese migrations' or 'Chineseness' as fixed entities are to be debunked, attention needs to be paid towards the everyday articulations that render such divisions (Valentine, 2008). Extant scholarship forwarding the central role(s) encounters play in the un/making of borders under conditions of migrant-led diversification (Ye, 2016a) have hitherto highlighted the (extra)ordinary where people are e)or 587.96 cm m497.9 1 Tf [(le) -2 (d -2 () -3 (c) 7 (le) -2 (-19 ()] TJ ET Q q 0.24 0 0 0.24 14.2

together in a common activity [learning], in the process enabling unnoticeable cultural questioning or transgression' (Hollnagel, 2015:660; Amin, 2002). However as demonstrated by Hemming (2011) and Andersson et al. (2012), learning spaces are not exempt from hierarchical articulations of religion, race, ethnicity, gender and class which continue to inflect who are included/segregated despite tropes of pluralistic inclusivity. Beyond containers of an essentialised

Highmore (2008) contends that the consumption of 'exotic' Indian food by Anglo-Celtic British men must be seen as negotiations with transformative but ambivalent potentials. In other words, ritual gestures of food-based commensality at the shared table can either foster new, positive relations/identities across difference or calcify borders due to ignorance of the other's food taboos. Apart from pragmatic skills and knowledge of cultural difference, the possibility of relativising diversity through less cognitive, more-than-

aforementioned strands of work, I thus propose huaren geographies – comprising components i) geography; ii) difference/subjectivities and iii) simultaneity – as a conceptual framework for correcting said lacunae. Not only is this research novel in bringing different huaren transmigrants within the same analytical frame, I also give due emphasis to the politics of encounter between them which has the potential to both reinscribe and interrupt ‘preconceived categories and boundaries’ (Leitner, 2012:829).

If migration fundamentally involves the traversing of multifarious spatial and social sites (King, 2012), paying attention to the multiscalar geographies that migrants encounter and inhabit seems indispensable to any analysis of ‘Chinese’ subjectivities etched across the transnational canvas. This includes the material, social and imaginative spaces that are part of the itinerary, place specificities and ‘stickiness’ (Bondi & Davidson, 2005) as well as the moving – both corporeal and representational – itself (Brickell & Datta, 2012). Crucially, spatiality is understood here to relationally produce, and is conversely produced by, subjectivities (Nightingale, 2011; Sibley, 1995). Filtered through such ‘counter-topographic’ lenses (Yeoh & Pratt, 2003), the active role(s) space/place plays in moulding the thoughts, motivations and actions of mobile actors and conceptualising Otherness (Cohen, 2004) is taken seriously. Examining socialisation sites beyond universities is hence necessary because not all locales in which huaren student-migrant identities are articulated carry equal weight.

Subjectivities not only take and make place (Clayton, 2009) but are (re)worked at through relational fields of constructs and hierarchies that have been afforded significance as well (Dixon, 2017). Thinking of identities as forwards the perspective that boundaries delineating us/them are neither inherent nor inevitable but historically produced and spatially embedded (de Leeuw ., 2011). Difference such as 'Chinese' are therefore emergent – come into being and exist to fulfil specific purposes (Banks, 1996) – and processual – circumstantially valorised, maintained or suppressed (Ma, 2003). However, notions of primordialism do matter for 'the association with one's Chineseness rests foundationally on generational lineage as well as phenotypical attributes' (Chee, 2010:6). In other words, we cannot sidestep the irreducible physiological traits which also contribute towards the performance of multiple and malleable Chinese identities (Chan & Tong, 2000-50 (n -9 (y21 (e) -13 (s) 2 () 317 -75 -13 (s) 113 -50 0 0 50 317 -6 (a) /TT6 1 Tf () Tj ET Q q 0.2

mobilities through these juxtaposing metaphors – centre/margin, proximity/distance, here/there, inside/outside – is thereby instructive for while ‘their identities are constantly reconfigured through the transmigration process, [they are concomitantly] adjusted situationally to the local dynamics of who else co-inhabits the city with them’ (Ho, 2016:2382; Collins, 2012).

To summarise, HG is a conceptual lens concerned with the emplacement, agency and dynamism of mobile ethnic Chinese actors. It is hoped that researching along these fronts will produce enriching perspectives extolling the diversity that exists within the ‘Chinese’ gloss as well as the impacts of co-presence in an era of increased connectivities.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

where warranted would certainly improve the process and outcome of methodologies'. Indeed, my positionality proved to be highly ambiguous and inhibited my study as much as facilitated it.

For instance, several respondents expressed difficulties elucidating their thoughts on 'Chinese'/'Chineseness' even though they could fluently share their migration experiences. Despite said questions being deliberately left open-ended, responses like Odette's (F, British-Hong Konger) still emerged:

I: What does being ethnic Chinese or having Hong Kong roots mean to you then?

P: It's just a thing. I don't know how to explain.

Such truncated rejoinders were initially frustrating because they appear to reveal nothing. The non-verbal cues – blank looks, hesitance – only began to make sense once I started dwelling on her declaration of being 'neither Chinese or British'. It seems a 'cultural gulf' (Robina, 2001) between us was accidentally erected after I revealed my literacy – vis-à-vis her illiteracy – in Cantonese. In accepting my authenticity as a Chinese 'insider', her own insecurities as the Other were amplified, hence the reticence. Thus, I made it a point to send my respondents copies of their transcripts. Through this practice, they were given opportunities to reaffirm/refine their previous opinions, rectify possible mistakes and/or furnish additional responses which only occurred to them after the formal interviews or those they found difficult to convey on a face-to-face basis (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). While only some did the aforementioned, such follow-up procedures undoubtedly exacted greater 'clarity regarding the information collected as well as... [facilitated] a more equitable balance of power between the researcher and participants' (Bosco, 2017:6).

Although most of my respondents gradually opened up as rapport was created, some

CHAPTER FOUR

'CHINESE' MOTIVATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The ongoing focus on flexible, capitalistic accumulation tied to skilled mobilities including student migrations has tended to occlude other rationales associated with such movements (Ho, 2011b). This chapter thus explores the diverse motivations and logics underpinning huaren migrants' sojourns to London in order to reframe debates surrounding 'Chinese' mobilities and transnationalisms. Specifically, I chart some of the economic and non-economic factors, in both the receiving and sending contexts, that have influenced their choices and subjectivities. Looking at pre-departure situations is instructive for it acknowledges that migrants' journeys begin from somewhere, that they are 'as much about those who stay and the contexts from which they begin as they are about mobility and relocation' (Lee & Pratt 2011:225).

coming to London was non-negotiable if he truly wished to contribute to Hong Kong's creative industries upon his eventual return:

"I do have other cities to choose but the most international, with close relations with other cities is London."

Such sentiments that equate overseas education as a means to a larger goal or 'high cost-performance ratio' in Cassie's (F, PRC) opinion are likewise echoed by Gwendolyn (F, Macanese) who capitalised on her university's academic reputation to legitimise her decision:

"Before I came here I struggled between X and Y. In the end I gave up Y and one of the reason is that London is really a big city, multicultural city so if I come here I shouldn't have any homesick kind of stuff. Also because of the fame of this school. X is very famous for this program."

For these career-minded individuals, they envision a geographical advantage that is accrued to them through having studied in key global city nodes. Besides 'quality' education, the other symbolic capitals (Waters, 2009) that can be amassed from spending
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their mobilities are facilitated and granted by state authorities as one means of shoring up a cadre of well-travelled 'talents'. Although a fundamental term of such scholarships involves the non-negotiable return of its recipients, Fiona (F, Singaporean-HongKonger-Malaysian) makes clear that the decision to study abroad was as much about the maximisation of her own interests as the Singaporean administration's (Collins , 2014):

"I knew I wanted to do a Masters abroad so I started applying for all the potential scholarships. In other words, I saw an opportunity and I took it."

Nonetheless, Fiona's mobility is still contingent upon her contract with the Singaporean civil service. Although such strategic deployment of selected citizens within specific international networks is similar to the way(s) TNCs 'accumulate financial capital through the embodied knowledge of their expert staff in world city client networks' (Beaverstock, 2007:51), I surmise that they differ contextually in at least two subtle ways. Apart from a clause demanding that its beneficiaries return to the city-state as aforementioned, the

Although everyone talks about an overseas education, understandings surrounding it are highly dissimilar. One stark disparity has to do with how these itineraries do necessarily aid recipients in achieving specific competitive advantages but are loosely guided instead, exemplifying why it is important to avoid interpreting the transnational arrangements of huaren student-migrants in a reductive fashion emphasising enhanced flexibility.

Unlike the careerists who mediate their cross-border mobilities with deliberate intentions, 'experimental' migrants came to London without specific end-goals in mind, or whose objectives only became apparent over time. As Lawrence's (M, Singaporean) anecdote reveals, the decision to move to London largely revolved around his desire for self-exploration with career outlooks considered only incidentally:

"Honestly, I didn't really know what I was doing when I applied for

language of 'Asian values', Zac (M, Taiwanese) talks about how only Caucasians can afford to be '30 years old, married but still studying'. In the popular 'Chinese'/'Asian' imagination, sponsored migratory journeys are still regarded as more favourable (Ye, 2016b).

Crosscutting such 'spontaneities' are desires for risk and adventure, with several respondents professing that they actually made little efforts to find out more about the English capital even after they had accepted the universities' offers. The different and vibrant social/cultural milieu that London is expected to shower them often stems from stereotypical images circulated through popular media. Nina's (F, Taiwanese) story exemplifies such an instance:

"I'm not sure if you are aware but many Taiwanese actually adore the English accent and as for the expectation, part of it comes from the movie . Basically the movie features a pair of twins but each was brought up in a different country and their contrast convinced me that I prefer the English way of life rather than American."

Although this could be interpreted to some extent as a desire for cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), there also exists an intangible aspect that can perhaps only be attributed to geographies waiting to be lived, albeit imaginaries suffused with racialised discourses involving the complex/hierarchical placing of class, nationality and ethnicity (Ho, 2006). Yet the disillusionments some respondents displayed – citing a mix of 'gloominess' and 'mediocrity' – likewise caution us against romanticising self-initiated and experimented modes of traveling as 'freedom of movement with respect to employers,

Accounts that equate emigration to key lifecourse transitions constitute another significant vein. Like Conradson & Latham (2005a:290), this does not 'imply some heroic Nietzschean project of self-annihilation and self-reconstruction... [but refers instead to a] more prosaic project that is structured both by the act of moving and by the possibilities that London offer'. Although their stints in London are seen as open-ended, those are also temporally bounded to particular life-stages as Ben (M, American-Hong Konger) explicates:

"I just felt like everyone goes back to school at a certain point especially the place where I worked. A lot of people go to like business school and I didn't want to do that... but I knew I had to come back to school because the logical next step in a career is to get like a more advanced degree, going to an industry I care more about. Yeah, it's kind of like a nice break. London is a lot like New York where I was living before. I guess it's those reasons."

At first glance, Ben's movement appears highly utilitarian considering that career progression constituted a key reason for his relocation. However in stressing that he will have to return to his 'real life' back in America four months later, he is also alluding to

“Not that many people I knew were here. That’s part of the reason why I wanted to move to Europe. The first year I moved here I had one good friend who is from here but that came after the decision to move so it was nice to have afterwards so no, social networks is the opposite reason why I moved here.”

For Ben and Drew who are interested in more ‘periodic’ travels, London appears to be a perfect compromise – lively city but too expensive for long-term stay. While the English capital may not be their end game, neither is the possibility of return completely omitted. It is all on the normative expectations attached to different phases of their lifecourses (Kobayashi & Preston, 2007). Moving or extended periods of sojourning must therefore be seen as one possible avenue open to the individual. It is ‘neither unidirectional nor final [but] multiple, circular... rather than a single great journey from

"Going abroad is liberating in the sense that people in the UK are accountable for their actions. Even though discrimination may still

moving allows Mary to resist the gendered and culturally-inflected regimes organising her spatial access (or lackthereof). Yet the appeal of London-as-a-cosmopolitan-city in shaping Mary's trajectory should not be sidestepped for it has concomitantly furnished her with a slew of options not available in Singapore e.g. Michelin-graded taster sessions. Viewed this way, migration involves more than just the loosening and reconfiguration of extant oppressive social structures but also a 'wish to close the gap between performance (acting) and ontology (being), a desire to be present-present to both oneself and others' (Holiday, 2001:69).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the burgeoning vein of literature that has started to explore the less calculable indices underpinning 'Chinese' mobilities and transnationalisms. While neoclassical rubrics espousing career/financial rewards continue to feature prominently in the lives of huaren transmigrants, there is also a good deal that needs to be said about the equally nominal self-experimentations, lifecourse needs and escapisms that sojourners seek. This entails a recognition that 'places offer things to individuals..., the value of which varies greatly depending on the... persons involved' (Conradson & Latham, 2005b:162). Indeed by mapping the manifold logics ordering their movements, I forward a perspective that gives due attention to the temporal, social-cultural and spatial situatedness of 'Chinese' mobile subjects for 'self' is not only constituted by the individual himself/herself but broader institutional and societal dynamics – in both the countries of origin and destination – as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENCOUNTERING 'CHINESENESS'

5.1 Introduction

If the preceding chapter is concerned with the discursive ideals ordering 'Chinese' mobilities, this chapter focuses on fleshing out the everyday involvements of huaren transmigrants through their situated encounters in learning and leisure spaces. In so doing, the many complexities, contestations and contradictions that are subsumed under the catch-all category of 'Chinese'/'Chineseness' are brought to the fore. As Wilson & Darling (2016) argue, encounters are more than just a shorthand for the social and material assembling of urban life but engagements – positive, negative or otherwise – that

“Because Easterners will want to look for Westerners to work with so the latter becomes the ones who have the final say in who they want to be in their groups. And while Westerners are generally willing to group with Easterners, usually they still prefer to work with other Westerners as well who do not necessarily speak English better than us.”

“I feel like sometimes on a course where there are like 70% Asian people the White people would just talk to themselves and sit on the other side of the class. There will be this implicit divide and it is very unconscious I feel but also a conscious decision to sit with people that look like you. There is a u-shaped desk, and the Chinese people will be on one side and White people on the other.”

It is evident from the above quotes that the purported inclusivity of universities is premised upon essentialising racial constructs framed around phenotypes and assumed cultural ‘sameness’. Even Fiona who speaks English fluently and had previously spent a semester abroad in London is not exempt from such sequesterings, attesting to how the kinds of ‘thrown-

Western/Caucasian divide, such exchanges were acknowledged to be circumstantially facilitated by the uneven demographic composition of their courses/seminars, corroborating Tonkiss's (2013) assertion that the way(s) spaces are designed in supporting the intermingling of strangers cannot be ignored.

However to simply understand how classroom micropolitics play out for ethnic Chinese transmigrants in reductive binaries is myopic for their co-

huaren from other parts of the world. Even those whose courses are not dominated by

The strong predilection for Rina to speak for her geographically distant but culturally proximate stranger-compatriots who are excluded from class discussions clearly underscores how difference itself can serve to amplify both self-identity and a sense of community, reminiscent of Ho's (2016:2) claim that transversal webs of ethnic ties/connections 'can be mobilised towards nurturing empathetic identification and caring relationships in societies characterised by cultural diversity and social complexity'. Yet it is crucial to note that such instances of ethnic re(dis)coveries or (re)sinicisations also appear to rest on very particular conditions at the macro/national (racial minority) and micro/classroom (Eurocentric discussions) levels. As Elias (M, HongKonger) confesses, ethnic identification is sometimes nothing more than a novel 'resource' he utilises to elevate his academic standing in the classroom setting. In other words, 'Chinese'/'Chineseness' is not an isolated but mutually constitutive set of social relations (Hsing, 2003).

5.3 Leisure Spaces

While the majority of the transmigrants I talked to were more than willing to shed their culturally 'Chinese' skins when emplaced in a university/learning setting, I found this to be less pronounced when they started describing the kinds of company that they surrounded themselves with and the spaces frequented in their idle hours. With the exceptions of three, everyone else shared that their private social circles in London comprise largely, or in some cases entirely of, huaren and mobilised cultural logics of presumed 'sameness' to justify why such material racialisation has taken place. This is

exemplified in Lawrence's (M, Singaporean) account on what comprises an ideal leisure activity for him and his friends, which is a motif brought up by many other interviewees when explaining why they prefer spending time with other huaren:

"Of course I have many Chinese friends who drink but I think generally a good meal or catch-up over food constitutes 70% and drinking only 30% or lesser while such ratio is usually the inverse for non-Chinese and non-Asians."

realised I don't understand their lingo, their inside jokes even though we all speak Mandarin."

CHAPTER SIX

NEGOTIATING 'CHINESENESS'

6.1 Introduction

If the everyday proceedings of huaren transmigrants are punctuated by slews of enabling and disempowering events of relations that take place across multiple temporalities, I turn to the various tactics that they have adopted in order to negotiate such encounters in this final empirical chapter. As Hsing (2003) opines, uncovering the politi -3 (s2 (oa) 9 (l) -250 es) 13 ()N 5-3

However, how a person sees (or tries to present) himself/herself and how they are perceived by others do not always coincide. If even Odette (F, British-HongKonger) cannot help but feel alienated despite having grown up in the UK, it is fair to surmise that relationally enacting one's identity 'do not automatically remove the barriers faced in encountering others' (Wang & Collins, 2016:95) either. Racialised bodies bearing the phenotypical features that are considered incompatible with the characteristics put forth thus continue to be vulnerable to abjection and spatial exclusions (Ho, 2017b).

6.3 Strategic Essentialism

Since 'we are what we look like' (John, M, Danish-British-HongKonger), some
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The kind of affective familiarity or 'propinquity' (Wilson, 2011) described by Nina is evidently sustained on a semi-conscious level that is less mindful and agentic. Here, presence is not simply reducible to co-presence (Callon & Law, 2004) for the solidarity that emerges between her and the other unacquainted visitors in Chinatown play out on more 'affective rather than discursive, conversational registers' (Bissell, 2010:276). Adriana's preference for the groceries sold in Chinatown is similarly couched in emotive terms seeking to reproduce 'contingent fixities' (Clarke, 2004:418) amidst the fluidity of transnational lives. Other reterritorialisations include traversing privatised Asian- or Chinese-dominant churches and recreational clubs as Katie (F, Filipino-PRC) and Fiona (Singaporean-HongKonger-Malaysian) have done so respectively:

"I'm more at ease in a Chinese place. It's not the language at all. I can't put my finger on it but I just felt more at home even though I'm the only Filipino there."

"Usually we go to Asian clubs so it's predominantly Asian demographics there. The club owner is Asian, the deejay is Asian, everybody there is Asian. There is not even one White guy."

In 'confining' themselves to the familiarity of Chinese/Asian cultural reproductions, these routines reveal that reclaiming the 'self' entails defining what is not (quite literally in these cases) inside dialectically (Mahtani, 2001). The inclusivity and m

people who look alike, not entirely, but seeking like-minded people:

“Basically I think ethnic Chinese friends are more reciprocal. We place a lot of emphasis on caring and returning favours while foreigners are more distant and individualistic. With the latter, I usually only engage in very superficial conversations.”

Indeed while none of my interviewees disputed that ‘Chinese’ is a fractured category, many concurred that they do seem to share some sort of ideological commonalities with their huaren mates. Seemingly universal/neutral concepts such as ‘friendship’ are in fact shaped by specific cultural discourses which operate tacitly to orientate bodies to behave in particular ways (Bissell, 2010). As such, Cassie tends to dedicate more time towards those who also places equal emphasis on the allegedly ‘Chinese’ values of collectivism and empathy. Crucially, such views underscore how the same signifiers can be refashioned by huaren transmigrants in ways (‘comaraderie’) that are different from how non-Asian/Chinese might mobilise them (‘antisocial’) to explain behaviour.

6.4 ‘Cosmopolitan’ Flexibilities

The third tactic, which adheres most closely with idealised notions of cosmopolitanism, involves the flexible negotiation of social situations. Here, inclusivity becomes an indication of a tolerance of all peoples as not similar to self, but ‘rather as having a recognisable, expected, and difference’ (Yeoh, 2017:1). Apart from the most cited example of ‘code-switching’ between languages to facilitate communications i.e. Cantonese practitioners speaking Mandarin when conversing with those from Taiwan and China, Zac’s (M, Taiwanese) response below captures precisely the types of

'cosmopolitan repertoire' (Butcher, 2009) articulated by several interlocutors:

"Yeah, unless I am very close with him/her. Otherwise, politics is not a topic that would appear in our casual conversations. Even if we do talk about politics, I would observe if s/he is open-minded enough to discuss them."

In displaying mindfulness towards the kinds of topics that should be threaded carefully with PRC nationals, Zac's prudence demonstrates an awareness that the meaning(s) of 'Chinese'/'Chineseness' varies across contexts. What distinguishes his (among others) strategy from the preceding relational enactments and strategic essentialisms lies in how Zac's was enacted with the intent to create common familiarity amongst groups of people while the latter two largely involves altering individual mobility rhythms to minimise personal discomfort and encountering unknown others. Yet this does not mean that contentious topics are shied away from for the process of (re)creating comfort does sometimes requires mature confrontations. Gwendolyn's (F, Macanese) vignette typifies such an instance:

"For instance for the Tiananmen Square incident basically 90% of the Chinese don't know what is it because the Chinese government tried to hide this event from the public. But when I am here, I'm quite open to talk about it because I don't want them to be lied about it. I want them to know the truth."

Despite inciting bursts of anger and humiliation among her PRC peers, Gwendolyn opined that such open dialogues have actually brought them closer. In fact, they openly welcomed Gwendolyn's efforts to initiate discussions on sensitive geopolitical issues, partly because opportunities to do so are rare back home. This resonates with Mahler's (1999) observation that transnational migration provides a 'liminal' space for (re)configuring

identities in profound ways. Imperatively, mastery of the cultural 'know-hows' (Beaverstock, 2002) does not always equate to a more 'diverse' composition of friends. Even though Ben (M, American-HongKonger) and John (M, Danish-British-HongKonger) both described their closest social circles as comprising mainly other Caucasians and Asians living in London respectively, they also qualify that this is simply because they feel the most at ease among such company. Pivotaly, acquiring intercultural sensibilities is not instantaneous but requires active efforts and time.

6.5 Nonchalance

The final tactic is to be nonchalant about the various, sometimes competing, discourses ascribed upon them. This does not mean that my interviewees are unaffected. Rather, they view feelings of estrangement, frustration and novelty as inevitable to the migratory experience (Collins 2010). After being subjected to years of racial second-guessings in the UK, Irene's (F, Malaysian) account illustrates how she has become increasingly desensitised to such encounters:

1.5/second generation interviewees. All of them recounted at least one incident in their growing years whereby they were treated differently simply because of how they look e.g. corrected for 'improper' English accents, name calling. While experiences of these sorts did cause them much grievances (especially as adolescents and teens), many also talked about how they have gotten over such agnosticism as they matured. Looking back, some like Autumn (F, Canadian-PRC) even attributed the self-confidence – including being at ease with or even proud of their 'Chinese' identity – that they possess today precisely to these obstacles that they have surmounted. Indeed, it is only through coming to terms with the irreducibility of cultures can 'Chinese'/'Chineseness' become an open-ended signifier where the inability or unwillingness to speak Chinese dialects/languages fluently (Ben, M, American-HongKonger) among other non-normative traits not be seen as a sign of lost authenticity (Ang, 2001) or a problem at worst.

6.6 Conclusion

Building on the understanding that encounters have resonances beyond their immediacies, this chapter has previewed the variegated ways huaren transmigrants attempt to negotiate more desirable forms of identifications for themselves. This means that subjectification is never unidirectional i.e. externally instigated. Be it through practices that help them fit in or at other times to differentiate themselves, huaren transmigrants are social actors who intentionally embody and perform the identities that they

positioned (Collins, 2009). The choice and success of tactic depends very much on accessibility and the difference encountered. After all, boundary-making is a dynamic process that shifts in response to the social occasion that arises (Cranston, 2016).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

It seems fitting to conclude by returning to my provocative claim on 'unbounding' Chineseness which is two-fold. The first, which adheres the closest to Reid's (2009) original meaning, concerns propagating the nature of 'Chinese'/'Chineseness'. Be it the motivations/logics ordering mobilities, politics of difference encountered or strategies adopted to negotiate membership terms, it is clear

revealed to be intersected by other contextually dependent identifiers of difference as well. Proposing huaren as a semantical and conceptual corrective therefore does not mean replacing one dominant, broad-sweeping lexicon with another but utilised to encourage a more complex view of subject- . To assume a less anticipatory stance when thinking about Chinese mobilities and transnationalisms, we need to thoroughly interrogate the possibilities and costs associated with simultaneity (Yeoh, 2005) – both as transnationals and co-living with others – because huaren migrants are more often than not only partially enfolded into the spaces that they inhabit.

Although I have framed my research questions and empirical directions towards the nexus between Chinese Mobilities and Transnationalisms, International Student
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narratives 'may be nothing more than 'fleeting expressions of a [single] habitus' (Lin, 2012:145) at particular points in time.

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