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Homeland Engagement and Host-Society Integration:

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Abstract: This paper addresses three main questions through a comparative study of new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore: (1) How do contexts of emigration and reception affect the ways in which new immigrants are tied to their homeland? (2) How do diasporic communities develop to help members engage with the homeland? (3) What effects does transnationalism have on host-society integration? We develop an institutional approach to analyze how the state is involved in the transnational field and how diasporic organizations serve as a bridge between individual migrants and state actors in transnational practices and integration processes. We find that new Chinese immigrants maintain emotional and tangible ties with China even as they are oriented toward resettlement in the hostland and that their transnational practices are similar in form but vary in magnitude, depending not only on diasporic positionality in the host society but also on bi-national relations. We also find that those who actively engage themselves in the transnational field tend to do so through diasporic organizations. Finally, we find that homeland engagement generally benefits integration into host societies. These findings suggest that social forces at the macro level—the nation state—and at the meso level—diasporic communities—are intertwined to affect processes and outcomes of immigrant transnationalism.

Key words: Diaspora, transnationalism, integration, Chinese immigration, USA, Singapore

Homeland Engagement and Host-Society Integration:

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Introduction

New Chinese immigrants (*xinyimin* in Chinese) refer to those who emigrated from mainland China after the official launching of "reform and opening up" in 1978. Their number increased dramatically in the past decades, from 4.08 million in 1990 to 9.34 million in 2013.[2] They are now found all over the world, including countries that historically received few Chinese. However, they are not evenly distributed across the globe, but are disproportionately concentrated in developed countries. For example, the United States, the most preferred destination for new Chinese immigrants, takes the lion's share (more than a quarter) of the total contemporary emigration from China. Singapore, the most preferred Asian destination for new Chinese immigrants, attracts disproportionately large numbers as well. New Chinese immigrants also show remarkable variations in transnational practices, patterns of diasporic formation, and outcomes of integration in different host societies. In this paper, we address three main questions through a comparative study of new Chinese immigrants to the United States and Singapore: (1) How do contexts of emigration and reception affect the ways in which new immigrants are tied to their homeland? (2) How do diasporic communities develop to help members engage with the homeland? (3) What effects does transnationalism have on host-society integration? We develop an institutional approach for analyzing how the state is involved in the transnational field and how diasporic organizations serve as a bridge between individual migrants and state actors in immigrant transnational practices.

Bridging Agency and Structure

Transnationalism is generally viewed as "the processes by which immigrants maintain, forge, and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1994: 6). It is more specifically defined in terms of migrants' occupations and activities that require *regular and sustained* social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation, which implies the actual presence of actors and their measurable networks and activities (Portes, 1994; Portes, 1999), or in terms of social processes through which migrants simultaneously live lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and the country of origin, which encompasses both actual and virtual ties and practices across nation-state borders (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004). What is new about contemporary transnationalism is the scale, diversity, density, and regularity of such movements and the socioeconomic effects on migrants and their diasporic communities in host countries on one end, and on family members left behind and their home communities in sending countries on the other (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Portes, 1994; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999).

In the existing literature, two strands of thought are influential in theoretical formulation and empirical analysis: transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below. Transnationalism from above is a state-centric approach that emphasizes the power of the state under capitalism and the specific ways in which the countries of origin—government and political institutions in particular—take measures in order to channel and manage the transnational activities of migrants (Iskander, 2010; Itzigsohn, 2000; Rodriguez, 2010; Smith, 2005).

While globalization limits the power of both sending and receiving states to control the movement of people, as well as capital, goods and information across borders, the transnationalism from above approach accentuates the role of the sending state. From this

approach, sending states operate on a transnational scale either to reach out to include their expatriates into the nationhood or to shut them off. Many sending-country governments are well aware that, apart from high volumes of monetary remittances, their expatriates are making significant transfer of technologies, information, and commercial know-how to their counterparts back home and are making economic investment and philanthropic contributions in the millions of dollars to their hometowns (Saxenian, 2006; Thunø, 2001). In order to encourage and guide such transfers and maintain and strengthen ties with their diasporas, sending states proactively engage with their expatriates in the transnational social fields by reforming policies, establishing institutions, and initiate programs (Chin and Smith, 2015; Délano, 2011; Durand, Parrado and Massey, 1996; Goldring, 2002; Iskander, 2010; Rodriguez 2010).

Sending states also play an important role in diaspora building through cultivating diasporic identities and reifying existing social structures of diasporic communities through policy intervention, such as granting dual citizenship and permanent residency status and privileges. Empirical studies on China, South Korea, Vietnam, India, Mexico, Morocco, and other countries show ample evidence about the proactive engagement of sending states with their expatriates to cultivate loyalties, attract remittances, and extract obligations (Argawala, 2015; Chin and Smith, 2015; Délano, 2011; Huynh and Yiu, 2015; Iskander, 2010; Portes and Zhou, 2012). However, the role of the receiving state in shaping individual actions has given relatively scant attention.

Transnationalism from below, in contrast, is an agency-centric approach that expresses the varied ways in which expatriates relate to their country of origin in economic, cultural and political terms and their local and grassroots activities across nation-state border (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller, 2003; Guarnizo and Smith, 1998; Portes, 1999). A much-studied form of transnationalism from below involves monetary remittances that flow from the migrants' receiving countries to their communities of origin in the sending country (Mahmud, 2015). From this

approach, migrants send monetary remittances for a variety of purposes. They send cash to support their left-behind families, to invest in small businesses to be run by their families as a source of income, to buy land or build houses for their own transnational lives, and to do philanthropic works, such as poverty or natural disaster relief, education, medical care, and other public development projects in migrants' native villages or communities (Durand, Parrado and Massey, 1996; Goldring, 2002). They do so not merely out of family obligations but also out of their own need for social mobility and compensation for social status loss (Zhou and Li, forthcoming). Transnationalism from below also involves the transfer of intangible resources, such as social remittances, referring to the transmission of values and norms, identities, life styles, and relational patterns (Levitt, 1998, 2007), and political remittances, referring to the transfer of democratic leadership and governance, egalitarian ideology, grassroots activism, and human rights (Piper, 2009). These various forms of cross-border practices describe how immigrants maintain strong ties to their families and communities in their homelands and how they proactively and effectively use these ties to mobilize economic resources and accumulate social and political capital for the benefit of the migrants themselves and their families in both sending and receiving (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998).

Moving beyond the binary of transnationalism from above or below, Chin and Smith (2015) carve out a middle ground, advancing a notion of "state transnationalism" to capture the inter-relational dynamics whereby the nation-state acts both proactively on its priorities and reactively to grassroots transnationalism instigated by their expatriates. Based on a case study of South Korea, Chin and Smith (2015) identified the mechanisms that shaped different types of state-diaspora interactions, including institutional building in the nation-state and in the diasporic community. Their study addressed an important gap in the literature that overlooked the role of diasporic communities in facilitating the action of the individual and that of the state in

transnational practices. A few other studies also find that cross-border activities conducted on an individual basis are exceptional and that many such activities are channeled through institutional actors, including hometown associations and other ethnic organizations in diasporic communities as well as sister associations and civic-cultural organizations in sending villages and towns (Goldring, 2002; Moya, 2005; Portes, Escobar and Radford, 2007; Portes and Zhou, 2012). However, there is still insufficient knowledge in the literature about how immigrants relate to and interact with state actors in the transnational arena, why individual migrants necessarily rely on diasporic organizations to engage with their homeland, and how receiving states constrain or enable immigrants' transnational practices.

Regarding the effects of transnationalism, the existing literature often focuses on hometown development and, at the individual or household level, homeland dissimilation. Homeland dissimilation refers to the process of differentiation between migrants and non-migrants in the same communities of origin, between families with or without migrants in the same community, and between families in migrant-sending communities and those in non-migrant-sending areas in the homeland (FitzGerald, 2012). For migrant families left behind, they are likely to reap double benefits — directly from remittances beyond survival needs and become much better off than other families living in the same community, and indirectly from local or regional development fueled by migrant remittances and capital investments compared to others living in non-migrant-sending areas (Faist, 2000; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003). Thus, transnational flows contribute to local development and increase the average levels of homeland dissimilation, which simultaneously *reinforce* the existing social structures of inequality and uneven development in the homeland. For the immigrants themselves, transnationalism can also work as an effective means to maximize human capital returns while helping to maintain or expand social class status (Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub, 1991; Mahmud, 2015; Portes and Zhou, 2012; Ren and

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Liu, 2015).

While the existing literature offers important insight into the power of the nation-state and the role of individual agency, we note three important gaps. First, it is not clear how individual migrants, especially those of lower social status prior to migration, are connected to the state. Human movements across national borders involve not only nation-states and migrants, but also diasporic communities. Initially established by immigrants as a site for identity reaffirmation and for self-help, diasporas erect distinct social structures recognizable to in-group as well as out-group members. Most migrants are engaged with the homeland through family and kin networks. But when their transnational engagement is beyond their place of birth and when nation-states and extrafamilial institutions are involved, individual migrants may need their diasporic communities to help build connections.

Second, the relationship between sending and receiving states is not yet fully explored. Bi-national and international relationships at the level of the state affect the scope and magnitude of cross-border activities among immigrants (Waldinger and FitzGerald, 2004). While transnationalism from above foregrounds the role of the sending state, it overlooks the role of the receiving state, especially how circumstances in the receiving state regulate diasporic development and diaspora's capacities in connecting individual members to the nation state.

Third, the effects of transnationalism on host-society integration are understudied. On the one hand, the process of migrant integration in a highly globalized world is more complicated than ever before, much unlike the conventional assumption of a natural, unidirectional, and inevitable pathway. Contemporary immigrants are now found to achieve economic success and social status, depending not exclusively on rapid acculturation and entrance into mainstream circles of the host society, but on ethnic resources mobilized through diasporic communities (Ren and Liu, 2015; Zhou and Lee, 2013). On the other hand, many new immigrants, especially those who look

drastically different from the host core group, are often stereotyped by the host society as unassimilable, disloyal, and forever foreign, regardless of their attachment to the ancestral homeland (Hsu, 2015; Zhou, 2004).

We frame our comparative analysis of new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore around the dual processes of transnationalism and integration. We develop an institutional approach that pays special attention to the intersection between macro- and meso-level institutional factors to explore three key propositions. First, diasporic formation involves both individual participation and institutional building. Diasporas are not fixed in time and space. A diasporic community's organizational structure often changes in response to homeland conditions as well as host-society circumstances. Second, transnationalism involves multiple actors—individual, organization, and nation-state. Ethnic organizations in diasporic communities serve as a necessary bridge between individual and state actors. Third, homeland engagement and host-society integration are not necessarily mutually exclusive and conflictual. From this approach, we analyze how contexts of emigration and reception shape diasporic development, how diasporic communities help migrants maintain homeland ties, and how organizational transnationalism facilitates migrants' integration into their host societies.

Site Selection and Data

Site Selection: The US versus Singapore

The United States and Singapore share a significant proportion of the total post-1978 Chinese emigration. Both countries are traditional countries of immigration with a deep British heritage, and both are preferred destinations for new Chinese immigrants. However, these two nation-states are vastly different, not only in the sheer size of population and land area, but also in polity, immigration policies, diasporic positionality, and relations between homeland and hostland

at the state level. A main consideration behind our site selection is the contrasting contexts of reception for Chinese immigrants.

Existing theories about diasporic development, integration, and transnationalism are established largely from the perspective of traditional countries of immigration and resettlement of the Global North (the developed world), especially the United States, and based on the experiences of immigrants as marginalized racial/ethnic minorities striving to get resettled in and incorporated into the host society's mainstream. A comparative study of patterns of diasporic development and integration of the same national-origin group in different socio-political settings can shed new lights on the theorization of contemporary immigration. Unlike the US, Singapore is a different migrant-receiving country. Although it has been considered part of the Global North, Singapore's immigration regime is more similar to those of new migrant-receiving countries of the Global South (the developing world) than to those in the Global North, in which migration flows are tightly controlled and pathways to citizenship are highly restricted by the state. For new Chinese immigrants, in particular, Singapore presents a different context of reception. It is a city-state with a one-party polity and an economy that is dominated by high-end manufacturing, finance, commerce, and international trade. It is the only Chinese-majority nation-state with a relatively high level of racial diversity in the world. It is geographically close to the homeland, China, and is located in the center of the Chinese diaspora with long-standing sociocultural and economic ties to China. And the national government has deep engagement with China while proactively supporting migrant transnationalism (Ren and Liu, 2015). The focus on new Chinese immigrants in two different national contexts of reception allows us to explore whether factors found to explain diasporic development, transnationalism, and integration in existing theories are applicable to non-traditional immigration regimes like Singapore and what reasons may underline possible discrepancies.

Data Sources

Our data were collected from two parallel research projects by the authors between 2008 and 2014 and multi-sited fieldwork in Los Angeles (LA), San Francisco (SF), and New York (NY), USA, Singapore, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Both projects relied on mixed methods that includes an analysis of Chinese immigrant organizations listed online (1,371 in the US, mostly in LA, SF and NY), face-to-face or telephone interviews with organizational leaders in diasporic communities (57 in the US and 30 in Singapore) and with government officials in China (25 in Guangdong, 25 in Fujian, and 12 in Beijing), and content analysis of archival and media data (for detail, see Liu, 2014; Zhou and Lee, 2015; Zhou and Liu, 2015).

Our multi-sited fieldwork included participatory observations and content analyses of relevant printed or online publications and unpublished material (including government documents and organization newsletters and event flyers). Participatory observations involved our physical presence at major formal events (e.g., Chinese New Year, PRC' national day events, and host-country national day celebrations, anniversary celebrations of immigrant organizations, and gala dinners) and informal activities (e.g., parties, networking sessions, and social gatherings) organized by new Chinese immigrant organizations, our service on awards committees and other committees of immigrant organizations, and our memberships in Wechat groups of new Chinese migrants. The participation in these events and activities provided opportunities for both of us to conduct some unstructured interviews and discussions on relevant topics and issues. We also selectively took part in PRC official activities relating to Chinese immigrants at the central and provincial levels, through which we gained some insider perspectives on the formulation and development of diasporic policies and issues of priority and concern (Zhou and Lee, 2015; Zhou and Liu, 2015).

For content analysis, we selected two major Chinese language newspapers, *The World Journal* and *China Press*, published in the US; one major Chinese language national paper, *United Morning News* (*Lianhe Zaobao*), and one English language newspaper, *The Straits Times*, published in Singapore; and the overseas edition of *The People's Daily* and a few local overseas Chinese magazines (*qiaokan*) published in China. We also analyzed individual or organizational postings on websites, internet portals, and social media relating to transnational feelings and activities of new Chinese immigrants. We believed that this diverse range of primary data enables us to offer a balanced analysis of the mechanisms and outcomes of diaspora-homeland interactions.

Changing Contexts of Emigration and Reception and Ties to the Homeland

Contemporary Chinese Emigration

Chinese immigration is centuries-old, and the vast Chinese diaspora centers in Southeast Asia. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, however, China closed its door to the outside world. Transnational flows into and from China was highly restricted. Communications among family members across national borders were mainly through letters and mailed packages (containing food and goods for daily necessities) or monetary remittances, which were scrutinized and regulated by the government. Overseas Chinese and their relatives left behind in China were generally treated with disdain and distrust (Peterson, 2012).

China re-opened its door and relaxed its emigration policy upon the launching of the nation-wide economic reform in the late 1970s. Corresponding to major changes in immigration policies of destination countries, new waves of Chinese emigration surged with little sign of ebbing. Long-standing diasporic networks were responsible for much of contemporary Chinese immigration to the United States that began in 1979 as the majority of new Chinese immigrants obtain immigration visas from family sponsorship. However, contemporary Chinese immigration

to Singapore occurred much later, after Singapore and China established diplomatic relations in 1990. The city-state's highly selective immigration policy, rather than diasporic networks, drives the migration flows.

Among new Chinese immigrants, there is a significant group of student migrants. According to Chinese official report, about 3.05 million students were sent to study abroad between 1978 and 2013, and about two-thirds obtained employment and immigrant visas upon completion of their studies. Of those students who remain abroad, nearly 90 per cent live in just a dozen countries, such as the USA, Australia, UK, Japan, Canada, and Singapore.[3] Once they secured their residency or citizenship status, the student migrants formed an important link in various family-chains to perpetuate subsequent migrations that are much more diverse than ever before.

In general, new Chinese immigrants, regardless of destinations, differ from their earlier counterparts in five major respects. First, they hail from all over China rather than just villages or towns in traditional sending regions of Guangdong and Fujian provinces in the South. Second, they are no longer overwhelmingly peasants and unskilled laborers, but are a highly selective lot, including a large number of migrants who are well-educated professionals and resourceful entrepreneurs or capitalists, and re-migrants with rich experiences of internal migration and/or international migration. Third, upon arrival in destination countries, they are no longer forced to be segregated in ethnic enclaves or confined to jobs in the ethnic economy. Fourth, they are exposed, or have access, to new modes of information and communications technology (ICT) and transportation, are highly mobile across long distances. Fifth, they leave behind a homeland that is no longer impoverished but one that experiences high rates of economic growth, rising standard of living, and rapid globalization.

Divergent Contexts of Immigrant Reception

From an institutional approach, we consider the context of reception to involve two levels of factors—polity, immigration policy, and diasporic positionality at the societal level, and ethnic organizations at the group level. The United States and Singapore offer two contrasting contexts of reception for Chinese immigrants, which affects not only diaspora development but also the maintenance of individual ties with the homeland.

The United States is a traditional country of immigration with a strong ideology of assimilationism. At the founding of the nation, English institutions, language and culture defined the national identity, and White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) middleclass constituted the American mainstream. Immigrants of different cultural origins and socioeconomic backgrounds were expected to eventually assimilate into this mainstream. However, for a long time in American history, immigration policymaking was part of the nation-building project to determine who should be included into, or excluded from, the American nation. The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act was a prelude to constructing a gatekeeping ideology and establishing state apparatus and bureaucracy to exercise control over its geographic borders and national boundaries (Lee E, 2003).

Due to major structural changes in the 1960s, such as civil rights movements, the American mainstream is now more inclusive, which may arguably include members of formerly excluded ethnic or racial groups (Alba and Nee, 2003: 12). In 1965, the United States reformed its immigration policy, abolishing the national origins quota system that had structured American immigration policy since 1924. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, favored family reunification and encouraging employer-sponsor migration of immigrants with needed skills. Intertwined with China's open door policy, emigration from China accelerated. Consequently, the United States became home to the largest concentration

of people of Chinese descent outside Southeast Asia. The Chinese American population grew exponentially, from 237,000 in 1960 to 4.4 million in 2013 by the official census count. More than half of ethnic Chinese were foreign born; 47 per cent of the foreign born arrived after 2000 and 54 per cent were naturalized U.S. citizens (Hooper and Batalova, 2015). Despite rapid growth of the ethnic population, Chinese Americans remain a tiny racial minority, comprising only one per cent of the total American population in 2010 (non-Hispanic white, 65%; black, 13%; Hispanic, 16%; and Asian, 5%).

American society has a highly stratified racial hierarchy with the non-Hispanic white race on top, black at the bottom, and others (including the Chinese) in between. Historically, the Chinese encountered a hostile host society in which they were singled out for legal exclusion and forced to develop diasporic communities for survival and self-protection. Even though merchants were not barred from immigration, they too were segregated in ethnic enclaves just like their working-class coethnics, and were blocked from participating in the American mainstream and integrating into the American economy. In present times, Chinese Americans have made tremendous progress in observable measures of socioeconomic status (SES) — education, occupation, and income, and have attained success in integration at the individual level (Zhou, 2004). But, as a small racial group, they continue to be positioned at the lower rungs of the racial hierarchy and their diasporic community remains marginal to the society's mainstream (Hsu, 2015; Lee WH, 2003).

Singapore is a nation of immigrants quite different from the United States. Decolonized at a much later time, Singapore is the only country in the world that is both a Chinese-majority society and a multicultural society with four founding races—Chinese (74.1%), Malays (13.4%), Indians (9.2%), and Others (3.3%) (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). However, the city-state's Chinese majority is a minority and its Malay minority a majority in the region. Such a

"double minority" position necessitates the adoption of a multicultural ideology (Tan, 2004; Yeoh and Lin, 2013). The Constitution stipulates four official languages—Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and English. But English is used as the main official language, as in administration, international commerce and business, and technology and science, for promoting its integration into the global economy and removing the language barrier to ensure that all founding races are included in the nation to build a harmonious society (Liu, 2014; Ren and Liu, 2015).

Nation-building in Singapore is deeply influenced by the British colonial past. While the state's governing structure is patterned on British parliamentary democracy, it is not so much administered by elected politicians as by bureaucrats who gain positions of authority and power through a system of meritocracy. In contemporary era, the society's mainstream is arguably a melting pot, where a unified national identity is prioritized over ethnic identities and meritocracy is the guiding principle for ensuring fair treatment to all races (Ren and Liu, 2015). Even though Chinese culture does not define Singaporean culture, Chinese Singaporeans occupy positions of power in society, and the diasporic Chinese community is well integrated into the society's mainstream.

In the 1980s, Singapore confronted two urgent challenges: the need for talent to keep its globally-linked economy competitive, and the need to deal with problems associated with its below-replenishment fertility (Yeoh and Lin, 2013).[4] The nation-state formulated a multi-fold immigration policy to meet these challenges. Although policy targets no particular ethnic group, the country disproportionately accepts Chinese immigrants who obtain post-graduate degrees from the United States, U.K, Japan, Australia, and other Western countries, have "portable" jobs skills and "transferable" work experiences, and generally hold high-paying professional occupations (Liu, 2014). As a result, the foreign permanent resident (PR) population represents the fastest-growing segment of Singaporean population. As of mid-2012, Singapore's total population was

5.3 million, including 38 per cent non-citizens (10% PRs and 28% "non-resident" foreigners who were on various work permits or long-term visas).[5] Although new Chinese immigrants face a seemingly more favorable context of reception than their counterparts in the US, they remain a culturally distinct social group being treated in ways quite different from their counterparts in the United States (Ren and Liu, 2015).

Ties to the Homeland

Differences in the contexts of reception affect the ways in which new Chinese immigrants in the US and Singapore relate to their homeland. As a group, new Chinese immigrants in the US appear more settled than those in Singapore. They display a wider range of socioeconomic characteristics, including the well-educated who earned advanced degrees from the U.S. and secured professional employment, the low-skilled and less educated whose migration was sponsored via traditional family or kinship networks, and the undocumented who entered the U.S. through illegal channels and were marginalized even within their own ethnic community upon arrival. Forty-seven per cent of adult Chinese immigrants (25 years or older) had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30 per cent of the general US population, but the less educated component was also visible, about 20 per cent of adult Chinese did not attain a high school diploma (compared to 15% of the US population). The paths to moving ahead in the host society vary, including the time-honored path to low-wage jobs in the ethnic enclave economy, the path to high salaried professional jobs via educational achievement, and ethnic entrepreneurship. Those who emigrated from non-traditional sending regions in China and integrated into the mainstream labor market are weakly attached to, or are detached from, the diasporic community, while a significant proportion of the new immigrant population continues to rely on the diasporic community.

Whether they are integrated into mainstream America or segregated in Chinatowns and Chinese ethnoburbs (middleclass suburbs with a visible Chinese presence in population and ethnic business), new Chinese immigrants in the US hold strong ties to the land they left behind because of their upbringing and, more importantly, their family, friendship, and other social networks (Li, 2009). But as time passes, the majority of Chinese immigrants strike roots in America, and their homeland ties wane or turn symbolic, much like older generations of Chinese immigrants in the US and Southeast Asia (Yow, 2005). Mr Zhang, one of our interviewees, who had been in Los Angeles for 25 years and worked in a software firm as an engineer, reported that, after both his parents passed away in China, he changed the verb "*hui*" (return) to "*qu*" (go) when he told people that he was going to China. He said,

> "After my mother passed away [father passed away a year earlier], I came to the
> realization that America is home. All these years, I grabbed, and created, any
> opportunity to go to China from work and spent most of my vacation time visiting
> my parents in China, and I went at least twice a year ... Now I can start planning
> our vacation trips to places around the world where my wife and I have never
> been to. And at work now, I'd try find excuses not to go China. It's a very long
> trip."

For Mr Zhang, China suddenly became far away. Several other respondents whom we interviewed reported that, after their parents passed away, they stopped making trips to their hometowns altogether. The experience of growing roots in the hostland is not unique, but is shared by many with or without the intention to engage in the transnational social field. Although Chinese immigrants no longer look to China as a place to which they eventually return, they are still drawn to the diasporic community for ethnic life. Mr Zhang lived in a white middle class suburb, but would frequently go to Monterey Park, a Chinese ethnoburb less than 10 miles away

from downtown Los Angeles. He would also regularly participate in activities in his Chinese alumni association and professional association. He said he did so just to meet old friends to "have a good time." Ethnic organizations offer alternative social spaces for immigrants in America, and organizational participation helps immigrants maintain their symbolic ties to their homeland and a sense of ethnic, rather than diasporic, Chinese identity, regardless of the level of transnationalism (Zhou and Lee, 2015). This ethnic identity is rooted in America and is distant from China (Hsu, 2015; Zhou, 2004).

In Singapore, the profile of new Chinese immigrants is more bifurcated with the highly skilled professionals and resourceful entrepreneurs on one end and low-skilled contract workers on the other, because of the highly selective immigration policy (Lin, 2010; Yeoh and Chang, 2001; Yeoh and Lin, 2013). Among the highly skilled, most were student migrants who obtained advanced degrees either in Singapore or in developed countries of the Global North (Yeoh and Chang, 2001). The dominant mode of socioeconomic integration in Singapore is through occupational achievement via education rather than through the entrepreneurial route taken by earlier Chinese immigrants. The entrepreneurial route, however, remains a viable pattern of integration. New Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Singapore displayed two distinctive characteristics in comparison with earlier immigrants in Singapore or their contemporary counterparts in the US: many are "technopreneurs" who have the capacity to mix their scientific know-how with business acumen tend to concentrate in high-tech sector; and their business is characterized by a high degree of transnationality in terms of its operation, corporate management, and mindset (Ren and Liu, 2015).

New Chinese immigrants in Singapore are also more transnational than their counterparts in the United States. According to our respondents, there are four main reasons. First, close geographic proximity and easy transportation access to China (with about 400 direct flights per

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day between Singapore and various cities in mainland China), combined with a strong Chinese cultural affinity and the long-standing diasporic network in Singapore, make transnationalism a viable path to social mobility. Second, Singapore is a small city-state with no hinterland and little natural resources makes it a less desirable place for permanent resettlement. Proportionally fewer Chinese immigrants in Singapore are willing to give up their Chinese citizenship to become naturalized citizens than their counterparts in the United States. More of them have plans to eventually retire in China while expecting that their children would study abroad, especially in the US, and eventually resettle there. Third, even though new Chinese immigrants have shared cultural heritage with local-born Chinese Singaporeans, they have often been perceived as the social "other" and as competitors for jobs and public resources (Liu, 2014). This has also driven new Chinese migrants to maintain and sustain their associations with the Mainland in various forms. Finally, more highly skilled Chinese immigrants in Singapore than in the US are "twice migrants" who have acquired naturalized citizenship in the countries of initial immigration, such as the US, Canada, and Australia, to which they would return in the future. A Chinese immigrant professional, who first migrated to the United States and became a naturalized US citizen and later migrated to Singapore, remarked,

> "I've been in Singapore for nearly 10 years now. I was attracted to Singapore by
> higher earnings and also greater entrepreneurial opportunities because of China. I
> think I can make good use of my time in Singapore to do something bigger.
> Singapore is also safe and good for raising children. But my children are
> Americans, I am American too. In the end, we'll all move *back* [emphasis added]
> to America."

Among new Chinese immigrants in Singapore who have become naturalized Singaporean citizens, they tend to consider both Singapore and China as their "homes" to which they are

simultaneously tied. The president of the Hua Yuan Association likened it to a married Chinese

woman's *po-jia* (mother-in-law's home) and *niang-jia* (mother's home). He remarked,

> "To new Chinese immigrants, Singapore is like their *po-jia* and China, their
>
> *niang-jia*. They can only benefit from good relations between *po-jia* and *niang-*
>
> *jia* and prosperities in both "homes."[6]

For new Chinese immigrants, sinking roots in Singapore does not reduce their probability

to actively engage in transnationalism, but it does have an effect on reinforcing their diasporic

Chinese identity, which is quite distinguishable from local-born Chinese Singaporean identity

(Ren and Liu, 2015).

Diaspora Development and Organizational Transnationalism

Structural Change in the Diaspora

Diasporic communities are products of migration and resettlement. Simultaneously, they

serve as the institutional basis for homeland engagement and host-society integration. Because of

different contexts of emigration and receptions, Chinese diasporic communities in the US and

Singapore experienced different patterns of development. At the early stage of development,

diasporic formation resulted in similar organizational structures in both the United States and

Singapore with a strong sojourning (*qiao*) orientation with China as "home" to which migrants

eventually returned. The communities were originally formed on the basis of kinship and place of

origin rather than on the homogeneity of a common ethnicity for self-help and economic activity.

Three pillars constituted the traditional ethnic social structure: Chinese clan associations, Chinese

language media, and Chinese education (Liu, 1998; Wong, 1977; Zhou and Kim, 2006). The

Chinese language, in a variety of dialects, was the most central identity marker of the diaspora.

These ethnic organizations not only met the basic needs of members but also served as an important bridge to connect them to their families in sending villages or towns back in China.

Historically in the United States, legal exclusion and institutional discrimination forced Chinese immigrants, the merchant elite included, into segregated bachelors' societies backed by a self-sustaining ethnic economy that was predominantly in retail and service industries (Wong, 1977; Zhou and Kim, 2006). The exclusion of Chinese women to migrate and miscegenation laws in the late 19th and early 20th century stifled the natural growth of the diasporic population, which further reinforced the sojourning mentality and the interdependence of ethnic life in the community. In contrast, Singapore's diasporic Chinese community was not as geographically concentrated and socially isolated as the Chinatowns in the US and other Western countries of immigration. It was more localized with normal family formation and multiple generations (Frost, 2003; Wang, 1991; Yow, 2005).

While traditional organizations still occupy a central place in diaspora communities at present time in both the US and Singapore, those in the US remain "ethnic" in Chinatowns with an ageing memberships because second and later generations of US-born Chinese have become assimilated and left Chinatowns, whereas those in Singapore, whose memberships include multi-generations of local-born Chinese, have already evolved into civic organizations and integrated into Singapore's civic life (Liu, 2014).

New waves of Chinese immigration cause profound changes in the organizational structure of diasporic communities. The age-old notion of the "hometown" was deterritorialized and transformed from representing a specific locality (e.g., a sending village or township) to being a cultural/ethnic symbol representing the Chinese from the mainland, collectively, and China as a nation state. In both the United States and Singapore, new Chinese immigrants are no longer tied to pre-existing kinship- or place-based organizations established by earlier Chinese immigrants or

older generations of local-born Chinese (in the case of Singapore), but tend to establish new organizations of their own.

In the United States where official policy on organizing is relatively open and barrier-free, the emerging organizational scene is as diverse as the new waves of Chinese immigrants. While traditional Chinatown-based organizations continue to offer resettlement assistance to new immigrants from sending villages or towns, three main types of new immigrant organizations were developed rapidly in old Chinatowns, new Chinese ethnoburbs, and cyberspace: extended hometown associations, professional organizations, and alumni associations. Extended hometown associations are usually named after a major city or a province, such Beijing Tong Xiang Hui and Guangdong Tong Xiang Hui.[7] Unlike the traditional kinship- and place-based associations, the extended hometown associations are deterritorialized and do not have strict primordial ties such as kinship and locality. Members may not necessarily be born in those cities or provinces and may not even speak local dialects but are connected to these places either through work or schooling. Professional organizations are based on a wide range of professions, the most common ones are in science and engineering, as highly educated Chinese immigrants are concentrated in these professional fields. Alumni associations are formed on the basis of universities and, to a lesser extent, high schools in China. Nearly all major universities in China have their alumni associations in the United States established by immigrants themselves (Zhou and Kim, 2006).

Unlike Chinatown-based organizations, new Chinese immigrant organizations are loosely structured even as they are registered non-profit organizations with bylaws and/or boards of governors. Most of these organizations primarily aim at network building among new immigrants and information sharing on employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the United States, China, and around the world, and protecting the interests of Chinese immigrants in American society. The transnational goals are also explicit, which include improving US-China economic

relations, fostering greater Chinese diasporic economic exchanges, and raising relief funds in the event of natural disasters in China. Although these organizations vary in size and formality, the sheer number is striking. For example, the Chinese University Alumni Alliance, based in New York, has nearly 50 member associations in the United States, serving as a platform to facilitate social networking among alumnae, promote exchange, understanding, and cooperation between universities in the United States and those in China, promote US-China relations and friendships, and offer services to individual members and local communities.[8] A content analysis of mission statements of randomly selected 45 Chinese professional organizations showed that helping members adapt to American society and promoting US-China relations were common goals. Our fieldwork in selected organizations' activities indicated that the primary reason for participation among most individual members was social — "hanging out" with old friends to "have a good time." For organizational leaders, often those who were successful entrepreneurs or professionals aspiring to become entrepreneurs, organizational activities were considered opportunities and important stages for them to show and perform social status (Zhou and Lee, 2013; Zhou and Li, forthcoming).

Organizational development among new Chinese immigrants in Singapore is comparatively less diverse because of more stringent conditions and requirements (e.g., maintaining a certain proportion of Singaporean citizens in membership). There are two main types—extended hometown associations and alumni associations—of organizations established by new Chinese immigrants. Professional Chinese organizations are uncommon because members of the two main types are mostly professionals.

Two new Chinese immigrant organizations in Singapore are most influential. The Tianfu Hometown Association, founded in 2000, represents the "hometown" in a more inclusive and symbolic manner.[9] Tianfu's membership is not confined to those who were born or raised in

Sichuan province, China, and who speak a particular local dialect, but include those who had studied or worked in the province or had business/ cultural contacts with Sichuan prior to emigration. The association dropped the word "hometown" from the name to become Singapore Tianfu Association (STA) in 2006. Membership is now open to Chinese new immigrants from all over China and as well as local-born Chinese Singaporeans. As an affiliated entity of the Tianfu Association, the Tianfu Business Association was established to promote greater economic transnationalism and engagement with China. STA currently has an active membership of 2,300 with members hailing from all parts of China, approximately 70% are naturalized citizens of Singapore, 99% attained at least a bachelor's degree (30% of whom were educated in Singapore) and 57% received a master's degree or higher. The organization has a strong transnational orientation, maintaining strong relationships with the leadership in Singapore government and officials in various levels of governments in China. It connects new Chinese immigrants to local-born Singaporeans in Singapore and to compatriots in China. The association is also a member of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, working closely with local Chinese clan associations in organizing different activities oriented towards assisting the integration of new Chinese immigrants into Singapore society and improving mutual understanding between new immigrants and local-born Singaporeans.[10]

Another major new Chinese immigrant association is the Hua Yuan General Association of New Immigrants from China (formerly Singapore Hua Yuan Association). Founded in 2001 by China-born professionals, Hua Yuan's membership includes those who have become Singaporean citizens or PRs, as well as those who are on long-term employment passes and student visas. The association's main missions are to assist members in better integrating into the multi-ethnic society of Singapore, to promote information exchange and communication, and to promote commercial and trade relationships between Singapore and China. Hua Yuan is a transnational

organization, with branches in major regions in the PRC. Its honorary advisor is the current minister in the Singapore Ministry of Health and the majority of its honorary chairmen/advisors are local-born prominent Singaporeans, demonstrating the organization's intention to foster bonds between locals and new immigrants.[11]

It is worthwhile to note that the majority of leaders in these two associations (i.e., presidents, vice presidents, and council members) are business people, mainly in small and medium-size enterprises, who have regular and sustained business operations simultaneously in both China and Singapore, thus demonstrating close linkages between transnationalism and diasporic organizations.

Despite variations on types, the diasporic development in the United States and Singapore among new Chinese immigrants provides a similar platform, actually and virtually, to connect members with one another and with their "home" communities in China. It simultaneous serves as an institutional basis for immigrant transnationalism and integration.

Reaching Out to the Diaspora: The Role of the Sending State

The Chinese state proactively reaches out to the diaspora as a key economic policy imperative. As China's economic reform opened up economic opportunities, the central government changed its attitude toward the diasporic communities — from regarding them with fear and hostility to applauding them as agents for change. Initially, the official policy regarding overseas Chinese aimed to attract remittances and capital investment. Later the policy was shifted to attract Chinese talents from abroad while helping overseas Chinese become naturalized citizens, participating in the mainstream society of their countries of residence, and growing roots in their new homelands.

Administratively, the Chinese government put overseas Chinese affairs back on its top development agendas by reactivating its dual-track bureaucracy in charge of overseas Chinese affairs. Operating along the two pillars of the state (via the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, or *qiaoban*) — and the party (via the Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, or *qiaolian*), this complex bureaucracy has offices at the provincial, city, county, and district levels. Both *qiaoban* and *qiaolian* are staffed permanently by paid officials, have sizeable budget allocations, function mainly to intersect with the vast web of diasporic organizations worldwide and to promote their transnational activities (Portes and Zhou, 2012; To, 2014; Zhou and Lee, 2015).

The Chinese state creates an open and welcoming institutional environment to promote engagement with its diasporic communities and promote immigrant transnationalism. Some of the state-sponsored activities include infrastructural building to attract foreign capital investment, facilitate joint ventures and economic cooperation, and advance scientific, technological, and scholarly exchange. For example, between 1979 and 1987, 90 per cent of foreign investments in special economic zones (SEZ) in China came from the overseas diaspora.[12] Beginning in 2000, the Chinese central government and local governments changed the SEZ model to knowledge-intensive development models, building hi-tech industrial development parks, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics laboratories, and other research and development facilities and crucibles, to attract new generations of diasporic Chinese to invest in China. The hi-tech investors and technopreneurs are disproportionately new Chinese immigrants who resettled in the US, Singapore, and other advanced Western countries.

The Chinese state also attempted to reverse the brain drain through innovative programs and initiatives. The policy toward students studying abroad, initially emphasized "return," was relaxed to recognize that returning to China was not the only way to serve the country (To, 2014;

Zweig, 2006). The Chinese government now considers returned students and scholars a leading force in areas like education, science and technology, high-tech industries, finance, insurance, trade and management and a driving force for the country's economic development. It also supports students and scholars who resettle abroad permanently but plan to return to make contributions in various ways, such as giving lectures during short-term visit to China, having academic exchanges, conducting joint research, bringing in projects and investments and providing information and technical consultancy.[13] To lure the long-term return of highly-skilled migrants in the fields of science and engineering, the Chinese government launches a variety of programs. For example, the Ministry of Education has several exemplary programs to attract Chinese students to return to China, including "The *Chunhui* (literally, spring bud) Program," targeting those returnees with doctoral degrees and with outstanding achievements in their respective fields; and "The *Changjiang* Scholar Incentive Program," providing general financial support and research funds to well-established scholars and researchers already employed in universities in foreign countries and invite them to China to be chair professors or visiting professors at Chinese universities.

Similar efforts have been undertaken at the provincial level. For example, the strategic plan of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Guangzhou included: support for new overseas Chinese associations to integrate into their host mainstream society; training for a group of young individuals to become leaders of local overseas Chinese communities; inviting individuals of overseas Chinese communities abroad to Guangzhou to attend activities aimed for friendship building; organizing summer camps for youth and teenagers from around the world.[14]

At present, China's policy puts greater emphasis on strengthening connections with immigrant organizations, fostering technological and cultural exchanges, and supporting the development of Chinese communities abroad as a means of promoting China's "good image" and

facilitating its "peaceful rise" (Xiang, 2011). The Chinese government, at the central, provincial and local level, also organizes various overseas trips to visit diasporic communities (Portes and Zhou, 2012; Zhou and Lee, 2015). The role of the Chinese state in reaching out to its diasporas is consistent across national boundaries, whether in the US or Singapore or elsewhere in the world.

Transnationalism via Diasporic Organizations

Unlike the classic form of transnationalism, which involves migrant remittances sending, present-day diaspora-homeland interactions often involved organizations. Our study finds that the majority of new Chinese immigrants who engage in routine and sustained transnational activities do so via diasporic organizations, that they utilize memberships and positions in their organizations to establish authenticity of their identities when they engage with China, and that these patterns resemble those found among Latin American immigrants in the US (Portes, 1999; Portes and Zhou, 2012).

As we have just shown, Chinese diasporic communities in the United States and Singapore respond to changes in the contexts of emigration and reception by reforming its traditional organizations and developing a complex array of new organizations. Our content analysis of organizational websites and interviews of new Chinese immigrant organizations showed that most leaders of new Chinese immigrant organizations were the owners of businesses, very much like those in traditional diasporic organizations, or employees in public and private sectors who hold senior management positions and that the organizational leaders were more actively engaged in transnational activities than other members that traverse hostland and homeland (Ren and Liu, 2015). For example, the president of Tianfu Association is the founder and managing principal of a multinational human resource management firm. The president of the Hua Yuan Association is a successful self-made entrepreneur with businesses in Singapore and China. These elite members

of the new Chinese diaspora are also invited to serve on various committees of China's central, provincial or local government agencies and Singapore's civic organizations.

Organizational leaders, who are members of the local business elite, in both countries are better positioned than individual immigrants to engage in transnationalism because they are economically more resourceful and are better known in the diasporic communities and to state actors in the homeland. Other individual migrants who are engaged in the transnational field, or who aspire to seek out transnationalism as an alternative path to social mobility, tend to gain recognition and referral through organizations.

New Chinese immigrants are found to participate mostly in five common types of transnational activities. The first type involves hometown development projects in the traditional sense, usually based on a sending village or a township that a traditional immigrant hometown association represents. Organizational fund-raising is typically project-specific, such as building a new village gate, a roadside altar, a temple, a park, a library, and an elderly activity center; or upgrading a school, an ancestral hall, and a clinic; or paving or repairing a village road. Traditional family and hometown associations play a central role in this type of activity, but there is a general trend of weakening ties because of gradual assimilation of immigrants in host societies and rapid urbanization in hometowns in China (Yow, 2005). New Chinese immigrants who hailed from traditional places of origin and whose migration was sponsored by family networks were more likely to participate in this type of activities. However, highly-skilled new immigrants in both the United States and Singapore are unlikely to do so because they have little affiliation with a particular sending village or local hometown.

The second type involves philanthropic work, such as fund raising for major disaster relief or poverty reduction. For example, immediately after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province (which claimed 68,000 lives), the CCBA in New York established the Sichuan

Earthquake Relief Program and raised a total of $1.32 million donations (with the largest single donation of $50,000) and delivered it to the American Red Cross within a four-month period.[15] Singapore's Tianfu Association collected donations of more than S$200,000 (US$160,000), mostly from its members, within ten days after the earthquake.[16]

The third type involves conventions and conferences which are held regularly. Traditional family or hometown associations tend to hold these conventions globally, reflecting the organizational efforts to connect with other Chinese communities in the diaspora. The worldwide conventions of hometown or family associations are published in commemorative editions, in Chinese or bilingually, that are circulated in China and the Chinese diaspora. New Chinese immigrant organizations usually hold conferences and conventions in host countries. The chief purpose of these regular conventions, initiated and organized by both traditional and new Chinese immigrant organizations, is for information exchange, social networking, relationship building, and achievement recognition. These conferences and conventions are also made known to the Chinese state, as a means to reaffirm the organizational statuses.

The fourth type involves community cultural events and holiday celebrations that are held in host countries as an integral part of diasporic, or ethnic, life. Chinese immigrant organizations usually take the lead in organizing in the form of parades, street fairs, or banquets. Local politicians and community leaders appear in parades or on center stages at street fairs before cultural performances by traditional and contemporary Chinese singers and dancers. These cultural events and street fairs attract Chinese immigrants, long-term residents, people of Chinese descent, as well as non-Chinese locals and tourists. Some of the new organizations, utilizing their transnational ties with various levels of homeland government and top-notched cultural institutions in China, organize and sponsor professional artists and other cultural workers to tour and perform in the US (in Chinese concentrated cities) and Singapore.

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The fifth type involves building transnational business partnerships or acting as "go-betweens" to better capitalize on economic opportunities in China and host countries. For many new immigrant organizations, business interests are one of the most important goals because they do not need to rely on serving the survival needs of members, as traditional organizations did in the past. Rather, the leaders are either successful entrepreneurs or established professionals aspiring to become entrepreneurs or technopreneurs, and possess strong bilingual and bicultural skills. They voluntarily form nonprofit civic organizations and claim leadership positions to build up identity and credibility. They travel back and forth between China and the US to build *guanxi* (connections) with government officials and business people in China and help facilitate Chinese companies entering the US or Singaporean market. On the home front, these organizational leaders are actively involved in domestic politics and community affairs, supporting local politicians by making campaign donations and sponsoring community events, which in turn, add more credibility to the organizations. Once they firmly establish a foothold or reputation in the community and earn the trust of Chinese government officials and entrepreneurs, they enter into partnerships with businesses on both shores or offer their services as consultants or brokers to promote transnational trade and investment.

These five main types of transnational activities in which new Chinese immigrants are actively involved underscore the critical role of diasporic organizations for grassroots transnationalism. In fact, many new Chinese immigrants establish organizations and are actively involved in them for the purpose of homeland engagement. Our respondents highlighted two main reasons. First, an individual's organizational affiliation, especially a leadership position in the organization, serves as an important identity marker for the individual to interact with state actors back in China. Except for well-established business people, high-ranked executives and managers of well-known firms, or professors from reputable universities, new Chinese immigrants are

unknown to their hometowns in China, which are highly urbanized and transformed from small, homogeneous, and closely-knit villages and towns to large, heterogeneous, and anonymous metropolises. Their memberships and/or leadership positions in diasporic organizations help to verify the authenticity of their identities and legitimize their social statuses. This is especially important when they interact with sending state actors at the higher level (e.g., municipal, provincial, or national) of government. Second, sending state actors do not interact with any individual from diasporic communities but only with those who have certain attained social status and significant institutional affiliations.

Host-Society Integration

From our interviews and content analysis of media reports, we find that new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore are adapting well in their respective new homelands. We also find that those who are actively engaged in transnational practices tend to be the socioeconomic mobile—entrepreneurs and professionals alike. They look to their ancestral homeland for *better* opportunities that would take them to a *higher* ground. In the United States, first generation immigrants are more likely than US-born Chinese Americans to engage with the homeland. But this is not the case in Singapore where second- or third-plus generations of Chinese Singaporeans, including those of mixed race, are as likely as new Chinese immigrants to do so.

At the sociocultural level, however, new Chinese immigrants are assimilated into the nationhood of the United States and that of Singapore in strikingly different ways. In the United States, most of the new Chinese immigrants aspire to become American. They are economically integrated into mainstream America, but find themselves conditionally accepted into the American society. The paradox of being applauded as the model minority while simultaneously treated as the perpetual foreigner is embedded in their integration outcomes regardless of their symbolic or

instrumental ties to their ancestral homeland, and is a common experience that they share with their US-born coethnics.

While race is a determining factor, the China factor also influences the way Americans of Chinese descent are treated in society. Transnationalism in Chinese America is very much a first generation phenomenon. This is not merely because the members of the second or later generations are thoroughly assimilated and detached themselves from their ethnic community or lack bicultural and bilingual skills, but also because of the possible ramifications of the delicate US-China relations. The historical stereotypes, such as the "yellow peril" and "Chinese menace," have found their way into contemporary American life, as revealed in the highly publicized incident about the trial of Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwan-born nuclear scientist suspected of spying for the Chinese government, but eventually proven innocent in the mid-1990s (Lee WH, 2003). So Chinese Americans, US-born or foreign-born alike, must consciously prove that they are truly loyal Americans, especially in times where US-China relations are in the spotlight (Zhou, 2004).

Ironically, the conditional acceptance by American society prompted Chinese Americans to align with other Asian Americans to organize pan-ethnically to fight back — which consequently heightens their racial distinctiveness while simultaneously distancing themselves from their ancestral homeland. In response to sociocultural marginalization by American racial hierarchy, new Chinese immigrants also gradually adopt an ethnic American identity as they become more settled in America. At this point in time, only a small fraction of the Chinese diaspora in the United States is actively and routinely engaged in transnationalism. It is still too early to tell whether transnationalism will ever become a main mode of socioeconomic integration in the United States in the future. Nonetheless, organizational development facilitates immigrant transnationalism, by offering "a layer of protection from Uncle Sam's (US government) suspicion," in the words of one of our respondents.

In Singapore, new Chinese immigrants are economically integrated upon arrival because of its selective immigration policy. Singapore's approach to migrant integration is also highly selective, in which the path to PR and eventually citizenship is closed off to low-skilled contract workers. With an immigration policy that favours highly skilled immigrants, the government implements a series of measures to differentiate the entitlements and benefits in education, public housing and healthcare the state provides to citizens and PRs while encouraging PRs to become nationalized citizens. It establishes mechanisms, both top-down and bottom-up, for integration via state-sponsored activities to bond native citizens with new citizens and PRs. Furthermore, it engages local Chinese institutions, such as long-standing Chinese clan associations, to assist with assimilation. It is expected that, in time, new Chinese immigrants become truly Singaporean in terms of their socio-political outlook, mindset, and behavioral ways (Tan, 2003).

While Singapore is a Chinese-majority nation in which race and homeland engagement do not set barriers to assimilation, new Chinese immigrants encounter undercurrents of public anxiety and xenophobia quite similar to those in the United States and other Western migrant-receiving countries. Having the "right" racial characteristics and "right" socioeconomic profile do not make them assimilable. New Chinese immigrants are often seen as "foreign" by Chinese Singaporeans who resent being categorized as the same kind of people. On the ground, the public discourses on new Chinese immigrants rarely make reference to ethnic solidarity and a shared cultural identity of the sort, and many Chinese Singaporeans dispute the idea of a common cultural heritage or cultural affinity and invoke instead the national identity and political allegiances as points of reference in contrast to new Chinese immigrants (Tan, 2003).

New Chinese immigrants generally support the state's calls for integration. For example, the Hua Yuan Association launched a "New Immigration Contribution Award" in tribute to the integrative efforts. The 15th anniversary of the Singapore Tianfu Association ceremony, held in

January 2015, was patronized by the Singapore's Minister of Social and Family Development, Consul-General of the PRC Embassy in Singapore, and a senior official from China State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (*qiaoban*). Demonstrating its commitment to integration, the Association made generous donation to local Malay and Indian charity organizations. Multi-ethnic cultural shows including Malays and Indians were also included in the ceremony. Some new Chinese immigrants even changed their mainland-sounding surnames to Singaporean-like dialect based surnames.[17] However, anti-Chinese undercurrents in the host society felt overtly and covertly on everyday basis reinforce the diasporic identity among new Chinese immigrants, who are ambivalent about settling in Singapore permanently. When asked if she intends to permanently stay in Singapore, an interviewee replied,

> "Singapore, or wherever I am, would always be an alien land. I will leave this
> question to fate."

The responses of new Chinese immigrants in Singapore to integration are also shaped by the rise of China and by Singapore's significant position in a realigned regional geopolitical order with China playing a central role. Seeking transnationalism as a means of improving the socioeconomic status on the part of new Chinese migrants does not appear in conflict with the state's dual goal of economic growth and integration. In fact, going global and engaging China are exactly what Singaporeans and their institutions, including big or small businesses, have been doing and are encouraged to do. In the process of engaging the ancestral homeland, something paradoxical is emerging: Singaporeans going to China invoke their Chinese ethnicity as Chinese overseas (or *huaren*) and reaffirm it as a result, while Chinese immigrants engaging with China via transnationalism reaffirm their diaspora identity as overseas Chinese (or *huaqiao*).

The similarities and differences in integration outcomes between new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore complicate their assimilation stories, which are not easily

captured in terms of homeland dissimilation and hostland assimilation. Transnationalism offers a path to social mobility for new Chinese immigrants in both receiving countries. However, socioeconomic integration through transnationalism does not weaken the ethnic identity among new Chinese immigrants in the United States but does reinforce the diasporic identity among their counterparts in Singapore.

Conclusion

In this paper, we employ an institutional approach to highlight the intersection between macro- and meso-level institutional factors influencing immigrant transnationalism and integration. We do so by comparing the experiences of new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore. We find that new Chinese immigrants maintain emotional and tangible ties with China even as they are oriented toward resettlement in the hostland and that their transnational practices are similar in form but vary in magnitude, depending not only on diasporic positionality in the host society but also on bi-national relations. We also find that those who actively engage themselves in the transnational field tend to do so through diasporic organizations. Finally, we find that homeland engagement generally benefits integration into host societies. These findings suggest that social forces at the macro level—the nation state—and at the meso level—diasporic communities—are intertwined to affect processes and outcomes of immigrant transnationalism.

We draw several important conclusions. First, diasporic communities remain highly relevant for new Chinese immigrants, even for those who are well poised for successful integration upon arrival in their host countries. New immigrants and their associations tend to go beyond primordial ties that have long defined Chinese diasporic life and employ China as a cultural symbol in its simultaneous engagement with the host society and the homeland, largely

because of growing economic opportunities in a rising China. For highly skilled Chinese immigrants particularly, the patterns of diasporic development (e.g., extended hometown associations and alumni associations) in the United States and Singapore are strikingly similar. This raises an important question why the main factors associated with the favorable context of reception, such as favorable immigration policy, majority status, proficiency in a host-society language, and absence of ethnic segregation, fail to explain ethnicization, or social othering, as the case of Singapore illustrates.

Second, diasporic communities serve to link individual migrants to state actors. New Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore no longer confine their transnational practices to their birth places where their personal and occupational identities are known through close family or kinship networks. But to engage with their homeland beyond closely-knit family or kinship networks in familiar sending villages and towns, they need to rely on diasporic organizations to validate their identities and make connections with the state. The bridging role of diasporic organizations suggests that meso-level institutions constitute an important force for transnationalism both from above and below, which is overlooked in the existing literature.

Third, diasporic communities tend to operate independently with the dual purposes of development in the ancestral homeland and integration into the new homeland. Even though the sending state, China in this case, enthusiastically supports immigrant transnationalism, its role is more to facilitate than to dictate the means and outcomes. This conclusion is consistent with the findings about state transnationalism, which calls attention to the interaction between nation-states and diasporas (Chin and Smith, 2015). However, the role of the sending state may be overstated.

Fourth, the receiving state, even if seemingly inactive in the transnational field, regulates immigrant transnationalism through institutional mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The types of transnational activities among new Chinese immigrants in the United States and

Singapore are similar, but the magnitude of engagement is different. This has to do with how the receiving state relates to the diaspora and its homeland. The Chinese diaspora in the United States and the one in Singapore are more or less uniformly affected by the Chinese state. However, ethnic Chinese in the United States is a tiny ethnic minority, and the ethnic economy is trivial and marginal to the US national economy. The US government has done little to interact with the Chinese diasporic community, either for transnationalism or for integration purposes, and has left these tasks in the hands of immigrants or markets. Moreover, the US-China rivalry relations directly or indirectly deter the homeland engagement among new immigrants. In contrast, Singapore has a long history of doing business in and with China and perceives China as a trading partner. While it aggressively searches for new investment opportunities in the PRC and recruiting talent there (at least up to 2011), the Singapore state also proactively encourages local Singaporean Chinese associations, both traditional and new, and their members, people of Chinese descent and new immigrants alike, to utilizes its Chinese heritage in renewing or establishing cultural and economic ties with compatriots in the ancestral homeland — all for the agendas of its own nation-building and economic growth. As a result, the magnitude of immigrant transnationalism diverges.

Last but not least, homeland engagement and hostland assimilation do not necessarily constitute a zero-sum game. Traversing the two homelands smoothly entails constant interaction and negotiation between individual migrants, diasporic communities, and nation states via transnational organizations. New Chinese immigrants in both countries, for example, simultaneously engage with both the hostland and homeland in their social, cultural and economic works. Organizational transnationalism in turn leads to dual embeddedness that simultaneously contributes to capacity building of the diasporic community and the individual. In this sense, transnationalism is utilized as an alternative means to socioeconomic status attainment by

immigrants, which facilitates, rather than hinders, integration to host societies. However, patterns of hostland assimilation can be more complicated than generally understood. New Chinese immigrants in the United States are increasingly becoming ethnic — distinct from the society's majority that is racially non-Chinese or non-Asian but similar to US-born coethnics — while their counterparts in Singapore remain diasporic Chinese — distinct from the society's majority that is racially Chinese and continue to maintain its close ties with China.

In the final analysis, our comparative study on new Chinese immigrants in two different national settings has demonstrated that the characteristics and trajectories of immigrant transnationalism are not so much shaped by the rational choices of individual migrants or ethnicity *per se*, but more importantly, by the interaction between macro-level forces (e.g., state policies, diaspora positionality) and meso-level institutional factors (ethnic or diasporic organizations and networks). We agree with the argument that transnationalism is shaped by polity and politics (Chin and Smith, 2014; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004), but we take a step further by placing the critical role of diasporic organizations in the center of our analysis while paying special attention to the role of the receiving state and bi-national relations.

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[2] See http://news.xinhuanet.com/yzyd/overseas/20140903/c_1112346861.htm (accessed January 28, 2015).

[3] See http://edu.sina.com.cn/a/2014-03-14/1832240718.shtml (accessed January 28, 2015).

[4] Singapore registered one of the lowest total fertility rates in the world: 1.57 in the mid-1990s and 1.2 in 2009, far below the population replacement level of 2.1 children born per woman.

[5] See http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/themes/people/popnindicators2012.pdf (accessed October 9, 2012).

[6] *Lianhe Zaobao*, November 12, 2001.

[7] *Tong xiang hui* is literally hometown association in Chinese.

[8] See http://cuaa-na.org/ (accessed January 30, 2015).

[9] Tianfu is an alias of Sichuan Province in China.

[10] See http://www.tianfu.org.sg/about.html. One of the co-authors is an advisor to the Tianfu Association, which provides an opportunity for participatory observation.

[11] Interviews with Mr. Wang Quancheng, President of the Huan Yuan Association, Singapore and Beijing, 2013-2014.

[12] See http://qwgzyj.gqb.gov.cn/qwhg/146/1346.shtml (accessed January 22, 2010).

[13] See http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/international_2.htm (accessed January 25, 2010).

[14] Interview with officials of Guangdong Provincial Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs, Guangzhou, July 2010.

[15] See http://ccbanyc.org/enews0809.html(accessed July, 5 2011).

[16] See http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-05/25/content_8246555.htm(accessed October 9, 2012).

[17] *Straits Times*, October 5, 2014.