

The Long Umbilical Cord

*The role of race in China's diaspora
engagement in Australia*

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Abstract

Incidents in recent years that involve China exerting extra-territorial control over foreign citizens of Chinese descent, has given rise to two concerns: That Beijing is increasingly willing to insert itself into the domestic affairs of other jurisdictions and that the Communist Party leadership regards ethnic Chinese as within their own domain, regardless of citizenship. Nowhere is this more prominent than in Australia, where intelligence agencies have flagged a suspected widespread campaign by Beijing to assert influence over and through the country's Chinese diaspora, and where several high-profile incidents involving Chinese-Australians in recent years has spurred Australia to revamp its anti-interference laws and in turn dialled up the tensions on the two country's bilateral relations. Some of these events include the suspected efforts by Beijing to interfere in local elections by mobilising Chinese voters, the seemingly arbitrary arrest of two Chinese-Australians in China, violent protests over Hong Kong at university campuses, and the expulsion from Australia of a Chinese businessman and suspected agent for Beijing.

This thesis therefore aims to explore whether China is indeed blurring the line between ethnicity and citizenship, and proceeds by investigating racial definitions of Chineseness and whether they function as a tool for PRC diaspora mobilisation and hence as a channel for political influence in Australia. The research is carried out through documentary research, consisting of official PRC government communication materials as well as media coverage by diaspora media in Australia, while borrowing from the methods of process-tracing in order to connect the dots between racial discourse and political impact.

While not able to reach conclusions about the diaspora functioning as a tool for PRC influence, this paper does find that racial discourses and definitions of Chineseness are consistent and pervasive across all platforms analysed.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

PRC — People's Republic of China

CCP — Chinese Communist Party

OCAO — Overseas Chinese Affairs Office

ACFROC — All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese

UFWD — United Front Work Department

ACPPRC — Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China

AVA — Australian Values Alliance

1. Introduction

In 2015, Chinese government agents abducted an ethnic Chinese Swedish citizen from his apartment in Thailand. Gui Minhai later reappeared in a forced confession video on Chinese television saying: “Although I have Swedish citizenship, I truly feel I’m Chinese, my roots are still in China” (Reuters 2016). Around the same time, Lee Bo, a British citizen and Hong Kong resident vanished from the city and resurfaced in Mainland China, appearing later in an apparently scripted interview saying that he decided to give up his British citizenship (Guardian 2016). To hammer home the narrative, the PRC Foreign Minister affirmed that Lee was “first and foremost a Chinese citizen” (Siu, Lai and Ng 2016; Gonzalez-Vicente 2016).

The two cases set a worrying precedent and suggested a willingness by the Chinese leadership to extend the long arm of its authoritarian rule beyond its own borders in a form of extra-territorial policing. In addition, it seemed clear, from the both action and script, that Chinese leaders consider Chinese ethnicity to trump and transcend foreign citizenship. Other cases in recent years, including in the Solomon Islands, Kenya and Malaysia, strengthen this hypothesis, and researchers such as Leo Suryadinata have argued that the PRC has begun to blur the distinction *huaqiao* (Chinese citizens overseas) and *huaren* (foreign citizens of Chinese descent) in official policy (Gonzalez-Vicente 2016; Suryadinata 2017a; Suryadinata 2017b).

More recently, two Australians of Chinese descent were arrested and prevented from leaving China with Australian diplomats denied access and Australia told to respect China’s “judicial sovereignty” (McGuire 2021). This time, however, the events took place within a much broader context of political conflict between China and Australia, in which suspicions of China weaponising ethnic Chinese Australians on Australian soil has fuelled the flames, and where there are increasing indicators that the PRC views Chinese abroad as first and foremost Chinese — dictated not by legal nationality, but by ethnic heritage. As such, the circumstantial evidence suggests that China may subscribe to racial beliefs and racial definitions of Chineseness, where race and ethnicity trump citizenship as the defining force behind belonging, identity and political loyalties, and where the PRC thereby sees itself entitled to discipline what it may regard as unruly progeny living outside of the family home, often through the long arm of parental control. To go beyond the circumstantial, this thesis aims to systematically explore the role of race in PRC diaspora engagement in Australia.

1.1 Research aims and objectives

This thesis analyses the role of race in China’s engagement with its diaspora in Australia. More specifically, this paper aims to explore to which extent the PRC uses racial discourse relating to definitions of Chineseness in its communication with overseas Chinese in Australia, and whether this impacts political loyalties in favour of China among overseas Chinese, in a way that is politically favourable to Beijing. This paper interprets such expressions of loyalty as a potential channel for political influence in Australia. To achieve this objective, this paper will first analyse official government communication materials to test for racial discourses, and then analyse whether such racial discourses are communicated to and within the diaspora through Chinese-language media in Australia. Finally, this paper will explore how racial discourses relating to Chineseness impact Chinese-Australian political loyalties and how these allegiances are distributed between China and Australia on issues involving political conflict between “host” and “home” lands. These political loyalties will be explored in relation to four key political events. Where loyalty is expressed in favour of China, this paper interprets it as a form of political influence.

This thesis will not focus on PRC political interference or China-Australia bilateral relations directly, but will instead attempt to contextualise racial narratives within political influence channels in Australia, thereby hopefully providing an illustration of potential mechanisms of causality between the racial discourse and political influence.

1.2 Research questions

To address the role of race in China's diaspora politics, I attempt to answer the following question:

To which extent do racial definitions of Chineseness constitute a tool for PRC diaspora mobilisation and hence a channel of political influence in Australia?

This question is broken down into four sub-questions, in order to explore the question through several steps:

- To which extent does the PRC employ racial definitions of Chineseness in public documents and in official communication with its diaspora?
- To which extent does the PRC employ racially-based definitions of Chineseness as a tool for diaspora engagement and mobilisation in Australia?
- To which extent is the Chinese diaspora in Australia receptive to the PRC's racial definitions of Chineseness, and corresponding expectations of belonging and political loyalty?
- To which extent do such racial definitions of Chineseness translate into racially defined political loyalties to the PRC by overseas Chinese in Australia?

1.3 Thesis outline

The thesis is structured in the following way. This introduction will be followed by a literature review in **Chapter 2**, which presents the existing scholarly research of relevance to this paper, and discusses the wedge between current research in which this thesis is situated. This is followed by a brief discussion of theory in **Chapter 3**, which attempts to distill a relevant theoretical framework out of existing literature on race and diaspora politics in a Chinese context. **Chapter 4** will introduce the key background and context of this paper's chosen case study, focusing on Chinese diaspora engagement in Australia, and **Chapter 5** will then introduce this paper's research methodology, by explaining the chosen research design and approaches to data collection and data analysis. The consequent three chapters will then present the the main findings of this paper's primary research. **Chapter 6** will first explore the general role of racial discourses in the PRC's official government communication, including in CCP-run diaspora agencies. **Chapter 7** then turns to Australia to analyse the role of such racial narratives in Chinese diaspora communication, explored through both official government diaspora channels, PRC-affiliated institutions and media as well as independent diaspora media in Australia. **Chapter 8** then makes attempts to analyse how racial narratives affect political loyalties among overseas Chinese and the impact of this on domestic politics. This will be discussed against the backdrop of four key events, all of which directly involved Chinese-Australians and provided noticeable political reverberations: (1) The 2017 Bennelong by-election; (2) the arrests of two ethnically Chinese Australian citizens in China; (3) the pro-democracy protests at the University of Queensland; and (4) the expulsion from Australia of Chinese billionaire Huang Xiangmo in 2019. The thesis offers a brief conclusion in **Chapter 9**.

2. Literature review

The following chapter aims to give a broad outline of the existing literature that has contributed to this paper's research on the role of race in China's diaspora politics in Australia.

Rather than fitting neatly within a discrete area of study, this thesis finds itself at the intersection of several academic fields, chief of which are China studies, diaspora studies, ethnic studies and international politics. This is owing to the fact that this paper aims to explore specific micro-level social phenomena in order to draw broader conjectures about macro-level political implications. More specifically, the literature that forms the scholarly and theoretical backbone for this paper falls within the categories of (1) transitional and extra-territorial authoritarianism and diaspora politics, (2) ethnic nationalism, (3) Chinese diaspora engagement; (4) diaspora identity, loyalty and nationalism; and (5) Chinese diaspora in Australia.

The following literature review aims to give a broad outline of what research has previously been conducted peripherally on the topic, while the core theory will be covered separately and in more detail in Chapter 3. This review will present the literature by starting in the general and moving to the more specific, before presenting the knowledge gap in which there is a space for new research, and, how specifically it relates to this paper's research objectives.

2.1 Diaspora politics and extra-territorial authoritarianism

John Agnew's seminal work on the "territorial trap" has played a pivotal role in the study of politics in transnational space (Agnew 1994), which in turn has spawned a large body of literature on extra-territorial authoritarianism and diaspora politics, some of the more recent of which has been instrumental to this thesis.

Alan Gamlen, in an analysis of diaspora institutions and governance, has argued that existing studies focus too exclusively on national-level interests (Gamlen 2014), and Elaine Ho and Fiona McConnell, propose a need to reconsider what they view as an artificial distinction between domestic and foreign policy, as diasporas may play bridging roles, able to mobilise resources outside of the national territory either to the benefit or detriment of the state (Ho and McConnell 2019). The latter point is also detailed in Maria Koinova's study of Kosovo, who finds that diasporas can contribute to post-conflict state-building by mobilising assets through extra-territorial processes (Koinova 2018). Whether or not diasporas end up contributing to forming co-operative ties between countries of origin and residence, however, depends according to Nikola Mirilovic, on regime types. Mirilovic finds cooperative foreign policy to depend on a dyadic relationship, and more likely to emerge when both states are democracies (Mirilovic 2018).

Especially when the sending state is authoritarian it appears diasporas may become pawns of political control. In two separate studies, Marlies Glasius and Johannes Gerschewski provide frameworks for understanding how non-democratic regimes maintain stability by extending control beyond national borders. Gerschewski identifies legitimation, repression and co-optation as the three pillars of transnational population control (Gerschewski 2013), while Glasius argues that authoritarian regimes manage overseas populations by including them as patriots or excluding them as outlaws or traitors. Authoritarian regimes, he proposes, should therefore not be considered territorially bounded (Glasius 2018).

Sara Kalm finds the promotion of dual nationality, the use of absentee voting and efforts to attract investments as some diaspora engagement strategies used by sending states, a toolbox which is used to nurture feelings of national obligation among its people abroad (Kalm 2013). These strategies appear relatively benevolent, however, compared to the arguments made in the pivotal work by Yossi Shain, who highlights the more sinister mechanisms of diaspora governance. Shain has pointed to withdrawal of citizenship, the use of spies and agents provocateurs to infiltrate exile groups, efforts to flame dissent, and silencing through violence, kidnappings and political assassinations. Furthermore, governments commonly engage in propaganda campaigns to brand exiles as disloyal to the nation and their activities as treasonous (Shain 1989).

Bahar Baser and Ahmet Erdi Ozturk support Shain's argument in finding that the Turkish regime ranks members of the diaspora into positive or negative binaries, as either good or bad, loyal or hostile (Baser and Ozturk 2020). In addition to sending states' ability to monitor, intimidate and harass diaspora populations through extra-territorial forms repression, what Fiona Adamson terms "long-distance authoritarianism", also non-state actors in the diaspora may use repressive mobilisation strategies internally. Members of the diaspora then become trapped between multiple forms of transnational repression (Adamson 2019).

Existing case studies of extra-territorial diaspora politics are wide-ranging. They include Russian passport distribution in Crimea as a regime stabilisation mechanism (Wrighton 2018); Uzbekistan's extraterritorial security practices aimed at exiles (Lewis 2015); the transnational authoritarian system of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party under Saddam Hussein (Helfont 2018); repression of Libyan and Syrian diasporas in the UK and US both during and after the 2011 Arab Spring (Moss 2016); and the Syrian government's dissident repression and control of the exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (Conduit 2020). In addition, Gerasimos Tsourapas has dissected the cost-benefit calculations by Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco in deciding whether to securitise emigration policy or diaspora policy. He calls this the "long arm of the Arab state" (Tsourapas 2020).

It is Eritrea, however, that perhaps provides the most salient example of extra-territorial diaspora control, as a third of the country's population lives abroad and state coffers are heavily reliant on remittances paid for by a diaspora tax. This is made possible by fostering long-distance patriotism and sense of obligation to the motherland, as well as through direct coercion (Hirt and Mohammad 2018). Martin Plaut goes as far as calling Eritrea a "mafia state" with a system designed to keep its citizens perpetually under state control (Plaut 2017).

2.2 Ethnic nationalism

While less extensive, a small corpus of scholarly work on race and ethnicity in diaspora politics and transnational authoritarianism have been useful in this thesis.

Walker Connor has played a pivotal role in the field of nationalism and ethnicity. In his early work, Connor has placed ethnic nationalism as a political force in a historical perspective (Connor 1973) and offered a framework for understanding both state- and ethnic nationalism (Connor 1970).

However, more recent literature has taken ethno-national theorising further into the transnational and diasporic arenas. Stéphane Dufoix, for example, distinguishes between "extra-territorial nations", which involves moving beyond the territorial framework, and "over-state nations", where people living abroad maintain a link of origin, rather than

nationality, to the home state (Dufoix, 2011). In addition to sending states exporting their secret security apparatus, Francesco Ragazzi finds that some regimes employ the concept of *jus sanguinis*, or blood-based principles of nationality, to maintain an official national identity among populations abroad. This “transnational nationalism”, Ragazzi argues, is a new version of “ethnic nationalism” (Ragazzi 2009).

According to Christian Joppke, concepts such as *jus sanguinis*, which imply a form of ethnicised citizenship, points to the dual nature of states as both ethnic and territorial units, a fact that is often manipulated by political elites for various purposes (Joppke 2003). Communities defined by cultural boundaries and racial identities increasingly impact the transnational, argues Riva Kastoryano. This is especially the case when backed by state recognition, as competition between states and communities on issues involving identities and loyalties has led states to extend their sovereignty beyond their territories (Kastoryano 2010).

Gabriel Sheffer seconds Ragazzi’s distinctions between transnational and ethno-national diasporism, the latter of which he describes as based on non-essentialist primordial elements, myths and psychological factors related to their homeland. Sheffer argues that ethno-national diasporas demonstrate greater solidarity, maintain non-territorial boundaries and are more loyal to their homeland. As a result, the question of loyalty is a recurring issue facing diasporas, with members forced to decide whether they owe loyalty to the ethno-national centre, to their homeland or to the host country. This, unsurprisingly, can be a source of conflict between host and homeland (Sheffer 2006).

Similarly, William Safran finds the so-called diaspora “homeland myth” to have political implications. It is sometimes exploited by the state, as diaspora sentiments may be provoked by the host country to influence the homeland, or vice versa by the homeland to exploit diaspora sentiments from afar. At times, diasporas may also interfere directly when they have a strong interest in the domestic affairs of their homeland (Safran 1991).

2.3 Chinese diaspora engagement

Scholars such as Stephen Fitzgerald and Wang Gungwu have been instrumental in broadening the understanding of China’s diaspora politics and overseas Chinese affairs policy, along with work by scholars such as C. Y Chang. Fitzgerald’s early research discussed the “fifth column” theory in relation to China’s policies towards overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (Fitzgerald 1970), while C. Y. Chang analysed China’s revived overseas Chinese policies following the end of the Cultural Revolution (Chang 1980). Wang Gungwu first dissected what he called China’s new external policy (Wang 1985), and later explored overseas Chinese affairs in the context of Greater China, where he introduces the term “Chinese overseas” in order to more accurately describe those of Chinese descent living outside of Greater China (Wang 1993).

By drawing upon theoretical insights from both IR and diaspora studies, Hong Liu examines how China, since 1949, has increasingly involved the overseas Chinese in diplomacy (Liu 2011) and Sheng Ding finds that under Xi Jinping, target campaigns designed to shape loyalties and identities in the diaspora have been specifically designed as a way to increase China’s soft power capabilities (Ding 2015)

Hong Liu and Els van Dongen analyse China’s diaspora policies from the angle of transnational governance. They argue that a state-centered approach that interprets the Chinese diaspora as being “coopted”, is too simplistic and one-sided as it neglects how the engagement with transnational social actors, in this case overseas Chinese migrants, changes

existing state structures and how the overseas Chinese themselves are not simply passive recipients of a state policy, but actors in their own right who gain in various ways from cooperation with the Chinese state (Liu and van Dongen 2016). This is exemplified in the work of Xiao-Lei Qu, who finds that China's government-sponsored youth camps have been successful in fostering homeland ties among overseas Chinese in the Philippines, who themselves have also benefited from Chinese language learning (Qu 2017).

Aranya Siriphon has analysed the impact of China's diaspora influence efforts on different groupings of overseas Chinese in Northern Thailand, finding the PRC's engagement to be more successful among some than others (Siriphon 2016). Enze Han further expands on this research by investigating the changing diaspora policies Northern Thai Chinese both China and Taiwan since 1949. He calls this "bifurcated homeland", and finds that nationalism has largely replaced ideology post-Cold War (Han 2019)

Carsten Schäfer argues that while China aims to control its diaspora extra-territorially, overseas Chinese do not directly act as a "fifth column" for China, as the government has not yet succeeded in gaining broad-based acceptance and definitions of what it means to be Chinese are never fully under the control of the Chinese nation. As a result, Chinese diasporas may foster democratic behaviour in certain situations, while triggering illiberalism and hyper-nationalism in others. This affects not only China but also the host countries of these populations (Schäfer 2019).

Chris Vasantkumar points to a primordial definitions of overseas Chinese identity and argues that in order to understand the relationship between nation and transnational forms of community on must start by reconciling ethnic and national understandings of Chineseness (Vasantkumar 2012).

2.4 Diaspora identity, loyalty and nationalism

Nationalism among Chinese overseas has been sporadically covered in the past. Vanessa Fong has found the term "filial nationalism" fitting for the domestic setting, where teenagers in China expressed a sense of unconditional loyalty to China, similar to that owed to their parents (Fong 2004), while Hong Liu found overseas nationalism to be stronger among new Chinese migrants, sustained in part through extensive links to the homeland, contributions by Chinese language media and targeted diaspora policies by Beijing (Liu 2005). Meanwhile, Hongmei Li explored such sentiments in the context of the controversial pro-Beijing transnational activism of overseas Chinese in the 2008 Pasadena Parade in Los Angeles (Li 2012).

More recently, Carol Chan's case study of ethnic Chinese in Chile, published this year, uncovers tensions between different practises of citizenship, identity, nationalism and ethnic belonging. Chan find that there is a tension between "ethnic" and "national" in Chinese identities in Chile, with further differences between "old" and "new" Chinese migrants, divided linguistically between Cantonese and Mandarin and between levels of integration. While earlier Cantonese-speaking migrants aim for better integration, recent migrants are more likely to be temporary residents, and are more willing to explicitly display expressions of patriotism to the Chinese state. The new Chinese migrants are relatively more politicised and vocally nationalistic, while they also threaten to absorb Chilean-born and Chilean-identified Chinese into their own political discourses on China and on "who constitute Chinese nationals". in this context, Chan finds, a new de-territorialised Chinese identity or citizenship is also evoked, which expands the space for patriotism and reinforces a sense of

primordial Chineseness among some and instilling alienation among others (Chan 2021).

2.5 Chinese diaspora in Australia

Diaspora identities and tensions between ethnic and national belonging among Chinese in Australia is covered by Ien Ang (Ang 2014); Georgina Tsolidis covers historical narratives of Chineseness and sinophobia in Australia (Tsolidis 2018); and Lucille Lok-Sun Ngan and Kwok-bun Chan analyse Chineseness in cultural and racial discourses in Australia, asking “Who is Chinese and who is not Chinese?” (Ngan and Chan 2012). Venkat Pulla and Jennifer Woods have dissected the multigenerational ethnicity of long-settled Australian-born Chinese in Australia, and identify ways in which Chineseness is perceived and performed (Venkat Pulla and Jennifer Woods 2014).

Wanning Sun, meanwhile, explores Chinese-language and diasporic media in Australia and analyses its role in public diplomacy involving China (Sun 2019), while Chongyi Feng focuses on the political identities of overseas Chinese in Australia and the Chinese nationalism of Han Chinese migrants in Australia. He argues that nationalism is weaker among those who experienced pro-democracy activism during their formative years in the 1980s, and strongest among the post-Tiananmen generation, who were exposed to patriotic education campaigns in the 1990s, when the CCP was looking to nationalism as a stop-gap alternative to the somewhat discredited ideology of socialism (Feng 2011).

Finally, in the book *Silent Invasion*, Clive Hamilton presents his evidence for China’s extensive political influence operations in Australia in recent years, which has included political donations for various forms of influence and extensive diaspora meddling, resulting in deepening political conflict between China and Australia (Clive Hamilton 2018).

2.6 Theoretical core

Most central to this thesis is the topic of race in Chinese identity and its impact on Chinese diaspora politics. The pioneering work of Frank Dikötter forms the core theoretical backbone for this thesis (Dikötter 1994; Dikötter 1996; Dikötter 2015). This is supplemented by the work Dan Shao, who explores the importance of bloodline in Chinese nationality (Shao 2009), and Barry Sautman, who covers both the role of race domestically as well as its impact on Chinese foreign policy (Sautman 1997; Sautman 2001). For research on Chinese diaspora politics, and specifically the ethnic versus citizenship perspectives of Chineseness in diaspora engagement, this thesis relies heavily on the work of Leo Suryadinata (Suryadinata 2017a; Suryadinata 2017b) and James To (To 2012; To 2014).

The literature listed above covers what this thesis deems to be the most relevant research on transitional and extra-territorial authoritarianism, diaspora politics and ethnic nationalism, both as general theory, and more specifically in relation to China. The literature has been instrumental in positioning this thesis within the existing body of knowledge. The next chapter will discuss the core scholarly work to construct a theoretical framework.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter builds on the literature review by outlining the core theoretical framework employed in this thesis. Instead of relying on a single academic theory, this paper attempts to construct a useful theoretical frame by drawing upon research and arguments from several related areas. The theoretical discussion will proceed as follows: (1) First, I will attempt to discuss potential meanings of “race” and address some of the difficulties in finding a one-size-fits-all definition, before (2) discussing the various expressions of “race” in a Chinese context. Next, turning to China’s diaspora engagement, I will first analyse (3) the mechanisms of China’s diaspora politics; and then cover (4) the transnational nature of Chinese identity. Finally (5), by combining the race and diaspora politics, I will discuss the notion that China is blurring the boundaries between ethnicity and citizenship and its implications for overseas Chinese.

3.1 Interpreting race

The topic of “race” is sensitive, politicised and the perpetual subject of interpretation, interrogation and misinterpretation. Race is unscientific, the argument often goes, and should therefore be left alone. Its lack of factual or scientific basis, however, is arguably not good reason to dismiss it, as racial thinking, regardless of its factual credibility, persists. Racial thinking can be a potent force and, through subjective constructs of “us” and “them”, it informs identities, loyalties and political action throughout the world.

In fact, it is precisely because of its fuzzy boundaries of meaning and its ability to shape-shift as it migrates between different social, political and geographical contexts, that racial beliefs are too often able to hide in the shadows. Detecting it, therefore, first requires an understanding of where to look.

“Races do not exist, they are imagined,” writes Frank Dikötter in his pioneering book on the discourse of race in China. “Phenotypical variations like hair texture or skin colour are subjectively perceived and culturally constructed by social groups: some may focus on skin tone, others on eye colour. These biological differences do not in themselves induce cultural differences, but are utilised to legitimise role expectations: physical features, in other words, are given social meaning. Classifications based on physical appearance have no scientific foundation” (Dikötter 2015, p.xiv).

Barry Sautman agrees that race is popularly interpreted as a set of phenotypical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. “Some discourses claim crucial genetic distinctions among large, historically connected populations, while others reconfigure race by using culture, not heredity, to essentialise difference” (Sautman 1997, p.79). The latter is often associated with ethnicity. However, race and ethnicity overlap and Sautman argues that ethnicity can be racialised through the extension of myth of descent to other larger hierarchical racial configurations (Sautman 1997, p.79).

Defining the Other requires drawing real or symbolic boundaries, argues Riva Kastoryano. “Boundaries lead to internal differentiation creating social, cultural, and moral categories; they generate hierarchies among cultures; in short they engender complex relations where each element constitutes a microsociological basis” (Kastoryano p.79). Hence, language, religion, nationality and various fragments of identity — which at sometimes overlap and other times are divided by artificial and circumstantial boundaries — “come out as the core of

a collective identity imagined as real or mythical past or appear through social relations as markers of situational boundaries” (Kastoryano pp.80-81). Each society has its sameness and otherness, even though the codes of which may vary from one context to another (Kastoryano pp.82-93). Dikötter adds: “The assignment of racial categories varies according to the sociocultural environment. As a result, race as an identifying construct does not have a fixed meaning, but can vary enormously over time” (Dikötter 2015, p.xiv).

Hence, in order to better understand the concept of “race” for the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to place it in context of Chinese identity.

3.2 Race in a Chinese context

Concepts of Chinese and non-Chinese identities as the Chinese perceive them are complicated, argues David Yen-ho Wu. He points to the many terms that are used to reflect racial, cultural, ethnic, and national attributes. Those include zhongguoren [中国人], zhonghua minzu [中华民族], huaren [华人], huaqiao [华侨], tangren [唐人], hanren [汉人], among others (Wu 1991, p.159).

James To argues that “as an ethnic identity, ‘Chineseness’ is open to transmutation and manipulation. It undergoes continual flux across geographical and political boundaries — a perpetually fluid reconfiguration and rearticulated sense of identity that cannot be defined in a singular and fixed racial or ethnic context.” Over different periods and contexts, Chineseness has been articulated and expressed in a variety of ways, with the aim to reaching the widest “community” possible. For example, To argues, during revolutionary periods both nationality and common ethnic and racial identity were used to enhance patriotism and unity (To 2014, p. 131).

Dikötter argues that while race as it is understood today may be a modern construct, racial thinking is nevertheless historical contingent, based on pre-existing moral and cultural traditions (Dikötter 2015, p.ix). In China, that includes the symbolic importance of the colour yellow, a negative view of dark skin and an emphasis on patrilineal inheritance and lines of descent (Dikötter 2015, p.ix). Some of these continue to dominate racial narratives and beliefs today.

3.2.1 Phenotypes

Hair and skin colour

From early Chinese history, hair type and skin colour played a role in shaping identity. While the early Chinese were described as having white skin (Dikötter 2015, p.8), this later evolved into yellow as the defining Chinese complexion, and was often invoked as part of a hierarchical structure of racial categories where yellow and white races were placed above three darker breeds (Dikötter 2015, pp.49-50). Skin colour has continued to have importance into the 20th century, and racial theorising under the current regime has concluded that the Han Chinese are the main branch of the “yellow race”, to which all the minority groups could be traced, and where the political territory of the People’s Republic is conceived as relating to natural biological boundaries (Dikötter 2015, pp.83-130),

3.2.2 Lineage and kinship

Lineage as a racial concept grew out of the vocabulary of Darwinism and the belief in racial war, where the so-called “yellow race” was believed to be in a perpetual battle for survival with the other white, brown and black races (Dikötter 2015, pp.41-42). This understanding of racial war was based on the concept of lineage feuds, which was upheld by the semantic similarity between “zu” as lineage and “zu” as race — a concept which has later contributed to shaping the idea of nationhood (Dikötter 2015, pp.43-44). Kinship terms gradually became infused into a racial discourse that drew on language usually reserved for close relatives, with the Han race narrated as one big family and the Yellow Emperor as the great ancestor. Consequently, those that are not of the Han race are not the descendants of the Yellow Emperor and are therefore exterior families. Race based on kinship ideas was thus a catalyst of national solidarity, drawing clear boundaries between insiders and outsiders, and racial loyalty became an extension of lineage loyalty (Dikötter 2015, pp.72-75).

3.2.3 Myths of descent

Yellow Emperor and Yan and Huang

Kinship beliefs were strengthened through a broader mythology of descent. The Yellow Emperor has become a national symbol as the first ancestor of the Han, thanks to the myth of blood and biological inheritance. Further supported by the traditional Confucian values of filial piety and ancestor worship, these beliefs have led to the cult of the Yellow Emperor (Dikötter 2015, Kindle-p.72), which is centred on the belief that all Chinese are his descendants, or more specifically trace their ancestry to both the Yan (flame) Emperor and Huang (yellow) Emperor, who were ancient fraternal rivals to state leadership. Today it is a common refrain that all Chinese are proud to be descendants of the Yellow Emperor and Chineseness is often defined by descent from the Yellow Emperor as “father” of the Chinese race (Sautman 1997, p.83).

The Dragon as ancestor

Since the mid-1980s, use of the dragon as the all-China totem has been paired with the expression of Chineseness as a set of physical characteristics, with Chinese emperors associated with saurian traits and the Chinese thereby regarded as descendants of the dragon. Sautman argues that while the dragon was never regarded as an ancestor directly, it is nevertheless portrayed as the forefather of ancient rulers (Sautman 1997, pp.82-83).

Peking Man

These myths of descent get intertwined with, and are further bolstered by, what Barry Sautman refers to as paleoanthropological nationalism (Sautman 2001). The discovery ancient hominid fossils near Beijing has given rise to the narrative of the Peking Man as the common ancestor of the “yellow race”. As such, today’s China is believed to have been inhabited since the earliest stage of human history by the earth’s most ancient original inhabitants (Sautman 2001; Dikötter 2015, pp.128-135). As such, paleoanthropology plays a key role in the construction of Chinese racial nationalism (Sautman 2001, p.96) and Dikötter argues that Chinese nationality remains based on the ideas that the PRC is an organic entity with an uninterrupted line of descent directly traceable to the Peking Man (Dikötter 2015, p.xiii).

3.2.4 Blood

Intrinsically linked with both the notion of descent and biology is the concept of blood. The belief in blood kinship infused Sun Yat-sen's thinking during the Republican Era. Sun was explicit in his racial thinking and viewed the Han as a pure biological entity (Dikötter 2015, pp.77-78). The Republican elites extended the principles of *jus sanguinis*, on which the Qing dynasty's 1909 Law of Nationality was based, to further shape Chinese identity and to justify setting up organisations targeting overseas Chinese. Sun portrayed the Han Chinese as a pure race with common blood from a single direct mythological ancestor, and prescribed nationalism as the sole antidote to racial extinction (To 2014, p.131; Dikötter 2015, Dikötter 2015, pp.77-78)

Dikötter argues that this narrative of blood-based line of descent where all Chinese share a common ancestor became mainstream in the People's Republic after 1978, and this notion of "Chinese nationality" became connected to the argument that the political boundaries of the country were based on biological markers (Dikötter 2015, pp.127-128). The CCP has perpetuated the idea that all people in China belonged to a single, homogeneous group united by ties of blood called the Han (Dikötter 2015, pp.123-130). Following this logic, all ethnic Chinese are supposed to be attached to the Chinese state through lines of descent (Sautman 1997, p.84).

Also the current PRC Nationality Law of 1980 continues to uphold the principle of blood lineage as a major criterion, although elements of *jus soli*, the principle of birthplace, have been added in (Shao 2009, p.5). Dan Shao suggests that the "ancestral aura and legitimising power of bloodline", a concept often utilised for ethno-nationalistic or racist rhetoric, is still influencing Chinese national membership and political allegiance today (Shao 2009, p.29). Sautman argues bluntly that the law is anchored in concepts of race (Sautman 1997, p.80).

3.3 China's diaspora politics

Chinese overseas were initially ignored during the Qing dynasty, but the policy was later amended from one of abandonment to protection as political cost-benefit calculations changed (Suryadinata 2017b, p.24). In order to formalise the embrace of ethnic Chinese overseas for the first time, the 1909 Law of Nationality defined anyone born to a Chinese father or mother as a Chinese citizen under the principle of *jus sanguinis* (To 2012, p.185) The law was meant to prevent people from denouncing their Chinese nationality, and the principle of bloodline was considered an effective tool for maintaining the unconditional and perpetual obedience to the country through the traditional model of father-son piety (Shao 2009, pp.13-14). This gave the Qing court the power to claim overseas Chinese with foreign citizenship as its own nationals, effectively extending extra-territorial rule over any Chinese person abroad (To 2012, p.185)

While Chinese leaders initially took a hands-off approach to Chinese overseas in the first years of the PRC's existence, in order to avoid conflicts over political loyalties in the diaspora host countries, the situation changed after the economic rise of China also resulting in new patterns of Chinese migration. China has started to show interest not only in the *huaqiao* (华侨, Chinese citizens abroad) but also in the *huaren* (华人, foreign citizens of Chinese descent) (Suryadinata 2017b, pp.26-27), which became an integral part of the Chinese dream of economic modernisation, innovation and cultural revival (Liu and Van Dongen, p.805).

After the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989 triggered global protests against the

Chinese authorities, often led by Chinese students abroad, the CCP launched a campaign to eradicate or pre-empt politically dangerous discourses from rising in the diaspora. Consequently, ethnic Chinese were targeted by efforts to align diaspora narratives and beliefs with Beijing's interests (To 2012, p.190).

Today, this is carried out mainly through five government-controlled agencies, known as the "five overseas Chinese structures" (wujiao 五侨), chief of which are the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC) and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) (Liu and Van Dongen, pp.809-813). The latter is responsible for formulating policy and regulations for Chinese overseas and for fertilising diaspora patriotism (Suryadinata 2017b, p. 28). Also crucial to overseas Chinese work is the The United Front Work Department (UFWD) of the CCP Central Committee, which works through less direct means to build temporary alliances, neutralise party critics and shut down dissent (Liu and Van Dongen, p. 815; To 2012, p.186). In addition to these formal institutions, China's diaspora politics operate through consular departments in Chinese embassies (Liu and Van Dongen, p.811), as well as pro-Beijing organisations among overseas Chinese communities, such as the Peaceful Reunification of China Association (To 2012, p.200).

Beijing perceives the Chinese overseas as crucial to realising the "China Dream" (Suryadinata 2017b, p.3) and therefore attempts to entice, co-opt, or isolate various groupings of the diaspora (To 2012, p.183), both through soft methods such as encouraging pro-China attitudes and foster a nationalism based on common ancestry, culture and sentimental village connections (To 2012, p.190) as well as through hardline tactics that include harassment, blacklisting, threats or direct attacks (To 2012, pp.202-203). Overall, Beijing aims to foster patriotism, a transnational cultural interest and ethnic awareness among Chinese abroad (To 2012, pp.202-203).

3.4 Transnational Chineseness

Transnational structures reveal multiple allegiances: to the host country, to the home country, and to a constructed transnational community, argues Kastoryano (p.94). Competition between states and communities in the arena of identity and the loyalty of citizens has thus spread to the international scene and has led states to extend their reach beyond their own territories. This extension of state power causes new power struggles to emerge between states and communities. States react in order to maintain control over populations on the move, not only within a specific territorial space but also across borders — in transnational space (Kastoryano p.96).

Such transitional political efforts are made easier when diasporas also subscribe to similar transnational identities. David Yen-ho Wu argues that the traditional view of being at the centre of existence has always been an important aspect of being Chinese. This view connects with a sense of belonging to a unified civilisation with thousands of years of uninterrupted history. As a result, many overseas Chinese share common sentiments. On the one hand they feel connected to China as a nation, and on the other they see themselves as members of *zhonghua minzu*, which roughly translates to English as "the Chinese people" or "the Chinese race". These identities are closely connected with the primordial belief of being the bearers of a cultural heritage handed down from their ancestors — a concept with ultimately sets Chinese apart from non-Chinese and reflects an identity based on cultural and historical fulfilment rather than the more conventional modern notions of nationality or citizenship (Wu 1991, pp.160-163).

China's new migrants, the *xin yimin* (新移民) are different from earlier Chinese migrants in several respects (Suryadinata 2017b, p.9). They often regard their stay as less permanent than the previous wave of migrants, they are less integrated into their adopted countries, and they maintain stronger links with the PRC. Some also keep in contact with the Chinese embassies where they live (Suryadinata 2017b, pp.10-14). China's policy towards the Chinese overseas plays crucial role in such sentiments and the success or failure to integrate and indigenise, often contributing to perpetuate the old stereotype of "once a Chinese, always a Chinese" (Suryadinata 2017b, p.12).

Raised under CCP rhetoric, values and nationalism, new migrants, which To calls *xinqiao* (新桥), are more likely to align more closely with Beijing than other ethnic Chinese migrant groups. The many years of patriotic education at home is reinforced outside the borders of the PRC through Chinese-language media and modern communications. They are willing to connect with the Chinese embassies for status, political networks and diplomatic protection (To 2012, pp.207-208), which means the Chinese government is more able to influence their behaviour, in turn adversely influencing the relationship between China and the diaspora host countries (Suryadinata 2017b, pp.10-14).

3.5 Blurring race and citizenship

Racial thinking adds further complexity to China's diaspora engagement. While the distinction between Chinese citizens and foreign citizens of Chinese descent was quite clear during Deng Xiaoping period, the PRC has started blurring this distinction in both action and rhetoric in recent years. Chinese nationality law only recognises single citizenship and the clear distinction between Chinese nationals and foreigners of Chinese descent was meant to resolve the historical problem of dual nationality and the potentially conflicting political loyalties of the Chinese overseas (Suryadinata 2017a, pp.101-102). As China has grown more powerful, however, the distinction is growing increasingly blurred between *huaqiao* (华侨 Chinese citizens overseas) and *huaren* (华人 foreign citizens of Chinese descent) (Suryadinata 2017a, pp.101-102; Suryadinata 2017b, p.9). The policy first began to change in 2001 when Beijing revitalised its overseas Chinese affairs agencies, and PRC political action in 2006 made the practice explicit. During an outbreak of anti-Chinese violence in the Solomon Islands, China began to repatriate all affected Chinese to the PRC regardless of their nationality or citizenship (Suryadinata 2017a, pp.102-103; Suryadinata 2017b, pp.34-35).

China specifically included "huaren" in its "Overseas Chinese Affairs" programme in 2011, and this policy became even clearer under Xi Jinping after 2013 and with the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative in 2014 where the Chinese overseas were envisaged to play a key role (Suryadinata 2017b, pp.35-36). At the 2014 conference President Xi Jinping made a speech using the term "haiwai qiaobao" (海外侨胞, overseas compatriots) rather than "haiwai huaren" (海外华人, Chinese overseas), despite the occasion being the world "huaqiao and huaren" conference, rather than a "huaqiao" gathering (Suryadinata 2017a, p.103).

Matthieu Burnay and Eva Pils argue that China is weaponising citizenship, as the Party under Xi Jinping has expanded claims over who constitutes a PRC national (Burnay and Pils 2020, p.19). Internally, Chinese citizenship remains a tool of inclusion and exclusion, while externally, China's transnational citizenship challenges the thin line between citizenship and ethnic identity (Burnay and Pils 2020, pp.4-19). This *Tianxia* governance, as Burnay and Pils call it, often involves whipping up ethno-nationalist sentiment as a means to secure support for policies that may otherwise appear undesirable (Burnay and Pils 2020, pp.16-17).

Elena Barabantseva argues that China consciously employs ethnic nationalism to foster loyalty among overseas Chinese and to organise them into an ethnically conscious and politically sympathetic pro-Beijing front. This, she argues, marks a departure from China as a territorially-restricted unit, resulting in the Chinese nation-state to be trans-nationalised. At the same time, by claiming the identity of all ethnic Chinese, regardless of birth or citizenship, Beijing aims to mobilise Chinese trans-nationals to serve the national cause by contributing to both economic and political objectives (Barabantseva 2005).

In a paper published in 1997, Barry Sautman argued that myths of descent contribute to creating a form of racial nationalism in China, where loyalty is determined by a perceived common biology and lineage, which in turn has significant implications for China's external politics (Sautman 1997), and John Friend and Bradley Thayer, more recently identified the growing influence of Han supremacy on Chinese foreign policy (Friend and Thayer 2017).

Today, the use of a transnational re-conceptualisation of citizenship has two characteristics. Beyond the territorial borders of the PRC there is a constant mobilisation of overseas Chinese, either tacitly or explicitly justified by purported cultural or racial links. And secondly, the the PRC under Xi Jinping increasingly engages in extra-judicial law enforcement — including abduction — beyond its borders (Burnay and Pils 2020, p.15).

Gonzalez-Vicente argues that a form of sovereignty that draws upon a combination of imperial, civilisational and racist understandings of Chineseness has been mobilised by the Chinese government to intervene beyond state borders. He highlights three specific examples in recent years: the abduction in Thailand and Hong Kong of book publishers critical of the Chinese government, the extradition of Taiwanese citizens from Kenya to China, and the Chinese government's interference in Malaysia to protect Malaysian citizens of Chinese descent. He dubs this “extraterritorial racial sovereignty” and argues the armed with a belief in non-territorial racial citizenship, China's extraterritorial interventions are aimed not only at securitising but also at disciplining the target communities (Gonzalez-Vicente 2016).

3.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to gather and discuss the existing research on the topics of race and racial discourses in China, diaspora politics, and China's transnational engagement in order to form a cohesive theoretical framework for this paper's original research. The specific goals of the discussion has been to explore and establish boundaries for potential forms of racial beliefs in China, as well as identify the specific mechanisms that drive China's diaspora engagement efforts.

Sporadic evidence suggests that the PRC appears to be moving away from citizenship-based definitions of Chineseness and toward ethno-nationalist diaspora politics which at times are expressed as a form transnational authoritarian reach. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by conducting a more systematic analysis of the role of race and racial thinking in contemporary PRC diaspora engagement.

4. Context and background

This thesis has settled on Australia as its case study, with the specific aim to investigate how race informs China's diaspora engagement with its overseas populations. This will be carried out by analysing racial narratives in Chinese diaspora media between 2017 and 2021. This chapter therefore intends to provide the necessary background for the analysis, by explaining this paper's focus on Australia and briefly outlining the most important social and political context for understanding this paper's later primary analysis.

4.1 Australia as case study

Australia hosts about 1.2 million people of Chinese ancestry, which makes up around 5 per cent of the total national headcount (Mao 2020). In addition to the significant diaspora population, which has bred a rich diaspora media landscape allowing for easy access to a range of Chinese-language source materials, Australia and China are also closely connected economically and intertwined politically in a bilateral relationship that has descended into acrimony and conflict over the last few years (Walker 2020). Much of this tension stems from what in Australia is regarded as widespread efforts by the PRC to interfere in domestic politics, which is believed to take place through influence networks connected through ethnic Chinese Australian residents with loyalty to Beijing (Hamilton 2018). A handful of reports since 2017 have explored some of the specifics of these mechanisms (Joske 2020; Joske et al. 2020; Kurlantzick 2017; Searight 2020; Hamilton 2018)., and the diaspora appears to be caught in the middle of this bilateral tug of war.

4.2 Chinese diaspora in Australia

The Chinese migrant population of Australia has undergone major transformations in the last decades (Ngan and Chan 2012, p.137-138). The early flows of Chinese gold rush immigrants was cut short with the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901, which was specifically designed to keep out the Chinese. Discriminatory immigration restrictions persisted for decades, but the 'White Australia' policy was eventually replaced by the new official direction of multiculturalism in 1973 (Ang 2014, pp.1187-1188). Since then, new immigrants of Chinese descent have arrived, from a range of origin countries, including many ethnic refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s, and new waves of migration from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia from the 1980s onwards. After the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989, the Australian government granted thousands of PRC students residence, amid fears of persecution (Ang 2014, pp.1187-1188; Feng 2011, pp.124-125), and in the last decades PRC-born migrants now make up one of the the fastest growing new migrant groups in Australia (Ang 2014, pp.1187-1188), slowly crowding out Cantonese in favour of Mandarin as the main language spoken among overseas Chinese (Ang 2014, pp.1187-1188).

This makes the Chinese diaspora a highly diverse group, with a diversity of perspectives on identity, belonging and allegiances (Ang, pp.1187-1188; Feng 2011, pp.121-135). But more specifically, the increase in PRC-born migrants after 1989 has an impact on political perspectives and nationalism appears to be much stronger among Post-Tiananmen generation who grew up under the patriotic education campaigns in the 1990s, with nationalism introduced as the new major ideology in order to maintain CCP legitimacy. Historical grievances and anti-Western discourse was moved to the centre of the political education (Feng 2011, p.128). Feng Chongyi argues that such ideological indoctrination has

significantly shaped both the worldview and the political behaviour of this generation, with a clear shift from the pro-democracy stance of pre-1989 migrants to a fanatical “angry youth” patriotism which vocally denounce democratic Western governments while embracing the Communist Party regime (Feng 2011, pp.121-123).

This was exemplified during the Beijing Olympic Torch Relay in Canberra in 2008, where thousands of Chinese citizens came out to “protect the Olympic Torch” from “poisonous Tibetans”, marking a significantly more autocratic standpoint than the previous Chinese generation. A few weeks earlier, Chinese nationals marched in Melbourne and Sydney in protest against “the Western media’s dishonest reports” about recent riots in Tibet (Feng 2011, pp.126-127). Thanks to this socialised patriotism, Feng argues, Beijing is able to manipulate the political beliefs and behaviours of ethnic Chinese in Australia through a form of state-sponsored Chinese transnationalism (Feng 2011, p.121).

4.3 Chinese interference

The bilateral political relationship between China and Australia has deteriorated in recent years, with Australia has criticising China’s island-building in the South China Sea and called for an independent inquiry into the origins of the corona virus, while Chinese leaders have responded with economic coercion, targeting Australian exports and threatening more sanctions (Choudhury 2020). The Chinese diaspora is caught in the middle.

In a deliberately leaked document in 2020, Beijing warned that Australia was “poisoning bilateral relations” and listed 14 grievances, which included government funding for “anti-China” research; raids on Chinese journalists; Australia’s position on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang; and for blocking ten Chinese foreign investment deals (Kearsley, Bagshaw and Galloway 2020).

Australia introduced an anti-interference law in 2017, largely in response to China’s growing economic and political control (*BBC 2017*). According to intelligence reports, China’s efforts to influence discourse and political outcomes go far beyond above-board channels of public diplomacy, and instead operate in ways ways that are often opaque, deceptive and manipulative. (Almén 2020; Joske 2020; Joske et al. 2020; Searight 2020; Hamilton 2018).

In Australia, these methods have included payments to politicians in return for an explicit change of stance on politically important issues or financial support for research institutes that toe the PRC line. It often directly involves the diaspora, through attempts to mobilise Chinese-Australian voters to punish political parties who do not support Beijing’s policies, by “astroturfing” local grassroots organisations to give the impression of having mass Chinese-Australian support, and also cooption of Chinese-language media, such as Au123.com and Southeast Net Australia, and local organisations as public diplomacy tools and to promote politically advantageous narratives (Cook 2020; Searight 2020, pp.3-4; Sun 2016; Sun 2019).

Beijing employs a variety of other efforts to discredit, drown out, silence and attack critics (Searight 2020, pp.3-4). These efforts are often conducted indirectly through proxies, in order to create a layer of plausible deniability, thereby shielding Beijing (Searight 2020, pp.3-4). The United Front Work Department (UFD), an agency directly under the CCP and described as a “Magic Weapon” by the Chinese leadership, is believed to be pulling the strings of front organisations, such as The Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC), which are aimed at rewarding, intimidating, surveilling and co-opting the overseas Chinese community (Joske 2020; Searight 2020, pp.3-4; Joske

2019; Brady 2017). Huang Xiangmo, the council's leader, as suspected of being an agent for PRC interests, inspiring Australia's anti-interference laws in 2017 (Joske 2020, pp.20-24; Searight 2020, pp.5-9). The legislation was specifically designed to eradicate covert and coercive activities (*BBC 2017*).

4.4 Case study focus

As this thesis aims to explore the role of race in this political interaction between Beijing and the Chinese diaspora, the suspected proxy institutions and channels for PRC influence mentioned above will form a core part of the analysis. That includes the ACP-PRC, and PRC-affiliated media platforms, such as Au123.com and SENAU. In addition, this paper will use the visa cancellation of Huang Xiangmo as a sub-case study, along with three other events that have taken place since 2017, which are (1) The 2017 Bennelong by-election, (2) the detention of two Chinese Australians, and (3) the University of Queensland protests. This analysis will be conducted in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

5. Methodology

This chapter provides a brief outline of the methodology used in this thesis. I start by introducing this paper's overarching research design, which is anchored in a qualitative framework consisting of documentary research and case study analysis. The scope of the documentary evidence as well as the focus of the case study is outlined below. Furthermore, in order to draw connective lines between the textual content and their political implications, I have employed the methodological framework of process-tracing, which provides the specific tools needed to trace causal mechanisms in qualitative single-case studies. The chapter will then proceed to operationalise and define key concepts, introduce the specific sources used in the research, and give an explanation of the primary data selection and interpretation processes. I conclude the chapter with an a brief mention of some potential pitfalls.

5.1. Research design and method

This thesis employs a qualitative research design, drawing on documentary research and a single-case framework focusing on Australia. Process-tracing provides the tools to help explore potential causal connections between racial discourses and political outcomes.

5.1.1 Documentary research

This paper is centred on documentary analysis. All materials were sourced online and analysed between late January and May 2021. Secondary sources included news reports, grey literature and academic research. The initial news reports lead to the discovery of relevant grey literature, which provided context and background and helped establish certain sequence of events in China-Australia relations and China's diaspora engagement in Australia. They also allowed me to more fruitfully target the scope for my primary research, by pointing to relevant institutions, departments, political bodies and media platforms that would provide materials useful to answering this paper's research questions.

The selected primary materials consisted of (1) Chinese government policy documents and speeches by Chinese state officials; (2) news articles by Chinese state-affiliated media; (3) texts published by official Chinese diaspora agencies and official diaspora communication channels; (4) statements, speeches and media releases published by Chinese diplomatic and foreign policy bodies; (5) articles by PRC-affiliated diaspora media outlets in Australia; and (6) independent diaspora media coverage in Australia. Government, state-media, and official diaspora agency documents covered the period 2012 to 2021, guided by the start of Xi Jinping's tenure as a political marker, while all case-specific material fit into the 2017 to 2021 time period.

5.1.2 Case study: Australia

This thesis will focus on Australia between 2017 and 2021 as its case study.

Case selection criteria

Case demarcation and selection mark the crucial first steps in a case study research design (Lamont 2015, p.152), where the primary criterion for case selection should be "relevance to

the research objective of the study” (George and Bennett 2005, p.85). Without a fixed recipe, this must be based on informed decisions relating to the overall research objective (Keman and Wolderndorp 2016, p.424).

Australia was therefore chosen due to several criteria: (1) The country has a large Chinese diaspora, (2) the two countries have experienced significant bilateral political conflict in recent years, and (3) several high-profile incidents involving the Chinese diaspora have stirred up fears over PRC interference in Australia’s domestic affairs, and whether such influence is forcing ethnic Chinese in Australia to choose loyalty either to host country or ancestral homeland. As a result, Australia provides a suitable test case for analysing the impact of racially defined notions of Chineseness on China’s diaspora engagement, as well as their broader political implications.

Timeframe

The case study focuses on the period between 2017 and 2021, owing to a key political events in 2017. In China, Xi Jinping solidified Xi Jinping Thought” and more clearly spelled out the party line on several major issues including foreign policy in a speech at the 19th Congress in October 2017 (Doshi 2017). At the same time, China-Australia relations began to run into trouble. Australia published a Foreign Policy White Paper criticising China in the South China Sea, angering Beijing (Bisley 2017; Hutchens 2017), and several reports warning about China’s increased influence activities in Australia were published (Brady 2017) (Kurlantzick 2017). All primary documents relating to the case study are sourced from within this time period.

5.1.3 Sub-cases

Within the broader case study, I have selected four sub-case events that allow for specific exploration of whether racialised definitions of Chineseness dictate whether political loyalties are owed to host country or to ancestral homeland.

The following sub-cases were chosen, guided by the criteria that they covered conflict involving overseas Chinese in Australia and that they relate to political tensions between China and Australia. They include:

- 1. The Bennelong by-election in 2017**
- 2. The detention of two Chinese-Australians in China**
- 3. Violent demonstrations at the University of Queensland**
- 4. The expulsion from Australia of businessman and ACPPRC chairman, Huang Xiangmo**

All four cases allow us to explore the role of diaspora identities and loyalties in the context of Australia-China politics.

5.1.4 Process-tracing

In order to connect the dots between variables and trace the impact of racial discourse on political outcomes, additional analytical tools are needed. Process-tracing provides the tools for studying such connections within a framework of qualitative analysis. It is usually

employed to study causal mechanisms within a single-case research design based on qualitative data (Collier 2011, p.823; Beach and Pedersen 2013). By using rich qualitative data, process-tracing can allow a researcher to trace the theoretical causal mechanisms that link independent variables (X) with outcomes (Y) (Beach and Pedersen 2013, pp.1-5).

This thesis, therefore, aims to draw on qualitative data provided through documentary research in a single-case study, to trace possible causal links between the Chinese government's racial definitions of Chineseness and the political outcome of Chinese political influence in Australia. It will employ a method of "theory-testing process-tracing, which deduces a theory from the existing literature and then proceeds to test the evidence (Beach and Pedersen 2013, p. 3-15).

2.1.3 Evidence and causality

Process tracing relies on both descriptive and causal inferences, which in turn are drawn from diagnostic pieces of evidence that form part of a temporal sequence of events (Collier 2011, p. 824). Collier (2011, p.824) argues: "As a tool of causal inference, process tracing focuses on the unfolding of events or situations *over time*. Yet grasping this unfolding is impossible if one cannot adequately describe an event or situation *at one point in time*. Hence, the *descriptive* component of process tracing begins not with observing change or sequence, but rather with taking good snapshots at a series of specific moments. To characterize a process, we must be able to characterize key steps in the process, which in turn permits good analysis of change and sequence" (Collier 2011, p.824).

To test the causal relationship between racial discourse and political influence, therefore, this thesis will first produce detailed descriptive snapshots in four distinct stages, and ultimately attempt to trace the potential connections between them.

The analysis proceeds in the following five steps:

1. Testing for the existence of racial discourse in relation to definitions of Chineseness in official PRC government narratives and its use in communication targeting overseas Chinese
2. Testing for the communication of such racial narratives and definitions to the Chinese diaspora in Australia by local PRC-affiliated agents and institutions.
3. Testing for the similar racial discourses and definitions of Chineseness in independent diaspora media in Australia.
4. Testing for the the role of such racial definitions and narratives on diaspora loyalties in issues of political conflict between China and Australia.

Combined, this individual pieces of evidence provide a method to trace the causal link between independent variable of a racial discourse with the dependent variable of Chinese political influence in Australia.

5.2 Key concepts

5.2.1 "Race" and "Chineseness"

The concept of "race" is minefield, fraught with analytical tripwires. Races are imagined, argues Frank Dikötter. Biological differences do not in themselves translate into racial differences, but racial concepts are instead subjectively constructed and given meaning by

social groups. This is typically perceived as phenotypic traits, such as skin or eye colour, but it doesn't need to be. As Dikötter shows in historical examples, racial thinking can exist in many forms (Dikötter 2015). As an ethnic identity, "Chineseness" is open to "transmutation and manipulation", and is a perpetually fluid sense of identity that cannot be defined in a singular and fixed racial or ethnic context (To 2014).

This thesis therefore takes "race" as a broader category, not limited to biological or ethnicity markers alone, but also covering areas where some may see culture, heritage or other seemingly more innocent concepts of identity. Instead this paper employs "racial" as an umbrella term to capture a broader array of beliefs regarding identity and belonging as defined by primordial and birth-defined characteristics.

However, in research on the diaspora, racial definitions are further complicated, as diaspora is — *by definition* — understood in terms of ethnic and cultural heritage. This paper, however, interprets "racial" to mean definitions of Chineseness that go beyond simple cultural descriptions and associations to instead speak to more profound and primary identity characteristics, group belonging and loyalties. Therefore, to disentangle racial definitions of Chineseness from non-racial ones, this thesis employs a set of simple criteria for its evaluation of what constitutes as racial.

To qualify as a "racial", the following characteristics of identity must be expressed:

- It is regarded as birth-defined and primordial, rather than acquired.
- It relates conceptually to biological or physical conditions (such as blood, skin colour, genetics etc).
- It defines group belonging and loyalty.
- It trumps any acquired identity, such as citizenship, and cannot be abandoned.

For simplicity and readability, this paper will leave out the quotation marks when referring to "race" and "Chineseness".

5.2.2 "Diaspora" and "Overseas Chinese"

In reality, the "Chinese diaspora" is a heterogeneous group, spanning people from different origins, language backgrounds and political views (Ang 2014; Feng 2011, pp.121-123). Importantly, it also includes both PRC-citizens living in Australia as well as Australian citizens of Chinese descent, of which the distinction is important for questions regarding racial identities and loyalties. Despite this obvious diversity, this paper uses the terms "Chinese diaspora" and "overseas Chinese" to cover all people of Chinese descent living in Australia, and uses a small selection of diaspora media platforms as proxies to gauge diaspora opinion.

While these websites cannot be expected to represent diaspora opinion as a whole, they nevertheless provide a useful tool for testing whether PRC narratives of race and identity are able to gain a foothold within certain diaspora media coverage, whether this is communicated to certain segments of overseas Chinese in Australia, and whether some overseas Chinese — translate this into rhetoric or action favourable to the PRC. Still, while the user comments on certain websites cannot be verified to be originating within Australia, the media platforms themselves are founded by Australian residents and/or citizens and continue to operate from within Australia. The platforms therefore provide a useful source for racial narratives of Chineseness in Australia.

5.2.3 “Diaspora engagement” and “political influence”

This thesis uses “diaspora engagement” as a catch-all term that include China-diaspora relations as well as communication by the PRC government and PRC-affiliated organisations through Chinese-language media platforms. As such it encompasses the terms “diaspora politics”, “diaspora communication” and “diaspora mobilisation”.

China’s “diaspora engagement” is represented by “China-diaspora communication” and will be measured by state-diaspora communication through both official diaspora bodies and media platforms unofficial PRC-affiliated channels, as well as independent diaspora media platforms. This thesis uses the term “political influence” to signify the ability to influence and stir up either rhetoric or action favourable to PRC interests from within Australia.

The impact of racial discourse on political influence in Australia is therefore measured through two proxies: (1) The receptiveness in diaspora media to racial discourses relating to definitions of Chineseness, and (2) the expression of political loyalties to China over Australia in diaspora media in situations involving bilateral political conflict.

5.3 Data collection

The following chapter will outline the types of primary and secondary sources used in this paper, explain the reasoning behind the choices of data sources, and introduce the sampling and selection methods used for retrieving the primary documents.

5.3.1 Types of data

The thesis used a combination of secondary sources, consisting of both media reports and grey literature, including security reports and foreign policy white papers, surveys, think tank reports and institutional research papers. All secondary sources were in English. Primary documents in both English and Chinese were sourced from the State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese Embassy in Australia and the Australian Values Alliance. Apart from this, all other primary documents were exclusively in Chinese.

5.3.2 Primary sources

Primary documents were sourced from the following platforms.

1. PRC government

- The State Council
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs

2. PRC state and party media

- Huanqiu (环球网)
- Xinhuanet (新华网)
- People’s Daily (人民网)

3. Official PRC diaspora agencies and communication platforms

- The All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC) (中华全国归国华侨联合会 / 中国侨联)
- Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (OCAO) (国务院侨务办公室)
- United Front Work Department (UFWD) (中央统战部)
- Overseas Chinese Affairs Study (侨务工作研究)
- China Overseas Network (中国侨网)
- China News Service (中新网)

4. PRC foreign policy and diplomatic agencies in Australia

- Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Australia

5. Unofficial PRC-affiliated media and platforms in Australia

- Au123.com (澳洲网)
- Southeast Net Australia (东南网澳大利亚站)
- Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (澳洲中国和平统一促进会)

6. Independent Chinese-language diaspora media and platforms in Australia

- Sydney Today (今日悉尼)
- Australian New Express Daily (新快报)
- Australian Value Alliance (澳洲价值守护联盟)

5.3.3 Explanation of overseas Chinese affairs sources

OCAO (国务院侨务办公室), ACFROC (中国侨联) and Overseas Chinese Affairs Study (侨务工作研究)

The two most important administrative offices for liaising with Chinese overseas are the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese Association (ACFROC), whose tasks are to shape law and policy, encourage interactions with China and drum up diaspora patriotism (Suryadinata 2017b, pp.26-29).

OCAO also publishes research in the Overseas Chinese Affairs Study (侨务工作研究) journal (Liu and Van Dongen 2016, pp.810-811). In addition to both OCAO and ACFROC websites, this journal was used as a source for primary materials. All provide insight into official state-diaspora communication.

United Front Work Department (UFWD, 统一战线)

The OCAO was previously administered by the State Council, but its responsibilities and functions were absorbed in 2018 by the United Front Work Department (UFWD) (Joske 2019). The department, which reports directly to the CCP, is tasked with gathering intelligence and conducting influence work, relating to all religious, ethnic and overseas Chinese affairs work (Joske 2020, pp.10-11). In recent years, the UFWD has attracted scrutiny for engaging in covert influence campaigns and economic espionage abroad. In Australia, the department have been accused of interfering in domestic politics (Joske 2020, p.4). The UFWD website was used as a source.

China Overseas Network (中国侨网) and China News Service (中新网)

In addition to the agency platforms outlined above, the Chinese government controls two

outward-facing news platforms that specifically target overseas Chinese. Those are the China Overseas Network (中国侨网), which is managed by the OCAO and functions as a portal for overseas Chinese affairs in China (Liu and Van Dongen 2016, p.810), and the China News Service (中新网). The news agency also provides China's state-media partnerships with diaspora media around the world (Cook 2020, pp.6-8). Both platforms provide insight into official PRC narratives aimed directly at overseas Chinese.

Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China

(澳洲中国和平统一促进会)

The Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC) is subsidiary of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification which is controlled by the UFWD. Its purpose is to promote the annexation of Taiwan and is believed to function as a proxy for PRC interests. Huang Xiangmo — a subject of this paper's sub-case study — was the Council's president until 2019 (Joske 2020, pp. 20-25). While not a media platform, the ACPPRC website regularly publishes articles and statements relating to the PRC interests and the Chinese diaspora in Australia.

Au123.com (澳洲网)

Au123.com, run by the Australia Pacific Media Group, provides content both through its website and Wechat account (Joske et al. 2020, pp.11-12). According to a strategy report published last year, the platform has close connections to the CCP, through PRC funding or ownership and connections to the UFWD, and is therefore a PRC influence risk (Joske et al. 2020, pp.11-12).(Joske et al. 2020, pp.38-40). According to a Four Corners report from 2017, Pacific Media actively handed out placards to protesters in favour of China's stance on the South China Sea court of arbitration ruling during protests (Joske et al. 2020, pp.38-40). The platform therefore provides a source of insight into the extent to which PRC narratives are replicated to an Australian audience. Thus, the thesis treats it as a proxy for PRC influence in Australia.

Southeast Net Australia (东南网澳大利亚站)

Southeast Net Australia (SENAU) was founded in 2016 as the Australian online branch of a state-owned media outlet from China's Fujian Province, which is under the authority of the Fujian Provincial CCP Committee Propaganda Department and managed by the Fujian Daily Newspaper Group (Joske et al. 2020, pp.61-63). Much of its content, including news about Australia, is repeated from Chinese state-owned media sources, though the platform also produces Australian content often featuring Australian politicians and prominent ethnic Chinese Australians, some of which are closely connected to the United Front system. (Joske et al. 2020, pp.61-63). The platform's manager and majority stakeholder has reportedly been a member of three united front organisations in China (Joske et al. 2020, pp.61-63). Similarly to Au123, SENAU provides insight into the transmission of PRC narratives to Australians and is treated as a proxy for influence in this paper.

Sydney Today (今日悉尼)

SydneyToday.com is a locally owned Chinese language platform, launched in 2011 by Chinese international students in Australia (Sun 2016, pp.18-19; Sun 2019, pp.25-26). While one of the founders and at least one former shareholder has been a member of UFWD organisations (Joske et al. 2020, pp.51-53), there does not appear to be any direct funding or ownership links to the PRC (Joske et al. 2020, pp.11-12). Sydney Today is therefore not a PRC mouthpiece, but does demonstrate nationalistic sentiments in favour of China, causing it to avoid issues that are politically sensitive, while giving a voice to the Chinese community

on issues where China and Australia may be in conflict (Sun 2016, pp.18-19). The website's rich comment section opens an additional window into diaspora opinion (Sun 2016, pp. 18-19). The website offers insight into whether PRC racial discourses of Chineseness are replicated by independent diaspora media in Australia, and how this is expressed in issues involving political conflict between host and homeland. Through both general news coverage and user comments, the platform functions as a useful proxy for diaspora perspectives.

Australian New Express Daily (新快报)

The Australian New Express Daily is one of the four paid national Chinese-language dailies in Australia. The paper is jointly owned by the Chinese Newspaper Group and the Kingold Group, both based in China, with the latter owned by Chau Chak Wing (周泽荣) a Chinese-born Australian citizen (Sun 2016, pp.23-28). Chau is a billionaire property developer and investor. He has donated to both the Labor and the Liberal party, as well as to other institutions, and is believed to be well-connected in Mainland China. His suspected ties to a provincial-level UFDW organisation has attracted scrutiny, causing him to be viewed as a potential agent for Beijing (Sun 2016, pp.27-28; Searight 2020, pp.5-7). Chau has claimed that he has never heard of the United Front, despite mentioning it in a speech and being photographed with several of the Front's officials (Joske 2020, p.18). Unsurprisingly, the Australian New Express Daily has been described as patriotic towards China (Sun 2016, pp. 27-28). Despite this, the website has no direct known links to the PRC authorities, and therefore remains technically independent and Australian-run. This thesis therefore treats it as a proxy for diaspora perspectives.

Australian Values Alliance (澳洲价值守护联盟)

The Australian Values Alliance (AVA) was founded in 2016 by a group of Australians with Chinese heritage, whose purpose was to send a warning of Chinese interference in Australia, which they believed were threatening Australian values. While not a media platform, the AVA website nevertheless publishes statements on key issues involving Chinese influence in Australia, and therefore provides a useful source for understanding Chinese diaspora voices from the other end of the spectrum. AVA therefore contributes to gauging the views of Australian citizens of Chinese descent and proxies diaspora perspectives critical of Beijing.

5.3.4 Sampling methods

The primary documents were sourced through a method of purposive sampling or theoretical sampling (Bowen 2009, p.36-37; Beach and Pedersen 2016; Lamont 2015).

Keyword list

The selection process was guided by both a list of keywords as well as the timeframe already set for the case study analysis.

Speeches by Xi Jinping, premier Li Keqiang and foreign minister Wang Yi were chosen as the blueprint for the initial keyword list design, which included phrases such as “Chinese sons and daughters” (中华儿女), “motherland” (祖国) and “blood” (血液). This informed further searches within government sources and state-media, which caused the list to snowball, attracting new as well as variants of existing words and phrases, such as “血统” (“blood”), “血脉” (“bloodline”), “血缘” (“blood relationship/consanguinity”) and “纯血” (“pure blood”)

as additions to the initial “血液”.

Keyword searches

Searches were conducted by combining keyword queries with Boolean operators with Google’s “site” search mechanism. Google’s time range filter allowed me to further target and limit search results. Entering “site:www.gov.cn” followed by “血液” into the Google search bar would, for example, bring up all Chinese texts containing the word “blood” available on the State Council website.

Case study searches

Keyword searches were combined with a time range filter starting on January 1 2017. For the sub-case data collection, general keywords were combined with case specific identifiers such as “本内隆补选” (“Bennelong by-election”); “杨恒均” (“Yang Hengjun”) and “成蕾” (“Cheng Lei”); “昆士兰大学抗议” (“University of Queensland protests”), and “黄向墨” (“Huang Xiangmo”). These keywords were applied to Google “site”-searches of the domains of diaspora and Chinese-language media in Australia.

5.4. Data analysis

The data analysis and data collection stages followed an overlapping and intertwined process, with early keywords inspiring codes which in turn spawned new keywords. The analysis itself relied on a combination of discourse analysis, framing analysis and narrative analysis (Bergin 2018; Lamont 2015; Keman and Wolderndorp 2016), between which there was significant overlap. It often makes sense to use a combination of predetermined and spontaneous codes (Bergin 2018, pp.155-156) and Bergin distinguishes between three stages, progressing from open coding, through axial coding to focused coding (Bergin 2018, pp.156-161).

This thesis started with a spontaneous coding approach, with relevant codes detected in government documents and official speeches. Initial codes such as “血” (“blood”) and “中华大家庭” (“the big family of the Chinese nation”) also became keywords for further searches, which in turn resulted in additional codes. At later stages, individual keywords were collected and united under broader themes. Terms such as “血脉” (“bloodline”) and “血肉” (“flesh and blood”), for example, were both placed together within the broader code of “blood”. Ultimately, during the final stages of the data analysis, broad themes were evaluated and interpreted against the backdrop of the theoretical framework employed in the thesis — relying heavily on the work of Frank Dikötter — to identify any potential thematic matches or parallels.

5.5 Potential pitfalls

This paper relies exclusively on documentary research based around a few sources and using independent diaspora media as a proxy for the perspectives of overseas Chinese in Australia. In one instance, the analysis also includes user comments on the website. This is naturally not an accurate gauge of the diversity of perspectives among Chinese-identified Australian residents and may in fact, due to the often extremist nature of online comments, not even

accurately represent the website and its readers. In addition, the comments cannot be verified to have originated within Australia and some may be written by users based in the PRC.

Nevertheless, many of the comments appear to discuss topics relevant to Australia, and they nevertheless provide some insight into expressions of racial and political thinking that exists among the website's audiences. Therefore, diaspora media, including the comments section, does arguably provide utility as an analytical tool for testing whether *some* opinions are receptive to and influenced by PRC narratives. This, arguably, is sufficient in the context of addressing this paper's research objectives. Still, this paper proceeds with caution and awareness of this fact.

6. Race in PRC narratives

The following three chapters will present the findings from the primary research. The current chapter will first analyse racial discourses and their impact for definitions of Chineseness in official state discourses and in China's diaspora communication. The subsequent chapter will continue by exploring the role of racial discourses and definitions in diaspora media communication in Australia. And finally, the third chapter will explore how racial definitions of Chineseness impact diaspora political loyalties, thereby potentially functioning as a channel of political influence for Beijing in Australia.

This chapter is further divided into two parts: The first presents the specifics of official Chinese racial discourses as they relate to definitions of Chineseness, while part two briefly explores the role of such racial discourses in impacting transnational Chinese identities and political loyalties that blur the distinction between citizenship and ethnicity.

6.1 Race in official PRC definitions of Chineseness

Chinese leaders are explicit about regarding overseas Chinese as a political force. Li Haifeng, while director of the OCAO in 2012, expressed a wish that every overseas Chinese would become messengers of China's public diplomacy (OCAO 2012). This sentiment has been repeatedly echoed by foreign minister Wang Yi (FMPRC 2013b), who has emphasised the goal of bringing overseas Chinese "closer to the motherland" (FMPRC 2020).

Overseas Chinese have been described as a resource for enhancing China's soft power (CNS 2014b; XIN 2015) and as assets in China's global Belt and Road construction project (OCAO 2015). They are called on to "tell China's story well" to the world (PD 2019), and are expected to contribute to China's long-held re-unification campaign (UFWD 2019).

Xi Jinping has called on overseas Chinese to unite and make greater contributions in the quest to "realise the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation" (PD 2014a; GOV 2020). He also asks of Chinese abroad that they embrace patriotism, love the motherland and never forget that they are Chinese (OCAS 2020). In 2014, at the Seventh Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations in Beijing, Xi Jinping made a speech in which he described overseas Chinese as members of the big Chinese family, who never forget their motherland, their ancestral home or the blood of the Chinese nation, and proclaimed that "realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the common dream of the Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad". "No matter where our compatriots live (...) Chinese culture is the common spiritual gene of the Chinese people (我们的同胞无论生活在哪里, (...) 中华文化是中华儿女共同的精神基因)" (XIN 2014).

By tying all ethnic Chinese overseas to China's political goals, Xi Jinping appeared to propose a transnational and ethno-national understanding of Chineseness. In fact, official documents show a pattern of racial definitions of what it means to be Chinese. They are centred on the following themes.

6.1.1 Family

“Motherland” (祖国)

During a visit to Guangdong in 2020, Xi Jinping highlighted how overseas Chinese should contribute to China’s foreign engagement by specifically emphasising the filial relationship between the PRC and overseas Chinese. In referring to them as “海外华侨华人” (Haiwai huaqiao huaren), Xi stated that “one of the most important characteristics of overseas Chinese is patriotism, love for their homeland, and love for their family”, adding that China’s development is “inseparable from the large number of overseas Chinese who care about Sangzi and the motherland (...跟我們有這麼一大批心系桑梓、心系祖國的華僑是分不開的)” (ACFROC 2020a).

The use of “motherland” is persistent in China’s official government communication, used to project Chinese identity as eternally bound to China, regardless of residency or citizenship (GOV 2021; CNS 2021b; ACFROC 2019b).

“Sons and daughters of China” (中华儿女 / 华夏儿女)

Within the metaphor of the Chinese nation as a big family where China is the motherland, overseas Chinese are often included as her children. At a symposium at Peking University in 2018, Xi Jinping underlined the importance of expressing patriotism and loyalty to the motherland and said: “We are Chinese sons and daughters. We must understand the history of the Chinese nation, inherit the Chinese cultural genes...” (ACFROC 2018b).

Phrases like “sons and daughters of China at home and abroad” or “sons and daughters of the Chinese nation” are repeated tropes in official communication (OCAO 2020a) (ACFROC 2020b) (OCAS 2019). It is conveyed as a badge of pride (CON 2015) but also carries the responsibility of spreading Chinese culture abroad and contributing to achieving China’s national rejuvenation (OCAS 2017b).

An article in China Overseas Affairs Study on the cohesion of blood and family affection used the term in the following way: “Chinese culture is the spiritual home of every Chinese son and daughter. No matter where we go, the land of China is our eternal cultural origin. Our ancestors (...) weaved a rope intertwined with culture and blood. No matter how far the boats with our Chinese sons and daughters drifts, this rope connects our emotions and our soul” (OCAS 2018a).

Clan and race (宗, 族)

The family metaphors are many. At times, family relationships are described in terms of cultural roots or ancestral heritage, other times in terms of blood-connected relationships (OCAS 2016). The family imagery extends to broader lineage concepts and myths of descent and sometimes veers into the more explicitly racial. Official coverage of China’s “Root-seeking journeys”, where foreigners of Chinese descent visit China, unsurprisingly put extra emphasis on this purported ethnicity-based connection. The two following quotes from “Root-seeking” tours in Beijing in 2017 and Guangxi in 2019 are good examples. The Beijing camp was described as “a platform for overseas Chinese to return to their motherland, not forgetting Sangzi, and not forgetting that they are the grandchildren of Yan and Huang” (...). And “although they live all over the world, they are of the same root and ‘same race’ (‘同族’),

connected by blood” (CON 2017b). The second text contains the following quote: "As the descendants of the Yan and Huang (...) we must always remember that our roots are in the motherland. We are a family of the same ‘clan and race’ (‘同宗同族’), connected by blood” (ACFROC 2019a).

6.1.2 Blood

Blood is repeatedly evoked as evidence of the ethnic connections between overseas Chinese and PRC citizens. In a 2014 speech on the “Chinese Dream and Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation”, Xi Jinping repeatedly used the concept of blood as evidence of congenital connection between China and Taiwan, saying: “...the compatriots on both sides of the strait are family members, and no one can cut off our bloodline. The compatriots in Taiwan respect their ancestors, love their homeland... (...) We are originally a family connected by blood” (PD 2014b). This was echoed by premier Li Keqiang at a conference for overseas Chinese businessmen three years later, where he said that compatriots are “bound by flesh and blood” and that “blood is thicker than water”. He also talked about overseas Chinese more broadly: “...the Chinese nation is a big family, and the love and nostalgia for the motherland has been integrated into the blood of every descendant of Yan and Huang” (GOV 2017).

“Blood is thicker than water” (血浓于水)

The notion that blood connections trump any other identities or affiliations is a common theme in official discourse, and the phrase “blood is thicker than water” and is often used to rally support from overseas Chinese on various issues (OCAO 2020a; OCAO 2020b). In coverage of China’s global mobilisation during the corona pandemic, the ACFROC wrote: “For Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad (...) the brotherhood of blood is thicker than water. (...) For the overseas Chinese, no matter how far they go, the ‘national’ (‘民族’) genes in their blood will not change, and the affection for Sangzi and the caring for the home country of our compatriots will not fade (...对于身在海外的华侨华人而言, 无论走得多远, 血液中的民族基因不会改变, 情系桑梓、心系同胞的家国情怀不会淡化)” (ACFROC 2020c).

“Connected by blood” (血脉相连)

Government documents often emphasise this blood connections between people in the PRC and overseas Chinese as a reason to expect loyalty and patriotism. Even the UFWD has publicly expressed the advantages of emphasising blood as one of the key levers for fostering patriotism among overseas Chinese (UFWD 2021). A 2017 proposal aimed to inspire overseas Chinese youth to become messengers of Chinese cultural heritage and bridges between China and foreign countries, stated: “...the Chinese nation is connected by blood, and the Chinese culture has the same root. Overseas Chinese youths are tied to the destiny of their ancestral (home) country and are closely related to national rejuvenation” (CONa 2017). A Huanqiu article from 2019 highlighted the blood relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China, with a quote stating that before the handover of Hong Kong to China, “Hong Kong seemed to be living in a foster family. After the reunification, it could once again live a good life with family members under the same sky” (HQ 2019c).

6.1.3 Myth of descent

“Yellow Emperor”, “Descendants of Yan and Huang” (黄帝, 炎黄子孙)

The 4th Overseas Descendants of Yan and Huang Children and Grandchildren Worship Ceremony was held in San Francisco in 2019, in reference to what is claimed to be the Flame Emperor (炎帝) and Yellow Emperor (黄帝), supposedly the ancestors of all Chinese people. China Overseas Network covered it by underscoring how the ancestor worship event was designed “so that so that the children of China will inherit the spirit of the Yellow Emperor, not forget the roots of China, and be “the descendants of the dragon” (CNS 2019a).

In the overseas Chinese business conference speech in 2017, Li Keqiang said that the love and nostalgia for the motherland was integrated into the “blood of every descendant of Yan and Huang” (GOV 2017). This notion of shared descent is often repeated in government documents, functioning in similar ways to family and blood-based concepts in defining overseas Chinese identities and linking them to the PRC. An OCAO article from 2018 about a “Root-seeking journey” in Chongqing states this function quite clearly: “Root-seeking activities not only enable overseas Chinese youths to understand the long history and splendid culture of ancient China, as well as the rapid development, but also enhance their sense of national identity as descendants of Yan and Huang and enhance their understanding of China” (OCAO 2018).

The OCAO wrote in 2019 about overseas Chinese artists in Australia and referred to the “unchanging traditions in the blood of the descendants of Yan and Huang”. The article included a quote which underlined the government narrative of Chinese identity as something innate and immutable: “No matter which country we live in, the spirit of Chinese culture will always flow in the blood of overseas Chinese. The country has nurtured us to pass on and promote Chinese culture overseas, and to base ourselves on Chinese culture to serve the overseas Chinese community, and enrich the development of local multiculturalism.”

“Descendants of the dragon” (龙的传人)

Connected to the narrative of Yan and Huang as ancestors is the seemingly equally common discourse of Chinese as descendants of dragons. In 2017, Xi Jinping described the dragon as a cultural totem worshipped by the Chinese ancient times and told former US president Donald Trump that the “Chinese people often call themselves “the descendants of the dragon” (PD 2017). In a text published by OCAO about a 2019 “Root-seeking journey” in Yunnan, this is highlighted in the following way: “Although everyone lives in different countries and regions, they are all Chinese sons and daughters and descendants of dragons. The common blood and culture connect us to each other. (...) We also hope that more descendants of dragons will return to the embrace of the motherland” (OCAO 2016).

“Peking Man” (北京(猿)人)

Borrowing legitimacy from the realm of science, Peking Man is at times cited as evidence of a shared Chinese biology, and is sometimes evoked along with other racialised symbols of Chineseness. A speech transcript from the 2017 “Eleventh World Outstanding Youth of Chinese Descent Chinese Tour published in the “Overseas Chinese Affairs Study” magazine stated: “The Chinese nation (...) is always a big family. The earliest Homo erectus discovered in China is the 1.7 million year old Yuanmou Man from Yunnan, and the 500,000 years old Peking Man. The Chinese nation believes that it originated in the land of China. The humanistic ancestors of the Chinese nation, such as Emperors Yan and Huang, and other tribal leaders, began the development of the territory where the Chinese nation has lived for

generations” (OCAS 2017a). As a result of this shared ancestry and biological connection, the text highlights the following consequence for overseas Chinese identity: “No matter where you are, as long as you have the blood of the Chinese nation, you are all members of the big family of the Chinese nation. They all have some common names: the Chinese nation, descendants of Yan and Huang, sons and daughters of China and descendants of dragons. This kind of affection has not changed because of nationality and geographical differences. In the eyes of Chinese people, overseas Chinese are married daughters, foster children and grandchildren, and relatives in distant places” (OCAS 2017a).

6.1.4 Yellow skin

Chinese government documents consistently include “yellow skin” in descriptions of Chineseness and frequently connect this apparent phenotypic trait with other alleged in-born characteristics, with belonging and with deep-rooted identity.

Often, skin colour descriptions are accompanied by “dark eyes” and “black hair”, such as in the speech by the Chinese ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, when addressing a group of adoptive children and parents in London in 2013. Liu said: “Children, you learned English from novels, grew up in a British family and have parents who love you, but your dark eyes, black hair and yellow skin undoubtedly tell you that you are Chinese. (...) your motherland China has not forgotten you, your motherland always misses you, and your motherland always welcomes you home” (FMPRC 2013a). The same year, the vice president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands, reportedly said that “no matter which country we are in, whether we are naturalised in the country of residence or not, we are all yellow-skinned Chinese with a fervent Chinese heart” (OCAS 2013a). In 2019, China Overseas Network quotes Huang Yong, a Chinese-Australian real estate developer as saying that the strength of China is the pride of overseas Chinese. “No matter where we are born or where we are, no matter what the reason was for leaving our hometown, we are all yellow-skinned and dark-eyed overseas Chinese, descendants of the dragon.” said Huang Yong, an Australian real estate developer” (CNS 2019b).

With such discourses, the PRC government is not only describing Chinese identity in ethnic terms, but more broadly confining definitions of Chineseness to a narrow racial frame where purported inborn and primordial characteristics trump all other identities. In this sense, racialised definitions of Chineseness appear to tie everyone with “yellow skin” to the “motherland” of China in perpetuity, regardless of citizenship or place of residence. Root-seeking journeys and cultural education camps play a key role in spreading this message: “No matter where we live with yellow skin and black hair, our roots will always be in China!” (OCAS 2018b), “...the descendants of Yan and Huang are descendants of dragons. With yellow skin and black eyes, even if we are in a foreign country, we can’t change our Chinese heart” (OCAO 2019).

It is repeated in other contexts too, such as in the coverage of Confucius School education in Barcelona: “...yellow skin, black hair, black eyes, this is the imprint left in you by your ancestors. No matter where you go and no matter how many years have passed.” (ACFROC 2018a). A quote attributed to a British-Chinese lawyer, in a text about how China's development brings dignity and self-confidence to overseas Chinese, reads: "I understood at that time that no matter how fluent my English is, and no matter what nationality I am, I will always have yellow skin and dark eyes, and the blood of the descendants of Yan and Huang will always flow in my body” (CNS 2019c).

According to government narratives, Chinese are forever “yellow”, and those with “yellow skin, black hair and dark eyes” are eternally Chinese. This has implications for expectations of loyalty — specifically affecting overseas Chinese.

6.2 Race-based identity, belonging and loyalties

6.2.1 Filial piety

Xi Jinping has made explicit in several speeches the expectation of patriotism and love for the “motherland” by Chinese citizens as well as overseas Chinese. At a teacher-student symposium in Beijing in 2018, he urged the “sons and daughters of China” to be patriotic and loyal to the motherland by saying “those who benefit the country will love it, and those who harm the country will be evil”. The following year, at the 2019 Spring Festival celebration, Xi again described the Chinese nation as a big family, and painted loyalty to the country in filial terms, where every family member is expected to make contributions (PD 2020). An article in China News Service expressed the same message in 2013, pointing out that the most important “Chinese spirit” is “loyalty to the motherland” while stressing that “loyalty is the same as filial piety” (CNS 2013b).

With definitions of Chineseness centred on racially charged concepts such as family, lineage and blood connections, members of the “big Chinese family” must necessarily also include ethnic Chinese overseas. With expectations that all Chinese are bound by filial responsibilities to the “motherland”, this naturally ties overseas Chinese into a racially defined political relationship with the PRC.

6.2.2 “Banana” (香蕉人)

People of Chinese descent with foreign cultural identities, are often dubbed “bananas” — with “yellow skin” on the outside and “white hearts” on the inside (CNS 2012b). While this perhaps represents Chinese racial perspectives at their most explicit, the linguistic use of “banana” can range from the relatively benign, when simply referring to ethnic Chinese foreigners who lack a Chinese cultural connection (CNS 2013c; CNS 2015a), to the explicit and sometimes aggressively racist, when ethnicity fails to line up with political or social loyalties. While “black hair and yellow skin” are thought of as “indisputable facts” (CNS 2012a), being a “banana”, is always negative, and often portrayed as something that needs correcting via root-seeking journeys or other cultural education (CNS 2013d). “They don't want their children to be “yellow-skinned and white-hearted” banana people” (CNS 2013a).

In 2014, China News Service ran an article titled “Farewell, Luo Jiahui”, in an aggressively scornful goodbye and good riddance dedicated to Gary Locke, an Obama administration official and Chinese-American, who had been especially critical of China. PRC media initially expressed excitement about Locke’s role in the Obama government, when the China Overseas News portal in 2009 proclaimed that “yellow skin” was emerging in the US political arena, and hailed Locke as the “the ‘Obama’ of Chinese descent and a representative of the realisation of the ‘American Dream’” (CON 2009). Five years later, however, the tone had changed completely. It appears the combination of Locke’s Chinese ethnicity and what appears to be expectations by the PRC leadership of a racial loyalty to China, had clashed with the political realities of Locke being first and foremost an American, as well as a US politician. While “yellow skin, black hair and dark eyes” are considered to be markers of Chineseness, failure to fulfil expected identity roles and ideals of political loyalty, can earn

someone the racial epithet — and slur — of “banana”.

The article, which combined both phenotypic and ancestral racial arguments, was particularly savage: “Locke is a third-generation Chinese born in the United States. His ‘yellow skin and white heart’ banana character has become Obama's diplomatic advantage. (...) While the United States continues to stir up whirlpools and create conflict in the Asia- Pacific, there is a wanderer with black hair and yellow skin that seems to have lived abroad for a long time coming to cheer on the United States. It is really a good performance of double acting. (...) However, the “yellow skin” of bananas will rot after some time. Not only will the ‘white heart’ be exposed, but it will also become a sickening ‘black heart’. Perhaps Luo feels that yellow skin alone is not enough. (...) ...the Luo family did not only fail to recognise the writings of their ancestors, but also did not understand Chinese laws. He especially likes to point fingers at China's internal affairs. (...) Mr. Ambassador, do your ancestors know about your “performance”? If your ancestors knew, he would have kicked you out of the door” (CNS 2014a).

6.2.3 Han traitor (汉奸)

The combination of racially defined identities with expectations of absolute loyalty to Chinese interests puts special pressure on non-PRC citizens of Chinese descent. An ethnic Chinese Italian woman who assisted an Italian TV station in uncovering an illegal taxi service operation in Milan run by Chinese, was criticised for “betraying her ethnicity” (CNS 2018). Ethnic Chinese who go against state interests are often accused of assisting hostile foreign forces and branded as “Han traitors”. State narratives tend to be especially unforgiving in these cases, such as in the China News coverage of supporters of the Hong Kong protest movement: “There is a small group of people who have the blood of the descendants of Yan and Huang and enjoy the dividends of China’s rapid economic development, but they are willing to be Han traitors, acting as ‘two-faced men’, secretly colluding with Western anti-China forces and engaging in anti-China activities against Hong Kong” (CNSa 2021). What is noteworthy is not the political reaction, but how racial narratives are frequently employed in official government communication to define Chineseness along racial lines, which in turn results in the expectation of certain behaviour and political loyalty, even from non-PRC citizens. Chineseness defined along the lines of blood, skin colour, lineage and descent, therefore, contributes to blurring the boundaries between citizenship and ethnicity.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the existence and forms of racial discourses as they relate to definitions of Chineseness in official PRC government communication, and in the PRC’s official communication through diaspora institutions. This analysis finds that racial discourses are frequent and pervasive in all government-run agencies, channels and media platforms and tend to rely on a narrative that defines Chineseness along the lines of family and lineage, blood, skin colour and myths of descent. In addition, the PRC consistently connects such racial identities to the country’s political objectives, often drawing on language suggestive of filial obligations to motherland, thereby connecting ethnicity with politics, and narrating a sense of racial belonging to the PRC also for non-Chinese citizens overseas. When ethnic Chinese citizens abroad don’t fulfil Beijing’s expectations of political allegiances along ethnic lines, criticism often turn viciously racist, with attacks using slurs such as “Han traitor”, “banana” or with condemnation for “betraying one’s ethnicity”. The next chapter will explore whether similar racial discourses exist within diaspora media in Australia.

7. Race in Chinese-Australian diaspora media

Having explored racial discourses in official government communication and in state- and party-run diaspora channels, this chapter proceeds to analyse whether the PRC is successful in channeling such racial discourses and race-based definitions of Chineseness to the Chinese diaspora in Australia, and whether the diaspora itself is receptive to these ideas. The hypothesised implication is that by defining Chineseness along racial lines, Beijing is able to blur the boundaries between ethnicity and citizenship and to influence identities among ethnic Chinese abroad, in a way that brings diaspora members closer into the political and ideological fold of the PRC. If successful, Beijing might be able to also influence political and national allegiances among members of the diaspora.

This chapter analyses the role of racial discourses and narratives on Chineseness by PRC-connected institutions and media platforms in Australia as well as the receptiveness to such ideas in independent Chinese diaspora media. It proceeds in two parts. The first half of the analysis focuses on PRC agencies and proxies for PRC interests in Australia. This includes (1) the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canberra; and (2) the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC), along with PRC-connected Chinese media platforms such as (3) Au123.com and (4) Southeast Net Australia (SENAU). The second half will focus on independent diaspora media. This includes (1) Australian New Express Daily and (2) Sydney Today.

7.1 PRC-affiliated agents and media in Australia

7.1.1 Chinese embassy

Many of the racial tropes in official Chinese discourses are also present in Chinese embassy communications in Australia. In a 40th anniversary speech of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Australia, ambassador Chen Yuming underscored the ancestral and bloodline connections between Chinese in Australia and the motherland. Highlighting overseas Chinese as a bridge between China and Australian engagement, he said: "...the blood of the overseas Chinese and the ancestral country is thicker than water, and when the ancestral country is prosperous and powerful, you can stand up straight. (...) Chinese culture is the blood of the nation and the spiritual home shared by all Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad" (EMB 2012).

The following year, Chen's successor Ma Zhaoxu evoked family and sibling love as a reason for supporting the PRC in a speech to overseas Chinese in Victoria. Ma argued that overseas Chinese actively make contributions to support the construction of the "motherland". "This reflects the brotherhood of the Chinese people. You fully support the great cause of the peaceful reunification of the motherland and resolutely fight against all kinds of anti-China separatist activities." "You actively participate in politics," he added, (...) "and are increasingly playing an important role in Australia's economic and social life" (EMB 2013).

The political implications of this were made relatively explicit by Minister Wang Xining earlier this year, when he said that "those scumbags who deliberately slander China, undermine Sino-Australian friendship and harm the well-being of the two peoples out of self-interest will be cast aside by the world, and their descendants will be ashamed to mention their role in history" (EMB 2021).

7.1.2 Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC)

The ACPPRC, whose main mission it is to promote the reunification of China and Taiwan, frequently turn concepts of shared lineage and bloodline in loyalty narratives. In a “Reunification forum” in 2016, the president of the ACPPRC, Huang Xiangmo, said: “We are all Chinese — no matter where we come from or where we live, the blood of the Chinese nation flows in our bodies.” The speech was aimed at rallying support for cross-straits relations and reunification, and Huang specifically argued that overseas Chinese in Australia are “willing to use their unique advantages” to help bring about this process (ACPPRC 2016).

During the opening of a Sydney Western Branch of the ACPPRC that same year, Huang used the familiar racialised tropes to underscore the perceived ethnic connection of the Sydney Chinese community, and linked this to achieving PRC political objectives. He said the local Chinese community “has always maintained a great tradition of love for country and hometown, harmony and unity. ‘Blood is thicker than water, and roots and leaves are connected.’ The common blood of the descendants of Yan and Huang, the common soul of Chinese culture, and the common dream of the peaceful reunification of the two sides of the strait bind us closely” (ACPPRC 2016).

In 2015, at the Sydney premiere of his own documentary on third and fourth generation Australian-Chinese, Huang reportedly said that although their appearance is not “yellow skin and black hair”, they still inherit the spirit of the Chinese people and have a sense of Chinese ancestry and Chinese identity (ACPPRC 2015).

In recent years, the ACPPRC has sponsored the annual Yellow Emperor ancestor worship ceremony, to emphasise the descent narrative. In March 2020, the ACPPRC covered the fourth with a statement that read: “The Yellow Emperor is the ancestor of the Chinese civilisation and the common ancestor of humanity. The era of the Yellow Emperor started the Chinese civilisation that has been endless for five thousand years. (...) Every year (...). the descendants of Yan and Huang diligently hold events around the world that echo the ancestral worship ceremony of the Yellow Emperor of Xinzheng in Zhengzhou City, Henan Province” (ACPPRC 2020). The fifth annual event was held in March this year (ACPPRC 2021).

7.1.3 Southeast Net Australia (SENAU)

Both SENAU and Au123.com appear to spread PRC narratives. Texts frequently include quotes by Chinese officials and articles are occasionally sourced directly from PRC state or diaspora media, such as China Overseas Network and China News Service.

SENAU carries statements by PRC officials such as Li Keqiang and Xi Jinping, often in coverage of official events and with the message of uniting and mobilising overseas Chinese in order to fulfil PRC political objectives, such as realising the “Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and “peaceful reunification of the motherland” (SENAU 2017b; SENAU 2021b; SENAU 2019b).

In an article sourced from China News Service and published earlier this year, the director of the Jiangxi Overseas Friendship Association is quoted as saying: “I am a ‘swallow’ of the

motherland, no matter where I fly China is imprinted deep in my heart. (...) Development and construction is our unshirkable responsibility” (SENAU 2021a). Variations of this narrative are often repeated: “Many children are not very good at Chinese, so I (...) told them that although they are far overseas, the motherland is like their mother. Together, the stronger China is, the more confident and respected the children living overseas will be” (SENAU 2020a).

An article that originally appeared in People’s Daily includes the following Xi Jinping wisdom: “The destiny of the overseas Chinese in the world has always been connected with the destiny of the motherland... (...) ... no matter where they are, the vast number of overseas Chinese can never lose their deep love for China... (...) Even if they are overseas for generations, they can’t forget their Chinese origin of black hair and yellow skin. (...) Overseas Chinese and Chinese are inextricably linked to China in history, culture, and blood” (SENAU 2018a).

SENAU, much like in official PRC state sources, also draws on family concepts such as “sons and daughters” (SENAU 2020b; SENAU 2018b; SENAU 2017a), racialised concepts of blood, phenotypes involving yellow skin (SENAU 2016b; SENAU 2017c), and myths of descent in narrating Chineseness. “Although overseas Chinese live overseas all the year round, the love of their homeland and family blood cannot be forgotten” (SENAU 2019a).

In 2016, SENAU covered the opening of the ACPPRC’s new Sydney branch, where the leadership of the association urged overseas Chinese to spare no effort in working to promote China’s peaceful reunification, and council president Huang Xiangmo said the new and old immigrants are an important part of the Chinese ethnic group in Sydney and “the common blood of the descendants of Yan and Huang” (SENAU 2016a).

7.1.4 Au123.com

Like SENAU, Au123.com also lifts content from PRC government media platforms. As with the previously analysed platforms, racialised language here is often employed in connection with narratives about making overseas contributions to achieving PRC political goals, such as “modernisation and reunification” (AU123 2021b). For example, a mention of the Belt and Road initiative is linked with suggestions that overseas Chinese make contributions as “compatriots of the motherland” and as “descendants of Yan and Huang” (AU123 2018).

Au123.com repeats the PRC government script of unshakable belonging, such as in an article during the spring festival this year, which stated that “long distance cannot stop family affection, nor can it stop the love of the motherland” (AU123 2021a), and with statements of nostalgia for hometown and motherland and the inclusion of specifically selected song lyrics: “The blood flowing in my heart is surging with the voice of China. Even if I live in a foreign country, it can't change my Chinese heart” (AU123 2020).

However, one article about Greater China art troupes repeats both core PRC political narratives as well as a whole standard arsenal of racialised ancestor imagery. The article mentions “the patriotism of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas Chinese” and the common understanding of being “descendants of the dragon, connected by blood”. The article continues: “The descendants of Emperors Yan and Huang have the same roots and ancestors. Although they are in a foreign country, they still have a Chinese heart. Huangdi Xuanyuan created the culture of the Chinese nation, and the patriotic spirit of the Chinese sons and daughters has been passed on from generation to generation. (...). We commemorate the

Yellow Emperor, sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor, and promote the Yellow Emperor. It is to remember the merits of the ancestors, inherit Chinese traditional culture, inspire the patriotism of Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad and promote the peaceful reunification of the motherland” (AU123 2021d).

Veering into PRC-defined race-based political loyalties, one article discusses the concept of Han traitor in the context of Yu Maochun and Xu Xiuzhongtwo, both ethnic Chinese foreigners that have have challenged CCP interests. The author debates the labels “Han traitors” and “cultural rebels”, describing Han traitors as willing to “betray the interests of the motherland” and rebels for those who have “rebelled against the foundation of Chinese mother culture” and who have “completely denied their memories and feelings of China, ignoring their past life, family affection and culture” (AU123 2021f).

7.2 Independent Australian-Chinese diaspora media

7.2.1 Australian New Express Daily (ANED)

Australian New Express Daily (ANED), an independently owned platform, appears less servile to official PRC state narratives than the previously analysed media sources. Still, coverage of certain politically sensitive issues do align with PRC viewpoints and racial discourses, while rarer and less explicit, still appear in many of the most common forms.

An article from 2018 discusses integration and belonging among Chinese in Australia. It begins by stating that as “representatives of the entire Chinese ethnic group” and Chinese communities in Australia are “the epitome of our nationality”. As Chinese immigrants, “we always hope that the Chinese will be respected and that the motherland will be respected” and “...as long as you are of Chinese descent, you will be looked at with the same eyes because of your yellow skin and black hair” (XKB 2018).

Blood is also evoked in articles on the website in relation to China-Taiwan politics, with loyalty expectations based on “the principle that blood is thicker than water” tied to joint efforts to rejuvenate the Chinese nation (XKB 2020b). Blood and family are also evoked in connection with Hong Kong, such as in the context of China’s vaccine distribution in the city: Explain that the motherland will always be a strong backing for Hong Kong. (...) ...the Mainland and Hong Kong have always been of the same spirit, blood is thicker than water, and they are family that cannot be separated” (XKB 2021c).

In an article about the Spring Festival Celebration last year, ancestry was tied quite explicitly to political loyalty, with key dos and don'ts. The text read: “The strength of the ancestral home country provides a solid backing for overseas Chinese (...) “Keep in mind the ‘Chinese Roots’ and never forget the ‘Chinese Heart’. Always remember that you are a descendant of Yan and Huang, no matter where you go, no matter how the environment changes. Do not say anything that is not good for the country, do not do things that are not good for the country, and put the righteousness of the nation before commercial interests” (XKB 2020a).

At times, ANED is relatively overt about taking sides with the PRC government, especially on the issue of political loyalties. Hong Kong independence protests, for example, are described as “radial and illegal”, as violent and destructive, and in effect “slandering the motherland” (XKB 2020g). Loyalty is frequently a key issue in ANED’s coverage of Hong Kong, and the racialised language of “Han traitor” necessary plays an consistent role, such as

in the case of advocating that politicians be punished for treason (XKB 2019c), and in the coverage of the wanted Hong Kong protester Luo Guangcong, who is described as a “rioter” and “Han traitor (XKB 2020h). Coverage of Luo Guangcong’s meeting with UK politicians is unabashedly pro-Beijing. Titled “Clearly interfering in China's internal affairs”, the article reads: “Some netizens said that the British imperialist forces blatantly colluded with Hong Kong Han traitors” (XKB 2020f).

7.2.2 Sydney Today

Sydney Today focuses less on overtly political content, instead leaning more on lifestyle, local culture and gossip. The website has a vibrant comment section, however, which is often unambiguously political and often saturated with racialised language and insults. Coverage tends to align mostly with PRC interests, and at times goes as far as parroting official PRC rhetoric.

An article from 2019 covered the 165th anniversary ceremony of Hongmen Zhi Gong hall in Australia, with quotes from official speeches: “The ancestors take the prosperity of the country and the mission of revitalising the nation as their own responsibility. (...) In the new century, the Australian Hongmen Zhi Gongzong Hall encourages its members and overseas Chinese to integrate into the mainstream society of Australia (...) [and]... to care about and support the modernisation of the motherland” (ST 2019k).

Phenotypic descriptions and racialised labels such as “mixed blood” and “yellow skin” (ST 2020a) or “banana person” (ST 2018), range from the benign to the politically caustic when mouthpiecing Beijing on political loyalty expectations within staunchly pro-China narratives.

An article from 2020 about Dai Qi, an ethnic Chinese American citizen, becoming the new US trade negotiator, repeated typical racialised language about Chinese identity and loyalties by referring to an article from Mainland China. The article was quoted as describing Dai Qi as “a more prominent and more dangerous example of an overseas Chinese person than Xu Maochun and more threatening to Mainland China”. She was further described as “not only fluent in Chinese, but also a typical “banana person” who has received a thorough Western education but still has Chinese characteristics. “But because of this, she is more dangerous than Yu Maochun, the chief China policy and planning advisor to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo” (ST 2020g).

Sydney Today had also applied the traitor narrative to Yu Maochun in an article published earlier that year, once again reproducing PRC political perspectives,. Titled “White House strategist Yu Maochun called a ‘Han traitor’ by Chinese netizens”, the article read: “Many Chinese netizens said that he ‘forgot about his ancestors and became Pompeo's dog-headed military advisor’ (...数典忘祖，成为蓬佩奥的狗头军师) (...) Some netizens said ‘Yu Maochun is familiar with China’s national conditions, and his insidious and ruthless tricks can sting China’s nerves. This is a modern version of a Han traitor. This person is using his identity to fight against China and to become a veritable lackey of the White House government’” (ST 2020b).

Sydney Today at times also repeats the PRC’s political angles on Hong Kong, repeating both racial language and staunchly pro-Beijing talking points. Chief among them is the discourse of “Han traitors” (ST 2019m; ST 2019l).

7.3 Conclusion

Both PRC government bodies and PRC-affiliated proxies operating in Australia repeat typical PRC racial discourses of Chineseness and belonging in their communication efforts directed at Australian audiences. Not only do they parrot PRC narratives, but often lift articles wholesale from PRC government media sources. Most of the racial tropes that are frequently in official PRC communication also appear in PRC-affiliated media in Australia, including concepts relating to skin colour, blood, family and ancestry, as well as myths of descent. Furthermore, definitions of Chineseness are frequently tied to expectations of political loyalties to Beijing, often taking the form of filial piety that is extended beyond the family into the domain of diaspora-motherland relations.

Independent diaspora media appears less bound by PRC narratives and do not follow the script on race and loyalty as do the PRC proxies. Nevertheless, the coverage by platforms like Australian New Express Daily and Sydney Today is at times hard to tell apart from other diaspora media and even PRC state communication. Sometimes, this includes repeating PRC racial definitions of Chineseness, defined by family and descent, blood and skin colour. Failure to live up to ones expected racial obligations can lead to being branded as a traitor.

The next chapter will analyse how such communication might effect political loyalties and political engagement in Australia by the Chinese diaspora.

8. Race, loyalty and political conflict

The current chapter, which makes up the third and final part of the primary research, explores the potential connections between racial beliefs and Chinese political influence in Australia, and more concretely whether racially determined identities provide an opening, via a racially and politically loyal diaspora, for PRC political influence in Australia.

To do so, the analysis will proceed by analysing diaspora media coverage of four key events that took place in Australia between 2017 and 2021: (1) The 2017 Bennelong by-election; (2) the detention in China of two Australian citizens of Chinese extraction; (3) the student protests at the University of Queensland; and (4) the expulsion of businessman and political donor Huang Xiangmo from Australia. All four cases involved overseas Chinese in Australia, touched on politically contentious issues, and involved political conflict between China and Australia. Importantly, all four events ended up challenging ideas about diaspora belonging and loyalties in Australia.

All four therefore provide suitable test cases for investigating the role of diaspora identities and loyalties in the context of Australia-China politics.

8.1 Bennelong by-election 2017

A by-election for the Australian House of Representatives seat of Bennelong was held on December 16 2017. The electoral division, located not far from Sydney, has a large proportion of ethnic Chinese residents regarded as crucial to electoral success (Tobin and Carter 2017). A few days before election day, a letter urging voters to take down the Turnbull government was circulated on in Chinese on Wechat in an attempt to mobilise Chinese voters. The letter, which was attributed to “Chinese who call Australia home”, claimed the Turnbull government was against China, against Asian migrants and against Chinese, and was hostile to China in the South China Sea. According to the Sydney Morning Herald the letter was shared on Wechat by Yan Zehua, an Australian citizen and vice president of the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC) (O’Malley and Joske 2019).

A few days before the election, the Australian Values Alliance, an organisation set up by a coalition of Chinese-Australians with the specific purpose of countering PRC influence in Australia, published two statements. The first one warned of candidates with suspected ties to Chinese intelligence services, specifically vying for “the support of ethnic constituencies” (AVA 2017a), with the second one highlighting Bennelong specifically (AVA 2017b).

Southeast Net Australia (SENAU) ran one single article which was factual and neutral in tone. It simply introduced the election and highlighted the significance of the diaspora vote: “The Chinese vote will become the key to the election. (...) Both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party have realised the importance of Chinese votes to the Bennelong constituency by-election, and immediately began to go to Eastwood to canvass votes for the Chinese and other Asian communities” (SENAU 2017d).

Sydney Today, published a couple of articles, including an opinion piece from a Labour Party Wechat account (ST 2017a) as well as one fuller account which focused on the ethnic makeup of the electoral division and the importance of the Chinese vote (ST 2017b).

Both articles were neutral in tone. However, the website's comment section displayed much more aggressive political views. One comment, by a user nicknamed "Meow", said "the Chinese in Australia stand up together and use their votes to rediscover Australia, turn Australia into a province of the great motherland, overthrow all evil western cultures, and establish a communist Australian special zone with Chinese characteristics!" (ST 2017b). As a riposte to a suggestion to go back to China if the "motherland" is so great, a netizen nicknamed "441" responded: "The biggest tragedy of China is not dictatorship, not about lacking human rights or freedom of speech, but having a group of fools like you, making the Chinese people scattered and disunited" (ST 2017b). As user comments tend to skew toward more extreme viewpoints in most online discussion spaces, the comment section can hardly be considered a reliable gauge of general opinion. Nevertheless, these comments do offer some useful insight into the nature of some of the most passionate viewpoints. And if combined with patterns of repeating PRC talking points, such comments could perhaps act as canaries for broader political allegiances.

8.2 Detentions of Chinese-Australians

In January 2019, Chinese-Australian writer Yang Hengjun (杨恒均) was detained in China, allegedly on the grounds of espionage. Despite holding an Australian passport, Australian diplomats were denied access to him and Beijing told Australia to stand back and respect China's "judicial sovereignty". Yang had previously written critically about China, and with the Chinese authorities predictably opaque about the reasons his incarceration, Australia determined Yang to be the victim of arbitrary detention (*BBC 2021*; Davidson 2021). In February the next year, Cheng Lei (成蕾), an Australian citizen working as a news anchor for CGTN (China Global Television Network), was arrested in China on the ground of "endangering national security" (Macmillan 2020). As the Yang and Cheng cases both involve ethnic Chinese Australian citizens and mark a political flashpoint in China-Australia relations, they provide a suitable test case for analysing diaspora loyalties.

The Australian Values Alliance (AVA) issued a statement in 2019 to protest the "unlawful detention" of Yang and called on the Australian government to publicly demand that China release him. The statement read: "This 'disappearance' style treatment resembling Nazi Germany's Gestapo method called 'Nacht und Nebel' or 'Night and Fog' (...) is often used against civil rights activists in China. (...) The AVA, as a community group for ethnically Chinese Australians, shall continue unreservedly to advocate individual freedom for those who are living under authoritarian one-party rule in China" (AVA 2019a).

Au123.com only covered the Cheng detention with a mention in a larger article about Chinese and Australian successes in containing the corona epidemic, in quote by Chinese diplomat Wang Xining.

Both Australian News Express Daily (ANED) and Sydney Today provided largely balanced coverage of the both detentions, both in the case of Cheng Lei (XKB 2021b; XKB 2020c; XKB 2020e), as well as in the reporting on Yang Hengjun (XKB 2020g; XKB 2020d), despite occasionally repeating the PRC's explanations uncritically (XKB 2021a).

Sydney Today, wrote about both detentions extensively, in what was largely balanced coverage. Several articles included statements by both the Chinese and the Australian side, both when it comes to Cheng Lei (ST: 2021b; ST 2021c); as well as in several texts about

Yang Hengjun (ST 2020f; ST 2020e; ST 2020c; ST 2020e).

However, once again, the user comments that appeared below the articles appeared largely pro-Beijing, and are often aggressively political. Several of the responses to both the Cheng and Yang detention cases appear to show a belief in the PRC narrative of having arrested spies, and further interpret it as a betrayal of China due to their Chinese heritage. Comments include statements such as: “A traitor who lives in Australia” (ST 2021c); “Definitely a serious betrayal of China! Traitors cannot be forgiven by the Chinese people!” (ST 2021a); and “She has seriously hurt the feelings of the Chinese people. (...) I hope she remembers that [she was raised by] her parents and her ancestors (...) Let’s wait for the Chinese government trial” (ST 2020d).

Other comments are even more vitriolic and overtly racist. One commentator attacks Cheng’s alleged betrayal of her ethnicity: “Typical running dog Han traitor. Why don’t you just bleach your skin and stop being Chinese! (典型的汉奸走狗，选一条路一走到底要反就把自己的皮肤漂白了，别当中国人了真的)” (ST 2020h). A comment directed at Yang Hengjun asks: “Are you still a yellow-skinned Chinese person after obtaining Australian citizenship? You deserve to be caught for betraying the motherland! Morrison can't save you from committing a crime.” A comment below reads: “Support the death penalty!” (ST 2019h).

8.3 University of Queensland protests

On July 24 2019, violent clashes broke out at the University of Queensland over conflicting perspectives over Hong Kong. A solidarity protest in support of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong turned violent after a group of pro-China students reportedly gate-crashed the event, playing the Chinese national anthem and chanting “China is great” (Hamilton-Smith, L., 2019). One of the leaders of the pro-democracy protesters, Drew Pavlou, criticised the university for having quietly appointed Xu Jie, the Chinese consul general in Brisbane, to an adjunct professorship just week before the protests. A statement by the Consulate General in Brisbane in support of the counter-protest, prompted Foreign Minister Marise Payne to condemn the interference (Searight 2020 pp.21-22).

The statement on July 25 about “the spontaneous opposition of Chinese students from the University of Queensland in Australia to anti-China separatist activities” read: “The Consulate General attaches great importance to the safety of Chinese students abroad, affirms the spontaneous patriotic behaviour of Chinese students, resolutely opposes any words and deeds to split the country, and opposes some people who (...) incite anti-China sentiment...” (CONSUL 2019).

Two days after the event Southeast Net Australia (SENAU) published a brief article that was sourced from China News Service (CNS) and which reproduced the consulate general’s statement almost verbatim (SENAU 2019c).

The Australia New Express Daily (ANED) described the pro-democracy protesters as “anti-China separatists”, included online rumours about the anti-China protesters being paid for and gives more credence to the pro-PRC side in the conflict between Hong Kong and Mainland communities in Australia (XKB 2019h).

Sydney Today gave slightly more coverage to the event than the other diaspora outlets. The accounts were mostly factual and balanced (ST 2019d; ST 2019f). Some articles were republished from Chinese media, however, and naturally conveyed a more pro-PRC stance:

"Hong Kong Independence" has made a big hit at the University of Queensland, and can only rely on mainland students to save the school" (ST 2019e).

User comments, once again, were more extreme both in terms of political stance and in their use of racial language.

In a comment on July 26, a user nicknamed "Overseas traitors" wrote: I am really worried that these Hong Kong people have gangster backgrounds or other identities. Judging from their behaviour, they must have received some professional training" (ST 2019e). Some resort to racialised insults based on ancestry and heritage: "Please don't use Chinese. Use your dog language to express yourself, since Chinese represents China! You are a scumbag who cuts off your children and grandchildren. Send greetings to the women of your ancestors in your family". Others return to complexion: "Then peel off your yellow skin first. Finally, stop typing Chinese". Others simply rejoice at the Chinese community's political cohesion, saying "So happy to see the Chinese people unite!" (ST 2019g).

8.4 Huang Xiangmo's expulsion

Huang Xiangmo (黄向墨), a Chinese billionaire in Australia, was suspected of being an agent for PRC influence efforts the country. Huang was leader of the Australian Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China (ACPPRC), which has direct links to the UFDW, and was vocal about advocating diaspora unity with the explicit purpose of achieving reunification. He has sometimes done so by evoking racialised narratives of Chinese identity and belonging (ACPPRC 2016). In 2016, Huang penned two opinion articles for Huanqiu, where he talked about Chinese unity and political power, using racialised discourses about ethnic cohesion. In the articles, he praised the Chinese community in the US for uniting in protest against the conviction of an ethnic Chinese police officer that had fatally shot a black man. Huang emphasised the value of political power and argued that due to many differences within the Chinese diaspora, including the distinction between pure and mixed blood, "disunity" had become a chronic disease in the global Chinese community (HQ 2016a; HQ 2016b). In Australia, Huang's political donations and connections to PRC interests became a trigger for Australia's anti-interference laws (Joske 2020, pp.20-24; Searight 2020, pp.5-9), and based on intelligence that Huang an agent for Chinese interests, the Australian government cancelled his residency in 2019, resulting in his expulsion from Australia (Joske 2020, pp.20-24; Searight 2020, pp.5-9; Conifer and Borys 2019).

Both the ACPPRC and AVA issued statements upon Huang's visa cancellation, unsurprisingly from opposing positions, but both mentioning overseas Chinese. AVA stressed that "Chinese communities in Australia have been abused by the CCP in an attempt to undermine our institutions of democracy and Australian values" (AVA 2019c; AVA 2019b), while the ACPPRC criticised the decision as an attack on the Chinese community: "The unfair treatment suffered by Mr. Huang Xiangmo has dealt a heavy blow to the legal participation of Chinese and other minorities in politics..." (ACPPRC 2019).

Among the analysed diaspora outlets, only Southeast Net Australia (ANED) and Sydney Today covered the Huang case. ANED followed the progression of the case with relatively neutral coverage (XKB 2019a; XKB 2019d; XKB 2019f; XKB 2019e; XKB 2019b).

Sydney Today also covered the case in fairly neutral terms, starting with Huang's expulsion (ST 2019a), and following the case's progression through the ensuing cleanup over his financial dealings (ST 2019j; ST 2019i). The website also included statements by Huang in

self-defence (ST 2019c), with one article covering the joint statement by 128 Chinese associations issued in support of Huang (ST 2019b).

In an article copied from Global Times, however, Huang calls draws links between Chinese ethnicity and what he alleges to be political persecution: "...not only are the Chinese unsafe from now on, but other ethnic groups will also face the same risks. (...) Today, Chinese are punished for being close to China, and tomorrow people of other ethnicities will be punished for being close to their home country. (...) When you are a descendant of Yan and Huang, how can you defend yourself when others want to smear you as "red" [Communist]?" (ST 2019n).

More notable, however, is the unusually muted patriotism in the website's comment section. Comments on several of the articles are mixed, but a larger proportion appear more supportive of Australia, and compared with the previous three cases. One commentator says "our Australian government cannot tolerate improper and dirty money to enter Australia" (ST 2019a), while another says "Huang, a part of the CCP's external propaganda, now has to pay some party dues" (ST 2019j). Regardless, a few jingoistic and racially charged comments also sporadically appear in the discussion. A reader nicknamed "Australian soil resident jud31" said: "No matter how fierce you bite China, you are still considered Chinese and an obedient Chinese dog by your master, unless you whiten your yellow skin." The same user adds: "Taking Australian nationality is just a convenience for identification, because the existing Western order excludes Eastern culture. (...) When you see that the majority of Australians today have white faces, you can tell that this kind of ethnic equality is false. (...) The motherland is not imaginary, it is the biggest pillar of support for a group of people referred to as Chinese by the ghost [鬼佬 = "white people"]. China is strong, and the status of Chinese people in the Western world can be elevated. In real life, strength determines status" (ST 2019c).

8.5 Conclusion

Based on four case study events, this chapter looked at whether coverage by diaspora media aligned with PRC interests or sided with Australia. The results were mixed. While there were suspicions the PRC was attempting to interfere in the Bennelong by-election by using local proxies, diaspora media did not play into this narrative and coverage was both limited and relatively neutral in tone. In both the detentions of Australians in China and the demonstrations at the University of Queensland, the PRC got directly involved. In the first case, the PRC employed its own political and legal apparatus to prevent the Australian citizens from leaving and to obstruct Australian diplomats from getting access to Chinese territory. In the Queensland case, the PRC used a locally-based diplomatic agents to interfere in free expression. Here, diaspora media coverage was mixed, and sometimes skewed towards pro-Beijing narratives. The user comments section on Sydney Today was largely patriotic in favour of China, and often expressing highly racialised definitions of Chineseness and loyalty. The Huang Xiangmo case involves a complex network of potential Chinese influence structures in Australia that extend from the CCP via the UFWD, ACPPRC and Huang Xiangmo to the Chinese community in Australia. Judging by the coverage of Huang's visa cancellation and expulsion, however, diaspora media does not play a direct role in this network. With the exception of a few articles sourced from PRC media, ANED and Sydney Today's coverage was neutral. In fact, even the comment section of Sydney Today showed mixed perspectives, Many were critical of Huang and only in a few cases expressed racialised pro-China sentiments.

9. Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the role of racial discourse relating to definitions of Chineseness in China's diaspora engagement. The hypothesis ran that by emphasising ethnic identities among overseas Chinese populations in Australia, Beijing may succeed in mobilising diaspora loyalties in ways favourable to PRC interests, and thereby opening up a potential channel for influence in Australia.

This paper first explored the racial discourse itself, and then attempted to connect race with the potential political impact. While the detail-level research itself was based on documentary analysis within the case study of Australia, a sense of causality between variables was attempted explored using the logic of process-tracing.

To do so, the analysis was broken down into four steps, which consisted of the following: (1) First, this paper analysed the existence of racial discourse in relation to definitions of Chineseness in official PRC government narratives and its use in communication targeting overseas Chinese; (2) second, it explored the communication of similar racial narratives to the Chinese diaspora in Australia by PRC-affiliated communication platforms; (3) third, it tested for similar racial discourses and definitions of Chineseness in independently Australian-owned and run diaspora media in Australia; and (5) finally, it explored the role of such racial definitions of Chineseness, and its loyalty components, in relation to issues of political conflict involving conflict between China and Australia. Chapter 6 covered the first point, Chapter 7 the two following, and Chapter 8 concluded.

Chapter 6 analysed racial discourses on Chineseness in official PRC government narratives and its use in official Chinese government communication targeting overseas Chinese. This paper found racial discourses to be frequent and pervasive in all official agencies, channels and media platforms and that they tend to be centred on definitions of Chineseness that are drawn up along primordial, genetic or biologised lines. The most common categories are (1) phenotypes, such as yellow skin, black eyes and black hair; (2) blood-based, including notions of common blood; and family and lineage, which depicts all ethnic Chinese people as belonging to one family. This is both used metaphorically, in the sense of "Chinese sons and daughters" all belonging to the same "motherland", but also more literally to imply ancestry and shared genetics. Finally, overlapping with the previous category, is (4) myths of descent, which expands upon the big family notion by depicting an even greater genetic and blood-based family bond that can be traced back to ancient times, to legendary rulers such as the Yan and Huang emperors, and even perhaps to the ancestor of humanity itself. These findings fit neatly with the racial categories proposed by Frank Dikötter (2015) and analysed in this paper's theoretical framework.

In addition, Chapter 6 finds that official documents consistently connect such racialised definitions of Chineseness to the country's political objectives, often drawing on language suggestive of filial obligations to the motherland and ethnic obligations to one's own people. By doing so, this thesis argues that the PRC is actively narrating a sense of racial belonging to the PRC also for non-Chinese citizens overseas, thereby injecting race into politics and equating ethnicity with support for China. When overseas Chinese fail to fulfil these ascribed ethnic and political roles, they are attacked for "betraying one's ethnicity", or of being a "banana" or a "Han traitor", also in official communication.

Chapter 7 explored the use of racial discourses on Chineseness in Chinese-language media in Australia. This proceeded in two steps, first by analysing the use of racial definitions of

Chineseness by local PRC-affiliated communication platforms, and secondly to apply the same analysis to independently owned Chinese-Australian diaspora media. This paper found that both PRC-affiliated and independent media platforms frequently and consistently repeated the PRC's racial discourses of Chineseness in their communication with Australian audiences. That includes the same broad categories as mentioned above, as well as many, if not most, of the same exact phrases. In addition, although more prominent in the coverage by PRC-affiliated media, both types of platforms repeat PRC narratives on belonging and political loyalty, either through quotes by PRC government officials or by copying articles wholesale from government sources. In PRC-affiliated media, these political narratives are frequently tied to racialised definitions of Chineseness. In independent coverage, however, this is less frequent and less explicit, as these media platforms appear less bound by the PRC script on race and loyalty. Still, this paper found racial language and imagery to appear frequently across all types of diaspora media.

Chapter 8 then attempted to connect the dots between race and political influence. Having first established the PRC's racial narratives on Chineseness and political loyalties in diaspora communication, and the consequent transmission of these ideas to Australian audiences by independent and semi-independent diaspora media, Chapter 8 proceeded to test diaspora loyalties on four key issues involving conflict between Chinese and Australian interests. Those case were the 2017 Bennelong by-election; the detention of Chinese-Australians in China; clashes between pro- and anti-PRC protesters at the University of Queensland; and the expulsion from Australia of Huang Xiangmo. Based on these four case study events, this chapter looked at whether coverage by diaspora media sided with PRC interests or with Australia. The analysis was based on general diaspora media coverage as well as the user comments section on Sydney Today.

The results were mixed, with both the Bennelong and Huang Xiangmo cases showing little diaspora engagement or alignment with Beijing. However, in both the detention case and Queensland protest, diaspora media was welcoming to PRC narratives. In varied coverage, Yang and Cheng were mostly presented in ways that fit the official story from Beijing, with user comments and occasional headlines referring to them as "Han traitors". The coverage of the Queensland protests went even further in siding with the PR, with articles describing pro-democracy protesters as "rioters" and "anti-China separatists" and amplifying PRC government voices. In one instance, the statement by the Consulate-General in Brisbane in support of counter-protesters, which was condemned by the Australian government, was published verbatim and in its entirety.

Ultimately, the results relate the paper's research objectives in two ways. While most of diaspora media coverage in Australia shows subtle political alignment with the interests of Beijing's interests and sometimes contributes to PRC talking points, little can be gleaned from the analysis in Chapter 8 alone. This thesis fails to capture clear evidence of racially-defined political loyalties and can therefore not draw conclusions about a racially conscious diaspora functioning as mechanisms for political influence.

In terms of racial discourse, however, the results are different, as this thesis has found extensive evidence for racially charged definitions of Chineseness in the analysed materials. Narratives that define Chineseness along kinship, blood-based, phenotypic and genealogical lines are frequent and pervasive in all communication platforms, from PRC government channels to independent and Australia based media. In addition, these categories, which include notions of family bonds, blood-based siblinghood and structures of descent, are consistent with the racial categories proposed by Dikötter and incorporated into this paper's

theoretical framework.

While this thesis has perhaps not succeeded in connecting the dots between racial discourses and the specific mechanisms through which China's long arm of extra-territorial diaspora politics may operate, ample evidence has been found for existence of racial thinking in Beijing. In communication and narratives at least, this appears to define overseas Chinese, regardless of their location or citizenship, as primordially connected to China and to each other. According to this logic, overseas Chinese are eternally connected to the motherland — by bonds of blood, kinship and by their filial obligations — and in a sense by a long umbilical cord that extends to the Chinese state.

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