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Cheng, Joyce Junxi

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**'Mobile' Media Memory:  
Older Chinese migrants and their construction of media memories  
across their transnational lives**

by

**Joyce Junxi Cheng**

[895992]

to

The School of Culture and Communication

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Supervisor: Prof. Ingrid Volkmer

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## **Abstract**

Throughout the 1980s, scholarly interest emerged in media memory studies. In the early debates, researchers explored how mediated content influenced the way how citizens reflected their biographical 'reality'. However, most of these discussions are based on national perspectives; the construction of media memory in the transnational sphere, including the memory produced by migrants, has long been overlooked.

To address this gap, this research examines the way how older Chinese migrants reflect their media memories across two phases of their lives in a) China and b) Australia. This study outlines a new transnational dimension which I describe as 'mobile' memory, as a 'fluid' transnational memory space across migrants diverse lifeworlds. Through this focus, this study - unlike most of the research of media migrants with a national focus on either 'home' or 'host' country - aims to assess memory structures in the individuals' perception of the role of media in their transnational biographies.

Based on extended in-depth qualitative (narrative) interviews with older Chinese migrants in Melbourne, this study's results reveal how the cohort's earlier lifeworld media memories during the Mao era in China have influenced media usage, the experiences they gained in Australia in their later life stages and how these two phases make them reflect and re-interpret their pasts across time and space. Such a 'mobile' memory space illuminates a fresh perspective in assessing the construction of media memory in the context of globalisation.

## Table of contents

Introduction .....	5
1. Conceptions of transnational media memory studies .....	8
1.1 Researching media memory: from local to globalised media sphere .....	9
1.2 Exploring ‘mobile’ media memory in the global media scenario .....	11
2. Methodology.....	13
2.1 Justification of case study .....	14
2.2 Methodological approach: qualitative method.....	19
2.3 Sampling procedure .....	20
2.4 Methodology of interpretation .....	22
3. Results and discussion .....	24
3.1 Results .....	24
3.2 Discussion .....	39
Conclusion .....	41

Bibliography

Appendices

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## Introduction

The scholarly interest in the study of media memory commenced in the late 1980s in Western world regions. Since this time, media memory has evolved as a research area. The first studies assessed the memory of specific issues 'mediated' by 'linear' media, such as newspapers, radio, television and more recent studies also include digital media (Niger, Meyers and Zandberg, 2011). These debates over the past decades can be roughly divided into two categories: the first type of debates focuses on the memory of major news issues which have been 'mediated' as 'media events' such as the attacks of 9/11, the Olympic Games, the Funeral of Princess Diana (e.g. Dayan; Katz, 1992). These debates address the way how individuals memorise the collective, events which were often delivered 'live' by media. Studies address not only the memories of these events but also the way, how these mediated experiences influence individuals' perceptions of 'reality' (Dayan and Katz, 1992; Hepp, Couldry and Krotz, 2010). The second category of debates developed in the perspective of media sociology. These debates consider 'memory' studies embedded in the larger theoretical context of socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Schuetz, 1966). Studies relate media memories issues to biographical perceptions of 'sense making' where political and other events are embedded in biographical narratives of subjective 'social reality' (i.e. Zelizer, 1992). Overall, it can be argued that most studies that assess these closely intertwined dynamics of 'media,' an individual's biography' in the larger context of 'society' are conducted in a national perspective and 'national boundedness'. I would argue that approaches of media memory studies are mainly linked to national contexts of 'collective citizenry' and, thus, collective memory, however, studies that address 'mnemonic dynamics' *transcending across* national boundaries emerging in a transnational dimension are only on the periphery of this research field.

Among scholars who produce approaches, relevant to transnational media memory research are for example, the sociologists Levy and Sznajder (2002; 2005) claim that global media culture could produce new dimensions of formerly nationally oriented 'imagined communities'. Levy and Sznajder argue that, instead, 'imagined communities', should be now seen as 'cosmopolitan mnemonic collectivity' creating empathy among all human beings. Another scholar who addresses media memories in a larger transnational context is Erll (2011a) who argues that memory in the 'contemporary world' should no longer be bounded by the nation-state framework. Based on this

argument, Erll highlights the ‘travelling’ nature of memory. In her discussion, media and migration are identified as two key actors in the ‘global mnemoscapes’. Other scholars such as Kyriakidou (2017) suggests conceptualizing a more nuanced relation between ‘local’ and ‘global’ memory narratives when addressing global media memory conceptions. She argues that while media content could be shared globally, individuals ‘localise’ content, understanding global issues in the local context.

Yet, despite these efforts to conceptually identify the structure of transnational media memory, I argue that not only a) are there a few debates conceptually assessing transnational memory narratives as pointed out above but b) these debates rarely address media memory narratives of individuals who *move across* countries. It could be argued that diaspora studies address these narratives, however, if memory studies are addressed in the field of diaspora studies, these mainly focus on the dimension of ‘hybridity’ in terms of identity. Diaspora studies rarely illuminate how ‘mobile’ individuals, who migrate across national boundaries, produce specific narratives based on a) their memories of their ‘original home’, and b) their ‘new home country’. Indeed, to some extent, the research paradigm in the field of media memory is still constrained by ‘methodological nationalism’ (Glick Schiller, 2010; Beck (2006: 31) and rarely includes social phenomena emerging through an increasing mobility of individuals moving across societies.

This study aims to offer a new perspective to combine transnational media memory and diaspora studies. The study attempts to firstly assess the way older Chinese individuals living in Australia produce narratives of the media memory from their time in China. Secondly, this study focusses on the way how they remember their media-related experiences in their later lives as ‘migrants’ in Australia. In this sense, the study reflects the ‘links’ between national media spheres as these are constructed within individuals’ mnemonic lifeworlds. A focus which illuminates a new dimension of ‘mobile’ memory formation in a transnational background.

The study’s empirical focus is on in-depth interviews with individuals who identify as Chinese migrants living in Australia. Extensive narrative semi-structured interviews have been used as a method for data collection. Lengthy narrative interviews are appropriate for such a memory study as it allows sufficient time for respondents to reflect on their personal past while also giving the

researcher the opportunity to compare individuals' narrations (Rosenthal, 2018: 161-163). In narrative interviews, only a small number of respondents is needed, yet an in-depth interview normally lasts for more than one hour. As Rosenthal argues, this extended interview time gives the researcher the ability to fully engage with the interviewees' personal remembrances (Rosenthal, 2018: 135). Guided by this method, long interviews were conducted with three interviewees that lasted seven and half hours in total. All interviewees are aged above seventy and moved to Australia during the 1980s. This means that respondents spent their youth — what Mannheim calls the 'formative' life phase (Mannheim, 1952) — in China during the Mao era, and settled in Australia in their late twenties. Although the cohort of older migrants has long been marginalised in media memory debates, the extreme — and often abrupt — life changes experienced by this cohort across their biographical time makes their memory a meaningful subject for investigation.

This study is based on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) conception of 'social reality.' While Berger and Luckmann do not specifically address memory dimensions, their conception of social reality is crucial for the underlying framework of autobiographical memory narratives. These narratives indicate specific types of social knowledge production, and — in the subjective context — social reality construction. This model allows to illuminate the dynamics of subjective memory reflection across different life 'cycles'.

Based on this approach, the thesis is based on two broad questions:

- a) What kind of memory do older Chinese migrants have of their communicative 'worlds'?
- b) How does the global media network influence their media-related remembrance in terms of reflecting or reshaping their memories when moving across China and Australia?

This thesis consists of three chapters: the first chapter provides a critical review of relevant debates in media memory studies and identifies the existing research gap. The second chapter introduces the methodology and justifies the chosen case, the method, the sampling procedure and the categories, used for the interview interpretation. The third chapter provides insight into the construction of media memory of respondents, included in the narrative interviews. By investigating their media-related remembrance during the past decades, the study addresses the

fluidity of the cohort's media memory construction in the context of their lifeworld transnationalization. Results reveal, that although their experiences of the Mao era which they perceive retrospectively as 'trauma', have influenced the individuals' attitudes towards media profoundly. The media experience individuals gained in their later lives in Australia have formed another 'communicative world' that interacts with their pasts. The cohort living within such a memory space started to re-interpret their mediated pasts from their earlier life in China decades ago.

Through the case study, it is found that media memory, as a form of 'social knowledge', is constructed along with the interactions and dynamics taking place in a global media scenario. This new memory space illuminates a fresh angle for assessing the construction of media memory, as well as 'diasporic experience', under the context of globalisation.

## **I. Conceptions of media memory studies**

As argued by Habermas (1996), the information provided by media impinge on a first level directly on reality experience and — on a second level — influence how individuals participate in democratic decision-making (i.e. public deliberation) and perceive the larger structures of public debate. This insight indicates that processes of mediation (Hjavar, 2008; Hepp and Krotz, 2014) should be more included in memory studies to understand the link between mediated 'news' and civic consciousnesses in conceptions of biographical 'memory' studies.

Since the age of satellite communication in the mid 1960's, news and information can be 'shared live' by individuals across continents (Couldry and Hepp, 2017: 1–15; Volkmer, 2014: 163–191). This thesis focuses specifically on the way how such a transnational experience relates to the 'lived experience' of individuals and — specifically — how it shapes their biographical 'memory' (Volkmer, 2006; Couldry and Hepp, 2017). As a form of knowledge, those transnationally mediated remembrances not only influence how individuals establish their identity, self-recognition, and political inclination, but also shape the way how they construct their subjective perception of transnational 'social reality' (Zelizer, 1992; Dijck, 2007; Couldry, Hepp and Krotz, 2009: 6–7; Couldry and Hepp, 2010).

## **1.1 Researching media memory: from local to globalised media sphere**

A distinction between ‘media experience’ and ‘lived experience’ is no longer possible, given the mediated character of modern societies (e.g. Couldry and Hepp, 2017: 1–15; Volkmer, 2016: 163–91). As media experience can be perceived as ‘lived experience’ by individuals (Volkmer, 2006; Couldry and Hepp, 2017), media memories can also shape people’s understanding of ‘social reality’ (Zelizer, 1992; Dijck, 2007; Couldry, Hepp and Krotz, 2009, 6–7; Couldry and Hepp, 2011). To address the connection between the transnational communicative world and actual lifeworld makes the investigation of mediated memory critical for deepening current understandings of the constitution of social space in the context of (global) modernity. This connection is specifically complicated since mediated experience no longer relates to national spheres but is internationalised, which creates a new degree of complexity for current memory research.

However, it is interesting to note that most of the early literature in memory studies relates to a national context, often articulating the linkage between media memory and the formation of collective national identity. For instance, in empirical studies, Kitch conducts a study of the ‘American hero stories’ spurred by 9/11, arguing that these heroic narratives should be understood as a form of ‘myth’ created for institutionalising the officially defined image of the ‘ideal American’ (Kitch, 2005:38–60); also in the American context, Zelizer (1992) studies the news remembrance related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy and emphasises the role of journalism for such a memory narrative. She finds journalism to be the ‘first interpreter’ of this nationally shared event, defining the meaning of the ‘big news’ and delivering its ‘interpretations’ to each national citizen. In contrast, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) argue that ‘media events’ are ‘per se’ national ‘ceremonies’ that are organised and deliberately framed by public institutions such as television. In Dayan and Katz’s work, ‘media events’ are a form of ‘ritual’ that breaks into the daily routines of individuals and offers a collectively shared space (Dayan and Katz, 1992). Their approach to media events directly translates ‘events’ as staged media-transmitted experiences in modern society, which are perceived as a clearly defined event reality, shaping individuals’ lifeworld perceptions. Beside this, there are also scholarly discussions (i.e. Schwartz, 1982; Lang and Lang, 1989) that consider media content as influencing the building of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006) on a national level. Not only is media understood in a ‘national’ perspective as

the nation-based institution which represents national values (see: Dayan and Katz, 1992: 1–7; Zelizer, 1992), but the notion of ‘society’ is also related to nationality (Beck, 2006: 27–33). As a result, media memory is conceptualised as a collective structure, however, the transnational ‘fluidity’ of memory, together with a scale of mnemonic dynamics happening across and beyond nation-territories, are largely overlooked.

Indeed, this nation-based approach can be contextualised within the broader research scheme of ‘methodological nationalism’ that has colonised the social science field in recent decades (Beck, 2006; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). However, it is problematic to only identify media memory that is national in scope, as a range of news and events can now transcend national boundaries in the context of contemporary globalisation (Volkmer, 2006; 2014; Reading, 2011; Feindt, Krawatzek and Mehler, 2014). In this context, a networked mnemonic sphere can potentially emerge in the global scenario, but the nuances of this sphere can hardly be fully captured by the nation-state framework (Beck, 2006; Volkmer and Lee, 2014; Erll, 2011a; 2011b).

In the last decade, only a few scholars have started to shed light on the mnemonic dynamics of a transnational media arena. Through a three-generational approach across nine countries, Volkmer and her colleagues (2006) assessed how different generations in nine countries reflected on media memories. The main aim was to identify the way in which international events and issues were remembered in global and local perspectives and how these diverse forms of autobiographically mediated narratives shaped a globalized ‘generational consciousness’ (Volkmer, 2006: 14–15). They identified on one hand the similarities of the memories of mediated ‘events’, and, on the other, regional differences. The dichotomy of ‘globalised’ mediated memories and local practices has also been in the focus of subsequent studies. Based on a case study of the holocaust memory in Asaba<sup>1</sup>, Bird (2011) found that digital media can challenge the authoritarian-defined narratives of regional Holocaust memories to some extent.

Conversely, Zelizer (2011) contended that, since the ‘global media cannibalization’ is still dominated by Western media, the global media connection may put ‘global over local’, altering the interpretation of traumatic pasts experienced by citizens in developing countries; also focusing

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<sup>1</sup> Asaba is the capital city of Delta State Nigeria.

on the tension between ‘global’ and ‘local’, Kyriakidou (2017) examined the memory of three ‘global disasters’ shared by Greek audiences. She then argued that, although the media content could be shared globally, individuals would ‘localise’ those issues, translating their mediated experiences into contestations of the nation as the basic symbolic community for the individuals in their day-to-day lives. In general, this body of literature makes a meaningful attempt to investigate the dynamics of media memory in the transnational mnemonic sphere. However, it should still be noted that, although these studies compare media memory across societies in a transnational sphere, their scope is confined to the memory formation of individuals settling in national societies. The dimension of specific media-related memory, produced by individuals who move across national sites, remains unresearched.

## **1.2 Exploring ‘mobile’ media memory in the globalised context**

Indeed, understanding the new dimensions of memory being produced by mobile individuals who move internationally pose a specific challenge for contemporary scholarly discussions. So far, mainly diaspora studies have focused on transnational contexts through concepts of ‘hybridity’ and ‘identity’, that, however, still consider the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis (Gunningham and Sinclair, 2001; Glick Schiller, 2010); the so-called ‘diasporic media’ is usually understood as, either a ‘connector’ linking individuals to the ‘native country’, or a tool assimilating them into the ‘host’ society (Chin, 2016: 15). This nation-defined duality of ‘home-host’ that is established in the media research field leaves little space for exploring the complexity of dynamic media-related experiences in the transnational scenario (Volkmer, 2014: 122). However, with the pace of globalisation, individuals in the diasporic community can also engage with diverse national and transnational publics in their day-to-day lives. These new dynamics emerging from in-between national media spheres, cannot be fully captured by the nation-based dichotomy of ‘home’ and ‘host’ as used in diaspora research.

As has been argued by Volkmer in the case of Arabic migrants in Germany (2014: 122–128) that the choice made by individuals in their day-to-day media usage is already beyond the reach of the ‘home-host’ dichotomy. Subjects in the middle-aged cohort, for example, were found to negotiate usage of both Arabic and German media channels, taking the information gained from different

sources to assemble political perceptions. This phenomenon illuminates a new communicative space existing in-between diverse national media spheres which cannot be fully explained by the nation-based research model. Thus, it is necessary to move away from the predefined division between ‘home’ and ‘host’; ‘native’ and ‘foreigner’ when investigating the way how the mediated mnemonic contents transcend across and beyond national societies and how individuals respond to these new dynamics in their everyday life experiences. Only in doing so, can it be possible to describe the complex dynamics of connectedness and disconnectedness, experienced by migrating individuals.

My study further explores this dimension by investigating the construction of — what I describe as — ‘mobile’ memory of older Chinese migrants experienced through the process of moving across national sites. This approach of ‘mobile’ memory relates to Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) understanding of the construction of social reality. Although Berger and Luckmann do not explicitly address the dimension of memory as a social reality, however, their theory allows to understand memory as a structure shaped by the consistent interactions between individuals and their social surroundings. As social institutions keep changing, one’s perception of social reality never remains one and the same, but is rather a fluid structure, embedded in the consistent changes in the social realm. As Halbwachs argues, individuals ‘re-produce’, their biographical past in different life epochs (Halbwachs, 1992: 47). Researching how older Chinese migrants assemble and reflect their media-related memories across different life phases illuminates the dimension of ‘mobile’ memories from two perspectives: the first perspective examines how individuals collect and recollect their memory through media in different periods of their biographical time; the second perspective identifies their day-to-day lives across China and Australia. Overall, both perspectives constitute their communicative ‘worlds’, allowing a deeper understanding of their media-related past and illuminate the dimension of ‘mobile’ memory.

Globalized communication enables new dynamics to the construction of media memory. These dynamics shape a networked mnemonic sphere that stands in-between (and beyond) national spheres (see: Volkmer, 2006; Levy and Sznajder 2002). As argued by Beck (2006: 28–30), the global society does not deny the differences existing across human communities. Instead, we need to understand the structure of this ‘global society’. Only when we understand how the world of

‘the other’ is constructed can we build up a more comprehensive vision of the human world, and usher ‘cosmopolitan empathy’ to the global society. In this regard, the research of memory, as a form of social knowledge, can help to reach a deeper layer of individuals’ lifeworld construction, making sense of how certain perception of ‘reality’ is constructed in a transnational context. With this belief, the current paper chooses the media memory construction of older Chinese migrants across two biographical phases: their earlier memories of their Chinese lifeworld and memories related to their Australian lifeworld, as its research scope. Through exploring the media memory of this specific cohort, it aims to show how the lifeworlds of the individuals have been constructed. This can help us to better understand the entangled relation between the media and human lives from the past, to present and into the future.

## **2. Methodology**

This research project is designed to explore the ways in which members of older Chinese migrants (aged seventy and above) engage with media in their biographical memories. Interviewees are asked to describe media related memories of two different phases of their lives each of which relates to a different national context.

- a) First, they are asked about their media-related memory during the childhood and teen years spent in mainland China, during the time when Mao took charge of the CCP;
- b) Second, they are asked to describe their media experiences when they arrived in Australia during the late 1980s;
- c) Third, they are asked to recall more recent experiences that are more related to ‘global news’ and ‘global media network’.

Overall, the focus of this study relates to questions such as how respondents maintain and renegotiate their media-related remembrances. In this chapter, I will introduce and justify the research methodology chosen.

## **2.1 Justification of case study**

This research examines the formation of 'mobile' media memory of individuals who have moved across countries. The construction of media-related memory of older Chinese migrants who live in Melbourne, Australia, is selected as the research case study.

Following the end of the White Australia Policy in 1973, large numbers of Chinese migrants have settled in Australia. This process has contributed to the fact that the Chinese are today the second largest ethnic community in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a). According to census data released in 2016, there are 1.2 million people of Chinese ancestry living in Australia, of these, 41% were born in Australia and 40% (509, 555) are Chinese migrants. Of these migrants, 160, 652 live in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b).

This research is conducted in Melbourne, which is one of the most popular settling cities for residents born in China (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). This is a small case study (given the limits of the minor thesis) and includes individuals born between 1947 and 1949 who migrated to Australia between 1984 and 1987. The cohort of this generation is of special interest for this study for the following reasons:

- a) they are born around the year of 1949 which means that their childhood and teen years coincided with the Mao era;
- b) they migrated to Australia in the middle and late 1980s means that they moved to Australia during the implementation of the Australian multicultural policy (Chu, 1994; Australia Committee of Review of the Special Broadcasting Services, 1984; Kramer, 2003).

This historical background of their autobiographical experiences allows this study to not only assess a valuable body of media-related memories that these individuals have experienced over their biographical time, but also to explore the construction of media remembrance in their individual transnational lifeworld scenarios. These individuals lived through two mediated lifeworld media ecologies:

### ***(1) The cohort's Chinese media ecology***

The studied cohort spent most of their childhood and early youth in the Mao era. During the time, the production of all media content was strictly controlled by the Mao government and the Chinese

Communist Party (CCP). Media was seen as closely related to the political party and, hence, an instrument for propaganda.

Before the Mao era, radio was the most widely used media device among ordinary Chinese families (Huang and Yu, 1997). However, although commercial radio stations operated in mainland China from the 1910s to the late 1930s (for more detailed discussion, see: Huang and Yu, 1997), most were replaced by radio stations run by either the Chinese Nationalist Party or the CCP during the Chinese Civil War. After the CCP assumed power in 1949, the radio station they had set up during wartime was named the ‘Central People’s Broadcasting Station’ (中央人民廣播電臺) and began to provide services to citizens nationwide.

Mao and the CCP clearly knew the significance of media in promoting political goals. Thus in 1950, only one year after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Party announced ‘The Decisions Regarding the Establishment of Radio Receiving Networks’, which urged all the official institutions, schools and factories in China to join the national radio transmission system (Huang and Yu, 1997: 564). This policy ensured that citizens would listen to political information, as well as propaganda, aired from the Central People’s Broadcasting Station, even when they were not at home. Following the policy, around 70 million loudspeakers were installed across the nation, transmitting radio programs from the ‘Central People’s Broadcasting Station’ to over 400 million citizens (Huang and Yu, 1997: 564–565). During the Cultural Revolution, these loudspeakers also played an important role. With the help of those devices, all governmental announcements and propaganda programs were conveyed to every household, even those in the remote areas (Meng and Huang, 2016: Chapter 2). Subsequently, political ideology was able to penetrate daily life rapidly and efficiently. As articulated by Douwe Fokkema (1991: 610), it might be fair to say that the Cultural Revolution might have been impossible without those broadcasts.

Besides radio, the newspaper constituted another significant news channel at the time. Between 1949 and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the newspapers in mainland China could be roughly categorised into two types. The first type was ‘statesman-run-newspapers’ (e.g. the *People’s Daily* and the *Liberation Daily*), which mainly served national political purposes (Wang, 2016: 667–668). By contrast, the second type was seen as ‘intellectual’-newspapers (e.g. the *Guangming Daily*) (Wang, 2016: 668–669), that were critical to the CCP, as they emphasize

the role of intellectuals in supervising the operation of the government (Wang, 2016: 669). As the voices from the 'intellectual' newspapers had long been unfavored the Party, the Chief Editor and President of the Guangming Daily, Chu Anping (儲安平) and Zhang Bojun (章伯鈞), were ordered to quit their positions during the Anti Rightist Campaign in 1966. The newspaper was then taken over by the Party and used as another platform for political propaganda until 1976 (Song, 2013: 148).

Alongside radio and newspapers, the television was introduced to China in 1953 (Huang and Yu, 1997: 565). Compared with radio and newspapers, the influence of TV programs was relatively limited. This was firstly because, from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, the only TV station in China only aired programs twice a week, and only reached a small audience in Beijing. A large portion of the population was thus out of its broadcast reach. Secondly, considering the limited income of individuals at that time, television was unaffordable for most families. As such, it cannot be recognised as a widely used media at the time.

In the years before the interviewees left China, the Reform and Open-door Policy were implemented, which changed the media ecology in mainland China to some extent. In the context of policies encouraging the development of commercial media that were made under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, national media channels started to meet the needs of audiences; and content related to arts, sports and entertainment has been allowed to be broadcast through radio and television (Peiqing and Liu, 2010: 74–83; Cooper-Chen and Liang, 2010: 83–98). Meanwhile, a selection of Western media companies was granted 'landing rights' by the government (Huang 2007; recited from Chadha and Kavoori, 2015). This allowed many overseas media companies to join the media market in China and provide services to a mass group of Chinese audiences. As a result, the content provided by media after 1979 has diversified, although they are still under the guidance of the ruling party.

## ***(2) The cohort's Australian media ecology***

When moving to Australia, the individuals experienced a quite different media ecology which was based on internationalization of the national media environment aligned with Australia's 'multicultural policy'. In Australia, a number of domestic media companies, including Australia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Seven West Media (Channel Seven) and Nine Entertainment

Co. Holdings Limited (Channel Nine) already took on major roles in providing information for citizens. Following the end of the White Australia era in the 1970s, the Special Broadcasting Services (SBS) was launched. As a network that is claimed to serve the country's 'multicultural policy', the content delivered by SBS is produced in multiple languages, facilitating individuals from a diversity of language backgrounds to get access news and information (Australia. Committee of Review of the Special Broadcasting Service, 1985). In general, the channels above are significant for both citizens' day-to-day media consumption and governmental political communication (Cunningham and Turnbull, 2014). Besides all of these, the influence of the Chinese language media in Australia has also been widely discussed in recent years (see: Sun et al., 2011a; 2011b; 2016; Sun and Yu, 2015). During the 1980s, a range of Chinese newspapers was produced by migrants with Chinese backgrounds. These publications, such as the *Australian Chinese Daily*, *Xindao Ribao* (the Sing Tao Daily), *Hansheng Zazhi* (Chinese Culture Monthly), the *Australian Chinese Daily* and *Huasheng Bao* (the Tide), then played a crucial role during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Newspapers, such as the *Australian Chinese Daily*, not only reported the news of the student protests but also posted hundreds of political statements from Chinese student activists who were seeking political asylum (Sun et al., 2011a: 140). Their efforts not only informed individuals living in Australia about the events in Beijing but contributed to the fact that about 40,000 students were able to enter the country and, eventually, were granted citizenship by the Keating Labor government in 1993 (Sun et al., 2011a: 140–141). The 'chain migration' effect led to an increasing number of Chinese mainland migrants settling in Australia in the late 1990s. At the same time, the landscape of Australian Chinese media has gradually entered a new transformative era. Both the content, form and political influence of the Chinese media has become increasingly complex in recent decades (Gao, 2006; Sun et al., 2011b: 142). While a variety of radio stations, commercial magazines and newspapers were established in order to fulfil the needs of migrants from mainland China (Gao, 2006: 156–177), digital media, as a newly emerged communicative space, has also penetrated into the day-to-day communicative world of Chinese migrants, and is used as a significant channel for information acquisition (Sun and Yu, 2015).

### **(3) Merging media ecologies**

However, when assessing older Chinese migrants and their media memory, we also have to acknowledge a third dimension which I describe as 'merging media ecologies'.

For Chinese migrants in Australia, it has become easier to access news produced by different news agencies from different channels (Sun, 2016: 28). At the same time, a number of newspapers that used to serve 'local readers' (for example: *The New York Times* in America and *The Guardian* in Britain), have now been digitised, which enables individuals to access this content via the internet. Furthermore, citizens have direct access to digital information in an international spectrum.

Considering the case of Chinese diasporic media, the role played by the Chinese government in transnational media communication is — again — significant.

Starting from 2008, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has implemented its plan in promoting 'soft power' in the transnational media arena. A variety of media channels, including satellite TV (i.e. *China Central Television*), short-wave radio broadcast (i.e. *China Radio International*), newspaper (i.e. *China Daily Offshore*), internet news (i.e. *Xinhua* agency) and numerous of digital media platforms (i.e. *Weibo* and *WeChat*), have been deployed as the tool serving the governmental agenda of 'go global' (Sun et al., 2011b; Cheng and Wang, 2011). Especially after President Xi took power in 2012, the Chinese migrants is targeted by the CCP as the key audience for its propaganda scheme (Bowe, 2018). This situation raised a wide range of concerns toward 'red globalisation' led by China in academic, public and political spaces across regions and countries. Besides focusing on governmental decisions at a national level, some discussions also equate Chinese migrants with the CCP, conceptualising the 'Chinese migrants' as a homogenous community, particularly ideologically speaking. The heterogeneity and inner dynamics of the group have thus been largely ignored.

In this context, this study argues that it is urgent to explore the authentic dynamics taking shape in civil society, and to understand the lifeworld construction of individuals by considering their everyday life realities across the entire adaption process to different media/communication. Given the changes experienced by older Chinese migrants in their biographical time, the media-related experiences of this special cohort make for an interesting research subject. Understanding the

media memory construction of this cohort not only allows us to record a unique body of life memories across different transnational media ecologies.

## **2.2 Methodological approach: qualitative method, narrative and semi-structured interviews**

Given the subjective nature of the memory-related data collected for this research, I chose a qualitative research method, narrative and semi-structured interviews. In-depth 'narrative' conversations have been conducted to assess the deep 'logic' of memory production.

a) The narrative interview technique is mostly suggested in biographical studies. It is used, for example for assessing in-depth complexities of subjective experience in the field of medicine (Rybarczyk, et.al., 2019), psychology (Danby, 2015; Jindra and Jindra, 2019) and sociology (Rosenthal, 2018). It is also a useful approach for media memory studies as social biographical research (Rosenthal, 2018: 161-163). Overall, there are two types of narrative interview techniques: The first type is based on an entirely self-guided narration, which means that the researcher only uses one or two question(s) to spark the conversation. The researcher then allows respondent to reflect on a variety of associations they bring up in relation to specific experiences across their biographical trajectories. The second is a combination between narrative and semi-structured interview — which I have chosen — to allow the comparison across interviewees' narrations of different life phases. In narrative interviews, only a small number of respondents is needed, yet, each in-depth interview takes more than one hour (Rosenthal, 2018: 135).

b) The semi-structured interview is combined with the narrative interview approach (see: Appendix 1). It allows the researcher to lead the conversation in a relatively flexible way, designing the follow-up questions according to the given responses (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 74–82). I chose this approach mainly due to assessing the intersubjective nature of personal memory.

In this research, the narrative semi-structured interviews were guided by ten questions. Questions were structured into three parts, that correspond to the conceptual framework (see: Appendix 1). The first part aimed to explore how the interviewees perceive their media-related experiences during their biographical 'pasts'. The second part sought to understand how transnational living affects the interviewees interpretation of their lived experiences. The third part focused on the role

played by digital media in the memory ‘worlds’ of interviewees in more recent times. This structure of questions encouraged interviewees to trace back their remembrance from a young age to recent times, leaving the space for me to pose follow-up questions that explored the otherwise hidden connections between pieces of their intersubjective memories.

### **2.3 Sampling procedure**

The ‘snowball’ sampling method has been used in the recruiting process. This method allows researchers to reach out to potential participants through a chain-referral approach (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981), which builds a reliable environment for interviewees who are willing to share their personal experiences and memories in interviews<sup>2</sup>. However, since this approach hugely relies on the social network that has already been built between interviewees, it could potentially lead to a biased sampling result (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Acknowledging this issue, the researcher divided the sampling process into three stages to minimise this particular drawback of the snowballing method. Following the snowball method, the researcher initially approached two potential participants who met the sampling criteria and then invited them to suggest friends to participate in the project.

Given the fact that the narrative interview technique is used, and interviews lasted for about three hours, this number of interviewees is in line with the narrative interview method, this study includes a sample of three respondents. (Rosenthal, 2015). This approach has been chosen as respondents need to reflect a) in-depth b) on two highly complex biographical periods of their lives. A larger sample would not have allowed for this depth (given the limitations of the word count of the minor thesis).

The three interviewees were diverse in terms of gender and socioeconomic status.

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<sup>2</sup> Through reading the memoirs published in recent decades (for example: Cheng, 1989; Zhang, 2004), the researcher detected that most individuals who used to live in Mao era are usually afraid to publicly express their opinions relating to China and Chinese government. In this context, the snowball method can be possibly said to assist in creating a relatively trusting atmosphere, that enables interviewees to respond the questions in elaborate ways.

Interviewee 1, male (Wei<sup>3</sup>) was born into a worker family in Beijing and moved to Melbourne in 1984. Under complicated financial conditions, he gained his MA degree in 1986 and then, became a teacher in a local school.

Interviewee 2, female (Zun) came from a middle-class intellectual family in Hangzhou, a city in northern China. Without attending college in Australia, she found work as a school librarian until retirement.

Interviewee 3, female (Ann) was born in a cadre family. Both of her parents were recognised as the top leaders of the CCP until the start of the Cultural Revolution. After earning her PhD degree in Australia in 1980s, she settled down in Australia and lived most of her life in the country.

Despite this diverse background, all of them were above 70 years of age at the time of being interviewed and moved from mainland China to Australia between 1978 and 1989, which means that all three individuals have spent their ‘formative’ youth (from 11 to 19 years of age) in mainland China and moved to Australia in their late youth. So, they were able to articulate relatively clear memories of media and society in both, China and Australia. At the same time, since they arrived in Australia between 1978 and 1989, their autobiographical time has also engaged with the trajectory of media evolution in the two countries (see: section 3.1). Thus, this group of individuals is also able to provide meaningful narratives relating to their experiences of the dynamics happening in the transnational media scenario.

In order to develop a richness of information, the narrative in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher ran for seven and half hours in total. This time allowed each interviewee plenty of time to narrate in-depth their personal remembrances. In order to ensure that interviewees could share their experiences freely in the mainly English language conversations, interviewees were informed that they could use Chinese to clarify their description if they found difficulties in finding corresponding words in English.

After the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recorded interview responses. The following section outlines the approach of the interpretation.

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<sup>3</sup> In order to protect the security and privacy of the participants, they remain anonymous in this paper. Names are only used for the purpose of referencing.

## 2.4 Methodology of interpretation

As indicated by the title, the individuals included in this study are understood as the ‘older generation’ of the Chinese migrants in Australia. The concept of ‘generation’ used here stems from the theoretical assumptions about ‘generational location’ as defined by Karl Mannheim in 1928. According to Mannheim, individuals who ‘share the same birth year are granted with a similar social location, which limits them to a specific range of potential experience and a certain type of historically relevant action’ (Mannheim, 1952: 294). This conceptualisation of the linkage between ‘generation location’ and ‘social action’ is the theoretical underpinning for this study. Supported by this theory, the researcher collected the autobiographical experiences from the individuals, then used the data as the basis to interpret the lifeworld structure of older Chinese migrants.

The interpretative framework of this research is also derived from the ‘social reality construction theory’ put forward by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966. Based on the heritage of Durkheim French history school, the authors took a materialist outlook of the structure of human society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 28–29). Berger and Luckmann conceptualised the construction of the ‘social reality’ as a three-step process (see: figure 3.4.1):

The first step is ‘externalization’, which emphasises that individuals are creating their ‘realities’ in the social realm (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 31–63).

The second is ‘objectivation’, which explains how created realities are ‘institutionalized’ and ‘legalized’, thus forming a meaningful ‘symbolic universe’, or in other words, the socially recognized ‘language system’, that can be shared in the society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 63–147).

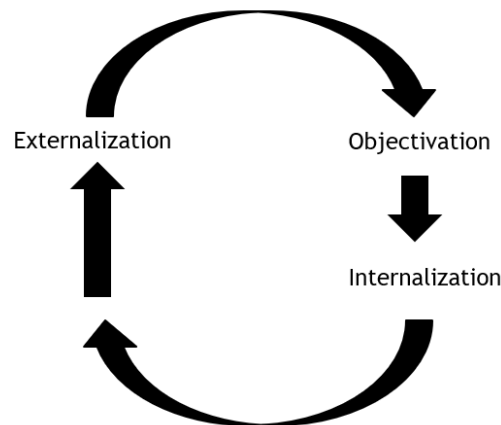


Figure 2.4.1

The third step is ‘internalization’. The conceptualisation of this stage assumes that ‘social reality’ is, indeed, a form of knowledge that is perceived by individuals through the symbols belonging to the ‘symbolic universe’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 147–201). This process of social construction is an open-ended process. When maintaining existing realities, new knowledge and meanings are created at the same time which makes so-called ‘society’ a fluid concept.

Based on this context, ‘memory’, as a form of social knowledge, should also be understood as a ‘fluid’, open-ended and dialectical construction. In this sense, it never remains one and the same but is embedded in the consistent discourse between individuals and society, such as through the day-to-day communication.

On the one hand, the way individuals ‘interpret’ their ‘lived’ experience can influence how they react towards the present dynamics happening in their social lifeworlds (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 108–110). On the other hand, the consistent changes happening in the social realm ‘here and now’ can also influence how individuals understand their pasts from multiple dimensions, shaping the way they ‘re-interpret’ their past experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 179–182). In other words, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), when the ‘past’ is influencing the way the individuals understand their ‘present’, the new realities emerging in ‘present’ can also shape the past, pushing the individuals to re-structure the narration of the knowledge they gained in pasts by re-interpreting the symbols they create historically. However, the definition of ‘social reality’ offered by Berger and Luckmann is mainly based on the national context, which presumes the divide between ‘natives’ and the ‘foreigners’ in terms of their engagement in reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 56–61). As such, their theorisation of social memory is also fixed within a singular national sphere. Consequently, the possible flow of mnemonic content across and beyond the national context has been overlooked.

However, in the context of media globalisation, the ‘realities’ of national societies can, indeed, be transported and shared in a global sphere. When the individuals engage with ‘global news’ on television or read information from newspapers and websites, they also perceive themselves as part of the ‘social reality’ that is shared by the transnational community. With this in mind, exploring the media memory construction of migrants, who — through moving across national sites — can help us to better understand the structure of memory, as a transnational social phenomenon, in the context of neoliberal media globalisation.

In this respect, the next chapter report research results and address media memories as addressed by interviewees illustrate how the interactive relation between ‘individual’ and ‘society’, ‘past’ and ‘present’. For the further understanding of how older Chinese migrants perceive today's digital globalisation, as a ‘new reality’ facing all societies, I will also draw close attention to how the interviewed individuals negotiate themselves between the different ‘realities’ within such a global communication scenario.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

Following the chosen methodology, memory data was collected through narrative semi-structured interviews. In the conversations, all interviewees have provided a rich body of data that is related not only to the media but to their autobiographical lives as well. However, since aim of the current study is to explore individuals’ media memory construction, only the relevant data has been analysed. At the same time, the results bring back Berger and Luckmann's model. This study — given the word limitations — can only focus on the dimension of 'internationalization'in Berger & Luckmann's model (see figure 3.1.1). This dimension of society reality construction emphasizes the way individuals perceive and interpret the institutionalized reality world. This study identifies four layers of ‘reality internalization’ following the memory narrations given by the interviewees.

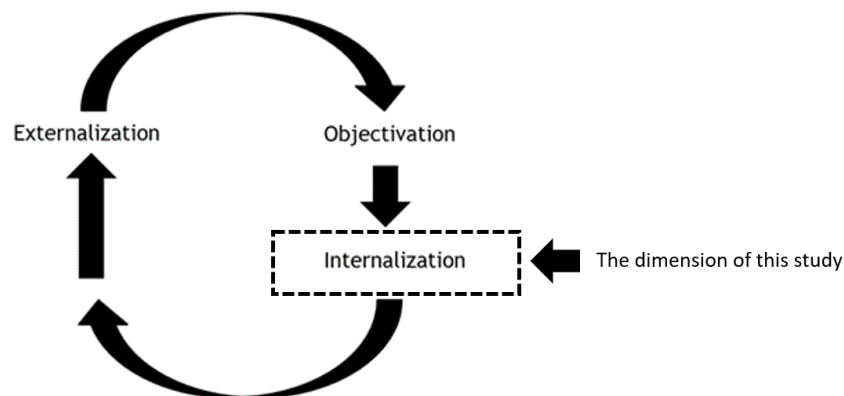


Figure 3.1.1

This chapter reports the media memory of the studied cohort across the four stages of their lives while discusses the implication of the provided narration.

### **(I) Media memory of childhood: remembering media before the Cultural Revolution**

During the childhood of the interviewees, radio was used as the main media channel for families to obtain news and information. In the conversations, the participants shared their own memories related to radio, which interestingly, were tightly bound up with the spaces where their family lives took place:

*“My family lived in a crowded block, so when people listened to radio at their own homes, I could follow their programs at my home as well. Though I didn't mean to do it. When I walked down the street, the sound of the radios from the neighbourhood were also around, some of them were listening to Beijing Opera and music, some of them were listening to news.”* (Wei: 6)

Another interviewee vividly recalled the passion the nanny that worked for her family had for listening to the radio. Interestingly, when reflecting the media contents that she once encountered, the interviewee used the word of ‘propaganda’ to refer them:

*“We got a set of radio at home and our nanny loved it. She was always listening to the radio at home, even though the contents were all ‘propaganda’... I remember I saw her crying once when she listened to the radio. I asked her: ‘why do you cry?’ She said, the story she just heard from the radio was almost her own story. That moment was very impressive for me.”* (Ann: 2; added emphasize)

Conversely to the adults in their lives, the children were less interested in political news than entertainment content. From their perspectives, the entertainment programs were much more engaging than political news, and they comprised a main part of the interviewees’ childhood memories, as demonstrated by the following quotation:

*“I remember in the middle of the day, there were always some neighbours turning on radio, listening Yuan Kuocheng's Pingshu<sup>4</sup> (袁闊成評書)... We also*

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<sup>4</sup> Pingshu is an entertainment art in China, the content of which mainly originates from ancient Chinese history stories.

*listened to music and songs from radio, though there weren't many of them."*  
(Wei: 5)

Another interviewee, Zun, states:

*"I was only interested in those programs about sports and arts, especially dancing. I only went through that political news roughly... As a child, I could hardly relate myself to 'politics'".* (Zun: 6-7)

Besides radio, newspaper was another important information channel remembered by the interviewees. Similar to the 'niche media' that was targeted to children in the Nazi regime (Rusch and Volkmer 2006, 77-78), the CCP also published a newspaper that specifically provided political information to young readers living in the Mao Era. One of the interviewees recalled the most influential one, *Chinese Youth Daily*, which was founded in 1951 by the Communist Youth League of China. The newspaper's mission was to engage young people in the political ideas of the CCP and encourage them to serve for the party. However, despite the highly political content of the newspaper, the interviewee was not very interested in them. Instead, she was keener to read the reports related to sports and arts:

*"I read more Chinese Youth Daily than People's Daily. The latter was for adults. Those contents were too difficult to be understood by us children... But I was only interested in contents about sports and arts, especially dancing."* (Zun: 3)

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, ordinary citizens living in China had minimal opportunity to obtain 'foreign news' media, since the media channels of the 'capitalist countries' were blocked by the CCP. Yet, to keep the cadres informed of international political happenings, the 'in-party newspaper'<sup>5</sup>, the *Reference News* (参考消息), would report news of countries other than China. Growing up in a cadre family, Ann had the chance to read the foreign news from the *Reference News*. As Ann said:

*"Some foreign news would only be published on the Reference News, especially those about the 'Western capitalism countries', but in those newspapers, you*

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<sup>5</sup> During the 1950s, the in-party newspapers like the *Reference News* would only be delivered to the carders of the Party.

*can only read things about North Korea, Albania and the Soviet Union... My parents had many newspapers at home... But my siblings and I weren't allowed to tell people outside our family about what we read at home, because the contents of those newspapers may differ with those available for the public."*

(Ann: 4)

Although this part of Ann's memory was not shared by others in the cohort, the purpose for Ann, in reading the foreign news was, indeed, quite similar with other interviewees in the cohort. As a child at that time, Ann was not interested in the repetition of political propaganda. Instead, the foreign news, in the telling of something different, seemed to be especially engaging:

*"I remember that I have read some news about the Soviet Union and America from the Reference News... As the Soviet Union were driven into revisionism around 1963, there were many articles criticising Khrushchev by that time... Some reports told that he would put his feet on table in party meetings. Those reports seemed so funny for me."* (Ann: 4)

While children were largely not interested in politics, political information, or rather, political propaganda, was still delivered to children through the school education system. Since the 1950s, schools and factories in mainland China were asked by the ruling party to organise 'political study sessions'<sup>6</sup> (政治學習). One of the interviewees, Ann, gave a detailed description of how these sessions operated:

*"We also need to attend the political education sessions. In those study sessions, we always got some readings, like the speech of Peng Zhen<sup>7</sup> (彭真). We needed to read them and study them."* (Ann: 3)

Among all the content covered in the political study sessions, the interviewees particularly remembered the political campaign, *Learn from Comrade Lei Feng* (學雷鋒運動), organised by

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, there has not been much academic study of the 'political study sessions' that took place during the Mao era. Most of the resources available now are autobiographical memoirs (for example: Cheng, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Peng was one of the leading members of the CCP. He gained his power during the Chinese Civil War. After 1949, he was appointed to be the First Secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee, and then became the mayor of Beijing.

the CCP in the 1950s. At the time, Lei Feng, a young soldier of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), was portrayed as a role model. Through media, his stories and personal diaries were spread across the nation and used as an exemplar of how to behave like a qualified citizen of the PRC. This content also penetrated the political study sessions undertaken by the interviewees at that time. The knowledge of the campaign that the children received through the study sessions had an impressive impact, which means that it is still shared by the individuals as a form of collective memory:

*"I remember the campaign of Learn from Comrade Lei Feng... It was then taken by my school as a part of our education, I guess that's why I can still recall it clearly."* (Wei: 1)

Another interviewee recalled how school students were inspired by the stories of Lei Feng, actively responding to the campaign in their real lives:

*"My classmates were both passionate for the campaign. I remember they helped the cooks and cleaners in our school to do their works, and also went to the university campus nearby, helping the cleaners there".* (Ann: 3)

Based on this response, it could be argued that the success of this specific campaign is mainly based on the school education system, particularly through the political study sessions. When media was the 'first mediator' that spread the political propaganda given by the CCP, schoolteachers in school took the role of the 'second mediator' that deliver the information to the young children, taking those media content as the materials for the brainwashing education. In this case, the trust that children have built toward their educators was largely used by the institution, enabling the operation of the governmental propaganda mechanism.

As such, although the children were not very interested in the political information broadcasted by media, their schools effectively conveyed the political propaganda of the time. As one respondent described:

*"We didn't have any newspapers at school. Or maybe we had, but I wasn't so interested in reading them. But our Teachers always told us the content of editorials and speeches of country leaders. The knowledge my classmates and I had about the media were mainly from our teachers in school."* (Ann: 3)

During the 1950s and early 1960s, all of the interviewees were still children, and not so interested in political information. Thus, when in their ‘family sphere’, they tended to choose the media content that interested them, such as Pingshu and music. These depoliticised contents were also more likely to be internalised, forming their memories. But at school, the political study sessions were compulsory, and schoolteachers assumed the role of the ‘second mediator’ that informed the students of the political information published in the media. This scenario enabled the political ideology to be taken for granted by the individuals, who were only children at the time.

Although these media memories were less relevant to the individuals’ later experiences during the Cultural Revolution, their school and school education-related memories are indeed relevant to their lifeworld construction. According to the respondents, their childhood media enabled them to identify their diverse interests beyond politics. At the same time, the memories related to political propaganda are also re-interpreted in the later stages of their lives. In narrating their pasts, the interviewees frequently use the word — propaganda — to refer the political information (or in other words, political education) they once received in school. It indicates that the way that individuals view their past has already been different from it used to be in their childhood during when they take the media contents they have learned in school as the only truth as granted.

## **(2) Media memory in the ‘formative’ years: remembering media during the Cultural Revolution**

During the Cultural Revolution, dramatic changes happened to both the sociopolitical space of the nation and the family lives of the individuals. In the national sociopolitical sphere, factories and many other institutions were shut down in order to make citizens devote all their time to the campaign. At the same time, all media channels were also owned by the government and used to serve political purposes. Thus, politically related information became the only media content available to citizens. In terms of family life, the parents of the interviewees were either jailed or sent to the May Seventh Cadre School. Soon after, under the *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement* (上山下鄉運動), the interviewees themselves were also sent to the countryside, staying there and doing farming. As the individuals were separated with their parents, the ‘family media sphere’ of their childhood was cancelled.

In these ten years, radio was used by the *Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG)* as the most important machine for the service of political purposes. In order to reach a larger scale of population, the government installed a massive number of loudspeakers across the country. An interviewee introduced his memories about those loudspeakers:

*“I remember there were always sounds from loudspeakers. The programs were all from Central People's Broadcasting Station... The male and female voices (from the loudspeakers) were both very solemn and overbearing. That's all I can remember.”* (Wei: 9)

Following radio, newspaper was a secondary channel for the Party to inform individuals of political information. The articles and official announcements published in newspapers were usually used as reading material for the political study sessions. However, after a whole day of farming, the individuals could barely concentrate on the dry political information, which may explain why they can hardly recall any political news from this time. As one respondent said:

*“The learning materials for the study sessions were selected from the newspapers, such like some reports criticising the capitalist class... We gathered together at night after finishing the work. It was dark outside, so we got an oil lamp on the table. But I was too sleepy to be focused.....”* (Ann:7–8)

There was a specific genre of news, however, that was exceptionally remembered by the individuals: the death of some key leaders of the Party. In the Mao era, the politics of the nation were controlled by Mao and several other politicians working with him, including Lin Biao (林彪) and Zhou Enlai (周恩來). Thus, their death could easily trigger massive changes in politics, which made this sort of information significant news for ordinary citizens<sup>8</sup>. In the interview, the

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<sup>8</sup> Lin Biao (林彪), who died in 1971, was once recognised as the successor of Mao. After his death, his image was only used in the propaganda serving for the Cultural Revolution by Jiang Qing (江青), who was Mao's fourth wife and the leader of the CCRG. Zhou Enlai (周恩來), who died in 1976, was the vice chairman of the CCP. As Zhou has long been revered by many Chinese citizens for his negative attitude towards the Cultural Revolution, his death raised large-scale public mourning followed by the Tiananmen Incident on 4th June of the year (for the relevant news report, see: *The New York Times* online, 1986). Eight months after Zhou's death, Mao also died. Soon after that, the leaders of the CCRG were arrested. So, Mao's death was widely recognised as a mark of the end of the Cultural Revolution.

memories of these deaths, especially those of Zhou and Mao, were collectively recalled by the individuals:

*“I remembered their (Zhou and Mao) death clearly, especially the death of Zhou in 1976.”* (Ann: 9)

*“I knew Mao’s death from the television.”* (Zun: 13)

*“I remember Mao’s death. That was 1976.”* (Wei: 9)

One individual specifically recalled how she heard the news of Zhou’s death and then went to Beijing to join the public mourning:

*“I was in Changchun<sup>9</sup> in that year, staying in a family friend’s home. That was in early morning, when I was listening to the radio, I heard that news. It all came into sudden. I was surprised at first, then deeply grieved. My friend’s mother was also very sad about that. Then, I decided to go to Beijing. In the train, everyone was crying. We talked about Prime Minister Zhou and his death along the way. In Beijing, people all gathered in Tiananmen Square and streets around.”* (Ann: 9)

Following the news of Mao’s death, came the downfall of what was known as the *Gang of Four*. The news was transmitted across the nation through radio, newspaper and television. In the mnemonic spheres of the interviewees, this news marked the end of the Cultural Revolution:

*“I knew the news (of the downfall of the Gang of Four) from the loudspeaker and the newspaper.”* (Wei: 10)

*“My neighbours were all talking about the downfall of the Gang of Four.”* (Zun: 14)

*“I was working, then I heard the news that the members of the Gang of Four have all been arrested. Everyone thought that was rumour at the start... But then*

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<sup>9</sup> A city in northeastern China.

*the news was confirmed by the official channel. Everyone was happy with that. It was like another liberalization for us” (Ann: 8)*

Although the campaign ended; the experiences acquired by individuals during these ten years profoundly influenced their perceptions towards media. According to the self-reflection of one interviewee, after the campaign, the perceptions individuals had toward media had become very different to how they used to be in childhood. As the interviewee remarked:

*“I think that was a thing for people from my generation. Our attitude toward media and politics has changed a lot after the Culture Revolution... As for myself, I’ve lost my trust in media even before the end of the Cultural Revolution.” (Ann: 9)*

At the same time, the contradiction between the media reports and people’s ‘real life experiences’ of the Cultural Revolution was also internalised, affecting the individuals’ attitudes toward the ‘media’ in general. In concluding their experience of the media during these years, a number of interviewees made a clear differentiation between the sphere of their own lives and the scenario presented by the media’s propaganda:

*“For me and other students who were sent to the countryside, those articles criticising Liu Shaoqi wouldn’t make any change to ‘our lives’.” (Ann: 8; emphasis added)*

*I can't remember those media contents clearly. At that time, the most important thing we need to think about was surviving, rather than the news. That political news cannot support ‘my own life’. (Zun: 10; emphasis added)*

*I think listening to the political news was totally a waste of time. I told myself to forget about them. (Wei: 8)*

The media experiences gained by individuals in their formative years, under the Cultural Revolution, have profoundly impacted their attitudes toward media in general. In our conversations, the interviewees did not recall many media memories of the Reform and Open-door Policy period. Although the commercialisation of the media industry has diversified its

information types and resources to some extent, the individuals consider it difficult to assume that the ‘new era’ of media is trustworthy (Wei, Zun). After moving to Australia, these previous experiences have also been transferred to the ‘new media environment’, forming individuals’ media-use habits.

### **(3) Media memory in late 1980s: living with media when settling in Australia**

All individuals in the interviewee cohort arrived in Australia in the late 1980s. From this period of their lives onwards, media has been gradually incorporated into their ‘personal lives’, rather than being separated as an irrelevant object. But their previous experiences, related to the Cultural Revolution, still significantly influenced individuals’ understandings of media.

In their initial years of living in the country, the cohort’s focus was improving their language ability. At the time, forms of English-language media were used by the individuals in language-learning. One interviewee specifically recalled a radio channel that read newspapers for people who are blind or have low vision. Since the broadcasts was mainly based on the contents of the newspapers, it also became the channel for the individual to obtain the local news:

*“Although 20 years ago, there was a radio channel serving blind people. I remember the announcer read newspapers, such as The Age, Financial Review and The Australian, in very slow speed. I always listen to that channel with the newspaper in my hands. That was the way for me to learn English and get news. That channel helped me a lot.”* (Zun: 16)

Another individual recalled how she improved her English through watching TV series:

*“I improved my English by watching TV series, Sometimes I can’t understand the meanings of the words, but I can figure out them from the facial expression of those actors and actresses. I think it was a good way for language learning.”*  
(Ann: 10)

After settling their lives in the country, individuals started to use media for other purposes, including entertainment, or to obtain news of Australia (Ann; Wei). In this period, individuals’ media memories were usually entangled with their everyday life settings, with the consumption of

media even included as a part of their daily routine. One respondent recalled her memories about a specific radio channel that has accompanied every day in her morning drive:

*“I liked Gold 104. It got some good songs in the 1980s, that accompanied me every morning along my way to work... I also heard my favorited English song, ‘Sailing’, from Gold 104. I can relate to that song so much, even though I come from China and worked in a small village before... So, I always listen to Gold 104 when I drove in every morning. My son would sometimes be surprised by my knowledge of pop music in the 1980s, I guess that’s the reason.”* (Ann: 10)

Another individual even listed a timetable for her media-use. As she recalled:

*“I usually start to watch channel 10 at 5 o’clock and switch to channel 9, or channel 7, at 6 o’clock. From 6:30 to 7 o’clock later is the time for SBS. Around 7 o’clock I will switch to ABC.”* (Zun: 18)

Under the country’s multicultural policy, the range of Chinese media has significantly expanded. This growing number of diasporic media outlets was also remembered by the individuals, comprising a significant component of their memory constructions. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, several Chinese language-based newspapers were started (See: Sun et.al. 2016). These newspapers were remembered by the individuals in the cohort (Zun, Ann). Alongside these publications, the local TV channel, SBS, would also broadcast news of China. These two categories of media both delivered news about China to the audiences living in Australia. As one respondent demonstrated:

*“It’s always easy to get news about China from different resources in Australia.”*  
(Ann: 9)

Given this globally connected media, the news happening in China were also remembered by the respondents, who were living in Australia at the time, even changing their life decisions. Although living in a country far from China, the June Fourth Tiananmen protest in Beijing is remembered by the individuals, and included as part of their memory. As one recalled:

*“When we saw the tank form the television screen, we were all shocked. What’s that? That wasn’t a communism country at all.”* (Ann: 9)

The news from Beijing has also gained wide attention from Chinese students and staff who were studying and working in Australia. As Ann recalled:

*“I remember we got a Chinese students union at the time, and in that day, we all gathered there, including my PhD supervisor, some Chinese democratic activists and people from church. We all stayed there and watch television together. Everybody was very despair. In the day after, I heard someone was crying in office. That was a student from China, he can’t believe that the government would shoot the students.”* (Ann: 11)

Being informed of this specific piece of news has even bended her life trajectory. As the respondent said:

*“I started my degree in 1987. Before the protest, my families and I planned to back to China after I graduated. But after that, I changed my mind, I didn’t want to be back anymore.”* (Ann: 11)

Although the individuals were not present in the location that the incident took place, the memory still connects them to the event, interacting with their everyday life experiences. The transnational media transmission of news that was happening in another ‘space’ to the individuals, made it a part of their remembrance.

#### **(4) Media memory in recent years: producing media memory in a global media scenario**

When talking about their media memories of more recent years, the individuals also recalled a range of Australian news. The national election, refugee crisis and same-sex marriage legalisation have been remembered by the individuals, forming a part of their remembrance (Zun, Ann). At the same time, interviewees were also expressed that they were curious about what is happening in mainland China, sharing that they use multiple forms of media to track Chinese news and social issues, in order to keep themselves up-to-date. Beyond Australian and Chinese news genres, the global media connection also pushed more global issues to the subjects. News, such as the 2016 American election (Wei), Kim Jong-un’s visit to Vietnam (Ann) and the global refugee crisis (Zun), all entered the personal mnemonic spheres of the individuals, forming part of their newly constructed remembrance. Responding to this complex body of news, the dialectical relations

between ‘past’ and ‘present’; and ‘here’ and ‘there’ have been built up, making the structures of the individuals’ memories more flexible and more complex.

When boundaries in-between ‘national media spheres’ has been blurred, a dialectical relation between the ‘past’ and ‘present’ has also been built into the individuals’ memory construction. While the media environment has shifted, the past experiences acquired by individuals in the specific historic epoch of the Cultural Revolution have impacted the way that they use media. During interviews, respondents emphasised that they would prefer to obtain news from more than one channel and compare the narratives of the news by themselves. As such, they can piece together information and generate the ‘fact’ that seems plausible for them. Demonstrating this process, one interviewee described how he conducted this comparison through the different world news lines of SBS:

*“I watch international news in different languages from SBS every morning. There are many different channels, like BBC, Al Jazeera and Dutch news. I usually watch four or five channels from them and compare their narrative. Then, I can understand what has happened.” (Wei: 11)*

Another interviewee gave a more specific example, of the earthquake in Sichuan:

*“I remember the earthquake in Sichuan, and the media in China faked the death numbers... I just compared the reports from China with those from America, Britain and Australia, and it’s quite easy to find the difference... The deaths number reported by Chinese media is always less than those of the Western media.” (Zun: 18)*

While comparing narratives and content, individuals also evaluate the credibility of the media channels. Interviewees referred to a number of news agencies across the world in the interviews. In self-conducting this comparison, ‘independency’ is taken by the individuals as the key criteria in evaluating the credibility of media agencies:

*“I believe they<sup>10</sup> were independent news agencies, though they may not that ‘neutral’.” (Wei: 10)*

*“The Daily Mirror is the worst, they just spread some gossips... but BBC and Herald Sun are both good.” (Ann: 13)*

*“If media is independent, it’s still trustworthy for me. But I do know there none of the media controlled by the government can remain to be independent.” (Ann: 13)*

In more recent years, digital media has provided a channel for individuals to contact friends, obtain news and share their opinions. Although the individuals did not recall many kinds of digital media platforms, its role in their daily lives is significant, for they all mentioned that they use digital media to gain news and share opinions (Ann). The ‘new media form’ even replaced some media that has long been used by the individuals in past decades, such as newspapers (Zun).

Yet individuals’ existing attitude toward the media have not disappeared with the change of the media form. When using digital media, the individuals still demonstrate that they care about the authenticity of news and information. As with television news, the individuals also conducted fact-checking of WeChat:

*“There are lots of fake news on WeChat, but Google and Wikipedia are both banned in China, which prohibited people to check the authenticity the news by themselves. Sometimes, my friend would send some articles to me. Then I would do some fact-check for them. I usually search the key words of those articles on Google, and it’s easy to find some reports of the same topic but from different sources.” (Ann: 13)*

However, in the conversations, the interviewees also revealed that they would only do it to some of the articles related to health and lifestyle. None of the respondent has mentioned whether and how this fact-checking process being proceeded on WeChat news.

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<sup>10</sup> News agencies include The New York Times, ABC and BBC that were mentioned by the interviewee in his speech before.

While the individuals' 'pasts' impact their 'presents', the media experiences they have gained in this later stage of their lives have also influenced how they understand and interpret their previous experiences. The ways the studied cohort understand the media in China were significantly impacted by the relevant information they have since acquired in Australia. As such, their perception of 'reality' has been re-formed:

*“When I was a child, I believe in everyone. But now it's different. One thing I've learnt after the Cultural Revolution is the official-documented history can be faked... In Australia, some Chinese newspapers, also some local channels like SBS and ABC, would report those things.”* (Zun: 23–24; emphasis added)

In this individual's speech, temporal concepts (i.e. 'pasts' and 'presents') and spatial marks (i.e. 'China' and 'Australia') intersect constituting her memory narration. On the one hand, phrases such as 'when I was a child' and 'now', are used to differentiate the mnemonic spheres of the 'past' and 'present' embedded in her consciousness. This indicates the way she used to categorise the memories formed in different life epochs. But on the other hand, the way that the individual interprets her previous experiences was changed after she gained new materials from Australian media channels.

In discussing recent experiences of digital media, the fluidity of memory structure has become more apparent. Individuals' new memories, gained from media, have even changed the way they understand their early education. One interviewee said he used YouTube in collecting information about both Chinese and 'Western' politics and history (Wei). In the speech, he described the process as the 're-education', as the information gained by him from YouTube were then used to supplement his past, early education. As he demonstrated:

*“You can say I re-educated myself with YouTube... ‘When I was in my secondary school and high school’, the history knowledge that the teachers taught us were far away from the truth. I need to get information from different sources. That's a life lesson for me.”* (Wei: 13; emphasis added)

In this person's narration, the media is described as another 'educator'. He accepts the narrative provided by digital media as the 'right' version of history, that replaces the version he learned in childhood. Parts of his school education are thus understood as 'untrue'.

In addition to following information about China and Australia, news that is recognised as covering ‘global issues’ was also recalled by the individuals in the interviews. What is interesting, however, is that some of this ‘global news’ has overshadowed individuals’ ‘lived’ experiences of Australia, shifting the way they understand local society. This is exemplified by one respondent:

*“When my family and I arrived in Australia, we both think this country is absolutely a perfect world. The education and Medicare system here were so different from how they were in China. I remember at the time, my friend just gave birth to her twin babies, and the government even gave a baby stroller for free! That seemed to be amazing for us! But the Iraq War changed our impression of the government here. It made us more critical.”* (Ann: 14)

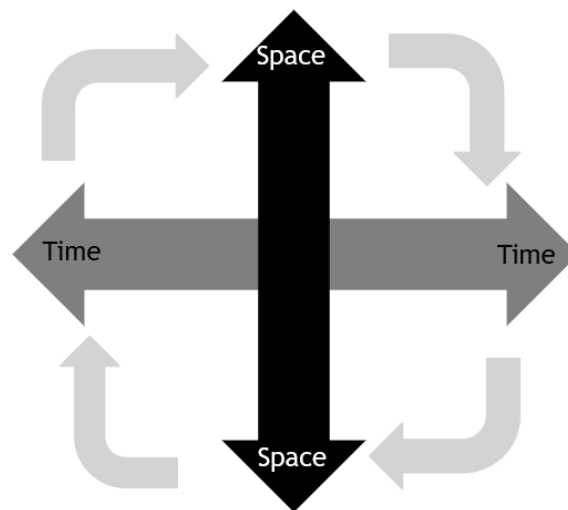
This description, together with the others reported above, make for a relatively comprehensive landscape of the memory construction of the older generation Chinese migrants, whose past lived experiences make such construction rather complex. At the same time, the intervening decades have also allowed the individuals to review and reflect upon their past experiences, forming their own narrative in a kind of self-consistency. Investigating this body of remembrance also provides us with a new perspective to re-evaluate the relations between media and individual; and local and global, as well as the concepts of ‘media memory’ and ‘diasporic experiences’ in the current, globalised world. These issues are discussed in the following section.

### **3.2 Discussion**

During the past decades, the studied cohort has encountered a variety of media. Their media-related memories have entangled with their day-to-day life experiences from multiple dimensions, comprising an essential body of their shared remembrance. However, when looking into the narration they gave to their media-related memory, it can be said that the relation between individuals and the media has never remained consistent, but continues to change with the socio-political context. From the Mao era in mainland China to more recent years in Australia, the individuals continue to negotiate their own approach to media-use. Different with it was in the nation-centric media scenario during the Mao era in mainland China, in recent decades of living in Australia, the boundary between the media sphere and the individuals’ lifeworlds was significantly blurred. The contents delivered by media allow it to be deployed by individuals in

learning the English language and obtaining news. This makes it an ‘actor’ in individuals’ day-to-day memory construction, rather than merely an ‘object’ that can be excluded from individuals’ personal lifeworlds.

Alongside these nuances in the shared mnemonic sphere, there are also a series of dynamics occurring in memory construction at the individualistic level, which is the ‘re-interpretation’ of the content of the memory (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 179). In the case of older Chinese migrants, this re-interpretation process can be identified as occurring from both temporal and spatial dimensions (see figure 4.2.1).



*Figure 4.2.1*

At a temporal level, while individuals’ ‘autobiographical time’ was embedded within the single-dimension span of ‘social time’, the individuals demonstrated their capacity to negotiate the content of their personal memory beyond the limitation of time, reproducing the interpretation of the lived experience across their different life epochs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 180). This fluid process of memory construction can be identified in the way older individuals narrate their past life experiences. After comparing newly collected media contents with existing ones, the individuals began to describe the media content they consumed in the Mao era as ‘propaganda’. As part of this, one interviewee interpreted the history knowledge they once took for granted from their school education as something that is ‘untrue’. In this context, a symbolic dialogue between

‘past’ and ‘present’ has been built. The memory gained by individuals in their later life stages overshadowed those they gained in the past, constituting their new recognition of the ‘reality’.

In a spatial dimension, the mobility of both humans and media allows the content of individuals’ media memory to be negotiated across regions. This can be demonstrated by the memory construction of the cohort in more recent times. While following news about China, the individuals also recalled a range of Australian, as well as international news. At the same time, not only have the media experiences gained by respondents in Australia shifted the way they understand the social reality of China, but the individual internalisation of ‘global-shared issues’, such as Iraq War, have also challenged their pre-existing ideas about the social reality of Australia. In this context, although the lifeworld structure of older Chinese migrants is based on the experiences of ‘home’ and ‘host’, it has also developed into a sphere that is connected to the global media scenario. As individuals can access a variety of news channels through this global media network, they can negotiate their own media consumption while re-defining the linkage between ‘here’ and ‘there’ in their personal mnemonic sphere. Furthermore, the ‘realities’ of other nations delivered by media can, thus, reshape the way individuals understand the social world in Australia that they interact with every day.

This finding extends the previous theory of Berger and Luckmann, which only focuses on the memory negotiation in the one-dimensional national context. Instead of the nation-centred media sphere. Indeed, the current content of the ‘mobile’ memory is structured within a space of ‘in-betweenness’ embedded in the global media scenario (Volkmer, 2014: 91–129). This newly emerging media sphere makes the concepts of ‘proximity’ and ‘distance’ negotiable, which embeds the structure of ‘mobile’ memory within an uncertain state. The constitution of this complex form of memory in the context of neoliberal media globalisation should invite further attention from future scholarly discussion.

## **Conclusion**

This research has reported the media-related memory formation of individuals who identify as older generation Chinese migrants. By investigating their remembrance of media in the intervening decades, the study finds that the structure of the cohort’s memory has never remained one and the same but has continued to change across time and space. Although their previous experiences of

the national media sphere, as a form of ‘trauma’, have influenced the individuals' attitudes towards media profoundly, that body of ‘pasts’ did not prohibit the individuals from accepting the ‘new realities’ facing them in their later lives as ‘migrants’. During their transnational lives, the cohort established symbolic dialogues between ‘pasts’ and ‘present’ in their consciousness — their freshly emerged memories have formed another ‘communicative world’ that interacts with the lived pasts, and a new interpretation of their lived media experiences has been generated. This symbolic dialogue between ‘past’ and ‘present’, across different national sites, manifests the fluidity of memory under contemporary globalisation. A new perspective in viewing the structure of memory has been illuminated; that memory, including media memory, is a rather fluid, open-ended, and not solid, structure, that is embedded in a complex network across time and space.

The building of this mnemonic network would be impossible without a global media connection. As discussed by Volkmer (2014: 61), the media linkage in the global sphere has not only allowed the information to flow across the transnational scenario, but also transformed public space into a multidirectional and multilayered system. Within this system, individuals can negotiate their own information consumption ‘horizon’, and independently define the construction of their lifeworlds (Volkmer 2014, 163–191). In a way, this conceptualisation parallels the idea of ‘the mediated construction of reality’ offered by Couldry and Hepp (2017) that discusses the effect of global media connection from the perspective of ‘social reality construction’. According to the authors, global media transmission makes it easier for individuals to access ‘symbols’ belonging to the ‘symbolic universes’ of other ‘alternative realities’. Through internalising these realities, individuals can define the scope of their own remembrance and deploy distanced, ‘global reality’ to inform their reinterpretation of social realities in the local socio-political space. In this context, the imagination of the ‘symbolic community’ has been expanded from a local to a global and cosmopolitan scope, making the relation between ‘proximity’ and ‘distance’ dialectical and fluid. However, since the theoretical framework proposed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) only discusses memory negotiation in the context of one society, it fails to explain memory formation in the context of this global media connection. To deepen current understandings of memory construction across national spaces, it is necessary that future scholarly discussion shed more theoretical light on this issue.

Acknowledging the complexity of memory construction under the neoliberal global media sphere opens a gateway for us to rethink the notion of so-called ‘diasporic experiences’, as well as ‘humanity’ in general. When looking into the narration of media memories of members of a cohort, it is apparent that the media-related memories of older Chinese migrants have a degree of uniqueness. But, at the same time, we can also find clips of their remembrance that connect to a globally shared experience, that cannot be fully captured by the nation-based duality of ‘home’ and ‘host’. Growing up under the authoritarian regime, the individuals have continued to negotiate their own remembrance in the later stages of their lives while embracing and incorporating a range of realities that have continued to emerge along their life journey. In this context, the notion of ‘diasporic experiences’, which defines ‘migrants’ based on the nation–state nexus, becomes rather doubtful.

In this regard, I suggest that the notion of ‘animal symbolicum’ offered by Ernst Cassirer (1944: 25–26), which defines a human as the sum of the symbols formed through their experiences, might be a more appropriate concept for understanding ‘migrants’ as real humans in the contemporary world. This notion can help us to understand their experiences from a more dynamic perspective. This perspective encompasses the changing structure of the internalised symbolic universe, rather than solely using the nation-based notion of ‘identity’ to account for the experiences of a diverse group of individuals. This notion is particularly critical in the world facing us today. Only when we understand humans and the human condition in all its variety, is it possible for us to construct mutual respect, which is the basis for a ‘cosmopolitan society’.

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# Appendices

## Appendices I Interview questions

Theoretical Framework	Interview Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception toward collective memory of media on early age: linkage between social location on circumstances and memory formulation (Mannheim, 1952).</li>   <li>• Transnational reflexivity on media memory (Volkmer, 2014; Lee and Li, 2017);</li>   <li>• “Fresh contact” and media memory: transnational living and transnational media sphere (Mannheim,1952; Sun, 2006; Volkmer, 2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media memory on early age:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When you look back to your early youth, what news event do you remember most?</li> <li>2. What do you remember specifically?</li> <li>3. What was your favored media for getting news? Why?</li> <li>4. How do you remember the way your parents got news?</li> </ol> </li>   <li>• transnational reflexivity on media content and memory               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. What did you know about Australia before moving here?</li> <li>6. Where did you get that information from?</li> <li>7. After you moved to Australia, what was the media you use frequently to inform yourself about Australia?</li> <li>8. From 1980s onwards, people could get all sorts of news from different countries, how did you use media to mix and match news from China and Australia?</li> <li>9. What is the most significant change of Chinese media environment in Australia from your experience?</li> <li>10. Do you have anything else to add to the conversation?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

## **Appendices 2 Interview transcript**

### **Interview 1**

**Interviewee:** Wei

**Interviewer:** Joyce Junxi Cheng

**Time:** 18th February 2019

**Venue:** meeting room 5, Baillieu Library, the University of Melbourne

**Thank you so much for participating. Before we start, can you introduce yourself briefly?**

Yes, I was born in Shanghai. Due to the (politic) changeover by that time, my father couldn't find a job (in Shanghai) and then worked in a very remote place. But soon after, one of his friends who was running a small factory in Beijing asked him: 'why don't you just come and look after my factory in Beijing?' So, when I was seven, I moved from Shanghai to Beijing together with my father, mother, one brother and one sister. We were what Chinese called 'Southerner migrants in North' (南人北轍).

And something different started to happen in our life. Our children started primary school, but my parents continued to talk with each other in Shanghai dialect, even until now, So in family, we spoke Mandarin to parents, but they replied us by Shanghai. It's a weird situation, but one thing good is, I'm the only one that can still speak in Shanghai dialect among all of the three children in my family. I can speak with my Shanghai relatives and friends in Shanghai dialect. This was a result of my passive listening, also my identity. I still recognize myself as Shanghainese, and still be proud of being born in Shanghai, it's a very good region of mainland China. I want to retain it. It also gave the feeling that I'm closer with my relatives, because I speak the dialect.

After graduating from my secondary school, Culture Revolution started, also the Down to the Countryside Movement (上山下鄉). My parents suffered, and I was sent to the East Ujimqin Banner of Xilingol, Inner Mongolia (內蒙古錫林郭勒盟東烏珠穆慶旗寶力格公社陶森隊), which was near the border of Mongolia. In fact, we had the chance crossing the broader line, but there was no incentive for us to go to Mongolia.

I stayed there for about four or five years. Then I went to Baotou (包頭), another province of Inner Mongolia) to teach English. That was because when Culture Revolution broke, I was in year 11 (高二), and there were not many college graduates in China, so were almost the group holding highest degree in China by that time.

**What time was that? 1979?**

No, it was 1972. In that year, I went to Baotou and became a secondary school teacher. Culture revolution started in 1966, and I went to Inner Mongolia in 1968. So my sent-down life (上山下鄉, 插隊) was lasted for about 4 years.

It was really funny but also weird, that those school people decided to allocate the teaching subjects the for each new hired teacher after the requirement process. But anyway, my colleagues were finally allocated to teach Math, Chinese and other subjects. And when they came to me, they asked: 'why don't you teach English?'. They asked me, maybe because they had knew that I have learnt English in my secondary school, which was the one of the top schools in Beijing, and by that time, you can rarely get someone who can teach English. Then I agreed: 'Okay, that's fine.'

But I know my English was so poor by myself, because I only received English education for 4 years and just got secondary school diploma. How can I teach others English? It reminded me about my limitation, so I started to attend night school to polish myself and improve my English.

When time comes to 1977, the government started to reform the education system, and it reversed the whole situation. I took the first session of the national college entrance examination after Culture Revolution and received the offer from Inner Mongolia Normal University and majored English for four-full years. I and my peers valued so much for the learning opportunity. That changed my perspective in viewing my own life. My generation is called 'the Class of 1977' (77級) in China.

After graduate, I was assigned to teach in English department of the university.

### **Didn't you decide by yourself?**

By that time, it was not where you decided where you would like to go. The nation had bigger power, 'they' would decide your job after your graduation. The system is called as *Assignments of Graduates* (畢業分配).

### **So that was the communist party decide it?**

Yes. Basically, it was the Ministry of Education, the university decide where you would go.

### **So, they then decided to let you stay in the university?**

Yes, I started teaching from the first years of undergraduate. It was partly because by that time, the junior faculty members didn't know what they were actually doing, and also because the Class of 77 was recolonized as a bright generation in China. If you were one of them, others would take you as bright kids, so why couldn't you teach? Almost on the first year, they decided to stay me in school after graduate.

I stayed in that university until 1985. Then I left China.

### **Why you did you choose Australia?**

There were several reasons. The first was about my parents. Both of them were old and sick by that time. My father was 72 in 1982 and died for sick four years later. And the second reason was about the life quality. In the late 70s and early 80s, the living standards in Hohhot (Inner Mongolia) and Beijing were very different with each other. For both of these reasons, I did want to be back. I want to look after my parents and stay in my home.

Many sent-down youths were sent back to their hometown, except me. The university I worked in couldn't help me with that neither. The best thing they could do was offering me a position in English department.

But I had a classmate. She lives in Canada now. She and her fiancé also wanted to move out from Inner Mongolia before getting marry, but they couldn't neither. So, she decided to go to Canada. That inspired me. If I couldn't be back to Beijing, why don't I just go somewhere else?

Other things was, though I studied English for four-full years, but all my teachers were Chinese, mainly Chinese. And only at last month in my study, we got four teachers from British Council. They were professional English teachers. After attending their classes and interacting with them, I just realized that my English wasn't good enough. So, I feel, why not? If I can go overseas, I would go to an English-speaking country, and can see how good my English can be.

So, I set off in 1985, that was the first time I arrived in Australia. But by that time, I was on visitor visa, rather than the student one, so I then back to China for two years, earning money and getting my visa done. In 1987, I started my master's degree in Monash University and finished that in 1889. Then I converted to PhD study. But by the same time, I got an offer to teach Chinese in a private school, I knew it was a change to change my visa status. I thought I made a mistake by that time.

I just thought I need to start working and get what they called 'employer nomination residential visa'. And the school said they can help me with that. So, I eventually started working and stopped my PhD. And the school helped me to get the visa.

I started teaching in that school from 1989 and 1998, and then left for those annoying office politics. After that, I was employed by an international school in Hong Kong and taught there for 15 years. That was a wonderful experience. When I was teaching in Australia, all my students were non-English speakers, and it was a tough work teaching English speaker Chinese. But things were different in Hong Kong, the school I worked in was called Hong Kong international school. All the Hong Kong elites and foreign businessmen would send their kids to that school. Henry Tang Ying-yen's daughter and Wang Kar-wai's son were both my students. I enjoyed working there so much.

I even thought I would settle my career in that school. But it wasn't the case. I was unhappy about some policies in that school and expressed my unpleasant openly, that annoyed them. Eventually, they didn't choose to resume my contract. That's fine, I just backed to home.

**Where was the place you call it 'home' in that stage?**

At that time, my home is already in Australia. When I started my study in 1987, my wife and daughter came along with me.

**So not the family with your parents?**

No, it's my own family. It was already here. And eventually I came back. That was 5 or 6 years ago. I came back in 2013. And then half a year ago, when I was volunteering in a secondary school, and someone just asked me what do I do in workdays... cause I only volunteer for Saturday and Sunday... and then they asked would I be willingly to restart my teaching? I replied yes, I would like to. So, in 2014, I started my work here in Asian Institute until now.

I have no regret in my life, because I feel I lived my life to the fullest. I didn't miss any opportunity appeared in my way.

**It's really impressive. Next, we may need to focus more on media.**

Could you define what is media? What do you mean by media to be specific?

**Well, the definition of media is rather complex and can change over time. Maybe I can give you some examples here for your understanding. The notion of media we are talking here can be television, radio, newspaper and also include digital media, social media...**

OK.

**Like what you said, you were born in Shanghai and moved to Beijing. In your early youth, what news do you remember most?**

In my childhood memory, I don't really remember there were many people would read newspapers or listen radios. Even when they were listening, it was mainly for entertainment, rather than for getting news.

Speaking from my own experiences, comparing to the Cultural Revolution, the politic campaign was less frequent during my childhood... there were no loudspeakers in street, and the government didn't invade too much to our personal lives. At that time, the party haven't actually start to educate and brainwash people, like teach people how to think, what to believe and how to behave.

Probably the worst thing I remember was 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign. So, although the campaign was propaganda, it was still organized for creating a better society. Although the whole story was fake, but the purpose of it wasn't controlling people. I don't think it was that bad.

**Yes... is Learn from Lei Feng the most impressive event you can recall before Culture Revelation?**

I think was the only thing I can remember in secondary school. Maybe that's because this campaign interfered into school life, school education. We needed to attend politic classes, participating into

political education (政治學習) by that time, and all of those things were interfered by the campaign.

**When was the first time your heard the slogan 'Learn from Lei Feng'? Do you still remember it?**

Yes, it was from radio.

**Can you recall which channel was it?**

I can't recall. But I can remember that we lived in a typical Siheyuan in Beijing and got some neighbors. At that time, we didn't got television, so the only information channel was radio.

In the middle of the day, there were always some neighbors would turn on radio to listen Yuan Kuocheng's Pingshu (袁闊成評書), like '*The Romance of Three Kingdoms*' (三國演義), '*Water Margin*' (水滸傳) and '*The Great General of Yue Fei*' (說岳全傳), all those kind of the things. And in the afternoon, programs such as Xiaolingdang (小鈴鐺), Sunjing Xiu (孫敬修) would start.... That's what I can remember.

From my observation, though Mao always wanted to take media as a ruling tool, that goal didn't achieved by that moment. Propaganda by that time had not really interfered into everyday life. People used media for entertainment, not for receiving politic education. That may also because my neighbors weren't well-educated, they were just some ordinary people. When I was a kid, some radio programs of 'Little Trumpet' (小喇叭, Xiaolaba) and their slogan '小喇叭開始廣播了' were what I can still remember.

**Yes, right. So the media content you can remember in your childhood was mainly consisted by children radio program and Chinese ancient myths.**

Yes, 'The Great General of Yue Fei' (說岳全傳) of Yuan Kuocheng (袁闊成) would be broadcasted through radio every noon, also Peking Opera and regional opera (地方戲), like *Huangmei* (黃梅戲), *Hebei Bangzi* (河北梆子)... We can also listen to musics and songs from radio, though there were not many options for us by that time. So, in general, in my childhood memory, people more tend to take media as a channel for entertainment, rather than for receiving education.

**Were your neighbors also migrants from other regions?**

I don't really know... I think they were Beijing locals.

**So it was until your secondary school that your started to realize there were some political campaigns had been showed in media**

Yes, it was mainly linked on 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign, and it was also in printed media.

When I entered secondary and high school, I would read newspapers more often, and school would also involve into that sort of social education. So, the campaign related with Lei Feng would be more impressive for me.

**Can you give me more details about this campaign? How did you get that information in school?**

By that time, we didn't have televisions.

My family lived in a crowded block, so when people listened to radio at their own homes, I can hear those sounds at my home as well though I didn't mean to do it. When I walked down the street, the sound of the radios from the neighborhood were also around, some of them were listening to Beijing Opera and music, some of them were listening to news.

And as what I've told you, the high school I've attended was a very good school, and I was very focused on studying. Even today I still respect my teachers, because they showed high sense of moral and professionalism to their work. They were typical Chinese intellectual, but the stepping generations of that land have reversed that tradition.

**Yes, I agree. But has your experienced that by yourself? I mean hearing news while walking....**

Yes, it was, I heard news and other things. But at that time I was so young, so I couldn't recall more details about that. Those memory was just like winds came to me.

**Yes, I understand, but why do you think you remembered the campaign of 'Learn from Lei Feng' specifically?**

There were many things happened in school, now you can understand there was a political background behind them. But the only thing I can recall about media was 'Learn from Lei Feng'... And when we talk about media, Beijing people were not so interested in '*Beijing Daily*' (北京日报), but we have '*Beijing Evening*' (北京晚報). '*Beijing Evening*' was read widely, all my neighbors would have it at home.

But I was too young, and my father, for some reasons, he didn't subscribe newspapers at all.

**Why?**

I don't know.

**Have you asked him about the reason?**

No, I wouldn't have had that kind of question by that time. But I knew there were lots of people read '*Beijing Evening*' (北京晚報), just like Shanghai people read '*Xinmin Evening News*' (新民晚報), Because '*Xinmin Evening News*' was not about politic news, it was more about normal

people's daily lives. People by that time would not really interest in what did the state leader said, who did he met, what he did last night, who slapped whom... at that time, no one would be interested in that kind of thing. But they really wanted to know how others handle their own lives.

So, people read '*Beijing Evening*', especially a column called 'Obangsaek' (五色土). There were lots of social commentaries and all of the WuXian novels (武俠小說) written by Louis Cha Jingyong (金庸) were published in installment in daily basis. That's why it can capture people's interests.

**So according to your perception, people would rather choose 'Beijing Evening' than other newspapers such as 'People's Daily'(人民日報) or 'Guangming Daily' (光明日報)?**

Yes, people would just buy it, 2 cents for one. It was so popular.

**What was the main contents of *Beijing Evening* by that time?**

There were still four pages about news. But I doubt whether 'they' had started to control what should be released to people and what shouldn't get released. The contents of this newspaper then got so complicated.

In my time, '*Beijing Evening*' was double-sided... something like in A2 size if I remember correctly and it was very cheap. People do not subscribe, they just buy it... By that time, people living in Beijing and Shanghai would shop in daily basis, so when they shop, they would just buy it.

**Yes, and as you've introduced before, another genre of contents on '*Beijing Evening*' was social commentary.**

Actually, it wasn't necessarily social commentary. Do you know Deng Tuo (鄧拓) and his *Yanshan Yehua* (燕山夜話)? There were lots of articles like that. Authors such as Lao She (老舍) and many 'old hands' in Beijing government would also publish their articles there.

**How would you describe that genre of content?**

Contents on '*Beijing Evening*' was reflection of Beijing people's real life. And there were columns set for political commentaries, such as *Yanshan Yehua* (燕山夜話); sections for fiction and a lot of short pieces politic news or life-related reports... Anyway, in my perception, *Beijing Evening* was more popular than *Beijing Daily*.

**Can you give me some more specific details about that? Why do you think *Beijing Evening* was more popular than *Beijing Daily*?**

All of the universities and work units (單位) would subscribe *Beijing Daily*, but *Beijing Evening* was more like a street thing. People would just buy it by themselves.

**You generated this perception from the scale it was read or the content of it?**

The content is closer to people's life... But I can't really judge it accurately for I didn't really read it by myself.

But before Culture Revolution, not everything were use that sense... the tradition from Republic of China (ROC) was still remained in society. It was easy to change the governor, but you can't change people's taste, preference and the way they live their life. '*Evening newspaper*' was for normal people (市井小民).

**Were they owned by the state by that time?**

Probably, but I can't assume... I think they were managed by the same group of editors. But I'd rather say *Beijing Evening* was rather cater for people by that time.

**Yes, right. So let's move to your secondary school, maybe by then you have clearer memory about media... what was your favorite media for getting news?**

I think at that time, I wasn't so interested about news. By that time, I just went to school and study. I can only remember in my middle school and high school years, we didn't have enough foods. So, my priority wouldn't be on how to get news, rather than how to satisfy my stomach...

**Oh... I'm so sorry to here that... you've just introduced that your dad didn't subscribe any newspaper, but would he or your mother listen to radio at home?**

No, not really.

**But when time come to Culture Revolution, media had changed a lot.**

Yes, there were many loudspeakers were installed during Culture Revolution... Culture Revolution was once started from People Daily and there were so many 'small newspapers' (小報) that students initiated, for example, '*the Origin of Family Background Theory*' (出身論) was only published on a magazine of Beijing No. 4 Middle School, '*Zhi Ba Chun Lai Bao*' (只把春來報) at first.

**What news were you remember specifically?**

News mainly came from loudspeaker.

**Yes, so after Culture Revolution started, is there any news or media content do you remember?**

No.

**You can't recall any of them?**

No, I don't remember. I think listening to the political news was totally a waste of time. I told myself to forget about them

I once made a presentation in school, talking about my experiences during the Culture Revolution before, we got a small salon... I prepared a presentation, which made me had to trace back those stuffs... To myself, I don't want to keep anything about them in my mind.

I remember there were always sounds from loudspeakers. The programs were all from Central People's Broadcasting Station. There was always something called news were broadcasted, but they were all propaganda.

**Was there any specific thing you still remember?**

No... I can only remember the sound from the loudspeaker. The male and female voices were both very solemn and overbearing. That's all I can remember.

Personally, I don't really want to remember anything, because I don't agree with anything encouraged by campaign. I knew it happened, but no one had any power to convert the whole situation.

**Yes, I understand... I guess here is the last question about that part, do you remember by what time point did you realize the campaign started?**

There were so many announcements, declarations and movements were organized, like *highest announcement* (最高指示), *new announcement* (新指示). There emerged repeatedly every day. I don't think I focused so much on them during that time, because most of my focuses were putted on my life, I wasn't really engaged into that. I can't choose what kind of society I was born in, I can only decide what should I do, what I want to put my efforts in. What I need to do wouldn't be impacted by other things, even today. I follow news but wouldn't engaged into it that much unless I feel there is something directly related with me.

I can only remember the death of Lin Biao barely (林彪)... But “But I remember Mao's death. That was 1976, I was teaching in that middle school in Baotou, Inner Mongolia... then I heard the news. I just felt relieved without any sorrow, though many people around me was crying, but I believe they were faking their sadness. I don't think there would be anyone would be generously sad about that.”

Another news was the downfall of the Gang of Four, that was another piece of good news... In that time, even until now, I think news wouldn't give direct impact to me. I follow news just for informing myself what a world I'm living in... and that's all.

**If you don't mind, could you tell me more details about how did you get to know Mao's death?**

There was an announcement.

**From radio?**

Yes.

**Were you in the school that you were working in?**

Yes, I was in that middle school.

**And everyone was listening to the radio together?**

Yes, from the loudspeaker. And everyone seemed to be in huge sorrow, because that was China, people need to prove that they're genuine enough to party, act in a way of political correctness.

The context was Mao dead, and people need to behave appropriately in that context, people need to feel sorrow and say 'oh, such a great man dead', to demonstrate the loyalty.

**Had you said that as well?**

No, I never said anything. Culture Revolution for me was just small potatoes for me.

**How about the downfall of Gang of Four?**

I knew the news from the loudspeaker and the newspaper.

By that time, all of the media would just give the same thing. Once governmental statements and announcements were released, they would be transmitted by radio all through the day. So that news was spread out to everywhere shortly. But I'm not so sure whether there was a television or not... no... I can't remember.

**How did you feel about that news?**

I think everyone was truly happy about that. Mao's death was another thing, no one dare to say anything to express their relief by that time, because people were manipulated and trained to respond news in the way expected by leaders. What I could do in that context was just being indifference passively, but I didn't think there was any point for me to demonstrate my happiness, because I can't gain anything.

**Yes, I see. But had those experiences during culture revolution changed your attitude towards media and news?**

No. I spent 33 years in China then left there, then BBC, New York Times and ABC are what I mean by 'media'. I believe they were independent news agencies, though they may not that 'neutral'.

**Yes, that's a really interesting point. Maybe we can continue talk about it later. But we can't skip your life between the end of the Culture Revolution and the start of your Australian life. I'm wondering what did you know about Australia before moving here?**

No, when I applied for Australian visa, I had no idea about this country.

**Then how did you know the existence of this country?**

I just know there was a country called 'Australia', but I didn't know how it was. There weren't many channels for us to get connected with the rest of the world, I was not informed anything about this country at all.

**But was there anybody told you anything about the country?**

Yes, as what we've talked before, at the end of my university life, I met four teachers from British council, they told us something about the world 'outside'... and there was a lecture in my institution who came from Melbourne, he also told me somethings about the country. But I didn't have a really comprehensive landscape about the country.

**Is there any other media reports you could recall between 1976 and 1985?**

No... At that time, my focus was on my own life. I just finished my study and started teaching and wasn't lived my life relaxing and happy. I always want to move back to Beijing, looking with my parents, after realizing how difficult it would be, I started to think about leaving China.

At time time, I'm always thinking how to get out from that place, getting out from Hohhot, getting out from Inner Mongolia.

I graduated in 1982 and started my work in 1985. By that time, China already started changing by that time, the economic reformation started, as for myself, my goal was only going abroad. I just didn't want to spend my life in Hohhot. That was almost the only task I settled by myself.

So, I didn't pay much attention on news and media. This habit lasted for the entire of my past life, I would only read those things I think I ought to read

**After you moved to Australia, what media you used frequently to inform yourself about Australia?**

I always watch TV program from the ABC and the SBS after I moved here. I don't really watch programs televised by those commercial channels, for there were too much advertisements and I can't stand them.

I think the SBS is pretty good. I watch international news in different languages from SBS every morning. There are many different channels, like BBC, Al Jazeera and Dutch news. I usually watch four or five channels from them and compare their narrative. Then, I can understand what has happened.

**Cross-referencing? Could you explain more about that?**

Yes, I wouldn't trust any news. But if news were reported by four or five channels, the general background of the information would be clearer.

### **Would you families also do this kind of cross-referencing between news?**

Maybe not... that's the way I get news.

### **Why would you do that?**

I need to filter and select the information by myself, comparing those news reports from different sources could help me to figure whether a news agency is reliable or not.

for example, I can feel those reporters in BBC do paid efforts to way every word they write, which is different with those in US. The reports given by ABC would sometimes take their own position, but at least, they still demonstrate their professionalism.

I form my attitude in media in early stage of my life. As I said, When I knew Morduch and how much he has controlled the media reports, I told myself, I won't trust all of the media anymore, I realized I can't trust any media.

### **Can you give me more details?**

It a general idea. I just asked myself, why he spent that much money in keeping controlling of those media companies? Obviously, that's because he wanted to impact the way people thinking. And the most effective way to influence people's thought was influencing the information they can collect. So, I just feel... I'm the only person who can decide whether or not I would accept that sort of impact.

People need to think and analyze every day, but someone is just over there, trying to manipulate all of the others. It not only happens in China, but everywhere on this planet.

### **By what point had your realized it?**

It's hard to say... my life in Australia was a big struggle when I studied in Monash. By that time, many classmates of me in Monash did their degree with scholarship, such as Chinese government scholarship, Monash University scholarship and many others... But I need to support myself. So, I studied full time, worked part time. I never had any holidays, I was working during every school holiday. By that time, news was just something for leisure, I didn't have any time to actually get then while surviving in my own life.

But I started teaching in 1989, so I think the time point would be somewhere during 1990s or in 1989. But once I knew the thing about Morduch, about how much he has controlled on media, I just told myself: Okay, I won't fully trust any media thing anymore.

### **Why that was especially striking for you?**

I can't understand why someone wants to take control of the media, I think for me, the only logical reason is he wanted to control how people think. I think that is the only logical explanation Although it was only my conjecture, I think it's close to the truth.

So, when I watch news, or watch videos..... I watch many videos on YouTube during my spare time, I'm always looking for information from different, even opposite standpoint. Cross-referencing is really important.

**Can you be more specific on what videos you would watch on YouTube?**

I just found YouTube was such a useful tool for me for reaching information resources. And this is not about media, it's about my life.

In current stage of my life, there were still two things I want to do: first, I want to review the education I received in China, especially those knowledges on philosophy and Chinese history. I need to figure out how much of them were fact and how much were lie, you can also say I'm re-educating myself with YouTube. When I was in secondary school and high school, the history knowledge the teachers taught us were far away from the truth. I need to get information about them from different perspectives. That's a lesson for me, that it's so important to read original historical documents and find narratives from other sources. Another thing was, I want to know more about Western world, because I found my knowledge about Western value and history is still quite limited. These two tasks were what I give to myself.

I think I must get the facts before I get my own views, I need to base my views on the right basis, rather than that false information,

**So, re-educate yourself was the main motivation....**

Yes, because my education was mainly based on that misleading information.

**Could you give an example on that? Like... how YouTube videos had changed your view towards some specific issues?**

There were so many. Like that peasant movement raised by Zhang Xianzhong (張獻忠). In fact, he was a very brutal person, and so corrupt. But in my history education taken in China, he was described as a remarkable leader, a hero.

I'm wondering how dare' they' to manipulated children for generations for your political purpose? I just realized how many mistakes were embedded in my past education, the only thing I can do is to 'disinfect' myself.

Last year, I had a trip to Yunnan, we started our journey from Kunming, then to Dali, Tengchong. We planned to pay a visit to Ruili, but finally abandoned that idea and went back to Lijiang. It was a long journey, so we hired a driver to drive a bus for us. And that was really interesting that the bus driver used to be in army during Sino-Vitnamese War. We talked about history all along the way, but he was so surprised that I knew I lot about the history in Yunnan.

That's because I always try to find out those historical events hadn't been documented by Communism Party, because I know that I was misled by my school education, and it happens others in China as well. I think everyone should do go through that process for 'disinfection'.

**How about you learning on Western history, can you tell me more about it?**

It's hard to say... there are so many things...

**Or can you give me a recent example of it? Like something you learnt from YouTube.....**

I watched Andrea Mars's documentary, *the Making of Modern Britain*. That was splitted into 6 episodes. The documentary was mainly about the last one hundred years of the Great Britain but with Andrea's political commentary.

Basically, I think that provide me a perspective in viewing that part history and it's a part of my self-education.

**How do you feel about that documentary?**

I think this documentary is very good. I think there are historical facts, but people could decide how to collect them and give comments on them... whether some certain historical event should be count as an advancement or not, or what impact did it gave to society..... something like that.

I also read books written by Francis Fukuyama, he wrote so many books on politic-related topics. His analysis on politic was also interesting, like that tangle model, theory on the rule of law, the accountability... He concluded a series of patter of government operation.

**Did you also know him from YouTube?**

No, I just got his books,

**There are only a few questions left here. Because you've mentioned the 'cross-referencing' before, I'm still wondering could you give an example about it? Like what news would be compared by you cross channels?**

A typical example was the news form Fox News, TBS and CNN. Fox News is significantly pro-Trump and CNN.... my favorite one should be New York Times, the news reports on New York Times were much more authentic. I think you can figure it out after reading two or three paragraphs. Sometimes you went through several sections and just found there weren't any evident has been collected, all the discussions were all based on the authors' subjective opinions.

I prefer those articles with hard facts, then develop the discussions on that. I also taught my students in the same way.

**Are you still interested in news about China?**

Yes.

**How would you get that news?**

I like Mingjing News based in US, the reports there are more related with Chinese democracy activism, and there are always some political commentaries made by He pin (何頻), Chen Xiaopin (陳小平) and Wang Juntao (王軍濤).

I like those commentaries made by Wang Juntao (王軍濤) particularly. He has participated into social movements himself during late 1980s and early 1990s, and I think he's one of the few academics among democracy activists now, there aren't many of them over there. The way he viewing social movements is different with others. He would take those movements as an object for observation, rather than a thing for self-interests.

**Yes, and they were also migrated to American then.**

Yes, right.

**It was started from 1980s onward, people could get news from different resources, how would you use media to mix and match news about China and Australia?**

When you get to my age, you will find that you would buy books from some certain authors, just because you believe in that person and their professionalism. In general, Western media were more trustworthy, but this assumption cannot cover the whole huge industry.

I trust some of the news agencies and distrust some others, and I would never read news from the latter. Like there are some of my previous school classmates and colleges on WeChat would repost news to chat group every day. For that news, I would only have a look of titles, but would never go through the full articles. Because I know that they are fake, those news agencies only make news as much as they can without any professionalism.

**Could you give me an example about that?**

I can't really recall anything... I don't take WeChat as my news resource.

But I can give you another example which is more related with your topic. That was in Hong Kong, in the high school, we talked about political control and brainwashing, I posted an article ... I can't remember it clearly, but that should be an article. It was in response to that there were some students concerned about the untruthful information and role of media, I just wrote: 'you overlooked the role of readers. if you can filter information by yourself, those news and information wouldn't influence you at all, you can't be brainwashed. You need to analyze the information by yourself, rather than accept whatever others tell you based on their own self-interests.' I told my students, 'try to 'immune' yourself from brainwashing.'" That's what did I said to high school students.

I think it's also about my personality. Of course, there're also some people just want to read news, they don't want to know the truth, they just believe whatever they've been told.

**Yes. And I'm wondering what media you would mainly use to inform yourself the news in Australia?**

It's ABC.

**So, is there any specific news you're following recently?**

No. But because I'm in Western society, I should to understand how this society works, how democracy mechanism works. And according to what I found so far, it's very costly.

**Why do you say that?**

Do you know how much has Trump put into his campaign? Even here, if you want to organize a political campaign, if you want to engage people into the election, you need to pay a lot of money for letters, phone calls. They're very expensive.

**According to your perception, what was the most significant change for media environment in Australia in past twenty decades?**

It's hard to say. I think it's contentiously evolving; people were engaged into this media environment.... I think the media industry is growing, but I'm not so sure whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. For people living in contemporary world, it's hard to figure it out, only history can make the final judge.

**Do you think your perception towards the world is still changing?**

To my age? No. I think I haven't change since I was a kid, I was born with my personality and character..... But I think my attitude towards media was just a result that I followed my heart, it's a gradual process for evolution, growth and development.

**Do you still remember by what time did you started to use YouTube?**

YouTube is a recent thing. And..... since there were a lot of other tasks in my life, so only when I have spare time, I would watch YouTube or read books.

**I mean, by which year you started to use YouTube?**

It's hard to say, I can't remember it clearly.

**Is there any other thing you want to add?**

No.

**Here's the end of our interview, thank you so much for your participation.**

## **Interview 2**

**Interviewee:** Zun

**Interviewer:** Joyce Junxi Cheng

**Time:** 22ed February 2019

**Venue:** meeting room 5, Baillieu Library, the University of Melbourne

### **Thank you so much for participating into our research. Can you introduce yourself briefly?**

I came in Australia in April 1987, it was long time ago. The purpose for me to come here is for a life with freedom. It not for earning money, but just for freedom. I found myself was very lucky. Only one year after arriving here, I found a job in the library of Victoria University. Everyone was asking: 'how did you find that job?' I even asked myself: 'how did I found that job?' Because I had never dreamed about it.

Maybe that't because of my working experiences in China. Before coming here, I worked as a librarian in China, taking charge of the collection called 'foreign magazines'. And after arrived in Australia, Victoria University was also looking for someone working with their magazine collection, so that was matched with my past experience.

### **That's interesting. It's still foreign magazine after all.**

Yes, for Chinese it is! So maybe that's why i got that position smoothly.

With the help of a English teacher, I wrote a cover letter, then went to the interview. My English teacher had also taught me how to answer those questions, so that wasn't gave that much troubles.

### **You must be a quick leaner.**

I think I'm open-minded, brave and always like trying different things. That's my personality.

I started my work in library directly without receiving any training, I think I treat my job in a Chinese attitude, I worked very hard, tried to do the best with my work. Some ladies worked in the same department with me told me: "Slow down", but I didn't. I took this job not only for money. By that time, librarians need to work on those book menus: when new magazine arrived, we should mark down which level it would be stored on, and those menus were all kept in drawers.

Five or six years later, we started to use computer, then I got some healthy issues. Because I worked too hard, repeatedly typing on keyboard, I got RSI. When I initially there were something wrong with my back, I told my manager, but she just replied: "everyone got a sore back." Okay, I thought maybe I was too fussy or something else, so I stopped talking about that. Until one day, my whole

body spasms horribly. So I visited a physician in the university. After checking, the physician said that the muscle on the right side of my body was 'as hard as rock' and it was abnormal, he asked me: 'why didn't you come to see me earlier?'..... but that's what my manager told me that my symptom was normal. I took the treatment for several times, then the physician left to America. Since then, I hadn't took any treatment at all.

Then I went to the university work union in university, to protect my own rights. But at last, the university replied me: 'if the university fired you directly, you wouldn't have chance to stay here any longer'.

Because the work union presented that they would protect the right of every staffs. The staff there supported me. We went to see a lawyer..... because I didn't know how to reach out those resources... she (the staff) went to the lawyer together with me, supporting and helping me a lot. But at last, I received letters from both the university and the lawyer, which claimed that I have applied for retirement due to heathy issues. But I always tried to back to work and want to keep that job..... staffs in Work Union then suggested me give up, because they had seen this kind of things for so many times. No one had ever won that game..... I finally chose to give up, I was axed.

At the beginning, I was so happy for getting this job, there were only four people got interviewed and it was me finally got the position, I worked hard, too hard, which then led me to this physical problem. And my boss finally found that I can't create any value for them anymore, I was kicked out.

**That was horrible. Which year was that?**

I started the position in 1989 and finished in 1999.

**So you almost stayed in that position for almost twelve years...**

Ten years. At the beginning, I worked form Monday to Friday, also for evenings and weekends, because the managers thought I can handle heavier workload, because I didn't any families here.

**But is there anything you felt pleasant with your work?**

Of course, at the beginning. I was so pleased for being hired. I applied for that job in 1998, by that time, someone just cut the position prescription from newspaper for me. By that time all of the information would be on newspaper, rather than internet..... Internet just went popular for the last ten years.

And there were three vacancies were listed on newspaper, the first one was full-time library attendant, and the other two were both part-time positions. For me, obviously, a full-time position offering higher salary per month would be better than the other two, and that position didn't require any specific school degree. By that time, I just realized that degree didn't matter that much. The employers would value more about your experiences. There were also some others with qualifications submitted their applications, but they weren't be employed. that was different from my expectations.

At that point I was so happy, my families, friends were all asked me: 'how did you got that job?' I told them the process. And during the interview, the chief librarian asked me whether I want to continue my study here, I said yes. Then I started to attended classes in college, the school covered all the fees for me.

By that time, my language was so poor, I thought I can't cope with that, I attended class but can't understand what the lecturer was talking about. So, I turned to the chief librarian and expressed my concerns on my language ability. And the chief librarian organized the language classes for me as addition. Then those English teachers helped me with my study and exam preparations, since then, I started to make my progress gradually.

### **Was that the education for you in Australia?**

By that time, I need to work, earning money for surviving. So, I only took two subjects, one was for academia purpose in university, and the other was called 'English for occupation'. My classmates in the latter class were all learning English for getting a job.

### **So, the latter one was specifically for English in workplace?**

Yes, specifically for workplace. And the teacher also told us some techniques we could use in work place, like if we can't understand what others were talking about, we could also ask them: 'could you speak slower?' or 'could you use other words instead of that one?'

### **I think you've taken a rather brave journey. You've already spent 37 years in China and stated your career. For most people in that situation, maybe they wouldn't choose to go abroad and start a new life.....**

That was one thing. And the other thing was, later on, I met someone from a famous university, Fudan University, in China and used to work in library as well, but he then worked in a factory, making cloth in Australia. He felt it was so unfair that it was me, a person without any academia degree, got that position. But the position was there, why didn't you try? They didn't try.

But there was a saying in Australia: "right time, right person". If you were the right person, but appeared in a wrong time, maybe it still wouldn't work. I was lucky.

### **Yes, and now we may need to move to some earlier stage in your life about your childhood. Can you introduce me about your childhood life?**

I still should say I was a lucky person, even in my young life. My father was a professor in a medical university, my mother was also received tertiary education. Me and my younger brother and sister should have had a happy life. But unfortunately, as many people know, the political movements..... My father, as a university professor, had no money. We can barely survive.

As I'm a person that always want to express my opinion openly, that environment was so dangerous for me. So, when I got the chance leaving that country, i decided to go.

Another thing related with this decision was peers' pressure, many of my friends had left to different countries, such like America, France and Luxembourg, I nearly chose to Luxembourg in early 1980s. By that time, there were no telephone, we can only write letter to each other. And in they asked me whether I would like to go to Luxembourg with them, but at last, they left earlier than I expected.

**So, when you looking back to your early youth, what news do you remember specifically?**

News?

**Yes, news..... how did you get news by that time?**

At that time, it was just radio and newspaper. And lots of things just happened around me, like someone's parents suddenly disappeared without any reason, no one had got any idea about where they had gone.

**What time did this kind of thing started to happen?**

That was during Culture Revolution. I was old enough to understand what was going on by that time. Before that, I was too young to keep them in my mind.

**Did you remember any news you got to know before that?**

I can't recall. There were just radio and newspaper, in most of the time, newspaper was the main source for news.

**How did your parents get news?**

I think it was the same. They got newspaper.

**Did they subscribe it?**

I think so. Bu that time, we have newspaper for children, and adults would read *People's Daily* (人民日報).

**Did you also read *People's Daily* by that time?**

For myself, I would read *China Youth Daily* (中國少年報). Because I was just a kid that didn't capable to read those complicated stuffs for adults.

**What was the contents on *China Youth Daily*?**

At that time, the main content of media was advocating people to be 'good people', contents were both very positive, so do Chinese media today.

**How would you define the 'positivity' here?**

Positive..... they would just give some ancient stories, encourage people to work hard and be good people. There were hardly reports about negative social news, like murder or whatever, we hadn't heard that kind of bad news.

**Can we say that most of the media contents were about the bright side of society?**

Yes, they would encourage you in being a good person.

**Can you give me any example for this kind of news?**

That trend was a main thing for that time, but I can't recall any specific examples related with it. They were all about..... educating people to be honest and respect. You should make some contribution to your country, you should go anywhere the nation wants you to go. It was not about your self-interests, it was the needs of country. That value was different with what West. In China by that time, no one would care about your personality or things you are interested in, you just need to follow the instruction given by the nation.

There was a slogan: '一顆螺絲釘，哪裏需要往哪釘', which means you are just a small screw existing for the needs of government, because you are just one of the components of the machine, you need to feed their needs, following their guide.

By that time, even today, many scientists left their family for their entire life, working for nation, maybe doing some research on nuclear or other technologies. They would just disappear for years, and their wives and families have no idea about where husbands had gone. That's so unfair for their families.

**When did that kind of thing started to happen?**

I think that started in 1956 or 1958, when China started the nuclear weapon development plan, such like atomic and hydrogen bomb. You know, years later, the nuclear weapon of the nation had been developed.

Of course, that was glory for Chinese government, but for me, as an ordinary person, I would not really care about that. Comparing with that, I think I'd rather think more for those scientists and their families.

**Did this sort on information was given by Chinese media by that time?**

No, those things were only reported during recent years. When they (government) entitled some scientists as 'the father of atomic bomb' or 'the father of atomic bomb', their wives and children would finally get to know where their 'fathers' had been in past fifteen years.

Such like my father, he worked on researching some sort of disease in China, which was a project was kept as confidence by that time. My father was instructed that he cannot give any information related with that to foreigners, because the government didn't want to let others know that disease

had happened in China. Those diseases were labeled with number, except those core researchers, no one knew what those disease was exactly.

**Was there any news or radios would give report to that?**

That was kept in confidential. Not any report would be given to that. Sometimes I asked my father: 'your classmates and colleagues published their academic books and articles, why don't you do that?' But he just said, his work was the confidential one, so the cannot write anything related with them.

Then I understood, his work would be taken by government, he can gain nothing from it.

**Yes..... His name was wiped out from all the records.....**

Yes.

**Maybe we'll move to this part later. Now we need to focus more on the newspaper you've mentioned, when did you started to read *Chinese Youth Daily*?**

That was before Culture Revolution, I was in... year five ..... or year six in primary school.

But that was before Culture Revolution. After then, all of the newspapers were just disappeared.

**So before the start of Culture Revolution, how did you friends and neighbors getting news? And what media channel was your favorite?**

At that time, you didn't have many choices, people can only read *People's Daily*, page one, page two..... and that's it.

**What kind of contents would interest you?**

I didn't remember there were many contents about arts or any other interesting things, almost all the contents on People's Daily were related with politic.

**Do you have any regional newspaper by that time?**

Yes, there were some, they were organized by the small-scaled news agency. The one was called '*Hangzhou Daily*' (杭州日報).

**Did you read it by yourself before?**

No, I was not so interested in that.

**Yes, right. so, the newspaper you mainly read were 'People's Daily' and 'Chinese Youth Daily' by that time?**

For me by that time, I would say I read more '*Chinese Youth Daily*' than '*People's Daily*'. The latter was more targeted to adults, some of the articles maybe too difficult for us to understand.

**Right. As for radio, what radio channel did you listen most by that time?**

We have local radio channel called *Hangzhou People's Broadcasting Station*(杭州人民廣播電臺) and also *Central People's Broadcasting Station* (中央人民廣播電臺). Contents on *Central People's Broadcasting Station* represents more about the... 'central' of the country, including that national news. And *Hangzhou People's Broadcasting Station* would report more about local news and some of the national news.

**According to your experience, which one was more popular in Hangzhou by that time?**

For me.....I was only interested in contents about sports and arts, especially dancing. But for politic-related issues, I would just go through them roughly.

**Did those contents were given by both newspaper and radio?**

Yes, but I was only interested on those stuffs. By that time, I think, by that time, I was too young to understand those things about politics. I think political news might only attract with those adults who had power, or desired for gaining power. For me as a child, I can hardly relate myself to 'politics'”

**How about your parents?**

I think for my parents, they spent most of their time in research, in their laboratory. They only spent a little of their time in media.

**When they use media, would they be interested in political news or just went through contents in a more general way?**

I think it was a more general way.

**Okay..... can you introduce me more about your own media using habits?**

I think by that time, the postman would deliver all the newspapers and mails to the front door of university, and the security would collect those for us. But I think for most of the time, my parents would only read those journals and books. They would stay in their own laboratory work.

**Would you talk about news at home with parents?**

Not really. My father didn't spent much time with us at my childhood, he always stayed in university, at laboratory. And during winter and summer vacation, he would go to rural area and do his research. I was complaint about that to him before. So I grew to be a boyish girl, I always play games with our neighbors' children, those boys.

We chased each other, playing hind-and-seeK..... I still really proud for myself, that when I was ten, I brought all my playmates to a park that was far away from home. When we back at home, it was totally dark, their parents were looking for them and blamed me..... but I did brought them back in the right direction. I'm still proud for that. But I didn't got many time to spend with my parents.

**Would you talk about news with your friends?**

It was sad that during that time, my parents, as intellectuals, were kept in the university, the camp for more than one year. And we can only get 8 Chinese yuan per month for the whole family. So, I have to make plan of those money carefully to make sure my young brother and sister can get enough food to eat.

Then we grew some little choke by ourselves and then brought them to a farmer's market near home, we needed to sell them out to get some more money. I still remembered that we used a big basket to carry all of those chokes..... That was a small city, all of the people knew what happened to our family, so we can easily sell those chokes out..... that was my life, my young life. Before my dad passed away, he also said that he couldn't imagine how could I survived with my younger brother and sister, I was only 14 or 15 years old by when. Beside this, I also cooked meals for my parents every day and tried to get some cigarette for my father.

We cannot have normal communication with our parents during that time, there were always some people kept watch over us. The only thing we could do was writing our words on small pieces of papers and sent them inside..... that was a smart invention of me.

**Yes, you were, that's so horrible. And did you still listen to radio by that time?**

No, I was then sent to the countryside, that was place close to the broad of Russia.

**How did you get news during your stay?**

There were no newspaper or radio. We had no contact with outside world. The place I've been sent was once settled for doing Laogai (reeducation through labour). But people there didn't necessarily committed crimes, like murder or something else, but just held different political ideas. It was 1969. After me and my younger sister were sent to rural areas, government released my parents, letting him back home and look after my youngest brother.

Since I've lived on southern before, I didn't have any piece of cotton-padded jacket that could against the coldness in north region, I needed to pack my own package and caught the train, it took me three-day to get there.

**You've mentioned that you hadn't got any radio on newspaper in the countryside, but would your supervisor subscribe newspaper for all of you?**

We've got nothing. During the daytime, all of us would work in farm, after that, we would be gathered together and have meetings during night. We read the 'little red book' (Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong, noted by the transcriber). That was what we got.

**Was that the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*?**

Yes, that's called Mao Zhuxi Yulu in Chinese (毛主席語錄). That was the only thing we can read, there were no media resources at all.

**Okay, right. So how long did you stay there?**

It was interesting that one year later after I arrived there, my friend found that my right eye got bigger than my left eye, I didn't found that by myself for there were no mirror in that place. After being told that, I went to see a 'barefoot doctor' (赤腳醫生). That 'doctor' had no idea about my symptom, but he agreed with my friend's opinion. So, he wrote an application for me, suggesting those party leaders to send me back to city. That gave me the chance leaving that place. Then I backed to my hometown, the city I lived before and visited two doctors there, they confirmed that I was pretty healthy. That was how I went back to my home, my hometown.

**What had changed after you backing at home?**

We were still in money-shortage and I couldn't get the 'rice tickets' (糧票) granted by government. So, I had to go to a black market near my home, getting rice and sugar there for my families.

The whole country was in food shortage and that was the only way we could survive.

**How long did this sort of life lasted?**

Five years. I did not only need to arrange my own life, but also need to contact with the governors to transfer my *Hukou* (the registered residency status of one individual in that system, 戶口) back. Because when I had been sent to the countryside, they also moved my *Hukou* out from my home and didn't transfer it back after my left. But without my *Hukou*, I wouldn't have any rights given by government. So, I did need to get that back. The negotiation with governors in north China lasted for five years, luckily, I eventually got my *Hukou* back.

**But where did you got those knowledge and information from? Like where should you go if you want to change your *Hukou*.....**

The first thing was, I need to let them realize I did have a physical problem, that's the reason for my leaving.

**Yes..... But specifically focusing on media, can you introduce me more about your media using during Culture Revolution? The first thing is, when did you realized that Culture Revolution has started?**

At that time, we had no idea about that. We were so young by that time, how can teenagers in 14 or 15 years understand what was going on in that situation? We had no idea about that. We just led our normal life, getting through it day by day.

### **Did you still read Chinese Youth Daily by that time?**

That was before Culture Revolution. But after Culture Revolution started, all schools were shut down, the doors were closed. All the publications also stopped their works, there were no magazines and radios anymore.

### **How about People's Daily and Central People's Broadcasting Station?**

“I can't remember those media contents clearly. At that time, this biggest thing we had to think was how to survive, not the political news. That political news cannot support our lives, they weren't rice. Rice was more important than political issues, than media.

There was such a mass. My parents were sent to the May seven cadre school (五七幹校). By that time, when students finished their year six, they would need to get the referral letters before enrolling into secondary school. But the thing was, all of my classmates received their referral letters, except me. They thought I was not educate-able because of my family background. The country would only educate 'good people', like those children from working or farming class background. By contrast, my families were grouped as '*black five categories*' (黑五類)..... that was the reason.

### **Who would file those referral letters for you?**

The the ministry of education, it was not about school. In China, there is a big issue that everyone would get their own 'personal files'. if 'they' documented that someone's parents or relatives had once worked for Kuomintang (國民黨) before 1950s, he/she would not be allowed to receive any education.

After that happened, the medical university my father had once worked in wrote a letter to the ministry of education, explaining that my father was not that bad.....two weeks later, I got my reference letter.

### **You've mentioned that during Culture Revolution, everyone living around your place knew what has happened to your family, so I'm wondering how did they knew that?**

Because people all lived in dormitories by that time, and the market there was just like the shopping center in North Melbourne, if you appeared in that place every day, people there would get familiar with you.

That's why they knew what have happened to my family once saw me and my sister standing there with a basket, and they just brought those chokes to help us.

### **Do you have any memory of big-character poster?**

Yes, they wrote one about my parents, on that poster, my parents were described as '*anti-communist*'. My parent got their university degrees around 1942, at that time, the communist party hadn't taken the power. So, of course, they would work under the Kuomintang government after graduation.

### **Did that poster mark the start of their sufferings?**

Yes, those people just wrote what they want on the poster, some of them were totally lie! You just reminded me about another thing, raiding homes (抄家) those students from university came to my home and putted everything upside down: suitcases, closet, table..... they even pried all of our wooden floorboards for finding whether there was some weapon under there. They did that for three times, I was just a teenager girl by that time..... these things happened before pushed me to the decision of leaving China, seeking for a free life..... from the experiences of my young life, I realized others can put any dirty lies on me.

### **How was the day when you saw that big-character poster of your parents?**

Those people putted that poster in the university canteen (食堂). By that time, there were meetings and fights in canteen every day, most of those were targeted to intellectuals in university. People organize magazines, newspapers and big-character posters by themselves, and stick those posters on to the wall of that big canteen.

### **Can we say that the poster had become the main channel at that time?**

Not really, I can't equal the *big-character posters* with newspaper. The newspaper was settled for people living in the whole country, but the posters were more used for personal attacks. For example, they shamed a woman by saying that she had been a 'prostitute' before 1950, they could make the whole story. But the reason behind this kind of accuses was jealous. Because that girl was pretty and many men liked her, those people could put any rude words on her.

### **According to your perception, how many people would get to read those posters?**

That was funny. At the beginning, some people would phrase a young boy for he had written a poster attacking the principal and professors, which was considered as a representation of his loyalty.

But just several months later, the boy's father was attacked by others with another poster. That boy's families then suffered a lot. And that boy himself suicide later..... just as that Chinese saying goes: 'everything old can be new' (風水輪流轉). There were lots of stories like this, including on those people who were born in 'red families'.

### **Had you read any big-character poster by yourself?**

No, because I'm a child from a family that had been putted in black categories. Only others can put their feet on my head, but I wasn't in any position to write anything about others.

**No, it's not 'written'. I mean, had you read any poster by yourself?**

Yes, I read poster every day. They were putted everywhere, in every street, every factory, every company.

**How was the contents of them?**

The contents were always different. Those were written for accusing different people, like someone was a bad person, someone did some unmoral things, or someone had worked for Kuomintang before 1950.

**Can you give me an example about that?**

I can't remember. The only poster I can recall was the one someone wrote for my parents, she said my parents had worked for Kuomintang before 1950 and claimed they were anti-communists. But that was ridiculous, they just needed to make living after graduated from university, they had to work. Not everyone could find a position in private hospitals during that time, and communism party hadn't come into power yet.

By that time, you can either be in 'red' or 'black', there were not any category in middle.

**Can you still remember how was the day you saw that poster?**

No, sorry, I can't remember, that should be traced back to 60 years ago. I can only remember the words they used.

**So, were this sort of campaigns usually start by the big-character posters, then others would organize struggle session to attack people like your parents?**

The session organizers were usually those red guards (紅衛兵), workers, farmers and militias (工農兵). The process was like..... for example, in the dormitory we lived in, my father was a university professor, and others were mostly factory workers. I still remember that my father would earn 169 yuan a month, but they would only earn 5 yuan a month. They just jealous about the privileges we got.

But before Culture Revolution, my mother helped them a lot, she would always pack those old clothes and send them to those poor families. But when Culture Revolution started, they just putted their feet on us..... this is human. There are so many books about this now.

**But how did you feel about your parents during Culture Revolution?**

I knew those things. After years later, I asked my father about that, and my dad said they it was just jealous. So, I replied my father, he was almost 90 years old then, why didn't you ask that woman why she did those things to us? But my dad just said, time has gone past, let it be. But if I got any chance, I think I would ask her about those things, the things she did to our family did destroyed my mother's career.

My parents just two ordinary individuals. Several years ago, I went back to China, some of my neighbors still remembered those things, they stayed at their rooms when those students raid my home, because they didn't want to get themselves in trouble. I still remember they putted all the suitcases in my room upside down and took the marriage rings of my parents. Those pictures were still so clear, just like happened in yesterday.

So those pasts pushed me leaving China, I can never know whether they would happen to me again.

**How about your life after Culture Revolution?**

I found a job through my father's colleague in a small factory, then find a job in university in 1977, In that year, a mass scale of students could enroll into universities again, so I founded that job in university library. I think I feel more secured, I can get 30 yuan per month. And for most people by that time, getting a position in university was a lucky thing.

All the factories by that time were ran by government, and all of my families didn't have any network with governors. But since my father worked in a university, so I can work there as well, that was a policy by that time.

**According to your memory, what news did you remember specifically during that time?**

By that time, I don't think there were much people would be interested about news. They just focused about their daily lives. But I didn't actually know..... just speaking on those people I knew, everyone wanted to left China after Culture Revolution.

**Was there any news informed people the finish of Culture Revolution?**

I can't remember, i don't know. For me, I just went through my life day by day.

My sister had been left in countryside for eight years, everyone is different. I was the second person left the farm I was once worked in, but there were thousands of people had been left behind. Many of them lied to the government, because they have to do that for backing home. My sister didn't want to lie, farmers there asked her about why she had still stayed there, whether she wants to find a farmer husband..... she should be back to home. Luckily, she eventually backed to home.

**Did you remember any news during that time? Like the death of Mao?**

I knew Mao's death from the television.

**That's interesting, when did you get television?**

I don't know.

**Or...how did you watch television by that time?**

I can't remember those things. But I could remember that the Communism party sent the files to the farm I worked in. And that file said those young people should be sent back to their cities. Those young people didn't know anything about those files, they just knew that they didn't want to stay at the countryside for their entire life.

**Yes, because you've mentioned that you got to know Mao's death from television, how did you remember that day?**

I can't remember. But that news, together with the death of Zhou Enlai (周恩來) were big news by that time. My neighbors were yelling outside the window about that news, then all of us just walked out from our homes, setting together in front of the television. But I can't remember where the specific location of that was. Maybe that was in the home of one of my neighbors, or that was the university I worked in, maybe there was a big screen over there.....

**What news beside this can you remember?**

No, I can't remember any other things. My focus by that time was on my own life, how to survive. That's it.

**Yes, right. so maybe Mao's death or the downfall of the 'Gang of Four' (四人幫) were not so important comparing with your own life.....**

Yes. I didn't pay much attention on those issue. But I did know what was happened. My neighbors were all talking about the downfall of the Gang of Four.

**And how did you know the things about Australia before arriving here?**

Through my friends. Many of my friends went to France, America and Luxembourg by the late of 1970s, and one of them suggested me to go to Australia. By that time, I had no idea about Australia, but my father told me that Australia is a good country, because there wasn't any war had happened in this land. So, I just decided to come here with a friend.

By that time, migrating was not that difficult, I went to a local police station for referencing whether there was anybody went to Australia before me, it turned out that I'm the first one moving from Hangzhou to Australia.

**So, all your information about Australia were from your father?**

Yes, I didn't know anything by myself. That was so funny that there were three optional cities for me: Melbourne, Sydney and Darwin. I was surprised that there was a city called 'Darwin', I thought that should only be a name for human.

**Was there any media had provided you some information about Australia?**

No, I had no idea about Australia before coming here. I just went through my life day by day. Then I found a job in university, that was out of my dream, I had never dreamed about that. I have a

friend just came here two years later than me, he was so determined about his career plan. But I just thought his plan was so hard to achieve, for we neither speaking English, nor understanding the social rules here.

**After you arrived in Australia, what media did you usually use to inform yourself about Australia?**

At the beginning, I think that was some local newspaper.

**Can you be more specific? What newspaper was that?**

I lived in Footscary at that time, so I read the newspaper published there. At that time, I read newspaper just for finding job, my English was not good enough for reading other articles.

**Yes. But we know after 1980s, people could get news from different channels, there were also some Chinese media emerged in Australia, what other media would you use to get news from China and Australia?**

In the 1980s, many Chinese people migrated to Australia, then the Chinese newspaper were started. I remember the *Pacific Times* (大洋時報), the *Epoch Times* (大紀元) and *The Tide* (新海潮). They were both free. You can just grab them from the Asian grocery shops.

**Was there specific news you got to know from those media?**

I didn't much news. I would prefer *Epoch Times* (大紀元) that would provide more information about lifestyle. My favorite would be page 7 and 8, there would be a section about cooking and traveling. For the cooking section, they would not only give recipes of Chinese dishes, but also those of Southeastern dishes, reading them makes me feel relaxed. I'm not really interested in that politic-related news.

**Why do you think those lifestyle-related things would interest you more?**

I think that was more related with the world I'm living in every day. I arrived in a new place, a new environment, I need to get familiar with my new life here. In China, I only knew there were *Four Great Traditions* of Chinese regional cuisine (四大菜系), but in Australia, I have learnt many news things. I can't even get chance to read those recipes in China by the time I left there, everything I can reach was about China, Chinese foods and recipes, it was impossible to read Malaysia recipes in Chinese magazines. But here, I've been given more choices. For me, those things were very refreshing.

**So, were they your main information resources when you just arrived here?**

Yes.

**How about now?**

I would listen to the mandarin program of SBS every morning, I used to subscribe newspapers, but I canceled all of them last year, because I can get news from websites or WeChat, they provide some timely reports.

**And you just said the 'timely reports', could you explain it to me? In what dimension you feel in that way?**

In 20 years ago, there was a radio channel for blind people. At that time, there weren't other way for blinds getting news. So those broadcasters would read newspapers, such as *The Ages*, *Financial Review* and *The Australian*, in very slow speed. I usually listen to that channel with newspapers in my hands. That was the way for me to learn English.

That channel helped me a lot.

**Yes, that's very interesting. And you've mentioned that news gets 'quicker', why would you feel in that way?**

For example, there was a radio news channel called 3aw. They have different news programs about finance, law and many other different things. There were also reports on garden, weather and emergency news. I listen to that every day.

In the morning, I would firstly listen to the mandarin program of SBS from 7 to 9, then I would change to the Cantonese program which would finish at 11 o'clock. After that, I would turn to 3aw..... I mixed that up with 3cw.....I knew the founder of 3cw, that was a Chinese radio channel, he was a football player and studies in Beijing Sports Universality. He didn't have any other skills other than playing football. But he worked very hard. After getting some saving, he founded that radio station for getting more money.

I also watch 3aw, that because they would report that emergency news right away. For example, you can get to know there is a car accident in North Melbourne, or there is a flood in some other place right after they happened, then I would know I shouldn't go to those places straightaway. That was so different with newspaper.

I think I haven't listened to 3cw for almost 10 years. Because I don't like those advertisements, there are just too much of them over there. I could understand their position, of course, they need money to survive in the market, but I just can't stand it anymore.

**Would you still be interested about news about politics?**

I'm not interested in political news, because I can never confirm whether the news is trustworthy. It is always easy for people to make stories. I get feeling because of my own life experiences. For Chinese government, even for Australian government, it is possible to hide the truth from the public. The 'full picture' can never be reached by ordinary people.

In Australia, it turned out to be that there are also this kind of things, there were always reports like 'someone committed some crime last year.' Apparently, police knew that earlier before, but

they kept them as secret from us. Just a piece of news could be hidden from public for one year, two years or five years. This kind of things just make me lose my trust on them. Don't believe in them.

But I would still say, Australian media would give more truth comparing with Chinese media. For example, you can still see those negative news, bad news from Australian media, especially from those night TV programs, like that news about murder, rape and violence. But Chinese media would only give you positive news, everything is good, positive. They would only release negative news when they found that was an inevitable one like those horrible train crashes. But even the deaths number in these accidents could be fake, for example, those reports on the Sichuan earthquake, the government would never give you too much details.

**Yes. And how did you inform yourself the news on Sichuan earthquake in Australia?**

From SBS and local newspapers, like channel 7, channel 9 and ABC.

**And how did you know the death number is not true?**

I think you can just find it out days or months later, still from the radio, it would mostly come from Australia radio. You can compare by yourself and choose who to believe.

**It's really interesting, can you introduce more about how would do this kind of cross comparison?**

I don't watch many Chinese TV programs, but I know SBS would broadcast TV news from CCTV every morning at about 6 or 7 o'clock. It would last for around half an hour, but I don't watch that. It's not only because that's too early in the morning, but also because that I don't trust most of details given by them. I would rather choose to watch programs of SBS and ABC.

**Why do you prefer SBS and ABC?**

I think their reports are more accurate and honest, though they may not be in that way for all the news reports.

**Can you give me some specific example about that? How would you feel they would be more honest to details comparing with Chinese media?**

I think it's not about specific examples in recent times, it's about history. In last 50 or 60 years, Chinese media just didn't give truths to public, people could only find that information by themselves in 15, or even 20 years later. For example, Tangshan earthquake, many people died during that time. Indeed, there were some scientists had warned the danger of potential earthquake, but government just ignored that. Finally, the whole city just disappeared. And the real number of deaths were only released years later.

By that time, the government claimed there were only 3000 or 30,000 people died, I didn't believe that. I can only believe in the memoirs from those survivors that released years later.

### **So how did you get reach to the memoirs of survivors?**

Their articles would be published by newspapers, or be broadcasted by radio,

### **Can you be more specific on that?**

By those local media organizations in China. And some of them also migrated to other countries, and they finally found out that real information through their relatives. There were so many this kind of thing had happened in China.

I remember the earthquake in Sichuan, the media in China faked the death numbers. Just compare the reports from China with those from America, Britain and Australia, you'd find the difference. In the reports about the incidents, the deaths number reported by Chinese media is always less than those of the Western media.

I think I can understand why Chinese government fake those numbers. It is the culture about 'face'. They may think if others knew that there were many people died in those disasters, they would lose their 'face'. But for Western people, they would care more about the 'fact' and 'truth', they would care that much on their 'face'.

### **You've also mentioned that, for news on disasters like Sichuan earthquake, you would also get news from media channels in America and Britain. Can you introduce me more about that?**

The channels that I always watch, for example: SBS and ABC, would all broadcast news from America and Britain. This is the way for me to improve my English. I usually start to watch channel 10 at 5 o'clock and switch to channel 9, or channel 7, at 6 o'clock. From 6:30 to 7 o'clock later is the time for SBS. Around 7 o'clock I will switch to ABC

### **How long had you keep this timetable?**

I started it in about 10 years ago for improving my English. I prefer to watch that news that I can understand most of them, but still got some words I don't understand.

### **Would you use any media from China?**

No. I didn't get those free newspapers anymore and stopped listening 3cw. I would only listen to SBS from 7 to 9 every morning, then change to 3aw.

### **But what had replaced those newspapers?**

I would use a application call *Our Steps* (新足跡), I think they got some volunteers translating the news from English into Chinese, maybe they also do that for improving their English, but that helped other people a lot. For me, I think that *Our Steps* helped me to get news easily, sometimes they would also make mistakes in their reports, but other readers would correct them by posting the original news links on comments.

So, you can just read the translated version first, if you found you're interested in that news and want to know more, you could just click into that link below the article and check by yourself.

### **Can I say you use *Our Steps* as a substitute to Chinese newspapers?**

Yes, but there is another reason for cancelling the subscription was that they got too expensive. It costs 600 dollars for a year, while I can only read news that happened yesterday. That's why I switched to radio and internet, I could always find news there that just happened several minutes ago. That an important difference.

### **How do you feel about *Our Steps* so far?**

*Our Steps* is founded by Chinese. And the founders just avoided to touch political issues related about China, they wouldn't even mention about those things, because they know that would get them into troubles. Nobody would know where the line is, so they just stay away from that zone.

They would not put their opinions in reports, for example, they would just report there was a boy died during camping, and another Chinese student took his own life for he can't cope with the study pressure.

There are several sections that I quite like. One is called *Jing Da Xi Suan* (精打細算) that would give some sales information, and the other one is *Zhong Hua Zhong Cai* (種花種菜) with contents about gardening and travelling. They even have a specific section for those Chinese parents that just arrived here, for their networking. And there is a funny section, which is called as 'anonymous zone', people would share their relationship or family issues there, and readers could give suggestion to them, helping them dealing with that situation.

The best thing about that website for me is that I can get to know how others think about those news and issues. For example, I just saw that sad news on the schoolboy's death this morning, and people just gave their different opinions on and discuss about that. Some just thought that the teacher should be responsible to that, some others thought it should be onto school or parents. So, I can get to know how others think about that.

### **What kind of news would interest you on *Our Steps*?**

I think there are many of them, such as the one I mentioned before about the death of the primary school student, since my daughter was in that school before and also joined that camping program. So, I also putted my comment under the news, I think that kid should receive enough sports training before participating into this sort of activities. As my daughter said, that camp was not a relaxing journey at all.

I would not participate those discussions on Sino-America trade war, I'm not expert in those issues. I would rather go to that news more related about everyday life, like family and relationship issues, and put my suggestion to comments. These issues are inevitable in everyone's everyday life.

**Yes, so you would prefer that life-related information on *Our Steps*.**

Yes, like the section of *Jing Da Xi Suan*, and those medical-related information, for example, where can we find good dentists and doctors. That would save lots of time for me. I'm also interested in those traveling and cooking information, like how others plan their journey.

I think those contents are more related with my life.

**Why do you think you don't like political news?**

Because I'm just a ordinary person, I think my power is limited for changing the whole country. I can't control politics.

**Had your past experience influence your interests?**

Yes but no, my experience in China influences me in some certain degree. But my experiences in Australia have also taught me something. I've tried to fight with power, but it turned out to be that I'm always that loser, like my experiences in my workplace.

I think Obama's experience is inspiring, he comes from a poor family but does wants to do some change in his country. Obviously, he putted lots of efforts into his career. Bu only six years after he became the president, his hair all turned being grey. I think that kind of life is not for me.

I don't even join in any Chinese community in Melbourne, those people just fight for getting more power. Those politic thins are too complicated for me, I'm not smart enough for that. I would only go to those clubs, like cooking club, traveling club and dancing club, but I would never involve myself into those decision-making processes. I like dancing, but didn't got chance to do that during Culture Revolution. During when, many people would dance Zhongzi Wu (忠字舞, loyalty dance), but I had never got chance for dancing that.

**Is there another Chinese media you would use now beside *Our Steps*?**

There is another website called Yiyi, but I just don't use it. I think it would be too much for me, *Our Steps* already provides me with enough information, it keeps me busy.

**Yes, and you've also mentioned that you would use many different medias, watch programs on different TV channels, listen to radio of different radio channels.....**

Yes, there are some differences between channel 7, channel 9 and others. Channel 7 and 9 is more commercial and would give more local news, but SBS and ABC would report more world news. So, for me, I would watch channel 7 and channel 9 more to inform myself that news happened around me, because I live in here.

**Could you introduce me how do you balance your media using between different channels?**

Before 7 o'clock, there would be radio program of BBC, after that, I would listen to mandarin program of SBS from 7 to 9. After 9 o'clock, there would be Cantonese program that I would also

listen to. I found there are some differences between mandarin and Cantonese program, some news would only be reported in Cantonese programs, but not in those of mandarin.

**Can you give an example?**

Too many. The reports of local news would always be same, from example, the change of Australian prime minister; but for that news happening in Hong Kong or Malaysia, the reports would be different. Sometimes mandarin programs wouldn't report them.

**Why would you be interested about that news?**

I just want to know what happened, even I'm not involved into them. For example, I live in Mount Wavely. For ten years ago, I had told my daughter that Australia has changed, the area we living in was not as safe as early days, by she didn't listen to me. But recent years, lots of cases had proved what I had said before. That's why I think Channel 7 and Chanel 9 are important to me, those reports could help me better understanding the place I'm living in.

**What would you listen beside the Cantonese program?**

If I'm at home, I would tune to the 3aw or the channel for classical music. And those programs on 3aw were also related with daily life, about cooking, law consultant and relationship issues, Usually, for those law or relationship consultant programs, audiences could also participate into discussions via phonecall, expressing their opinions. So, I can hear many different stories and opinions from people. That's important for me, because I can get to know others life experiences, standing in their shoes and making my own life decisions wisely. That's what I told to my daughter. Other experiences are just like references to our own lives, like myself, the decision of leaving China is also influenced by the life experiences of my peers.

**Had your past experiences make you to realize the importance for this kind of comparison?**

Yes, I don't want to listen opinions and narratives that only from one person. standing for one side, everyone could make fake stories about others, but maybe that's not true. Only when viewing things from different angles, we can understand the whole picture, the true story.

Like every Sunday, there would be a 30-minutes program on Channel 9 which would be started at 7:30 o'clock, hosted by Liz. She's sharp.

**Have you found the reports that are conflicts with each other?**

Yes. That's why I like programs such like *Q&A* and *Media Watch*, people discuss about news together in *Q&A*, and you can get to know their own opinions. And those misleading reports would also be picked out by *Media Watch*, I think programs like that could help audiences to find out the truth.

There was another program called *6 minutes*, they would give reports to human life in those dangerous regions, which could let me know what is going on around the world in my own home.

### **Why do you like *Our Steps*?**

There are not only Chinese there, some Australian people or other foreigners would also participate into discussions, maybe for learning Chinese or some other reasons.

### **Beside those we've talked above, is there any other media channels you would use in Australia?**

There is a TV channel based on north Queensland, which mainly focuses on life of aboriginal people. I've learnt a lot about aboriginal culture, their arts, music and sports, from there.

I would also watch the Chinese TV show, *If You are the One*, which is a dating program. Because I've left China for such a long time, things happen today maybe so different from those before. That program then became a channel for me to understand the young generation in China, how would they find their partner.

### **But your kids are both in Australia, why would you still be interested in that?**

I just want to know what the youth are thinking about. I can feel a generational gap between me and those young people, they are now in their 30s and have totally different view towards relationship with me. I'm curious about their opinion. I'm just interested about that.

### **How would you describe the role taken my media in your life?**

I think news and media are important in life. For example, in the case on terrorism, like the expansion of ISIS, I think media reports helped us to understand what is going on, and we can be aware that there are some dangers around us.

Like when I walked down the street, I would keep distance with those African boys, it doesn't mean that every single one of them would pose threats to others, but just in case.

### **So, your attitude of media had changed a lot comparing with what in your childhood right?**

Yes, when I was a child, I would believe in everyone, but now it's different. One thing I just found after Culture Revolution is that the official-documented history can be fake, and you can only get to know the truth after years later. Like some historical photographs, the government can just wipe the disliked person out from the picture easily. Those things just make me realized that I can never believe in those people from government, they are too smart.

### **You've also mentioned that you can get reach to those hidden stories years later from Chinese media, can you introduce me more about that?**

Some of those witnesses and survivors may would migrate to other countries in later of the time, so they can tell the truth to public. And *Chinese Daily* would also give reports to those stories, but I only read that for several months. Because most of the reports are still phrase government, rather

than talking about those these happened before, those true stories happened in the countryside..... that isn't what I want to read.

Some other free Chinese newspaper would also report about those things, and some of their news are translated from local channels, like SBS and ABC. The contents of them are similar with each other. Those newspapers were hardly got news from news channels in mainland China, but would collect news from other media around the world. But there are too many advertisements there.

But after internet has emergent, all those newspapers just disappeared.

**Yes, about the topic on trust, how would you confirm that one news channel is more reliable?**

I think the issues pointed out by *Media Watch* seems persuadable for me, through the discussions given on that show, I notice that news reports released by Channel nine do filter some details of the truth from the public. That drives me to believe it. But that doesn't mean I would abandon totally Channel 9.

In fact, Channel 9 is an important channel for me to get news every day, but when I would also take *Media Watch* as an important information source for me and compare the reports given by both, especially during the election session. for example, I could still remember that *Media Watch* would sometimes criticize the reports on Liberal party by Channel 9, for there were some details had been missed out.

**Yes, and we've also talked about that the purpose for you to do that kind of comparison is for making the 'right' decision, so could you be more specific about how was the relation between those two?**

That's from my own life experiences I've mentioned earlier, I also told my daughter to make her decision in this way.

**Can you be more specific? What kind of decisions are they? Are they about finance, politic or also something else?**

I think it's about life in general. But to be specific in politic, I think an example here would be on refugee policies. In pasts, I would support the asylum policy of liberal party, which holds positive attitude in receiving refugees, but after I knew that there are so troubles has been made by those African youth in city, I changed my mind. I think that the Liberal had tried to provide a better living environment for them, saving them from war, but they just destroyed everything. I can't see the point for us to keep the door opening for them, it would just put local people under the danger. So I changed my decision from 'yes' to 'no', the real life influenced me on that.

**Would you discuss about this kind of topics with your daughter?**

Yes. She would also accept my opinion if it based on truth. We can't base our discussions on those theories, they can never cover what is happening in real life. I've told her last year that our

community was not as safe as before, but after three or four houses had been burgled, she finally agreed with me. She should be aware of that.

That's what media can do, it would inform me what happens in somewhere far away, otherwise I would never get to know those things. Especially for refugee issues, years before, I did feel sorry for their experiences, those kids and women living in Sudan and Arab, I think their human rights are under the risk. But later on, after I knew they would do something so wrong to this society, I changed my mind.

**Did you also realize those issues through media reports?**

Yes, Channel 9, SBS and Channel 7 would both report those things. They happen in our daily lives, especially in suburbs like Sunshine. Those are true stories. We had never heard about them before, but they are now in our daily lives, everyday news. They keep updated every day. So, I would say I changed my mind after being informed of those things by media.

Definitely, there are also some good people among refugee community, not all of them are criminals. My daughter always says here is 'a safe place' anymore, things get changed.

**Have you found there are any differences on media using between you and your daughter?**

Totally different, she's in Facebook all the time, but I don't use Facebook at all.

**Would she tell you what's going on in Facebook?**

No, she wouldn't. I'm always the person telling her about the news, then she would check them out. We're different generations and interested in different things.

**But if got some chance, would you be interested to learn how to use those media of youth?**

I will send her lots of news and information from *Our Steps*, she knows what's going on, but she wouldn't pass any news to me.

But If I find Facebook is useful and there is some helpful information, I think I will accept it.

**Is there anything you want to add to our conversation?**

No.

**Thank you so much for your participation.**

### **Interview 3**

**Interviewee:** Ann

**Interviewer:** Joyce Junxi Cheng

**Time:** 26th February 2019

**Venue:** meeting room 5, Baillieu Library, the University of Melbourne

#### **Could you introduce yourself briefly?**

I arrived in Australia in 1985 to Newcastle University for an exchange program, then I received the scholarship from Melbourne University, so I started my PhD study here in 1987 and graduated in 1991. My husband and two boys came along with me with accompany visa in the same year. At the time my families and I arrived in Australia, we didn't plan to settle down in this country. But after the 1989 Tiananmen protest, we changed our mind. My son both started school by that time, so we decided to migrant.

I was born in Pingshan, Hebei and received my early education in Shanghai. Both of my parents had joined the Chinese Communist Party before 1949, and led the student revolutions in their young age. During WWII, both of them were in military. So, when People's Republic of China started, my dad became the vice-mayor of Shanghai, and my mom was the leader of Shanghai Education Department. But they were both suffered during the Culture Revolution. They were locked up in prison units in Tianjin, two fingers of my mom were broken during that time.

I didn't care about politics before the Culture Revolution, when my classmates all worked hard for joining the Communist Youth League and the party, I always spent my time in playing and reading. That was a golden time. But 1966, my parents were attacked, all of the students in my high school joined Red Guard and fight with each other in campus. I just stayed away from them, and became a Xiao-yao Pai (逍遙派). Because of my parents were criticized as 'capitalist roader' (走資派), I was sent to a village in North China and worked there for several years. After Culture Revolution, I went to Beijing and got a position in a research institute.

#### **What media did you remember specifically in your childhood?**

After I was born in Pingshan, my parents went to the north, so they left my younger sister and I to our grandma there. We didn't get any radio or newspaper in Pingshan. But I remember my younger sister and I were always dancing with some North Korea songs. I can't remember where those songs came from, maybe there was a set of radio, maybe somebody lived there taught us those songs.

Because the citadel of the Communist Party was settled in Pingshan during Chinese Civil War, so I think maybe there were some soldiers there had been to North Korea, maybe that was them taught us those songs.

### **Then when did you left Pingshan to Shanghai?**

Before that, I stayed in Anhui for a while, because my father got some troubles in his work. The politician my dad used to worked with, Rao Shushi (饒漱石), was accused as anti-communists, which was influenced my dad's career. Before that, he planned to go to Yunnan, to help with the new government there, but Rao didn't approve that. So, when time came to 1955, my dad was dismissed from their posts. But our children didn't realize what had happened by that time.

But luckily, my dad finally got back into the institution. He got a position in the Communication Office of in Shanghai People's Government (上海交通辦公室), then we set off to Shanghai, my dad's bodyguard (警衛員) and our nanny also went there together with us, though my father wasn't allowed to hire bodyguard anymore. That was because they've already our families, the daughter of my nanny had married with that bodyguard, which was lovely. By that time, he just did some other job in Shanghai. Then, when dad was appointed as vice-mayor, that young man came back to continue working for my dad.

### **So, what news did you remembered specifically during your youth life in Shanghai?**

There were quite a lot. We got a set of radio at home and our nanny loved it. She was always listened to radio at home, even those were all propagandas.

I think she trusted the Communism Party. Because she had a struggle life before 1949, but afterwards, she joined our family and had a more comfortable life. That's why she's always eager to learn the things about new China, new society and new reality. I remember that we once saw that she was crying, while listening radio. We asked her why, and she said she just heard the story from that that was so similar with her story. That was impressive for me. She influenced us so much. I still remember that she would always bring us to watch Yue Opera in theater. She was also a really kind woman, during the Culture Revolution, her daughter and son-in-law were sent to May Seventh Cadre School, but she still went to Tianjin to visit my parents. She cared about their condition.....

She worked for us for long time. In 1970s, I was admitted by a college, she even told me, don't wear my watch to school, because that would make me looked like a bourgeois lady and divide me from other normal students.

I think before the Culture Revolution, people, especially those poors like my nanny, were all trust the party, because they were just relived form the wars and colonies, people were all interested to know what the new government would be like through media, so they were willingly to listen those propagandas. That was very different with what in the Culture Revolution.

### **So, what news do you specifically remembered?**

It should be the ‘Learn from Lei Feng’ campaign (學雷鋒運動). I think I was in high school by that time. It was mainly about encouraging us to be moral people and do good things, like talking care of elderlies, helping others. Though it was also propaganda, I think it not that bad.

Another thing I also remember are some Chinese movies and movie stars at that time. There was a cadre club close to our home, so I would go there sometimes. That was impressive for me when seeing those big posters of those movie stars around the wall by that time, though it was also quite bourgeois. By that time, we led a good life. It feels like those political campaigns, such like the Anti-Rightist Campaign, just happened in a outside world. It didn’t affect our life too much.

**Can you give me more details about the campaign? And how did it affect your life?**

It didn’t affect me that much. But my classmates were both passion for it. They went to help our school cooks and cleaners with their work, and also went to the university beside our school, to help with the cleaning work.

My memories about that are very blur, can’t remember anything special. But when I read the memoir co-authored by my high school classmates, I was surprised that everyone remembered it clearly. They all talked about it.

My high school was the attached school for Tianjin University and Nankai University (天津大學南開大學附屬中學), which was settled specially for children from cadre or intellectual background before. Our cadre kids were both lived in school by that time, because our parents were both in the capital city, Baoding. They were too busy to take care of us at that time. Because I lived in school, I can only remember those things happened around me.

**How did you get to know it?**

We got some ‘politic study sessions’ at that time and need to write diary as well. But that wasn’t some actual diary, we need to share the content of it to our teachers, so it should be called as ‘thoughts reports’ (思想匯報).

**Did you have to do it?**

We don’t have to, but if being asked, we need to give it to our teachers. But since we both loved our teacher by that time, that wasn’t a bothering thing for us.

It always interesting for me to read it now. Beside my writings, there were some annotations from my teacher. I liked my teacher by that time, He taught us physics and very smart, we still kept in touch now.

**That’s interesting, and maybe we’ll need to focus more on media now, what was your favorite media for getting news by that time?**

Just radio. Because we stayed in school, there were some loudspeakers there to make sure that everyone can hear the content clearly. We also got many political study sessions and discussion groups by that time, and we would get some readings, like the speech of Peng zhen (彭真), and study them.

We didn't get any newspapers at school, or maybe we had, but I wasn't so interested in reading them. But all of us would be informed by teachers about the reports on media. Teachers always told us the content of editorials and speeches of country leaders. So, our knowledge about media content were mainly from our teachers in school.

**How about radio? What content of radio programs do you remember?**

I can't remember anything about that. And we also hardly listen to radio, but I would read newspaper.

By that time, I stayed at school from Monday to Saturday, and stayed at home at Sunday. And my parents got many newspapers at home. I really like one of them called '*Reference News*' (参考消息) which was an exclusive newspaper for cadres of the party. Those reports seemed to be funny to me.

**Can you be more specific, how did you read it?**

My parents got those newspapers and allowed us children to read them, so those newspapers weren't taboo for us. But my siblings and I weren't allowed tell people outside our family about what we read at home, because the contents of those newspapers may different with those available for public.

And we also got some newspapers at school, but we just read them in political education sessions. That's was before Culture Revolution.

**That's interesting that you found some differences between on newspaper contents, can you introduce me more about that?**

I can't remember it clearly, but some foreign news would only be published on '*Reference News*', especially those of Western capitalism countries. But in those public newspapers, you can only find things about North Korea, Albania and Soviet Union.

**Can you give me an example about the foreign news you read from '*Reference News*'?**

I remember that I have read some news about Soviet Union and America.

I still remember some of the news about the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union were driven into revisionism around 1963, so there were many articles targeted their criticism to Khrushchev at the time. Some reports told that he would put his feet on table during the party meetings. Those reports seemed to be funny for me.

**How about American news?**

Those were less impressive for me, can't remember them clearly.

Because we got Russian classes in high school by that time, rather than English classes, I guess I would relate more to those of Russia. My teacher also lent me lots of Russian novels, such as '*War and Peace*'.

**Beside '*Reference News*', is there any other media you would use?**

We also got some newspapers at school, but I can't recall most of them, I just learnt those articles criticizing Soviet Union, that were usually titled like 'first criticism', 'second criticism' and third criticism'.

But as we got Russian class at school, we can also get to read those Russian novels, watch their movies and videos of ballet, like '*Swan Lake*'.

**Can you also get reports about Russian arts from other media channels?**

Yes, there would be some articles on newspaper, and some book reviews recommend people some books and movies of Soviet Union, like '*Lenin in 1918*'.

**How do you remember the way your parent got news?**

They got some magazines and newspapers, but I'd only read '*Reference News*', I just like those strange stories.

**Yes, so you've introduced that you read many things about Russian,,,,,,**

Yes, there were many of them and those were from my teachers in the school in Tianjin. I went from Shanghai to Tianjin in year six, before that, I was a naughty girl, always spent time in playing rather than reading and studying. But a teacher I met in Tianjin, she changed me. Her surname was Liang, so I called her Teacher. Liang. She encouraged me to read and also sent me some books as presents. In the preface, she would usually write something like: "you are an excellent red child" (你是革命的后代). My primary school in Tianjin was also settled for children of cadres, and there were also some Indonesian-Chinese students in our class. But these all happened before the Culture Revolution.

**It's interesting that you said your teacher would tell you some news, can you introduce me more about that?**

It was not only news, but also many translated novels. Beside those Russian ones, there were also some other fictions from other countries, such like *Les miserables*. But they were also pretty bourgeois.

Both of us trusted our teachers, so we just took everything told by them as truth.

**But why do you always use the word 'bourgeois' in describing your life?**

I think that's because we got some special treatment by that time. Those novels and movies we got were not available public, and we also got drivers, workers and nannies at our home. That wasn't the lifestyle would be led by most people by that time.

We got a small theater in cadre club and watched movies there. Those were called in-party movie (内部电影), which would only be shown to cadres and families exclusively. There were also some American movies, but I just can't recall the names of them.

I know my life and experiences at that time was quite different with my friends and classmates at school, especially for those kids from intellectual families. They got more political pressures from society, media and teachers by that time. Life was harder for them.

By that time, kids from revolutionist, farmer and worker families were treated well, we can easily join Youth League and Communist Party at school. But for those came from intellectual families, things were different. The thing I perceived by that time was that those kids from intellectual families were so depressed. Though they always performed really well academically, almost none of them were happy in school. They have to sacrifice more for those honors.

**You've mentioned that there were lots of pressures from media to those kids, so, how did media pressured them?**

Those were everywhere, all the newspapers and radios were talking about that, they were ordered to keep distance with their parents for preventing the bad influences from them and participate into revolution (與家庭劃清界限, 擺脫家庭影響, 積極投身革命), things like that.

But I didn't understand them before the revolution, even we were friends.

**So, what news and media did you remember during Culture Revolution?**

That was started by a big-character poster (大字報) in TsingHua University, Liu Shaoqi (劉少奇) and Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) were kicked out from the party. By that time, everyone can make their magazines, posters and leaflets, that was very free. My friends and I was in Beijing by that time, those posters and leaflets flied to everywhere. There weren't any official media by that time, all of those stuffs were made my normal people. I also learnt how to sketch stencils by hands by that time for printing our own magazines.

In 1966, Chairman Mao received us Red Guard in Tiananmen Square, all the students were gathered there. Then, we moved into university halls, we got sleep bags and free foods there for we were Red Guards,

At the start, I wrote a poster criticizing our school leaders and even criticized Liu Shaoqi and Mao Zedong in my own diary. But my passion didn't last for long, soon after, I decided to stay away from the campaign, because I was scared. People started to fight each other. In school, they organized different groups and fight all the time, I had a classmate, he was the son of Yan Dakai (閻達開), lost one of his eyes in a violent fight in school documentary.

I joined it at the first just because all of the others did that, including those teachers. Because I've already joined the Youth League by that time, I was assigned some writing work by that time. But then people started to attack some student leaders, who were also our classmates; I've also got to know the *family background theory* (出身論) and the slogan '老子英雄兒好漢, 老子反動兒混蛋' (*If one man is a hero, his son must be a hero; if the father is an anti-revolutionist, his son must be a bastard*). Since then, I felt I may need to keep distance with those people, I also wrote those thoughts in my diary by that time. It was even before the attack targeted to my parents. So, I didn't join any group by that time.

### **What got you to that way?**

I can't stand that they started to beat our teachers and principals. I remember I wrote in my diary that our teachers were the best group of people, those students shouldn't do that.

### **Can you give me some examples on media you remembered during that time?**

I think what I remember specifically was that poster in Tsinghua University. That was the first thing during the Culture Revolution.

### **And what news did you remember when you were in the village?**

We also got some study sessions there and studied the speeches given by Yao Wenyuan (姚文元) and Jiang Qing (江青).

But I can't recall anything related with that clearly. See, when we were sent to village, we needed to network (串聯) with other sent-down youths in near regions. But my younger brother decided to go to Yan'an, and I joined him. But when we arrived in Baoding, I got a high fever, then, much of my memories were faded away. It was really strange, it was 1974.

### **How about afterwards, what news do you remember specifically?**

I remembered the death of Lin Biao (林彪), we were so surprised and just thought it was rumor. Because in that village, we didn't get any radio or newspaper, so it was a shock for us. We knew it at night, after finishing the farm works, but I can't recall much details of it.

### **But you've mentioned that you would need to 'study' newspapers by that time, how was those study sessions in the village?**

The place we worked at was in Inner Mongolia, and those documents would be given from the top leader to our *production team*, then assigned to sub-team. I remember we always attend those study sessions at night. After finishing our work, we would be gathered together and do some study. It was dark outside, so we got an oil lamp on the table. But I was too sleepy to be focused. Because I was a Xiaoyao Pai (逍遙派), I didn't really interest about those things.

By that time, the students in our class were divided into two groups, I was together with peers from cadre background. But because my parents were accused as *capitalist roaders* (走資派) by that time, I was sent to the village with those students from intellectual background. At that time, most of the cadre young people went to factories and *Production and Construction Corps*.

### **How was that linked with your perception towards media propaganda?**

The life of us were different. We gained more freedom in village and didn't actually pay much attention on political study. We went along well with those local famers. By that time, interacting with them was also taken as a part of politics study, but we just talked some random things, pretty casual.

But for those children from intellectual background, they paid all of their spare time in studying. They also would bring some textbooks there, like those of math or chemistry. Maybe that's the

only way for them to get a better future. But you know what book had been brought by brother? Maxims and Leninism! My dad putted those in his bag, which was pretty funny. I don't know whether he had ever actual read them.

**Had you actual talked with them about that?**

I got a friend there, a girl. But I think she's fine, but she also studied hard by that. Her father was the head of radio department in Tianjin University before the Culture Revolution, so her families also suffered during the time.

But actually, cadres like my parents would get more trouble. Before went to that village, my brother and I went to the jail in Baoding. We wanted to see our mom, but that jailer just refused our request.

**Was there any other thing related with media you remembered during that time?**

Yes, I even joined the propaganda team. I think they ordered me to do that, because I got along really well with those farmers. I almost save the life of a young girl, she was a farmer's daughter and got severe tuberculosis by that time. If nobody brought her to doctor, she would defiantly die. I thought I need to do that, so I brought her to the hospital in Tianjin, and she backed to life after the operations. Because of this, those people in our production team decided to let me join the propaganda team.

**How was your work in propaganda team?**

I was happy only for that liberated me from farming, that was a good thing. And that girl's brother wrote a article about that and published on *Tianjin Daily*.

After joined the propaganda team, I was sent to another village. My work there including organizing the politic study sessions and discussions. The reading materials for the study sessions were selected from the newspapers, such like some reports criticizing capitalist class. By that time, we worked together with the military propaganda team. The campaign after the death of Lin Biao was called rectification (整黨).

**How did you feel about other people's attitude towards political study?**

There was hardly anybody would take it as a real thing, those farm works had exhausted them, no one can actual put any attention on those things. It would be odd if I saw somebody who were eager to learn things about Culture Revolution. For me and other students who were sent to the countryside, those articles criticizing Liu Shaoqi couldn't change anything of our lives. I think we can't be passionate about politics and the revolution anymore after our parents were jailed and we were sent to the village.

After that, we just didn't put any attention to politics anymore.

I did that just because I was ordered to do that, so I had to write those articles and posters. I knew many people were eager to do those things, but that wasn't me.

**By what time did you realize that was the end of Culture Revolution?**

I think that was the downfall of the ‘Gang of Four’ (四人幫). By that time, I was working, then I heard the news that the members of the Gang of Four have all been arrested. Everyone thought that was rumor at the start, and the person said that was almost arrested by the security. But then the news was confirmed by the official channel. Everyone was happy with that. It was like another liberalization for us.

Because after chairman Mao and Zhou Enlai dead, everyone felt hapless about the future of this country. So, the downfall of ‘Gang of Four’ had some particular meaning for us by that time.

### **How did you get to know the death of them?**

I remembered their (Zhou and Mao) death clearly, especially the death of Zhou in 1976, I was in *Changchun*<sup>11</sup> in that year, staying in a family friend’s home. That was in early morning, when I was listening radio, I heard that news. It all came in sudden. I was surprised at first, then felt deeply grieved. My friend’s mother was also very sad about that. Then, I decided to go to Beijing. In the train, everyone was crying. We talked about Prime Minister Zhou and his death along the way. In Beijing, people all gathered in Tiananmen Square and streets around

I felt like people around me felt all the same, we just thought there weren’t any hope left for this country anymore. I think that’s why people would feel relieved that much after the downfall of the Gang of Four.

I think that was a thing for people in my generation. Our attitude of media and politics has changed a lot after the Culture Revolution. In 1949, many people trusted the Communist Party, as well as media. They were always keen for listening to the news. But after the political campaign, no one would believe in news anymore... As for myself, I’ve lost my trust in media even before the end of the Cultural Revolution

So, I don’t feel that my village life was totally a suffer, I learned a lot from that. For me and my peers, we were discriminated in urban areas before, but being treated equally in countryside by those famers, because they didn’t care about those things. That’s why many of my friends then went back to those places and visited those villagers, I think we got more freedom than those in factories and production crops.

### **You mentioned several times that you and your peers had lost your trust towards media after the Culture Revolution, can you be more specific of it?**

I don’t know how about others, but I lost my trust towards media before the end of Culture Revolution, I didn’t care about them even though I worked in propaganda team. I only take that as a way to escape from farming.

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<sup>11</sup> A city in northeastern China.

Even now, Chinese people wouldn't trust any authority, no matter who it is, government or scientist. You can find it from the spread of rumors on WeChat, people wouldn't take any words from authorities anymore.

For me, after 1989 Tiananmen protest, I felt like this party had already finished, it looked like Kuomintang. I can't believe they even shot the students, and everyone by that time were both on the side of students.

### **How did you get that news in Australia?**

It's always easy to get news about China from different resources in Australia.

When we saw the tank from the television screen, we were all shocked. What's that? That wasn't a communism country in our mind at all. I remember my dad said: "the Communism Party becomes the Nationalist Party".

I really hate Deng Xiaoping; I think he started the corruption in China.

He and his 'cat theory' finally turned all cats into tigers. He claimed that riches would help poors, and it turned out to be a different story. I think the true communist wouldn't say things like that.

When I visited back China in October, all of my families and friends, including my father, were all on the side of students. Nobody thought that Communist party did a right thing.

### **What did you know about Australia before arriving here?**

The government started the exchange program in 1980s, so my institution got a set of mini TV for studying purpose. I remember people would learn English from a TV program called 'Follow Me'. There was a tv set was in one of the classrooms in my school, anybody wanted to learn English could go there and watch "Follow Me". Since we didn't get other chance for learning English, that room was always very crowded.

I would also listen to radio program from ABC, there would also be some programs teaching English, but since my English wasn't good enough to catch every word in their speaking. I really liked Follow Me and still keep some textbook at home. The content of that program was close to everyday life but also practical.

### **Did you watch *Follow Me* with others?**

No, I just watched that by myself. We got a television by that time, my parents supported us. Then I left China in 1985.

### **So, back to the question, what did you know about Australia before arriving here?**

I just know some histories about this country, like it was established by some British Christians at first, and this country was famous for friendly people, I didn't know anything about White Australia policy by that time.

### **How did you know that?**

But I can't remember where I got those knowledge from.

**After you arrived here, how did you inform yourself about Australia?**

My English wasn't good enough by that time. I improved my English by watching tv series, Sometimes I can't understand the meanings of the words, but I can figure out them from the facial expression of those actors and actresses. I think it was a good way for language learning. As for news, I can understand most of the contents of them through listening, and I would also read some newspapers.

**How about radio?**

That was after I started driving here.

I liked the *Gold 104*. It got some good songs in the 1980s, that accompanied me every morning along my way to work. I like those songs not only for the melody, but the emotions they conveyed to me. I think those songs told some connections between people, no matter where they come from.

I heard my favorite English song, "Sailing", from the *Gold 104*. I can relate to that song so much, even though I come from a different world in China and worked in a small village before... I always turned to it when I drove in the morning. My son would sometimes be surprised by my knowledge about 1980s pop music, I guess that's the reason.

**And how about news, how did you mix and match news of China and Australia?**

I think there was not many news you can get about China, before internet began.

**But, how did you get the news of 1989 Tiananmen protest?**

I can't remember which channel it was, but it was from TV. At that time, there were many students gathered in student union, we watched tv together and talked about it. We were both furious about what the government had done.

**How was that day like?**

I remember we got a Chinese students union at the time, and in that day, we all gathered there, including my PhD supervisor, some Chinese democratic activists and people from the church. We all stayed there and watch television together. Everybody was very despair. In the day after the June 4<sup>th</sup>, I heard someone was crying in office. That was a student from China, he can't believe that the government would shoot the students. We both thought it was corruption stimulated the activism.

When I back to Beijing to visit my dad in October, we talked about it in hospital, there was another lady who was also worked for government, she and my dad both joined Communist party in their young age, and both of them were on the side of students. When I went to the research institution I once worked for, none of my colleagues and friends supported the point of government neither. Even those soldiers in military didn't want to shoot, they did that just because they were forced to.

But soon then, government made the announcement, they said it was those students against the party and people, which wasn't pursuable at all.

**How did that news influence your life?**

The influence was huge.

I started my degree in 1987. Before the protest, my families and I planned to back to China after I graduated. But after that, I changed my mind, I didn't want to be back anymore. I can't understand why government shot students, no one can understand. That's how we changed our mind.

And I also found it was too late for my children to study back in China, my older son was graduated from college and started university by that time, and my younger son was in year four. They have already gotten used of environment here, I can't bring them back.

**Would you still be interested on news about Chinese in recent days?**

Yes, pretty much. I can get more of that because of the social media, like WeChat and blog.

My blogs were started in late 1990s, I got two accounts. One is about Arsenal, that English soccer team, I was a fan of them. It was a surprise for me that those articles then got famous in the fan community, so I then translated a book about Arsenal written by Nick Hornby, which was then published in China. Then I translated another one called 'Naked Julia', that one was also plotted into a movie last year, I watched it here with a friend here in Cinema Nova.

I said it was a surprise because I never imagined that by blogs would be loved by many young people, I always thought there would be a generational gap between us; another reason is that I found there were also people from other countries joined the online discussion.

I do like writing I think, though my degree is on chemistry, I should say I hate that. Before then, I always need to try hard to persuade myself competing that degree, that was a ticket for getting job by that time.

**Can you introduce me more how do you use your blog?**

That was started by a suggestion from my younger son, he works in internet industry and always quite interested about Chinese internet market. So, he suggested me: 'why don't you start a blog, and we can see how people in China response to it would'. I also thought that'd be interesting, then we registered an account. At the beginning, I just translated those things wrote by him, but then he quitted, so I decided to write my own stuffs.

That made me realized how important media is, especially for the communication between West and China. You can see how interesting it is, Arsenal is a soccer team based in London, but they got many fans in China, and there was a big Chinese fan club was settled in Sydney. Those things motivated me, so I'm still writing now.

**How about WeChat?**

I use WeChat, but I don't really like it. There is too much rumor there.

### **Can you be more specific? How would you define rubbish?**

Those rumors, outdated news and lucky cookie comments.....can't find anything helpful there but just a waste of time. People also arguing with each other in group chat, I don't like that. At start, I would still check the source of those rumors by myself, I just want to find out who made those trash. But then I quitted, there were just too much of them.

But I should say that Chinese media impacted Australia politics a lot in recent years, especially for election. There were many posts criticized the asylum policy of Labour party last year and talked about things like Labour would accept refugees rather than Chinese international students. So, there were not many votes was given to Labour in Chinese community, like Boxhill.

### **How did you get that information?**

There were a few articles talking about it, but I saw many of those posts. Those young migrants from China were very different with our generation, they were vested interest holders that got benefits from the transformation. So, they'd be radical in many things.

Like the public vote of same sex marriage, my younger son found that many Chinese voted no. I think social media played a key role there.

### **And how do you get news about Australia?**

I don't listen radio at home, just do it during driving. I don't watch tv news as often as I used to be years ago. Now, I just watch the evening news from Channel 9 or Channel 7.

I just feel that news made me feel depressed, but had nothing to do with my everyday life, like murder, accident and terrorism. My husband and I now read news digest from WeChat. There is an account delivers news every day. The content covers both local and international news, also have news about China. That's enough for us and both that news was from authority resources, so I can trust it. We know that Kim Jong-un visited Vietnam these days, that was also informed by that, and that's so enough for us, we just need to know that big news happening in world, but no more details.

### **How do you feel about news now?**

I don't really care about news now. I think my idea and value towards the world had already formed and it hard for me to change it, also for my friends. We would talk with each other, but it's hard for us to change each other at this age.

I don't really want to know things like murder or killing, that just made me feel sad, but I can do noting to change it.

### **Do you still trust media?**

If media is independent, it's still trustworthy for me. But I do know there none of the media controlled by the government can remain to be independent.

Since my families did some job related with media before, I paid some attentions on media and quality of the repots. Then I found that the Daily Mirror was terrible, they jsut spread some gossips,

like Queen Elizabeth wouldn't allow Prince Charles to reign... those were pointless. So just don't trust those news and media.

But the media like BBC and Herald Sun are both good, I think BBC remained their independence, they did it well.

**How would you negotiate between different media resources?**

I've already get used of checking the news resources by myself.

There are lots of fake news on WeChat, but google and Wikipedia are both banned in China, which prohibited people to check the authenticity the news by themselves. So, sometimes, my friend would send some news. I would search the key words of the news on google, then, I can find some reports of the same topic but from different sources.

What surprised me was that even those well-educated people would trust those articles with significant logical flaw, like those discussion on trans-genetic foods.

**What news would interest you now?**

In recent days, I followed the news about the hot air balloon crush, because that happened on my friend, that hot air balloon was landed on her backyard. It was funny for me when I saw her face on Channel 9. And after my son started his business with America, I would also focus more on financial news of America, since they were related with his life. Also, of course, as I mentioned before, I would still care about what's going on in China.

**Is there any other news had changed your mind towards Australia or China?**

Iraq War. When my family and I arrived in Australia, we both think this country is absolutely a perfect world. The education and Medicare system here were so different from how they were in China. I remember at the time, my friend just gave birth to her twin babies, and the government even gave a baby stroller for free! That seemed to be amazing for us! But the Iraq War changed our impression of the Australian government. It made us more critical.

**Is there any other thing you want to add to our conversation?**

No.

**Thank you so much for your participation. This is the end of our interview.**