ICT USE AND IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG

BEIJING'S RURAL-TO-URBAN GRADUATE WORKERS

CHEN YANLING

(B. A. & B. B. A. SICHUAN UNIVERSITY)

A THESIS SUBMITTED

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND NEW MEDIA

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

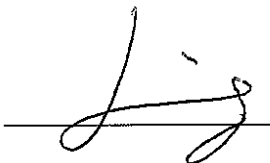## NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2012

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is my original

work and it has been written by me in its entirety.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of

information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any

degree in any university previously.

Chen Yanling

27 August 2012

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a new and enjoyable experience. It marks the end of my two years of Master's studies in communications and new media at National University of Singapore, and the start of my journey into the real world of communications and media. Perhaps, with the confidence gained from writing this thesis, I may return again to academia in my 40s or 50s, to bask in the world of knowledge, where freedom of thought and passion are encouraged.

Foremost, I express my most sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Lim Sun Sun, for her long-term support, patience and guidance throughout the two years. I could not have completed this project without her constant encouragement and help. Her constructive feedback and generous sharing of her research experience at every stage of this research project lit my path.

I would also like to extend my thanks to all of the kind faculty members in the CNM program, for their inspiring lectures and seminars; in particular:

- Dr. Millie Rivera, for her insights into literature review writing;

- Dr. Peichi Chung and Dr. Cho Hichang, for their classes on advanced theories in CMN; and

- Dr. T T Sreekumar, for his suggestions on my research proposal.

I am grateful also to my fellow graduate students, especially those from the July 2009 and January 2010 batches, who shared my joys and pains.

I appreciate the National University of Singapore for its wealth of academic resources, financial support, writing space and various workshops on thesis writing.

Finally, words are insufficient to express my million thanks to my parents and my grandmother, for their selfless love and unconditional support. To them, I dedicate this thesis.

Contents

Summary

The reforms, transformations and modernizations in contemporary China, along with ICT introduction and development, have brought tremendous changes to the living and working conditions of rural-to-urban migrant graduate workers and their hybrid identities as internal migrants, as modern youths, as junior workers, as college graduates. These changes are situated the research within the particular socio-culture and historical context of China.

The migrant graduate workers who are from the lower socioeconomic background, without influential social networks, armed with only a degree certificate and their ICT literacy, dreamed of becoming members of the urban middle class. Various contradictions were encoded in their identity because of the social context of today's China. The contradictions amongst their lower socioeconomic background, the past life experience in underdeveloped regions (often rural areas), the current life situation as urbanites and white –collar workers, and their ambition - to be members of the urban middle class are the root of the struggles that the group are experiencing during the process of identity exploration, identity representation and identity construction. And all the contradictions and the struggles of migrant graduate youth are embedded in the economical, social, historical and culture context of China.

This research, based on 40 semi-structured interviews in Beijing, complemented by a survey, suggests that during the process of their identity construction in the youth adulthood, the ICTs are creatively employed in the representation, creation and exploration of their real identity, alternative identity, ideal identity and committed identity. Moreover, their ICT use is an integral part of the process of the identity construction, with notable relationship with their life goal and

relationship maintenance. This thesis also explored the interplay of ICTs and identity among the Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers during the process of identity construction: how one's real/desired identity effects one's ICT devices adoption, choice, personalization and usage; how the potential offered by ICTs is employed in the representation and formation of participants' personal, social and cultural identities. Among these identities, their class-based identity dynamically interacts with their ICT use, including the purchase of the gadgets, the choice of brands, the different tastes and their position in the practice-oriented committees.

List of Tables

Chapter 1 Introduction

My flight to Beijing was delayed by two hours. Cui,[1] who was a college classmate of my classmate from high school, was at the airport to meet me; it was past 9:00 pm, and she had been waiting for over an hour. She was fashionably dressed and talkative, quite different from the stereotypical image I had of yizu[2]. She went on joyfully about her undergraduate life with my high school classmate as we boarded the Airport Express Rail. She said she was eager for me to stay with her, as she did not have many friends in Beijing. I asked about her current job and life. With an almost embarrassed expression, she said, "The place I'm living is an anjian'er (a dark inner compartment within an apartment). There is a window, but it is not open to the outside. Fortunately, the heating is very good and you will feel hot during the night."

It was the first time I had heard the word "anjian'er". Cui explained that the difference between anjian'er and mingjian'er (a bright inner compartment) was whether there is a real window that can open to the outside. After half an hour, we arrived at Shuangjing subway station, in the southeast corner of the city. She said her home was several bus stops away and if we did not have any luggage, we could walk for a while before getting on a bus. I did have luggage; we took a taxi to her place. She guided the driver to Tangjia Cun (Tang's Village); the name of the place told its own tale; it was once a village, but it is now located on the East Fourth Ring of the

---

[1] The names of all interviewees have been changed, to maintain anonymity.

[2] *Yizu,* or "ant tribe," refers to individuals who share the following characteristics: "Chinese university graduate born in the 1980s, working an unstable job that pays less than RMB 2,000 (approx. S$ 400) per month, living in a shared RMB 350 (approx. S$ 70) apartment and spending over two hours a day travelling to and from work" (Zhao, 2009). The term was first introduced by Liansi, a postdoctoral in Peking University, in his homonymous anthropological book on China's university graduates from the rural villages or towns who dream of a better life in big cities while struggling with low-paying jobs and poor living conditions (Zhao, 2009).

urban district. My first impression of the community was that it was dark, but looked new and clean. Walking into the building and in the elevator going up, I could not help but wonder if it was typical of an ant tribe's home. The elevator stopped at the 12th story, and we entered the apartment. It was dark and crowded. To get to Cui's room, we had to pass three closed doors in a corridor so narrow that only one person could walk through at a time. Outside the door to her room, I noticed a router connected to six cable lines. One of the lines passes into Cui's room through the small window. She opened the door and turned on the light. It was small, cramped, and I was embarrassed to be intruding, but Cui had tried her best to make it clean, warm and cosy. Perhaps the most valuable asset in the 6 m² room was the self-assembled desk. A single bed took more than half the space; the desk with the computer and a closet claimed the rest of the limited space. The 90 m² apartment was divided into seven rooms. Cui's rent was RMB650 a month; her friend and former high school classmate occupied the kitchen once-to-be, paying RMB700 a month.

1.1 Preface

The preceding quotation was extracted from my diary entry, written on December 5, 2010, which marked the start of my fieldwork in Beijing. I begin the thesis with this excerpt because it was my first real impression of the life of the ant tribe. My research project was originally to study the interactions between ant tribe's ICT (Information and Communication Technology) use and their identity formation. However, after investigating the group, it seemed obvious that the existing definition of ant tribe was dated, too narrow, and biased.

In reality, after one or two years of work, many rural-to-urban graduates earned more than RMB 3,000 (S$600) a month, paying upwards of RMB 700 (S$120) for rent. Their living conditions vary: although many live, or once lived, in basements or crowded apartments shared with more than 10 similar others, there were also those who lived in single rooms after having moved several times, often living in the suburban areas and commuting more than two hours each day, while others prefer to live downtown, near their workplace, paying higher rents and being subject to urban noise.

Among the ant tribe, some had graduated from China's most prestigious universities, while others were diploma holders who had pursued advanced higher education and degrees by passing the Higher Education Examinations for the Self-Taught. Many were born in the 1980s, in the rural or less developed regions of China. They are China's first generation to fully utilize ICTs and they are college graduates, following the country's higher education expansion. They pursue their dreams in Beijing, the capital of China, far removed from their hometowns, both in distance and

in the level of modernization, and are subject to the communal pressure to reside in modernized cities and leaving their rural-born bloodline behind.

I am especially intrigued by the relationship between these rural-to-urban graduate workers' ICT use and their identity formation. This topic follows the tradition of some of the earliest work on ICTs and identity construction, such as the studies conducted by Mizuko Ito, Rich Ling, and James Katz. Yet, with few exceptions, the subjects of these studies in developed countries were primarily educated and relatively affluent urban teenagers and college students. On the other hand, many of the parallel studies in developing countries or regions tended to focus on the economically and socially marginalized young adults. In Mainland China, the objects of these research projects are "peasant workers", *nongminggong or dagongmei*, *dagongzai* in Chinese, the young migrant workers with basic education working in low-level service sector or the manufacturing or construction industry. Among this scholarship, the works of Jack Qiu, Pui Lam Law, Yinni Peng and Cara Wallis are foundational. To build on extant research, my thesis will study the rural-to-urban graduate students born into low socio-economic families but armed with higher education and ICTs in China, arguably the most dynamically developing country.

1.2 Context of Research

The last three decades of China's economic reforms have witnessed the maturation of Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers and the domestication of ICTs in China. China's traditional *guanxi* society and the relationship- and bureaucracy-oriented nature of social organization still have an essential impact on Chinese people's identity and ICT use. As the first generation to enjoy the fruits of these far-

reaching reforms, these youths also have to bear with their negative effects. After graduation, rural-to-urban college graduates try to transform themselves from rural students into urban employees, experiencing a profound disturbance of their individual, social and cultural identities. In the process, ICT gadgets adopted as consumer goods provide potential for the presentation and formation of identity. Thus, ICTs could become symbols of one's identity, such as social status, and gender, as well as communication tools to establish and enhance relationships.

From the perspective of the online society, ICTs provide new opportunities for the presentation and creation of identity and identity play for all netizens, because identity is ambiguous in the virtual community, given the absence of basic cues about personality and social role embodied in the physical world. For the post-1980s generation, ICTs not only function as the main tools for work and entertainment; they are also used as platforms to express the individuals' inner voice, and as a cultural site to participate in popular culture and digital culture.

1.3 Research Questions and Chapter Organization

The objective of this study is to seek to understand the interplay of ICTs and identity representation and creation for the Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers in their early adulthood. The group was chosen was because that (1) as a member of the migrants in the background of China's large scale urbanization, this group is highly relevant to the modern social reality in China, however, comparing to their less-educated peers – the "peasant workers", the migrant graduate workers are much less discussed in academic writing. Moreover, for the ICTs research, the migrant graduate workers maybe a better choice with promisingly richer findings in creative ICT use,

comparing to the *minggong* group, as they are the first e-generation in China, much better educated and much more IT savvy. (2) The youth are armed with ICTs, and also face to create and format their personal and social identity in their early adulthood. During this period, the intensively dynamic identity activities make them a good choose to for the topic of the interplay of identity and ICTs. (3) Comparing to the local youth – the other group of members of the first e-generation in China and the new white-collar class in major cities, the rural-to-urban youth experienced more transmutation and changes, and therefore various contradictions encoded into their identity, such as (1) the contradiction between a rural/semi-urban childhood experience and an urban/cosmopolitan early adulthood; (2) the contradictions between long lasting social relations (including blood ties) with a lower class and desired emerging social identification with the urban middle class. For the group, these contradictions are emerged because of the difference among their lower socioeconomic background, the past life experience in underdevelopment regions (often rural areas), the current life situation as urbanites and white –collar workers, and their ambition - to be members of the urban middle class. All these contradictions and the struggles of the group are embedded in the economical, social, historical and culture context of China. These facts makes this particular group a proper choice to understand the interaction of the ICT adoption and social context.

With specific emphasis in class identity and youth identity, the present research seeks to explore

(1) For the group, how ICTs can be used to represent and/or create one's real identity, alternative identity, ideal identity and committed identity during their early adulthood, with an emphasis in Class-based identity?

(2) How the participants' ICT use relate to the most important aspects of the participants' identity construction during their youth adulthood, such as the life goal and relationship maintenance?

Although there are many aspects of identity, "class" and "youth" are the focused dimensions in the research, as they are the key features separate the group from others and also more relevant to the social contexts. Therefore my investigation will be organized around two general themes: how the ICT adoption and usage interact with one's class identity, and with one's youth identity. Their identity-related both offline and online ICT use will be analyzed. In so doing, it is hoped that this study will fill the existing gap in the scholarship on this specific group's ICT use and identity formation, and more importantly, it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which ICTs intricately connected to a group of people, within a particular discursive context.

My theoretical point of departure is that ICTs need to be understood within its specific social, economical and cultural context, the ways in which people interact with ICTs are closely interrelated with their everyday life actualities, including the biographical (for example, as post-80s, as rural-to-urban migrants, and as white-collar graduate workers in the case of the participants of the research), historical, social, cultural, and institutional context in which their lives are embedded. Therefore, I put much effort in providing the background information in **Chapter 2**, including the reforms, transformations and modernizations of contemporary China, the introduction and development of ICT and migrants' hybrid identities. Among these revolutions, of particular relevance to rural-to-urban graduate workers are reforms to the market economy, urbanization, household registration system, higher education, job market

and housing. Besides the course of these transformations, the process of the domestication and evolution of ICTs form the background to this research.

In **Chapter 3**, after introducing theories on identity and identity formation, the discussion will move on to how youth construct their identity in the particular life stage, how individuals present and create their class identity and social identity. The theories about class, modernity, consumption, social capital, as well as cyberspace will be organized to explain identity and identity formation both in the offline and online society. Then, it will move on to theorize ICTs and discuss how mobile phone and computer are used in identity presentation and identity formation amongst the youth. Lastly, it discussed the literatures on the ICT use in China, with the emphasis in the groups of the youth and the migrants.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the methodology used in this study. This includes a semi-structured interview complemented by a survey with a sample of 40 conducted in Beijing from December 5, 2010 to January 20, 2011; and July 16, 2011 to August 15, 2011.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 analyze the data collected from the fieldwork and try to explain the interplay of the ICT use and identity formation during one's young adulthood. Chapter 5 addresses the main findings and introduces the participants' general ICT use, and the other three chapters separately examine how ICTs are related to the youth's life goals, relationship maintenance and online identify exploration.

Chapter 9 concludes the whole thesis by summarizing the research findings, while reflecting on the limitations and provides recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Fluidity and Hybridity of Chinese Rural-to-Urban Graduate Workers' Identity Contexted in China's 30-Year Reforms

In the late 1970s, the Chinese government embarked on "reform and opening" (*gaige kaifang*) to strengthen its regime and improve the citizens' living conditions. The avowed national goal, set out by Deng Xiaoping in 1984, was to "to achieve a *xiaokang* (well-off) society for the ordinary people by the end of the century". Thirty years of reform have resulted in China's meteoric rise on the world stage: its planned economic system has gradually made way for a market economy system, making it the second largest economy in the world, overtaking Japan (*Business Today,* 2010). China has maintained an average annual growth rate of 9.8%, or triple the world average since 1978. China's technology development has kept pace with its economic growth, permeating and affecting every aspect of the people's daily lives and communications. For its residents, this has meant an upward trend in living standards and, as widely assumed, in the quality of life.

In reality, however, there have been attendant problems as well, such as uneven distribution of wealth and a deepening disparity in regional incomes. The uneven development between underdeveloped rural villages and the more modernized cities has sparked massive migration from the "old world" to the "new" and "happening" cities.

For the rural-to-urban graduate workers, *gaige kaifang* set their living conditions and also deeply shaped their identity. From the macro perspective, market reform brings about tremendous economic growth and also consumerism; urbanization reform accentuates the stark distinction between the urban and the rural,

between the haves and the have-nots. While higher education expansion creates more opportunities for young adults, it also inexorably leads to the degradation of the quality of higher education and the status of university graduates, resulting in intense competition in the job market. On the housing front, China's overheated economy has resulted in skyrocketing home prices, further intensifying the anxieties of rural-to-urban graduates who feel communal and societal pressure to buy their own home.

The social background is the life conditions of the group, and also the social causes of the contradiction of their identity: the migrant experience from the children in the underdevelopment regions (often rural areas) to the white collar workers in cosmopolitan, the difference between the peasantal origins and the ambition of being members of the urban middle class. The ambiguous and overlapping identities of the rural-urban graduate workers are the result of Chinese traditional culture and modern reforms.

2.1 As the Post-1980s Generation in the Background of Market Reform

The most basic identity for the subjects of the research is being the post-1980s generation (*80hou*). This generation comprises approximately 240 million people born between 1980 and 1990 (Department of Population and Employment Statistics, 2010). Both positive and negative social remarks are tied with this generation, such as "a Beat Generation", "the generation that never wants to grow up", "the reliable backbone of China's future". Meanwhile, many of the new rich and the writers among this generation are recognized as the trailblazers, opinion leaders and idols of their generation. The characteristics of the generation, such as growing up without experiencing hardships, better educated than their parents, being keen users of ICTs,

materialistic as well as idealistic, are largely resulted by the market reform starting from the late 1970s.

The direct results of the market reforms are as follows: firstly, the emergence of a growing urban middle class that has seen a conspicuous rise in their disposable incomes and can afford the many consumer goods available to them: modern apartments, automobiles and the latest technological gadgets (Wang & Lin, 2009). Secondly, the emergence of a consumer market that is consumer-driven, and widely encouraged. China is now the world's third largest market for luxury goods (Pocha, 2006). Individualism, materialism, consumerism and hedonic consumption are growing tendencies (McEwen, Fang, Zhang, & Burkholder, 2006; Wang & Lin, 2009) amongst the Chinese, despite a previous tradition that veered toward thrift and savings. The "spend now" attitude and tendencies are more pronounced among those who are younger, better educated, and financially better off—a trend that attests to the success of advertising, marketing and promotion campaigns (R. Wei & Pan, 1999).

2.2 As Rural-to-Urban Migrants Resulted by the Urbanization and *Hukou* System

The next aspect of the subjects' identity is as rural-to-urban migrants, which is a direct result of the China's urbanization and *hukou* system.

As a central part of China's strategy for sustainable growth, urbanization has brought about considerable progress and achievements in urban construction during the last 30 years (Campanella, 2008; Davis & Feng, 2008; Fang, 2009; Freeman, 2009). Economic growth not only promotes the expansion of modern industries and transformation of economic structure, it also fuels other consequences such as

massive population migration patterns from agriculture-dominated rural areas to industry- and service-dominated urban areas (Henderson, 1988).

China's urban population has seen an exponential increase in numbers. From the early 1990s, huge waves of migrants from rural regions flooded into urban areas because of: (1) increased demand for manual labour in the cities so as to realize Deng's market-oriented reforms; (2) employment opportunities created by the inflow of foreign direct investment, which fostered urban population growth; and (3) better opportunities and living conditions in the cities (Cai & Wang, 2009; Campanella, 2008; Davis & Feng, 2008; Ngai, 1999; Wallis, 2008). Hence, China's urban population has grown from 20.6% in 1982 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1982) to 26.23% in 1990 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1990) and 26.09% in 2000 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2000). The sixth National Population Census reported that, by December 2010, China's population was 1.37 billion, with 665.57 million (49.68%) in the urban areas, and 674.15million (50.32%) in the rural areas, with a migrant population of 221.43 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). In 2010, an estimated 19.72 million people lived in Beijing. Of these, 36.84% (7.264 million) were registered migrants who had lived in the city for more than half a year (*The Beijing News*, 2010).

Unlike the majority of migrant workers who immigrate to cities when they start work, the migration experience of rural-to-urban graduate workers begins when they are enrolled as college students. Although the inequalities between the locals (*bendi ren*) and migrants or "outsiders" (*waidi ren*) are not distinct while they are in school, the disparities between them in society, especially in the job market, are significant.

Besides the difference between the locals and the outsiders, the inequalities between the urbanites and the peasants- the social identity pigeonholed by the *hukou* system has more Chinese character. And the system has set the historical and psychological basis for the discrimination toward rural people (Zhao, 2000).

The *hukou* system[3], or the household registration system, was introduced in 1958 to classify the national population into mutually exclusive urban-rural categories (*nongye renkou* vs. *fei nongye renkou*) (see Y. Liu & Wu, 2006) to cater to the demands of the planned economy and to guarantee employment and social welfare for urbanites by preventing rural-to-urban migration (Cai & Wang, 2009). Therefore, those who were designated "agricultural" found themselves geographically and socially immobilized. However, during the reforms, to meet the tremendous manpower demand of sustained industrial development in the rural areas and to boost the pace of urbanization and domestic consumption, the division between agricultural *hukou* and urban *hukou* has been relaxed and withdrawn in 13 provinces and regions. However it is still difficult to acquire urban citizenship in metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai.

Today, although economic liberalization and social transformation have substantially weakened *hukou* as a form of regulating residents' mobility, this system still largely determines one's access to a range of welfare, resource and other opportunities and, consequently, one's potential in life. Urban citizens have more benefits in four aspects: employment, housing, social security (including health care,

---

[3] China's *hukou* (household registration) system is a powerful method of population management and organization. It requires individuals to register with local authorities to gain residency and thereby determine where people lived and worked. A household registration record officially identifies individuals as residents of an area and includes identifying information such as name, parents, spouse, and date of birth. The household registration record (*hukou ben*) is issued for each family, and usually includes births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and physical location, of all members in the family.

pension and compensation payouts) and education, which are issues of greatest concern. More importantly, *hukou* categories and the resulting identities have created a "caste-like system of social stratification" in China (see Wallis, 2008). Being a peasant is not only a job title; it is an identity which translates to "undeveloped," "lack of education," "poor," and "uncivilized," and they are often treated as second-class citizens. These disparities and discrimination in welfare and reputation also exist between the developed and undeveloped provinces. Lastly and ironically, the value of agricultural *hukou* has increased significantly because of the increasing value of the homestead and farmland.

These social facts are directly reflected in changes to the Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers' *hukou* status. Most of them were labeled from the start as peasants. Later, the status changed to "urban" when s/he enrolled at a university in the city as a member of a collective *hukou*[4]. After graduation, their *hukou* is usually managed by the "human source market" a government department in the cities in which their universities are located, or in their hometowns; a small number[5] obtain urban *hukou* from the cities in which they are working, while others continue to be labeled as peasants. All the newly transformed "urbanites" have taken on a collective *hukou* which is different from the family-based *hukou* of the locals. For them, the switch in status to a nominal identity as urbanite comes at a cost—the valuable land in their hometowns which, for some, is the only link to their past.

---

[4] Collective urban *hukou* is dependent on the workers uniting (if the holder is an employee) or university (if the holder is a student). It is different from the independent *hukou* held by the residents, because only the independent *hukou* guarantees the welfares. The collective *hukou* holders are subject to the number of registered migrants and local residents.

[5] They are working for the government or state-owned enterprises and only these organizations have the capacities to apply the collective urban *hukou* for their employees.

For the rural-to-urban graduate workers, their rural *hukou* is because of their peasant parentage and rural birthplaces, even though the majority have never worked in the fields and have no intention of doing so. Thurs, although many are, or once were, officially labeled as "peasants" in the *hukou* system, after studying and working in cities for several years, the majority has chosen to deny this official identity and identify themselves as urban citizens. They are struggling to change their socioeconomic status, life style and eventually their official and social identity by engaging in modern urban life, though the intention was constrained by their parentage, strained living circumstances and limited local social ties at the first beginning. Even if some of them successfully obtain the urban *hukou*, they are regarded as permanent migrants instead of locals. Moreover, the difference between the local urbanites and the rural-to-urban migrants is interpreted to be caused by their inequalities in financial status. Li Chengpeng, a well-known Chinese public opinion leader, said: "From my point of view, there is no difference between Beijing locals and migrants; instead, there are only the rich and the poor. If you don't have money, everyone in China is a migrant in your own country"(Li, 2011).

2.3 As White-Collar Graduate Workers after the Education Reform

What distinct the participants of the study from the migrant workers is their higher education and their office job, which brings them another layer of identity as college graduates and white-collar workers. And again, this identity is highly related with Chinese social context, including the education-emphasized traditional culture and the high education reform as well as the followed education inflation and the fiercely competitive labour market. Moreover, for the migrant graduate workers, the

contradiction between a rural or semi-urban childhood and an urban/cosmopolitan early adulthood defines their identity as rural-to-urban migrants.

Chinese culture has a long history of emphasizing the value and importance of education as the only way for the populace to raise their social status. Chinese parents place great importance on their children's education and spend a disproportionate amount of their family income in pursuit of education. Before the expansion of higher education, college graduates in China were known as "social elites" (*tianzhijiaozi*).

In the new era, the demand for higher education in China has expanded since 1999,because of three immediate motivations: firstly, to boost domestic consumption which had been sluggish since the 1997 Asian economic crisis; secondly, to reduce the high unemployment rate which was then estimated to be 9%; and finally, to achieve "mass higher education" (Bai, 2006), defined as the stage "when over 15 percent of the age grade have access to higher education" (Trow, 1973). In 2002, the goal to realize "mass higher education" (MOE, 1998) was achieved, eight years earlier than its original plan. In 2008, enrolments of higher education reached 53.95 million (MOE, 2008a), which made China the largest higher education sector in the world, with an enrolment rate of 23.3% (MOE, 2008b). The distribution of university graduates and diploma holders increased significantly, from 3,611 per million in 2000, to 8,930 per million in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistica of China, 2011).

Reform in the higher education sector has provided more opportunities for higher education. However, there are also disparities between urban and rural regions: as the quality of basic education in the rural region is much lower, it is more difficult for these students to gain admission to university. For the fortunate ones, they want to make the best use of the recognition of higher education to turn their lives around and extricate themselves from their remote and impoverished hometowns in exchange for

life, and better opportunities in the developed and modernized cities. On the other hand, the expansion has also resulted in the inferior quality of the programs and degrees, and further, the increasing numbers of unemployed graduates. In July 2010, China's Ministry of Education (MOE) revealed that over 25%, or about 1.5 million of the 6.3 million students who graduated in the previous six months, were unemployed[6]. As a result, some of the social elites once-to-be have become part of "the four vulnerable groups," followed by peasants, migrant workers and the unemployed (Zhao, 2009). Moreover, because economic and industrial development in China has been haphazard and not equally apportioned, graduates from the hard sciences, engineering, and business, the most popular programs in universities, find that their job opportunities are severely limited to big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

The job crisis is believed to be worse for graduates from the rural regions because they lack urban *hukou* and *guanxi* (relationship). The average monthly income of fresh college graduates hovers above the poverty-level income of RMB 1,500 (S$300) and no more than the salary of peasant workers (*nongmingong*) with secondary level education (Hambides, 2010). Meanwhile, rural-to-urban workers overwhelmingly believe that the salary and career prospects in big cities are much better than in their hometowns and smaller cities. Special funds and subsidies have been earmarked to encourage college graduates to work in rural regions or to start their own businesses. Nevertheless, most graduates still prefer to try their luck in the large cities and very few would venture to start their own businesses (Pettis, 2009).

---

[6] At the national level, there were variations in the numbers of graduate unemployment reported by different government ministries; researchers estimated the unemployment rate could be close to 30% (Li & Zhang, 2010). There were also reports of China universities fabricating and inflating employment figures of their graduates by issuing bogus work contracts as millions struggle to find work amid the downturn (Reuters, 2009). It was called "being employed" (*bei jiuye*). Further explanation can be found at http://finance.ifeng.com/topic/money/beijiuye/index.shtml

After being offered a job, being white-collar professionals is also different for the rural migrants as it is widely believed that they are treated differently from their urban counterparts in terms of occupational attainments and wages (Knight & Yueh, 2004; Law & Chu, 2008; Li & Zhang, 2010; Peng, 2008; Wallis, 2008). Rural-to-urban graduate workers have to face a relatively foreign (and often discriminatory) job-market and overcome the disadvantage of fewer family connections, different cultural backgrounds and discrimination (Knight & Yueh, 2004; Li & Zhang, 2010). For the rural-to-urban migrant workers, their degree and white- collar job is the foundation to achieve their dreams of becoming China's new generation of middle class, living a different lifestyle from that of their parents, and the lifestyle is featured by fashionable and personalized clothes, hairdos, accessories and ICT gadgets to express their taste, personalities and distinctiveness.

The appearance of the while collar college graduate workers from the local and the rural areas may be indistinguishable; however, their housing status differentiates the two groups. While the majority young local workers live in their own apartment worth of millions RMB bought by their parents years ago when the housing price was still reasonable, many migrants rent units in buildings, divisions, or share rooms with their peers. Many of these buildings are low-cost, low-quality, self-built houses in "urban villages"[4]. In Beijing, there used to be well-known settlements such as Tangjialing and Xiaoyuehe, with up to 10 people cramped into a 90-m^2 apartment with shared toilet and kitchen, paying average rent of about RMB 377 (S$ 75) per person (Lian, 2009, p. 31). However, the government had the buildings

---

[4] Urban villages or "villages in the city" (*chengzhongcun*) are engulfed by the expansion of urban areas. Located within the city, they are managed by farmers or their collectives and become migrant enclaves (Wu, 2009). Despite the poor living conditions, urban villages are not slums, and often contain urban infrastructure (Wang, Wang, & Wu, 2009); these urban villages offer new migrants a place to adapt to urban life in a transitional period (Tian, 2008).

torn down and rebuilt, and promulgated regulations to prohibit such renting, after the policymakers' attention was drawn to these living arrangements disclosed by the book, *Yizu*. Since then, migrants had to pay more to rent a single room; others live in multi-occupancy or "several-bed" rooms, and some continue to live in such divisions.

Their living conditions are the direct result of China's housing reform. In 1998, following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and to stimulate domestic demand so as to maintain 8% GDP growth and to boost the housing market, the State Council declared that it would phase out the original welfare housing system and encourage urban residents purchase their apartments from the state-owned enterprises or from the market (Wang, 2007).[7] Today, China's property price has skyrocketed, although it has been relieved because of policies and regulations to hold prices stable. By 2009, the property price to average annual income ratio in Beijing was in the ratio of 25:1 (Jin, 2010).

The difference in housing prices among the regions is stark. In Beijing, the price is approximately RMB 35,000 (S\$ 7,000) per m^2; in a small town in an undeveloped province in the West, the corresponding price is about RMB 2,000 (S\$400). There is a local saying among the Chinese: "It is better to rent a bed in Beijing than to purchase an apartment anywhere else." At first sight, this seems to make sense in terms of regional differences in potential opportunities, public facilities and approachable welfare. In contemporary China, home ownership is regarded as a reflection of an individual's abilities, social status and marriage potential[8]. The newly

---

[7] The announcement was stated as the Further Deepening of the Urban Housing System Reform to Speed up Housing Construction Notice.
[8] Many young Chinese regard a flat as a basic requirement to marriage, with the duty of purchasing a home falling on the men.

coined words *yizu* (who shares crowed rooms with others), *woju*[9](who lives humbly and saves money to buy a flat) and *fangnu* (house slaves who buy a flat on mortgage), serve to describe the different housing situations of Chinese youths. Meanwhile, the ever-rising property price and strong housing demand continue to fuel rental rates in the large cities. The average monthly rental for a one-bedroom apartment in urban Beijing and Shanghai is over RMB 2,000 (S$400).

---

[9] In English, the literal translation is humble abode or dwelling narrowness. The word was derived from a popular television series broadcast in Mainland China in 2009, translated literally as *Snail House*. The story revolves around two sisters from a small town, struggling with life after graduating from university in Jiangzhou, a fictional city that strongly resembles Shanghai. It portrays the difficulties of buying an apartment in the city, reflecting the real situation of many young migrants.

Chapter 3 Literature Review on Interaction of ICTs and Identity

This chapter reviews the literature on identity, identity formation, and the interaction between ICTs and identity. As the objective of the research is to understand the interplay of the identity construction and ICTs use amongst a particular group of Chinese migrant youth, the three focus of the discussion are (1) the comprehensive understanding of identity, including identity theory, identity formation during early adulthood, and identity markers (with an emphasis in class) in modern society, as well as the online identity; (2) how ICTs, namely the mobile phone and Internet, are used to represent and create one's offline and online identity; (3) the relatedness of ICTs use and identity work in China, with particular emphasis in the youth and the migrants.

3.1 Identities and Identity Formation in Modern Society

Identity is defined as the interface between macro and micro, exterior and interior, the social world and the individual person within it, as well as other people's views of "who I am," and how I see myself. These binaries—macro/micro, exterior/interior, social/individual, others/self—shape the complexities of identities, making the concept always in the plural and practical analysis (Woodward, 2004). In the modern world, modernity is the largest macro, exterior and social factor that influences our lives significantly, including our identity, identity formation, and identity presentation. Giddens (1991) noted that if we consider the term "modernity" descriptive of the cultural environment in which we live, then all identity processes occur within this global sphere, and the Internet age has created one universal identity to which we all belong.

For many, modernity characterizes identity and identity formation. Its impact is profound, intensive, and extensive, in three aspects. Firstly, modernity emphasizes autonomy and individuality, and is reflected in individuals' identity. Personal identity and social identity deeply feature social class, social relations and social sex, which are crucial markers of identity. Secondly, as modernity is achieved through the growth of capitalism and urbanization, consumption becomes the largest symbol for taste and social class, which are intricately intertwined, and the notion of taste is used to mark distinctions and social stratification. In the modern context, "being modern" is the universal identity; and representing modernity through consumption is the central dimension of this universal identity. Lastly, individuals now live in a world highly penetrated by ICTs, especially mobile phones and computers. These technologies link individuals together, but also set them apart; in the modern context, technologies provide a new playground for individuals to present and construct personal and social identities, real life and desired identities.

The following discussion explores the fluid, hybrid mix of identities in modern society. The first section begins with a brief summary of identity theories and identity formation during adolescence and young adulthood, moving on to the relationship between four important factors—social class, consumption, social capital, and social sex (or gender)—which are closely related to the identity of the participants, providing a comprehensive foundation for understanding identity as a hybrid production of its markers. This is followed by a discussion on cyberspace and virtual identity.

3.1.1 Identities and Identity Theory

James (1890), a pioneer in the study of identities, distinguished between

private self (the "I") and public self (the "me"), establishing the basis for identity theory. The "I" represents the facet of the self as a subject or agent, acting upon the world, while the "me" is another facet that is similar to an object that may be reflected upon by the self and others. Cooley (1902) and Mead (Mead, 1934) developed this further and asserted that the self is the product of social interaction. Goffman (1959) emphasized the impact of social activities on individuals' identity formation, defining an individual's identity as "the subjective sense of his own situation and his own continuity and character that an individual comes to obtain as a result of his various social experiences" (p. 105). Stryker (1980) further distinguished the self as a multifaceted social construct that emerges from one's roles in society. Society provides roles that are the basis for the formation of identity, and social attributes are considered to have an indirect impact on the self through their effect on "the role positions people can hold, the relative importance of their role identities, and the nature of their interactions with others" (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Generally, identity encompasses three dimensions: ego identity, emphasized in physiology, refers to the more fundamental and subjective sense of continuity which characterizes the personality; personal identity refers to the more concrete aspects of individual experience rooted in interactions (and institutions); and social identity means one's position(s) in a particular society structure (Côté, 1996).

Social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) also provides insights to understanding identity, especially social identity. According to the theory, membership in social groups and categories is an important component for the self (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Individuals can be grouped into a variety of social categories, with membership being based on the defining characteristics of the group to which the individual feels s/he best

resonates with his or her concept of "self." Each of these category memberships is represented as a social identity that both describes and prescribes one's attributes as a member of that group regarding "what one should think and feel, and how one should behave" (Hogg, et al., 1995). Thus, the groups to which individuals belong define who they are, and the norms by which they should behave, in the social sphere (Terry & Hogg, 1996). Identity is consistent for insiders and group members, but also exogenous. In this light, individuals will consciously differentiate themselves from outsiders or avoidance groups by making sure their norms and patterns of behaviour reflect that of their self-chosen categories (Akerlof & Kranton, 2009). Several factors are considered with regard to increasing individuals' tendency to identify with certain groups, such as a group's distinctive values and practices, prestige, and salience of out-groups. The consequences of identifying with groups are summarized as congruency, internalization, and reinforcement of antecedents of social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Identity is marked by differences, and individuals mark their identities by some symbols of difference (Woodward, 2004). The self and its identities, along with the difference, participate in social life through self-presentation, which is defined as "people's attempts to convey information about, and images of, the self and its identities to others" (Baumeister, 1998, p. 688).

For immigrants, migration is the process in which individuals put their identity at risk to "experience a wholesale loss of one's meaningful and valued objects: people, things, places, language, culture" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 26); they try to bridge between two identities, without necessarily arriving at, or completing, the transition.

3.1.2 Identity Formation during Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Identity formation is the development of an individual's identity towards a discrete and separate entity that includes a sense of continuity, a sense of uniqueness from others, and a sense of affiliation. Identity formation is regarded either as a task specially assigned in adolescence, or a life-long task that has its roots in the development of the self in infancy (Grotevant, 1987). Identity formation is addressed in several different domains, including career, religious and political ideology, values, sexual orientation, and the perception of self in friendships and committed relationships (Grotevant, 1987).

Many psychologists have tried to characterize the self-identity development process into designated stages, some of which overlap. Among them, Erik Erikson is arguably the most influential scholar. Over the decades, Erikson (1950, 1968, 1973) proposed a human growth model divided into eight distinct life stages—starting with infancy, and ending in late adulthood—characterized by challenges and crises in each stage. Individuals are expected to confront, and hopefully master, new challenges and upgrade to the next life stage. Although Erikson's model has largely been replaced, as the research paradigm in identity research, by Marcia (1966)'s new model which based on Erikson's, successfully pointing out the importance of two key processes involved in identity formation: exploration of alternatives, and commitment to choices (Matteson, 1977), it is useful to explore the participants' identity formation in this research, as it focused on the ongoing process of identity formation.

In Erikson's model, by the ages of 13 to 19, individuals are in the fifth stage of "identity versus identity diffusion," during which, adolescents try to combine all the aspects of identity into an integral identity to become an adult with all the attributes developed from the previous four stages. In a book introducing Erikson's ideas, Gross

(1987, p. 47) stated:

> *Youth has a certain unique quality in a person's life; it is a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a time of radical change—the great body changes accompanying puberty, the ability of the mind to search one's own intentions and the intentions of others, the suddenly sharpened awareness of the roles society has offered for later life.*

During adolescence, youths are in a state of "identity confusion" and "identity crisis" (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 15) and society normally makes allowances for youths to freely explore and experiment with one's identity to "find the true self." Successful adolescents who "emerge with a firm sense of identity, an emotional and deep awareness of who he or she is" and are able to integrate their identity with society enter the young adult stage (Stevens, 1983, p. 50).

In the sixth stage, "intimacy versus isolation" becomes the topic, and the youth must now learn how to maintain the self in close harmony with others. Although the role of confusion is coming to an end, it still lingers at the start of the stage (Erikson, 1950, p. 242). Young adults seek intimate relationships with others and to blend their identities with them. Once people have established their identities, they are capable of forming intimate, reciprocal and long-term committed relationships which "means the ability to face the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandon" (Erikson, 1973, p. 155). Individuals that cannot form these relationships may find themselves in a deep sense of isolation (Erikson, 1973, p. 155). It is worth noting that the age ranges are fluid, especially with regard to identity achievement, which may take many years. Thus, there is no exact time span in which to "find" oneself, and may only culminate in one's twenties (Gross, 1987, p. 39).

Based on the theory and the practical situation, the participants of this research were in the sixth stage, with some still in the later fifth stage: young adults in their 20s have already experienced several milestones, such as completing higher education, holding full-time jobs, and embarking on other responsibilities of adulthood, including making crucial choices in marriage, family, work, lifestyle, and life goals, perhaps before they were sufficiently mature or experienced to make wise decisions. In the context of society and relationships with others, these young adults found themselves experiencing growing pains in discovering their real selves and in making major commitments.

3.1.3 Class Identity in Network Society and Consumer Society

Class, as a major influential source of identity, and the relationship between an individual's socio-economic background and identity formation, plays a crucial role in the identities and identity creation of migrant graduate workers from low socio-economic backgrounds. Class is used to classify and represent individuals into different categories, such as "working class" or "middle class", and people within the same class share the economic status, which is largely determined by occupation and income. The representation of social class can be embraced or rejected by the individuals (Woodward, 2004, p. 80).

The concept of class within identity is contested. Marxist sociologists argue that class is embedded in economic structure. For Marx, capitalist society produced two great hostile camps—"bourgeoisie" and "proletariat," ruling class and working class (Marx & Engels, 1959). The division between the two classes is more closet and subtle in the new century and the Neo-Marxist sociologists also tried to analyse the new situation by applying the modified Marxism. Castells used the term "network

society" to describe the modern society where the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks, and where networks have become its basic units. The diffusion of a networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture (Castells, 2004). In this network society, labour was divided as "self-programmable labour" and "generic labour" according to their use of network. Self-programmable labour has somewhat autonomy to focus on the assigned goal demands creative capacity which obtained by appropriate trainings, and they make use of ICTs to create value for the society and themselves. On the other hand, generic labour is ICT have-less. They can be replaced by machines or by less expensive labour. They are mainly working in natural resource, manufacturing, and service industries, also minimum wage and sweatshop labour and the service industry, and are not equipped with the ICT knowledge. And the flexibility and adaptability of both kinds of labour to a constantly changing environment is a pre-condition for their use as labour (Castells, 2004, pp. 10-11).

Hardt and Negri (2000) coined "immaterial labour" to define the labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity. They work in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, using ICT skills. Meanwhile, they involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work", such as fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion. Based on the field work in China, Qiu (2009) implied the network society theory in China and developed the term "immaterial labour" to "network labour" to describe a new working class in Morden China in the network society. These Chinese non-elite knowledge workers works in electronics manufacturing industry, information services industry and media industry with new types of digital work, such as customer service

officers in call centres, the interns and ttemporary workers in media, SMS authors, the low-level IT workers and "playbour" who make money by online gaming. In terms of demographic variables, the majority of the "network labour" are youth with IT skills, including the migrants form towns and rural areas, and the urban unemployed and underemployed, and the work-study students. All of them use information technologies as tools of employment as well as worker organisation.

Unlike the Marxists, Weber viewed social class as a set of stratified status divisions within a particular organization. Individuals with common backgrounds, interests and similar opportunities for earning income, share market position and are categorized in the same class. Division and inequalities exist amongst classes, and restrict, or privilege, individuals for opportunities to a better lifestyle in relation to consumption in housing, health caring and education (Weber, 2003).

Social class can also be empirically studied using socio-economic status approach, which notes the correlation of income, education and wealth with social outcomes (Coleman, Rainwater, & McClelland, 1978; Gilbert, 1998; Thompson & Hickey, 2005; Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1949). The various classes—upper, middle, lower and the subclasses—are used to describe the class structure in developed countries, although the delineation between social classes differ in time and cultures. A detailed model of social stratification divided modern Chinese society into four classes—cadre and quasi-cadre, capitalist, working class (including urban state worker and urban collective worker, urban non-state worker, and peasant worker), and a peasant class (Li, 2005, p. 220). This widely applied model has been criticized for delineating only on the basis of economic capital, while ignoring other important forms of capitals—social capital (more often known as *guanxi* in Chinese), cultural capital and human capital—equally important in deciding individuals' placement

within the cultural fields. Moreover, the model is sorely outdated and does not reflect China's ongoing and escalating social mobility, for example, omitting the "new middle class", a emergent social category of wealth (Robison & Goodman, 1996, p. 225) resulting from China's economic reforms. They are individuals previously part of a lower socioeconomic rank, but have acquired considerable wealth in the current generation.

In the past, social class identification was based on collective identity and determined by communal work; in modern society, social class identification has moved to individual identity, represented by lifestyle and consumption. Today, in the customer society, class identity is determined by occupation and income, and visibly represented by consumption and lifestyle, which provides individuals with opportunities to confer their class identity through the consumption of private goods.

Goffman (1961) asserted that individuals use an "identity kit"—in the form of tools and commodities—to present the self (p. 14). Ewen (1988) used the term "commodity self" to indicate that one's identity and relationships with others is an amalgamation of displayed commodities, and that styled and fashionable commodities are objectified to provide a "powerful medium of encounter and exchange" (p. 76). Likewise, consumer goods become instruments "for the construction of self," even if this "commodity self" was a surrogate self (Ewen, 1988, p. 76). To Bourdieu (1984), the "aesthetic disposition" or one's taste "unites [us] and separates [others]," and shows how "one classifies oneself and is classified by others" (p. 56).

Researchers further suggest that, as consumption signifies one's identity, individuals' consumption decisions are largely based on one's identity. That is to say, not only does one's consumption decision depend on one's "unique preference," but also on the image created by others' equilibrium choices (within the context of in-

groups and out-groups) in society. Based on social identity theory, people choose cultural products that are similar to group members' preferences, while differentiating themselves by adopting different consumer goods which may signify other groups. Berger and Heath (2007; 2008) explained individuals' selection process on the basis of cultural tastes (e.g., possessions, attitudes, or behaviors) that distinguish them from other groups, abandoning such tastes when outsiders adopt them. Recent experimental studies (Berger & Heath, 2007; 2008; Berger & Rand, 2008) have shown how individuals diverge in consumption preferences from the behaviors of others (belonging to different identities).

Among the Chinese, certain consumption goods are regarded as status symbols and these items have conspicuously changed in line with, and reflect, China's booming economy.

3.1.4 Social Capital, Social Ties and Social Identity

Social capital is a term widely used in academia and daily life, and it was conceptualized and defined by Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition)" (p. 114). Putnam (2000) extend the term to include "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them)" (p. 19). And individuals perceive their social identity by these relations, interactions and networks.

Social capital can be used to improve one's social and economic position and is closely related to "the volume of capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic)" of the members of a person's interpersonal network (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Recent

research on social capital focused on its origins, consequences, components and dimensions. Portes (1998) claimed that the sources of social capital include bounded solidarity, value introjections, reciprocal exchange, and enforceable trust; positive consequences of social capital include norm observance, family support, and network mediated benefits; and negative consequences include restricted access to opportunities, restrictions on individual freedom, excessive claims on group members, and downward levelling norms. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) proposed that social capital has structural, relational and shared cognitive dimensions. The structural property of social capital suggests that social capital originated from social networks. The relational dimension reflects the contents of ties, such as super-ordinate-subordinate relationship, which suggests individuals receive different values from different connections with various contents. The cognitive aspect reflects shared representations, interpretations and systems of meanings among parties.

Research in SNS uses "social ties" to conduct networking analysis. The term was coined by Granovetter (1973, 1983) to explain mediated networks and how information, ideas, and social energy or capital circulating among individuals, and within, and between, networks (Genoni, Merrick, & Willson, 2005; Haythornthwaite, 2002). Strong and weak ties are differentiated by a "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Strong ties with family and close friends feature "high levels of emotional engagement, intimacy, and strong bonds of reciprocity." Weak ties require lower emotional engagement and intimacy, which link with more distant friends and associates, and the furthest nodes in a network (Granovetter, 1983); these are vital for broad heterogeneous network cohesion. Latent ties, the third level, refers to bonding with technical potential, but

has not yet been activated. Latent ties are of interest in discussions of identity

performance, and can be turned into a weak—or perhaps, over time, a strong— tie

(Pearson, 2009). Wellman and his colleague (2002) coined a similar term, "network

capital," focused on how ICTs affect interpersonal relationships, defined as the

"relations with friends, neighbours, relatives, and workmates that significantly

provide companionship, emotional aid, goods and services, information, and a sense

of belonging)" (p. 545).

In China, the cultural system emphasizes social communication and

interaction with each other (Wallis, 2008; Yu & Tng, 2003), exhibited in indigenous

values such as *guanxi*, *mianzi* (face), *renqing* (favour), and *bao* (reciprocation) (see

Wang & Lin, 2009). *Guanxi* is synonymous with social capital[10], which exists among

people with shared primordial traits such as kinship, native place, ethnicity, and also

achieved characteristics such as alumni and colleges. Thus, individuals are

encouraged to consciously establish *guanxi*, and to cultivate and maintain *guanxi*

through mutual exchange, such as regular greetings, contacts, and gifts (Gold, et al.,

2002). Individuals with high-quality *guanxi* are believed to have an edge over almost

all aspects of life and society, especially in employment and promotion (Huang, 2008).

3.1.5 Cyberspace and Virtual Identity

Individuals take advantage of technology to present and negotiate identities

online. In this thesis, cyberspace is a metaphor of the Internet, the virtual space of

digital communication network, or the site for computer mediated communication

---

[10] Scholars noted differences between the two terms. Firstly, the mutual benefits and interests entailed in *guanxi* are more implicit and subtle than in social capital (Yan, 1996; Yang, 1994). Secondly, while both terms involve material benefit, *guanxi* also involves feelings or sentiment, called *renqing*. Thus, "instrumentalism and sentiment come together in *guanxi*, as cultivating *guanxi* successfully over time creates a basis of trust in a relationship (Gold, Guthrie, & Wank, 2002, p. 8)."

(CMC), in which online relationships and alternative forms of virtual identity or online identity are enacted. Virtual identity also has personal and social aspects. Personal virtual identity refers to users' online representation and states, "Who I am," in a virtual environment. Social virtual identity relates to users' social interactions with others, and one's position and membership within an online community (Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011, p. 63).

Šmahel (2003, cited in Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011) asserted that there are two facets to virtual or online identity. Firstly, it refers to the identity or identities individuals display or create online through self-presentation (or representation), in the sense of "virtual representation," rather than a physical presence, in digital contexts. Virtual representation includes digital data about a user in virtual contexts, such as a nickname/username, email address, online history, and status within that virtual setting. Individuals can change their digital representations in different online contexts (e.g., using different nicknames), or even different digital representations in a context (e.g., multiple avatars within a virtual platform). Secondly, in a psychological sense, virtual identity refers to an individual's online self or persona formed by a sophisticated process of conceptualization and transformation. Users transfer, perhaps unconsciously, thoughts, emotions, and other aspects of their self to their online selves, their virtual representations (Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011, p. 62).

Self-presentation, the different ways by which users present themselves to other online users, is important for online identity construction. Although personal information may be more readily available in less anonymous but more private platforms, such as social networking sites, than that of more anonymous online contexts, such as chat rooms and bulletin boards, where even basic information, such as gender, age, physical appearance, and race may not be readily available (McKenna

& Bargh, 2000), individuals still have considerable choice in revealing or not revealing certain aspects of the self. They may highlight some aspects, such as their gender, interests, or sexual preference, while hiding other aspects, or assume and disclose other information during their interaction with other users. Besides identity representation, ICTs, especially the Internet, also provide users with opportunities to play cross different identities, such as "a seductive woman, a 'macho cowboy' type, a rabbit of unspecified gender, and a furry animal," more than the one in real life which is "not usually the best one" (Turkle, 1997, p. 13). However, even for those who refuse to play with their online identities, researcher suggested, "Whenever you put any kind of information out there you have the intention of what you want people to think about you" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 450).

3.2 Theorizing ICTs: Use and Identity

Ito (2004) asserted that, "Technologies are objectifications of particular cultures and social relationships, and in turn, are incorporated into the stream of social and cultural evolution" (p. 2). And, a year later: "Technologies are both constructive of and constructed by historical, social, and cultural contexts" (Ito, 2005a, p. 6). Baudrillard (2000) acknowledged that technological objects are signs of taste, status, and identity. Mackay and Gillespie (1992)went further to state that using these technologies not only involves "the consumption of meanings," but also "the production of meanings by the consumer" (p. 74). Such production of meaning— consumption and adoption of technology—works closely with users' particular identity markers (such as gender, age, and class) within a specific social, cultural, political, and historical context.

For technologies of communications, McLuhan's (1965) fertile notion of

technology as "extensions of man" not only points to the powerful functions of ICTs, but also implies that they impact human body and physical connection (p. 45). In some countries, the term or slang for mobile phone relates to the hands; for example, in Finland, the young refer to it as "an extension of the hand" (Oksman & Rautiainen, 2003, p. 104). In China, the Mandarin term for mobile phone also is with reference to the hand (*shouji*, or literally, "machine in hand"), while the term for computer connects it to the brain (*diannao*, which transliterates to "an electronic brain").

In addition to being regarded as a part of the self, ICTs devices link closely to self-presentation, self-perception, and self-identity (e.g. Lobet-Maris, 2003). Youths establish, maintain, deepen, and dissolve social relationships through ICTs, which may reconfirm an individual's social identity while adding richness to the identity itself and perhaps strengthens it (E. Green & Singleton, 2007; Hjorth, 2008).

Carey set out two facets of communication: transmission and ritual. The transmission approach studies how information is sent and delivered, while the ritual approach emphasizes the symbolic or ritual meaning of communication, relating to notions of community and belonging (Carey, 1989, p. 15). In Carey's words, "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs" (Carey, 1989, p. 18). Communication is "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (Carey, 1989, p. 23). As symbols used to represent everything from personal identity to group solidarity, communication technology devices "create the very reality they present" (Carey, 1989, p. 29). Thus, ownership of ICT devices becomes an unwritten rule that signify particular identity.

In the following discussion, attempting to theorize ICTs as cultural artefacts

and platforms for identity representation and formation, the major findings on the interactions of ICT use and identity are summarized with special regard to youths' usage of mobile phone and computer. These provide a solid foundation for this research, as strong connections have been found between ICTs and identity. Although much of this literature involves students in their teens and early twenties, from relatively affluent background in developed regions with advanced ICTs, such as Northern Europe, the US, and Japan, there have also been studies on youths from less developed regions.

To better analyze, two sections are separately addressing mobile phones and computers: focusing on how mobile phones are used as consumer goods, gendered devices, autonomy shields, and social networking tools, and how online identity tools, social networking sites, and UGCs (user-generated contents) are used to present and construct their identities. Although scholars have explored the symbolic meaning and cultural implications of the two major ICT devices, the focus has tended to be on the physical aspect of mobile phones, as it is more portable for the owner and more visible for the public, while the literature on computers has tended to focus on the impact of cyberspace and online communication on individuals' identity representation and formation. In this chapter, the symbolic meanings of computer as consumer goods have been omitted in the section on computers, as they are similar to that of mobile phones.

3.2.1 Mobile Phone Usage and Identity Formation

Mobile phones are reported to be closely combined with youths' identity construction (Brettell, 2006; Green & Singleton, 2007; Law & Chu, 2008; Ngan & Ma, 2008; Satchell & Graham, 2010). As discussed in section one, consumer objects

represent social status, individual identity and "consumption is part of self-construction" (Poster, 2004). ICTs' functional and symbolic value has made them prime objects of consumerism. Users regard these products as extensions of their physical selves, as many of the gadgets are portable and worn on the body (Gant & Kiesler, 2001; Goodman, 1996), with the mobile phone being a prime example. Mobile phones also offer and grant users more privacy, independence and autonomy, with their parents, as well as in the traditional public space. Lastly, mobile phones efficiently ensure and enhance social bonds among users functionally and emotionally, even in the form of what appears to be meaningless text messages, such as "just want to say hi."

3.2.1.1 Mobile Phones: As Consumer Goods

Brand and fashion are not only marketing strategies, but also closely related to identity, as the taste revealed by fashion implies one's socioeconomic status as well as distinguishes among different subgroups. The ICT industry also emphasizes brand and fashion in the design and advertisement of nearly every product, with the iPod, iMac and iPhone being the best-known examples. LG cooperates with Prada to design the high fashion smartphone. Mobile phones are regarded as fashion statements worn on the human body, displaying one's taste and identity, together with one's accessories or clothes and can, therefore, be operated both as sites for self-identification and cultural capital for onlookers (Hjorth, 2008; Katz & Sugiyama, 2006). For youths, researchers have found that the use of mobile phones as a status symbol is more important than other motives (Law & Chu, 2008; Özcan & Ko çak, 2003). Users of "old" (over two years), cumbersome, or "ugly" gadgets may feel embarrassed (Rich. Ling & Yttri, 2002, pp. 163-164). In China, owning a decent mobile phone is closely related to

perceived social status or maintenance of "face" (Law & Chu, 2008; Peng, 2008; Yang, 2008).

Mobile phones are personalized with styled wallpapers, ringtones, stickers and other decorations. The ways and levels of customization represent one's identity information, such as gender, income and marital status (G. Bell, 2006). Moreover, there is also symbolic meaning in how individuals display their mobile phones. Before mobile phones and other fancy gadgets took on widespread use, society used to regard the flaunting of gadgets as tacky or vulgar, but this is no longer so as gadgets have now become ubiquitous (Ling, 2003, pp. 97-98). Not only do the models, colours, ring tones and wallpaper serve as an expression of personal identity for the youths, or a means to "perform identity," it also conveys a certain style and way to distinguish whether someone is "in" or not (Ling, 2004, p. 85), and "to constitute and accomplish social solidarities and differences, both among themselves, and between themselves and other social groups" (Green, 2003, p. 207).

3.2.1.2 Mobile Phone: As Autonomy Shield

For many youths, it was their parents who had presented them with their first mobile phone. The parent-led acquisition of mobile phones is closely related to the timing[11], often seen as "a contemporary rite of passage," whether entering a higher level of education (O'Brien, 2010, p. 223) or religious confirmation (Kasesniemi,

---

[11] The age at which they acquire their first mobile phone differs between developed regions and developing ones, but this is happening at a younger age (Lenhart, 2010). In 2001, teenagers in Finland obtained their first mobile phone when they turned 15, the age when many attend summer camp or religious confirmation classes to prepare them for confirmation, which is a rite of passage for many (Kasesniemi, 2001, p. 162). Ten years later, in 2011, in the Irish Republic, youths acquire their first mobile phone at around 12 or 13 years of age, or the equivalent of 6th or 7th grade, which signifies the transition from childhood to adolescence (O'Brien, 2010, p. 223). Similar research in 2009 suggest that most American kids get their first mobile phones at ages 12 and 13 as they transition to middle school (Lenhart, 2010).

2001, pp. 162-163). The acquisition or presentation of the mobile phone is recognized as the stage at which there is an increase in social activity beyond the home (O'Brien, 2010). Further, some scholars suggest that the mobile phone itself is a rite of passage or a symbol of emancipation (Ling, 2000; Ling & Yttri, 2002), similar to obtaining a driver's license, which indicates independent social capability as well as a new stage in life.

Parents bought phones with their children's safety in mind, and for the purpose of keeping in touch (Oksman & Rautiainen, 2003, pp. 295-297). But, over time, the adolescents used their phones to inhibit adult monitoring (Ito, 2005b, p. 139); the privacy afforded by the mobile phone allows youths to build a relatively independent space beyond parental supervision (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p. 152). Besides parent-child relationships, mobile ICTs have frequently been linked to broader notions of personal autonomy as they blur the division between public and private space. Making private conversations and immersing oneself by using functions such as MP3, video, digital book and ignoring others, these devices enable users to physically position themselves in public, without being mentally involved and liberate users to conduct acts which were regarded as inappropriate in public, such as conversations on dating and sex (Yang, 2008). The personal territories created by mobile phone users in public space is coined as "symbolic fences" (Ling, Gullestad, 1992; 1998), which are built and symbolized by forms of nonverbal behaviour while engrossed in using the mobile phone, such as turning away from others, diverting eyes, and lowering of the voice (Campbell, 2008; Murtagh, 2002).

3.2.1.3 Mobile Phone: As a Social Networking Tool

The mobile phone is widely reported to be powerful in strengthening the personal bonds of social network ties (Scott W. Campbell & Russo, 2003; Kelley, 2006; Rich Ling, 2004); specifically, mobile phones nurture personal ties through "social grooming" (Fox, 2001) and reinforcing existing social networks (Ling & Campbell, 2011). Mobile phones further influence individuals' social identity, such as implying one's popularity by the number of messages received and names in the contact list, and as markers of in-group/out-group boundaries (Ling & Yttri, 2002).

Ling and Yttri (2002, 2004) identified several primary categories for mobile phone communication. Among them, hyper-coordination describes the way in which mobile phones are used "for emotional and social communication," particularly through chatting and text messaging in fostering group integration (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p. 140). Hyper-coordination characterized separately as "conversional mode" and "connected mode" (Licoppe, 2003). The "conversational mode" includes idle chatting, small talk and in-depth discussion, while the "connected mode" refers to frequent and brief voice or text messages (Licoppe, 2003). These messages are used as a form of greeting, while "meaningless yet necessary chat" lacks substance, but is nonetheless important for expressive and emotional reasons, as there is a "meta-content" in these messages, that is "the receiver is in the thoughts of the sender" (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p. 158). Similar process can be found in activities, such as "digital gift giving", wherein exchanging jokes are used as a means of "social glue" among the youth (Johnsen, 2003, p. 167; Taylor & Harper, 2003).

For long distance contacts, mobile phones are more frequently used to maintain regular accessibility and connection or "ambient virtual co-presence" between distanced individuals, especially for close and intimate relationships (Ito & Okabe, 2005, p. 264). And for individuals from low-income backgrounds, the mobile

phone is crucial in networking, to find a job, borrow money, or establish a romantic relationship (Horst & Miller, 2006).

Another impact of mobile communication on networks is it allows individuals to develop more selective personalized social networks, unlike the traditional location-based communities (Campbell & Park, 2008). With ICT development, the person, and not the place, household or workgroup, will become "more of an autonomous communication node," as "the portal" (Wellman, 2001, p. 238) and social networks have become more personal (Wellman & Potter, 1999). This trend is further accelerated by computer-mediated communication.

3.2.2 Internet Usage and Identity Formation

With the introduction of computer-mediated communication (CMC), social systems have become less location-based, and more people-based (Fortunati, 2002). Users engaged in CMC simultaneously exist in the physical space as well as the virtual conversational space) (Palen, Salzmann, & Youngs, 2000). The online activities provide individuals with another space and more opportunities to connect with others and create virtual identities (Truch & Hulme, 2004). Researchers question the possibility of true digital identity or virtual identity, given that it cannot really feel or experience anything. They further explore how such identity can be constructed, and how stable it may be, as the construction of virtual identities and online personas are created with the help of online tools, the sense of bonding with online communities, and the strong ties and weak ties in social networking sites and online communities (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, Boyd & Ellison, 2008; 2007; Livingstone, 2008). The following section explores individuals' identity representation and construction using online identity tools, SNSs, and UGCs.

3.2.2.1 Online Identity Tools

Individuals utilize, and are dependent on, specific tools and the online environment to construct their online identity, such as nicknames, unique chat codes (e.g., age/sex/location code), avatars, photographs and videos, to quickly and easily reveal aspects of their self they wish to share (Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011, p. 76).

Curtis (1997) noted that many nicknames are drawn "from or inspired by myth, fantasy, or other literature, common names from real life, names of concepts, animals, and everyday objects that have representative connotations" (pp. 126-127). Nicknames may convey information about a user's gender, sexual identity, as well as special interests, mirroring their offline selves (Subrahmanyam, et al., 2006). For example, females are inclined to use a feminine nickname, while males tend to use a masculine nickname (Smahel & Subrahmanyam, 2007; Subrahmanyam, Šmahel, & Greenfield, 2006). Additionally, sexual nicknames are common, and often they are used to attract the interest and attention of potential partners (Smahel & Subrahmanyam, 2007; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, & Tynes, 2004). Some users combine several aspects, such as interest and gender, in their moniker to convey more information and to create particular images (e.g., musicgirl, soccerboy).

Pictures and photographs in one's profile in SNS, blog and UGC play an important role in online self-presentation as nicknames in text-based chat rooms (Subrahmanyam, et al., 2006). A recent study of 131 Facebook members, aged between 13 and 30, found that the majority uploaded pictures that would not clearly identify their gender and age. Several (7.6%) posted non-portrait images, including group photos, joke or celebrity images. A minority did not provide any picture (2.3%) (Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris, & Arsoy, 2010). And it is not surprising

that users tend to use "a very good" or "best" picture of themselves in a non-anonymous environment, especially in online dating websites (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006).

An avatar is an adjustable, motion-enabled graphical representation for users in platforms such as games (e.g., MMORPGs), complex virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) and some SNS to create their desired virtual identities or personas. The forms of avatars range from human-like, to fantastical creatures, and are typically three-dimensional and animated. Many platforms provide considerable options from which users may choose, including original creation in graphic representation, such as sex, shape, facial feature, skin colour, clothes, and equipment. Research suggests that within MMORPG games, adolescents and young adult players have a greater tendency to state the similarity between their avatars and themselves, such as skills and abilities (Šmahel, Blinka, & Ledabyl, 2008). The visual aspects and assumed actions make the avatar more visible and intuitive than nicknames in identity representation (Šmahel, et al., 2008).

Other online identity tools are also creatively used, such as a/s/l code used in online chat rooms to share basic facts about their identity (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2003), comments posted to individual accounts by others (known as "wall posts"), a narrative self-description and a self-description list about personal interests and hobbies. These descriptions explicitly or tactfully imply one's identity by discourse with one's social group, cultural preference and character (Ellison, et al., 2007).

3.2.2.2 SNSs

Boyd & Ellison (2008) listed three functions of SNS: (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; (2) contact with a list of other users; and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and other users' lists. Though these, SNS are used as a platform of identity expression and exploration (Livingstone, 2008; Manago, et al., 2008; Subrahmanyam, et al., 2006).

Individuals extensively use their personal home page to disclose information about themselves and to construct identity images by utilizing online features, such as hyperlinks and animations, and users in cyberspace tend to imitate offline strategies when presenting their identities (Papacharissi, 2002). Younger individuals provide more elaborate and more detailed self-information, such as user pictures, with decorated site profiles; older adolescents prefer plain sites and emphasize more on their connection to other users (Livingstone, 2008). These youths also tend to portray their gender role construction in tandem with their preferred offline mainstream culture, displaying attractive females, and strong and powerful males (Manago, et al., 2008). However, young women tend to experience increased pressure to objectify sexuality and preserve innocence at the same time (Subrahmanyam, Garcia, Harsono, Li, & Lipana, 2009, p. 455).

SNS is also used to explore possible selves and to express ideal selves (Subrahmanyam, et al., 2009, p. 455). Thus, the persona in SNS is a public display of two identities: a real-world identity, and a simulated identity, constructed by intensive narratives. It creates a hybrid identity, fractured between the lived and the written, at the same time a part of the users, and yet apart from them (Booth, 2008). Moreover, the persona in SNS is not constant, but is in a continuous state of flux, constantly updated and updatable by its creator (Booth, 2008).

Besides identity tools, users of SNS also employ narratives[12] as a way to construct identity. Booth's study (2008) found that fans of popular dramas used MySpace to create personas of drama characters and, situating themselves into the narrative of a particular drama to further integrate into the fan club community. Kraus (2006) argued that ''the starting point for an identity theory... lies primarily... in narrativity as a multifaceted resource for the understanding of self-construction'' (p. 105). A narrative on the individuals behind the personas can be perceived through the comments posted back and forth between personas and among groups, and the stories posted by users (Booth, 2008).

SNS usage also reflects one's cultural backgrounds and cultural identity. Young American women tend to use public expressions of connection with peers via their Facebook photographs, while young Japanese women prefer to communicate via Mixi diaries, which illustrate that the Japanese prefer privacy and make themselves available only to close friends (Barker & Ota, 2011). Americans more likely present themselves in a direct and personal manner, while their Korean counterparts tend to use interlinks to special interests and manipulated graphics (Kim & Papacharissi2003). Kim's study (2009) on Cyworld and Myspace—the most popular SNS in Korea and the US—yielded similar results, suggesting that individuals' usage mirror their cultural backgrounds, whether emphasizing collectiveness within in-groups, or individualism and self-reliance.

For migrants, SNS brings together the diaspora or migrants from all over the world, and offers them a space in which to preserve online memorials and digital

---

[12] There are three kinds of narratives: very short self-descriptions, narratives mainly for social networking, and relatively long narratives, mainly for self-disclosure. The first is categorized into online identity tools; the second is discussed in the part on social networking sites, and the third type will be studied in the section of content consumption and production platform.

archives. As a result, the use of SNS contributes to the formation of collective

identities and strong links between them, as users' active participation in online

groups and an increasing sense of imagined community (Marcheva, 2011). Another

study examined SNS use by Asia-Pacific students studying in the United States and

concluded that foreign students use SNS to bridge social capital in their home country

and try to achieve social identification and collective self-esteem (Phua & Jin, 2011).

3.2.2.3 UGCs

The rise of UGCs[13] is often thought to further blur the distinction between

media producers and media consumers (Ornebring, 2008). For users, more than ever

before, using ICTs means creating, not just receiving. Creating online content is

"becoming an integral means of managing one's identity, lifestyle and social

relations" (Livingstone, 2008). For example, weblog writers may present their gender

identity through narratives of "everyday life," which closely related to the binary

gender system (Doorn, Zoonen, & Wyatt, 2007). Individuals put notable efforts into

the creation of virtual representation to "reveal, rather than conceal their digital

identity through a stream of digital content," including status updates, online quiz

results, photographs or videos (Satchell, Singh, & Zic, 2004).

Previously described online self-presentation strategies, including constructed

self-images, very explicit musings and narratives are also extensively used in UGCs

to convey one's identity, such as age, gender and location. The interactions between

the users may be emotional in tone, to reflect their everyday activities, important life

---

[13]In definition, UGC include SNS as SNS is also a user generated platform. In this thesis, UGCs refer to more anonymous platforms whose content rather than relationship are more highly valued by most users, and the contacts are often offline strangers, such as topic based online forum, blogs by anonymous writers.

experiences, interests, relationships and values, or to express themselves directly or indirectly (Subrahmanyam, et al., 2009). Meanwhile, writings related to romance, sexuality, and problem behaviors in UGCs are less frequent than that in the more anonymous chat rooms (Subrahmanyam, et al., 2006). It suggested that the narratives or life stories constructed online may help individuals establish a coherent sense of their self (McAdams, 1997).

The contents and activities in UGCs represent and create a collective CMC culture and a diversity of subcultures. Culture, as a social practice, is not something that individuals possess, but something that individuals participate in and consume. Digital culture is an important factor in shaping identity. Online identity and peer relations are shaped by peer culture and social networking site affordances (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison, et al., 2007; Livingstone, 2008). Hjorth (2008) posited that young people's use of convergent media forms as leisure activities, such as micro movies, pocket films, games, and camera phone practices, frequently served as valuable pathways for identity formation. And more frequently, youths creatively use signs and subculture symbols (i.e., emo or gothic symbols) to express their sense of belonging to a particular subculture (Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011).

Research in this field also covered microblogging sites, such as Twitter. This new medium affords dynamic, interactive identity presentation to audiences known or unknown. Self-presentation on Twitter is conducted by updating textual "tweets" and short conversations, instead of static profiles. "The potential diversity of readership on Twitter ruptures the ability to vary self-presentation based on audience, and thus manage discrete impressions" (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Yardi and Boyd's research (2010) studied microblogging as a platform of UGC to explore its impact on identity, looking at 30,000 tweets on the topic, "the shooting of George Tiller," and subsequent

conversations. Replies between like-minded individuals strengthen group identity, while replies between different-minded individuals reinforce in-group and out-group affiliation.

3.3 ICT Use in China: Background, the Youth and the Migrant

The China's information age was effectively initiated at the beginning of the 1980s, the decade when the current generation of Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers was born. Chinese government issued a series of policies to promote ICT development. The development of ICTs was accelerated after it was given top priority in the Sixth Five-Year Plan for 1981-1985. Since the early 1990s, the Chinese government has emphasized "informatization" as a new dimension of its economic development strategy to achieve modernization. The policy is officially defined as "a strategic measure that touches upon every aspect of modernization" ("China Informatization Development Report 2006,"). To further stimulate and manage ICT development, in 1998, the government established the Ministry of Information Industry (MII). Later, the "Informatization of the National Economy (INE)" program was launched to promote infrastructure development, to achieve informatization of various industrial sectors and, in turn, to create an ever-growing demand for ICT (Dai, 2007).

However, these programs emphasised only on investments, the technology, the facilities and the policy, not the practice, especially the practices of the low-income group, including the migrant workers, the unemployed and the underemployed, which contains the information have-less in China. Moreover, these programs focused on cities. With the recognition of the importance of information as the basis of services sector industrial development in the world economy, China has been driving for the

49

shift to the "informational city." (Cartier, Castells, & Qiu, 2005) The ICT

developments and advancements not only mirror China's 30-year reforms, but

remarkably, also shape the current generation's live patterns in two aspects-

consumption and symbol, as well as usage and communication ways.

3.3.1 The Domestication of ICTs: History, Symbols and Consumption

In China, ICTs are regarded as symbols of wealth and social status. To the

young, they are closely related to the fashion and youth culture. Consumption has

always drawn status connotations, even during the Mao era, when one's social status

was primarily determined by one's class status and political correctness. The content

of "four big items" (*sidajian*) reveals the ordinary people's most desirable consumer

items during different eras and there are different versions about the content. Among

them, ICTs remain the most desirable consumer items, such as radios in 1970s,

colour televisions, telephones, videocassette recorders (VCRs), hi-fi stereo system in

the 1980s and 1990s, and now, mobile phones, computers in the 21st century (Zhang,

2008).

Although the introduction of ICTs and R&D in China began in the 1950s,

radios and television sets remained luxuries until the 1960s. By the late 1970s, small

black and white televisions became affordable for more families. The penetration

rates of radios, tape recorders and televisions increased sharply in the 1980s (Zhou,

Lin, & Fang, 2009). Swaggering on the streets with heavy tape recorders playing

Hong Kong and Taiwan popular music served as the fashion symbol of youths. The

18- or 21-inch colour television was the emblem of wealth and social status,

especially valued by newly married couples. In the 1990s, Chinese consumers began

to upgrade their home appliances. Big screen televisions became necessities for average families and computers gradually became commonplace and early adopters began to surf the Internet. Landline telephones became ubiquitous and pagers were relatively uncommon; then the mobile phone was introduced and the "big brother" (*dageda*) became the latest symbol of fashion and wealth (Zhou, et al., 2009). In the last two decades, more ICTs such as the CD player, DVD player, MP3, PDA (personal digital assistant) and tablet were invented, popularized, and upgraded.

Saving money and purchasing appliances such as the first radio, the black and white television, 21-inch colour television, telephone and computer, became interwoven with the early life histories of the post-1960s and post-1970s generation. For the post-1980s generation, the introductions of radios, TVs, stereos and even telephones were a distinct part of their childhood memories. The domestication and proliferation of more personal and more entertaining devices reflect this group's skill, experience and easy familiarity with the communications media. These gadgets are either shared with peers in public places, such as game rooms, classrooms, Internet cafes or dormitories; or, increasingly, bought and used exclusively by the owner. The usage is different from that of appliances shared by all of the family members in fixed, relatively public places. For the majority of the post-1960s and post-1970s generation, the living standards were about the same as when they were young, and the affordability of appliances showed their abilities in making and, more importantly, in saving money. However, the difference in the family financial situation has become more distinctive for the post-1980s. Among them, comparisons on the playing of video games and owning of game cards were popular topics, even as students. During their secondary school and high school years, some of them had begun using walkmans, CD players, MP3s, pagers, mobile phones and laptops. Just as the big tape

recorder was once trendy for youths in the 1970s, wearing Walkman earphones was a fashion symbol among teenagers in 1990s. For the post-1980s generation, ICTs have always been associated with wealth, fashion, and tools for entertainment and schoolwork. Even in ICT, urban households are favoured over their rural counterparts in ICT development. Lastly, the uneven diffusion and development are also applied in different regions: while advanced ICTs prevail in the developed regions, often they are still rare in many rural provinces.

However, with the ICT gadgets becomes commonplace in daily lives, they might lose their symbolic meaning as some research suggested. It was claimed that the strong connection between the consumption of the ICTs devices and their symbolic meanings is limited amongst some specific groups now in China, such as migrant workers. As the social status of migrant workers is much lower than that of college students and white-collar workers, purchasing an expensive mobile phone is a common choice for them to show face, and only when the device is considered to be a luxurious consumption, it can deliver this connection (Chu & Yang, 2006). Moreover, the different interpretations of the relationship between ICT devices and its consumption meanings or the face concept in China reflect the influence of social status in the interaction and it also suggested that ICT devices' symbolic meaning is not homogeneous in Chinese society (Peng & Chu, 2012b).

3.3.2 ICT Penetration and Usage: Stratification and Inequality

The society has never been classless. Stratification, inequality, and power are always associated with the development of the ICTs, such as the "knowledge class" in the 1960s and 1970s (D. Bell, 1973), the "information labour force" in the 1980s and

1990s (Kling, 1990), and the distinction between "self-programmable labour" and "generic labour" (Castells, 1998) in the new Millennium. Digital divide research directly pointed out the contrast between the information haves and have-nots (Servon, 2002; Van Dijk, 2005).

In China, ICTs have long been perceived as gadgets or toys for the privileged classes (Robison & Goodman, 1996). As the ICTs, including the computers and mobile phones, and the services are more affordable, China's ICT penetration rate shapely increased and becomes a global IT power (OECD, 2006), the distinction between the information haves and have-nots in China has become blurry (J. Liu, 2010; Qiu, 2008). However, the digital divide still exists, and the equalities and disparities in ICT access and usage are more complicated.

Currently, China is the world's largest market for both mobile phones and personal computers. An estimated 738 million people in China use mobile phones, and 420 million use the Internet (CNNIC, 2010). The market for desktops was close to 225 million, with sales at RMB 85.37 billion (S$ 17.07 billion); while the market for laptops was at least 90 million sets valued at RMB 63.55 billion (S$ 12.71 billion) (TechWeb, 2009). The foreign brands are extremely popular, while local brands have significant advantages in the lower-end segment. For computers, the most renowned brands are Apple, IBM[14], Sony, HP, Dell, Lenovo and Asus while for mobile phones, the brands are Apple, Nokia, Sony Ericsson and Samsung. "Black" (*shuihuo*[15]) or contraband computers/mobile phones and "Shanzhai[16]" or imitation mobile phones

---

[14] Although China's Lenovo acquired IBM's PC Division in 2005, many IBM fans in China still regard the products of IBM's ThinkPad series "xiaohei" (little black) and insist that the quality declined after the acquisition.

[15] "Black" (*shuihuo*) computers/mobile phones are produced outside of China and imported into the country without payment of import tariffs.

[16] *Shanzhai* mobile phones refer to Chinese spin-offs and pirated mobile phones that are priced low, have multifunctional performances and are imitations of trendy mobile phone designs.

still hold their influence in China's IT market. Feature phones and smartphones with innovative functions began to make their debut in 2007, with the launch of 3G in China. Ultra-thin laptops and multifunctional smartphones with big touch screens and high pixel cameras have become increasingly popular. The fact that iPhone 4 sold out—of its 100,000 units—within four days of its September 25, 2010 release in China illustrates the Chinese people's enthusiasm for advanced technology (Kan, 2010).

China's current telecommunication market is a constellation of the following factors: existing patterns of high social mobility, strong government regulation, high rates of urbanization, extensive national mobile phone coverage, competitive and strategic calling plans and pricing policies (G. Bell, 2006). The telecom industry is dominated by three telecommunication giants: China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom. The most popular service plans are China Mobile's Easyown (*shenzhou xing*) and M-zone (*donggang didai*); the other two provide low-priced plans that are also highly popular. Most of the migrant workers use Easyown, which provides low-price roaming and long-distance call services, while graduate workers prefer M-zone, which targets the youth market. This service is extremely popular among college students and has cultivated high customer loyalty. The differences among ICT users are visible in the brands, functions and pricing of the products. Even the mobile telecom service used is revealed by individuals' mobile phone numbers. The most prestigious are the 3G programs[17] and China Mobile's "GoTone" (*quanqiutong*) for business services.

---

[17] All three telecommunication giants provide 3G services. This includes China Mobile's G3, China Unicom's Wo and China Telecom's Tianyi.

With regard to the Internet network usage, according to the latest China

Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC)[18] report, among the Chinese 420

million Internet users, 72.6% of them were urban resident and 28.1% were tweens. On

their education levels, 12.0% were diploma holders and 11.3% had a bachelor's

degree or higher. Nearly a third of Internet users were students. The main locations

for accessing the Internet are the homes (88.4% of the Internet user population) and

work places (33.2%) (CNNIC, 2010). The primary purpose for Internet usage was

stated to be entertainment, information processing and communication[19]. Online

shopping, online payment and e-banking have the highest user growth. An estimated

210 million people use social networking sites; this number grew by 19.6% in the

second half of 2010. The mobile network saw stable development between the years

2008 and 2010. The utilization rate of information acquisition, exchange and

communication applications are much higher[20]. Up to June 2010, the utilization rate

of mobile instant messaging was consistently ranked top (61.5%) followed by mobile

search with a utilization rate of 48.4% (CNNIC, 2010).

In the information age, ICTs introduce a whole new set of communicational

and social possibilities into the lives of the Chinese by offering a more horizontal

communication pattern and alterative information sources. Although ICT

development has brought tremendous changes to Chinese people, the inequality

---

[18] China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), China's state network information center, was founded as a non-profit organization in 1997 and takes orders from the country's MIIT (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology); administratively, it is managed by Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

19 The top 10 uses of Internet are "listening/downloading music" (82.5% of Internet user population), "reading news" (78.5%), "using search engine" (76.3%), "instant messaging" (72.4%), "online gaming" (70.5%), "watching/downloading video" (63.2%), "sending/receiving email" (56.5%), "blogging" (55.1%), "using social networking site" (50.1%), "reading online novel" (44.8%) (CNNIC, 2010).

[20] The most frequently used mobile phone Internet services are "instance messaging" (61.5%), "mobile phone search engine" (48.4%), "online music" (45.3%), "online novel" (43.3%) and "social networking site" (35.5%) (CNNIC, 2010).

between the different classed is still significant. As the digital divide theory suggested, the inequality between the ICT haves and have-nots is not only in terms of the access to different ICTs, but also the various types of access, and the usage. Those who have easy and unlimited access to ICTs benefit much more than those who have only limited access. These differences are a by-product of the rapid dissemination of ICTs, in which reveals the social context in China. The inequality doesn't only exist in different social groups, but also in members of the same social segments with different socio-economical background (Peng & Chu, 2012a). It is suggested that he socioeconomic status heavily influenced people's pattern of ICT consumption. Comparing to their counterparties from higher socioeconomic background, university students and migrants from the lower socioeconomic background are more often to use backward ICT devices and with poorer ICT capabilities. They are disadvantaged not only in terms of the accessible resources but also in terms of their self-respect (Qiu, 2008; S. Yang & Song, 2004, October). Moreover, it is found that the time of the first exposure to ICTs is crucial for developing skills. The post70 generation exposed ICTs much late than the post80 generation, and the difference may as large as 8 years. And this cohort difference also exists in the new migrant workers. Research found that younger migrant workers are more advanced in the ICTs usage than their seniors who are just slightly older than them (Peng & Chu, 2012a).

These groups with limited ICTs access and disadvantaged are between the ICT haves and the ICT have-nots, are called as "information have-less", which constitutes a critical social stratum between the two extreme groups (Cartier, et al., 2005). The gray zones include "large portions of the 147 million internal migrants, more than 30 million laid-off workers, another 100 million or so retirees, and a large number of the 189 million youth population (aged 15–24), including about 30 million students as

well as school dropouts and unemployed youth" (Qiu, 2009). And according to Qiu, although these have-less population are far from a single class in their present condition and there is a high degree if internal diversity amongst these various groups of the information have-less, they constitute "the fundamental techno-social basis for the making of the new working class in China today" (Qiu, 2010b). The group have been featured with restrained access to ICTs, and are lack of ICT literacy and therefore generally unsatisfied with the information they can access (Qiu, 2008, 2009). And similar findings come from the studies about the ICT appropriation of the different groups amongst the information have-less across China, such as in Beijing (e.g. Oreglia, 2007; Wallis, 2008), Central and North China (e.g. Bu & Liu, 2004) and South China (e.g. Ma & Cheng, 2005; Qiu, 2008). The information have-less shared some distinct practices in ICT appropriation. For example, many migrant workers have mobile phones, yet they seldom make a voice call, due to its expensive cost. Meanwhile, SMS as an affordable communication medium and a public display of their new-found urban identity, is widely used, especially among young migrant workers.

It is suggested that the emergence of have-less ICTs is essential to understand China's informational stratification process (Cartier, et al., 2005; Qiu, 2008). These have-less ICTs are inexpensive, providing less mobility and the same informational functions, such as Internet café, prepaid phone cards, Little Smart mobile phones and other ICT devices with disadvantaged functions (Qiu, 2008). The disempowerment for the have-less is not only about the low-end devices, but also the limited and restricted access. Take the migrants for example, they were living in the group dormitory without broadband network, and they were lack of the authority and economic ability to have one. In working places, these employees were commonly

forbidden to do online chatting (e.g., by QQ) by using the office computer. Restriction over their use of the work phone was commonplace, and personal use of their own phones during working hours was also strongly discouraged. The last but not the least, the inequality exists in the pricing and services, as migrant workers were often overcharged by telco and ignored and discriminated by the telco officers. Interestingly, the group also learned to re-empower themselves by re-appropriating ICTs and challenge the restrictions imposed by their employers and the society, such as shifting to services over which they have better control, creating alternative networks of their own, and "hacking" locked technologies (Qiu, 2008, 2010a).

In terms of the content of ICTs, although Internet censorship is stringent in China[21], compared to that of traditional mass media, the Internet is a much freer platform for Chinese netizens. More importantly, channels provided by telecommunications and the Internet—SMS (short messages), portals, blogs, BBS (bulletin broad systems) and SNS (social networking sites)—are shattering the decades-old pattern of local isolation and establishing conditions for the development of cross-hatching "societal *xitong* (system)" linking individuals, organizations, and groups throughout the country with one another and with people abroad. For the rural-to-urban migrant workers, ICTs open an information world with equal access as their peers born in cities, and promise a world with less restriction and higher mobility, and provide the potential for identity creation and formation. However, for some of them, the access to the unlimited content is limited by their own ICT literacy (Qiu, 2008).

---

[21] Internet censorship in China is conducted under a wide variety of laws and administrative regulations. The government blocks websites that discuss the Dalai Lama, the 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen Square protesters, Falun Gong, the banned spiritual movement, and other Internet sites. The authorities also monitor individuals' Internet access.

3.3.3 Youth's ICTs Use in China: Youth Identity with Chinese Characteristics

According to China's the sixth national censor, the population of the Chinese youth between 20-30 years old is 228million, among them, 85 million are urban youth, 43 million are semi-urban youth, while 100 million are rural youth (according to their *hukou* status, not the residential place) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2012). This big population has significant characteristics embedded in the social context in China. A range of expressions have been associated with the current youth generation to highlight the impacts of the dramatic social transformation upon them, such as "the new humanities" (xin xin renlei), "China's e-generation" and "China's me-generation" (F. Liu, 2010). They are both the privileged generation as well as the pressured one. They have never gone through the hardship of life as their parents had, instead, with the development of China's economy and as the centre of the family, they have greater purchasing power, and more brand conscious and fashion-savvy. Moreover, the post 80s generation is the first e-generation in china, and almost of them are ICT savvy. Meanwhile, being more influenced by peer pressure, they are eager to update their gadget constantly (F. Liu, 2010).

The corresponding word of youth in Chinese is "*qingnian*", translated as "green years". Youth in China associated with much more positive connections, such as hope, courage and dynamism, while in the West, "youth" implies "inexperience, impulsiveness, resistance, deviance and rebelliousness", and even dangerous and disturbing (Wulff, 1995). Moreover, as Chinese youth played an active role in revolutionary movements such as the civil war leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Cultural Revolution, as well as the *Tiananmen* Square protests, "cultivating youth in line with the CCP's ideology and

social-political goals has occupied a prominent position on the state's agenda in China" (F. Liu, 2010).

Nevertheless, with the increasing pluralisation of Chinese society after thirty years of reform, there are significant in-group differences in this generation, in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds, belief systems and behaviours (Rosen, 2009), and these differences also undisguised reflected online in the form of buzzwords and popular online discussions. The most distinctive in-group difference exists between the urban youth and the rural youth, the post-80s and the post-90s (F. Liu, 2010), the rich 2G (rich second generation, *fu er dai* in Chinese, means the kids of the riches entrepreneurs, one of the most popular buzzwords) and the poor 2G (poor second generation, *qiong er dai* in Chinese, means the kids from the lower class and poorer families, another most popular buzzword) (W. Wei, 2012).

The use of ICTs among the youth is highly related to the sociocultural context of today's China, youth culture and their identity. For example, as the youth, especially the teenagers, are under great parental expectations and the Internet is typically regards as recreation by their parents, there are stereotypes about the rational, responsible and mature users and the opposite ones. Moreover, people who use the Internet differently from themselves are viewed as the "other" (F. Liu, 2011a). The current Chinese youth generation are in a society featured by "sharp social stratification, fierce competition, lack of security, consumerism, corruption and unfairness in the distribution of resources" (F. Liu, 2009). ICTs as cultural tools are being taken up by young people and made meaningful for themselves. Youth make full use of the ICTs in major domains of their lives: recreation, the self, learning (study/work) and sociability (F. Liu, 2011b).

ICTs, such as BBS and the Internet café(wangba) are also actively used by the youth as outlet for their inner thoughts and an alternative place for the real world. It is found that the youth tend to use their own BBS language style and resist the real contexts they live in, and create unique BBS youth culture which reflects their identity. The contradiction between the trends of the society and the governmental and intellectual discourses produces subject positions for the youth to resist the orthodox ideas and traditional values, and the BBS offers an outlet for the group (Dong, 2003). The Internet café(wangba) is also very popular among urban Chinese youth. For the youth, it is not only the place for fun, but also often associated with a sense of freedom, being against the will of various authorities, relaxation, community and equality (F. Liu, 2009).

Chapter 4 Methodology

Given my objectives of obtaining in-depth perspectives on the interactions of ICT usage and identity formation among young Chinese rural-to-urban graduates, I chose a qualitative research approach—specifically, in-depth interviews.

4.1 Ethnographic Research

An ethnographic approach studies beliefs, values, rituals, customs, and human behaviour, amidst the natural settings in which individuals live and work. *In situ* fieldwork enables the investigator to be immersed in, and to draw upon, individual perspectives of their situations and surroundings (American Anthropological Association, 2004). Rather than verifying theory, ethnography aims to build original, persuasive and convincing theory. Historically, ethnography, largely associated with anthropology, is used to study a foreign culture in distant and exotic locales, and is widely used in the social sciences, including communication studies; e.g., Morley and Brunsdon (1999), and Johnson (2000).

Critics of ethnographic research question the notion of objective truth, claiming ethnographic truths are "inherently partial - committed and incomplete" (Clifford, 2010, p. 473). As Geertz (1973) noted, "what we call data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to… [they are] fictions, in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned' " (pp. 9, 15). In this sense, under the semblance of post-structuralism, it is said to be impossible to find universal truth, that such partiality is meaningful in revealing historical truths that are partial in the "ways they are

systematic and exclusive" (Clifford, 1986, p. 6). Instead of speaking for the interviewee, the "new ethnography" lets the individuals speak for themselves, emphasizing self-reflexivity and dialogues between interviewees and interviewer, instead of observations and descriptions (Clifford, 1986, pp. 11-17).

The data collected in ethnographic research are the participants' varied experiences, which some criticized as "incontestable evidence." However, as "an important epistemological category" (Gray, 2003, p. 25), experience is the primary way in which we experience the world, and know and understand others. When using experience as research data, researchers should also "understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced and which processes themselves are unremarked," because experience is rooted at these operations of discourses (Scott, 1992, p. 33).

4.1.1 Qualitative Interview

Kvale (1996, pp. 30-31) suggested that qualitative interviews involve 12 aspects: life world, meaning, qualitative, descriptive, specificity, deliberate naïveté, focus, ambiguity, change, sensitivity, interpersonal situation and positive experience. In essence, the qualitative research interview seeks to understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects, and their relation to it, by understanding what interviewees said, and how it was said, in a specific manner, and about focus themes. As Kvale (1996) put it: "A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level" (p. 32). This method allows the investigator to obtain in-depth information by asking probing questions, which often yield fertile stories and narratives.

4.1.2 Meaning Condensation

Giorgi (1975) introduced the concept of meaning condensation as one of five main methodological approaches in analyzing meaning: condensation, categorization, narrative structuring, interpretation and an ad hoc approach (Kvale, 1996, p. 187). This method abridges and condenses interviewees' words into brief statements. Meaning condensation involves systematically dealing with data in the form of ordinary language, and applying rigor and discipline in data analysis without necessarily transforming the data into quantitative expressions (Kvale, 2007, p. 107). This method consists of five steps: firstly, all of the interview transcripts are read through to obtain a sense of the whole. Secondly, the researcher determines the interviewee's natural "meaning units." Thirdly, the researcher restates the brief themes dominating natural meaning units, based on the researcher's understanding of the interviewee's viewpoint. Fourthly, the researcher interrogates the meaning units in terms of the specific purpose of the study. Finally, the researcher ties the essential, non-redundant themes together into descriptive statements (Kvale, 2007).

4.2 Qualitative Interviews in Prior Research on Migrant Workers' ICT Use

The qualitative interview method is widely adopted in prior studies on migrants, in the belief that this is more effective in studying marginalized groups. In communications studies, several studies have used qualitative interviews to investigate migrant workers' ICT use; reviewing their research methods would be instructive to this study. For example, Wallis (2008) combined participant observation, interviews, and a set of mobile phone diaries to obtain tangible data in her study on the mobile phone usages of rural-to-urban women in the low-level service sector in Beijing. For the interview part of the study, she conducted more than 70 interviews

among migrant female workers and 17 with migrant male workers in restaurants, marketplaces, and hair/beauty salons. Two-thirds of her interviews lasted over one hour, and yielded in-depth data. She also interviewed employees and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff members. The interviews among migrant workers included questions on basic demographic and employment information, traditional media and mobile phone usage. A semi-structured manner was adopted, and as she stated, "often interviews led in directions that were unexpected but extremely fruitful" (Wallis, 2008, p. 64). Wherever possible, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Another study on Beijing migrant workers also used in-depth interviews, following an initial survey. Eight survey participants were approached for the interview, and the initial and in-depth interviews were conducted at the interviewees' workplace to better understand their work conditions. The discussion section of the study was based on the interviews and the written answers to three open-ended questions in the initial questionnaire (Yang, 2008). Other studies examining the mobile phone use of migrant workers (Cartier, et al., 2005; Chu & Yang, 2006; Peng, 2008) conducted among factory workers in Southern China also used interviews and focus groups, and all were conducted in factories.

4.3 Methodological Procedure Used in This Study

The semi-structured interview was selected as the main research method for this study, to probe deeper into interviewees' detailed ICT usage and inner thoughts. This study focused on young Chinese rural-to-urban graduates that live and work in a modernized city in China, but do not have the feeling of being locals, even though several have local *hukou*. Lian (2009) wrote, in what was the first book on these rural-to-urban graduates, that there were an estimated 100 million *yizu*, most of them living

in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Wuhan, all major cities in China. In Beijing, the capital, there are 10 million *yizu*; it has had a long history as a migrants' destination, and is popularly known as *beipiao*, or "floating in Beijing." The promising future, the high average salary ranking (The Labor Market Research Center of Beijing Normal University, 2012), the advanced public facilities, and Beijing's unique position has attracted generations of migrants.

This study was based on semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 3) and questionnaire surveys (see appendix 4) with rural-to-urban graduates in China; 28 were interviewed in Beijing between December 2010 and January 2011, and 12 between June and August 2011. All of the interviewees were unmarried Chinese youths aged between 22 and 29, from rural regions, including villages and rural towns. They held college degrees, ranging from diplomas, bachelor's and postgraduate degrees, have worked less than five years in Beijing, and live in rented apartments shared with peers. Participants were recruited based on convenience selection, and snowballed subsequently.

Each participated in both the survey and interview. Firstly, the participants were asked to fill a questionnaire on their basic demographic, employment and living information, and ICT usage. This was followed with a semi-structured interview on their migrant experience and detailed ICT use (mainly computer and mobile phone usage), with many of the questions linked to their survey answers. The questions were open-ended, and often, the interviews would lead to unanticipated directions that turned out to be extremely fruitful. Based on their responses, participants were asked to further explain their thoughts or to provide examples. All the surveys and interviews were conducted in Mandarin. Some observation notes were made as to participants' expressions, their computers and mobile phones. Photographs are taken

of participants' mobile phones, computers and apartments; photos were not taken at their workplace, unless permission had been obtained. The research data included questionnaire answers, semi-structured interview, observation notes and photographs. Each interview lasted about 1½ - 2½ hours, which included the 30-minute survey. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, and transcribed. Prior approval had been obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) with regard to the recruitment and interview procedures. The "meaning condensation" method was employed to analyze the interview transcripts. Particular and common themes emerged in terms of usage patterns and were then classified, based on the purposes of the study. Dominant themes and issues arising from the interview were identified, and will be discussed in the next chapter on the analyses of findings.

Of the 40 interviews, 27 were held at participants' rented apartments, six were at their workplace (of whom five were from the same company)[22], and seven were at cafes. Where interviews were conducted at participants' homes, I made note of their living conditions and environment, as well as their ICT usage. I did the same with those who were interviewed at their workplace, noting their work environment and computers.

4.4 Profiles of Interviewees

Twenty-eight participants were interviewed in the first round, corresponding to Nos. 1 to 28 in Table 1 (below), and 22 in the second (Nos. 29 to 40). The majority of interviewees were heavy ICT users, with similar ICT experiences. In terms of ICT literacy and usage history, although several said that their ICT literacy was below average, compared with their peers. All owned at least one mobile phone and had

---

[22] See Table 1, Nos. 19 to 23.

access to computers at work or/and at home, although three females and one male interviewed in the first round of fieldwork did not own a personal computer then. Many also had experience using other ICTs, such as MP3, MP4 and digital cameras. The same surveys and question guide were used in both parts of fieldwork, although some new trends emerged in the second round, such as more smartphones and more micro bloggers, because of the half-year gap. Twenty-eight were interviewed in the first round, and 22 in the second round with more follow-up questions about new and emerging issues. The findings will be discussed in the next chapter, along with differences in both rounds, as the interviews provided meaningful comparisons, indicating new momentum and perspectives.

The interviewees comprised 19 females and 21 males; the majority was aged 23 to 26, with the oldest being 29. Eleven were born in rural towns, and 29 in villages. Three had master's degrees, 22 graduated with bachelor's degrees from major universities, 13 from general universities or colleges, and 2 obtained their distance learning diplomas from a college or technical school through distance learning. The participants worked in various fields, including real estate, IT, education, R&D, finance, health care, media, sports, trade, and translations.

In terms of work experience, 4 had between four and five years' experience, 26 worked for one to three years, and 10 had worked for less than a year. Only 3 reported salaries above RMB 7,000 (about S$ 1,200) a month; 23 earned from RMB 4,000 to RMB 7,000 (S$ 800 to S$ 1,200); 14 earned RMB 2,000 to RMB 4,000 (about S$400 to S$800). With regards to living condition, all of them were living in shared departments, 27 of them are living in shared room which may be shared by 2 to 4 people, while 11 of them were living in single rooms, of which, 4 were segmentations. Photos of several rooms are provided in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Profile of interviewees

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Education	Field of work	Work	Salary (RMB)
1	Lv	25	Male	Town	B1[23]	Real estate	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
2	Chao	25	Male	Village	B1	IT	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
3	Meng	23	Male	Village	B1	IT	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
4	Yang	24	Male	Village	B1	IT	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
5	Mo	26	Female	Village	B2	IT	4-5 years	7,001-10,000
6	Hua	24	Female	Town	B1	Media	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
7	Jin	25	Male	Village	B1	R&D	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
8	Dong	26	Male	Town	M	Real estate	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
9	Nanjing	23	Male	Village	B1	IT	<1 year	4,001-7,000
10	Doudou	23	Female	Town	B2	Media	<1 year	2,000-4,000
11	Cheng	23	Male	Village	B1	Education	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
12	Jin	24	Male	Village	B1	Engineering	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
13	Qi	25	Male	Town	B1	Government	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
14	Juan	24	Female	Town	B1	Media	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
15	Zhu	28	Male	Village	B2	IT	4-5 years	> 10,000
16	Haibo	26	Male	Town	M	Finance	<1 year	4,001-7,000
17	Liang	26	Male	Village	B2	Sports	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
18	Bing	26	Male	Village	B1	Finance	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
19	Qinghai	22	Male	Village	B1	Trade	<1 year	4,001-7,000
20	Shixi	22	Male	Town	B1	Trade	<1 year	4,001-7,000
21	Ying	23	Male	Town	B1	Trade	<1 year	4,001-7,000
22	Shui	24	Female	Village	B2	Trade	<1 year	4,001-7,000
23	Pang	23	Male	Village	B2	Trade	<1 year	2,000-4,000

---

[23] "B1" indicates bachelor's degree from a major university. "B2" indicates bachelor's degree from a general university or college. "D" indicates diploma received from a college or technical school. "M" indicates master's degree.

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Education	Field of work	Work	Salary (RMB)
24	Fanyi	24	Female	Village	B2	Translation	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
25	Ju	29	Female	Master	D & M	Education	4-5 years	4,001-7,000
26	Tao	26	Female	Town	B1	Market research	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
27	Cui	25	Female	Village	B2	Real estate	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
28	Yi	25	Female	Village	D & B2	Health care	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
29	Zheng	23	Male	Village	B2	Media	<1 year	2,000-4,000
30	Yuan	23	Female	Village	B2	Media	<1 year	2,000-4,000
31	Shan	23	Male	Village	B1	Education	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
32	Qin	25	Female	Town	B1	Media	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
33	Yan	26	Female	Village	B2	Real estate	1-3 years	> 10,000
34	Yu	26	Male	Village	B2	IT	4-5 years	4,001-7,000
35	Zhen	23	Female	Village	B1	Insurance	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
36	Linyun	24	Female	Village	B2	Real estate	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
37	Jie	23	Female	Village	B1	Media	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
38	Hong	26	Female	Village	B2	Press	1-3 years	2,000-4,000
39	Ming	25	Female	Village	B1	Agriculture	1-3 years	4,001-7,000
40	Cai	25	Female	Village	B1	Real estate	1-3 years	4,001-7,000

Source: Fieldwork, December 2010 to Jan 2011, and June to August 2011.

Chapter 5 Findings: General ICT Usage

The rural-to-urban graduate workers were born in China's rural areas in the 1980s, grew up in the midst of China's economic reforms, and now, armed with degrees and ICTs, are working in the most developed cities in China, leaving their undeveloped hometowns far behind. The ways in which this group has adopted, adorned and incorporated ICTs into their daily routine show how they think about themselves, and how they want others to view them. The chapter serves as a brief introduction on participants' identity-related ICT usage, specifically with regard to mobile phones and computers.

Many in this group were introduced to computers in their secondary or high school years, depending on their age, birthplace, and family background. The younger ones that were born into relatively affluent families in relatively developed regions tended to access, and to start using, the computer from a younger age, while the older participants from peasant backgrounds in villages, likely started using computers at the end of their high school years, often starting with having to check their performance in the national college entrance examination. Their first recollection of mobile phones often dates back to having watched their teachers and better-off classmates using such devices.

The majority of the participants obtained their first mobile phone towards the end of their adolescence, after graduating from high school and prior to starting college, which is much later than their counterparts in developed countries (Lenhart, 2010). To many, "having a phone" also means being about to "leave my home": mobile phone ownership signified entry into a new and more independent stage of life. Those from relatively affluent families also received their first computer around this

time, often by their first year or second year of undergraduate studies; others could only afford a personal computer after they had started working, and another four still did not have a computer. At the top of their "must buy" list was branded devices with advanced functions, especially smartphones and wafer-thin laptops, whereas gendered distinctions were significant in the choice of colours and designs with females veering towards "girlish and ladylike" designs and males preferring "manly and masculine" features.

Many frequently changed mobile phones, and one participant reportedly had owned seven. Many participants had also changed computers a couple of times, and had abandoned their first computer upon graduating university. Almost all of them believed that these ICT gadgets were symbols reflecting their identity, including social class, income level, personal tastes, gender and age, which is consistent with research about other groups (Law & Chu, 2008; Peng, 2008; Yang, 2008). However, their desire to have a most advanced and prestigious gadget, such as iPhone, was much more intense. They personalized these ICT devices to display their tastes, preferences and inner desires. With regard to ICT functions, besides communicating with others, mobile phones carried more emotive overtones, whereas computers were more aligned with entertainment and work. In terms of telecom service, many used Mzone, while several used Go tone, Easy own and Wow; among those interviewed half a year later, it was noted that more participants reported using 3G services, including Unicom's Wow and China Mobile's G3. The trend not only illustrates technological development, but also the group's desire to use better telecom service which also reflects social status in China.

For these participants, a typical work day begins when the alarm of their mobile phone goes off, after which some would receive mobile newspaper, which

they would then read, or would listen to music while on the move. For long commutes, some would log onto mobile QQ via their mobile phones. When they arrived at their workplace, the first thing was to start their computer and for many to log into QQ instantly, as well as check their emails and the latest online news. During their work hours, they search for information about business and news online, and some would use OA office system for much of their work. Their choice of communication mode varied, depending on whether it was a colleague, supervisor, or business partner; common forms include instant messaging, SMS or voice calls via computer, the landline telephone or their mobile phone. They would also deal with personal issues by calling or text messaging via their mobile phones, time permitting. If they were not too busy with work, they would scan their friends' news feeds via SNS, such as Renren, although many workplaces disallowed this. On the way home, some would again use mobile QQ, read mobile newspaper, scan websites, listen to music on the bus, or check new feeds in micro blogs. Back home, they often relaxed by chatting with friends, watching online movies, cartoons or funny videos, and reading feeds in Renren and posts in forums such as Tianya or Maopu. Some would respond to others' comments or update their pages in Renren or other SNS, and change their personal signatures in QQ. A few would watch television for fun, if they had a television set in the living room. Or they would call or send SMS-es to their friends, lovers and potential romance partners. At bedtime, some would send text messages to their lovers; others would leave their computer on to download movies. Many males would not shut down their mobile phones, whereas that was rare among female participants.

Throughout the day, the participants used their computer and mobile phone for information, communication and recreation. Many claimed that they could not live without these technologies, especially for work, while others preferred a life without

over-reliance on technology. However, all agreed that ICTs enlarged their knowledge

and horizons in terms of diverse viewpoints and boundless information. With regard

to communication and networking, they made full advantage of ICTs to find long-lost

friends from high school and stay in touch with friends and relatives from faraway,

for a relatively low price. ICTs also provided opportunities to get to know strangers

with similar interests, or who were willing to offer a listening "ear." Some of these

relationships turned into enduring friendships offline or online; others blossomed into

romances. SNS also offered opportunities for individuals to share their news as well

as to know what was going on in their friends' lives. They also used ICTs for

entertainment, as some jokingly referred to their personal computer as a "toy". It was

obvious that they spend a lot of their work and leisure hours with these ICTs,

especially the computer. Clearly, for these young migrant workers who lacked

personal social networks in Beijing, ICTs played key roles in assisting them in their

work, in providing information and entertainment, as well as facilitating

communication; thus, ICTs become incorporated into their daily routines and shaped

their lifestyles.

The participants' choice of social media was mainly QQ, Renren, Fetion,

MSN and Kaixin. QQ, formerly called Tencent QQ, is now the most popular free

instant messaging platform in mainland China (Tencent, 2011). Aside from the chat

program, QQ has also developed many other features including blogs (called QQ

space) and games. All the participants had at least one QQ account. Most traced their

QQ usage to the beginning of using Internet, when they were high school students,

and had been used it for about ten years. And for some, the main purpose of being

online was chatting with friends via QQ. Renren, or originally named as Xiaonei

Network (literally, "on-campus network") with similar functions as Facebook is the

most popular SNS among college students and young working people. As a real name SNS, these participants like other users disclose key information about real name, gender, age, hometown and schools as well as additional information, such as their contact information, hobbies and groups they joined. Participants enjoyed reading and uploading their peers' "status" and "news feeds" to learn about their friends' new trends and to take advantage of the shared contents, and many said they were not so keen to use Renren after work as when they were still in college. Kaixin (literally "happy") is a similar SNS targeting Chinese white-collar workers. Fetion (literally "flying letter") is an instant messenger allowing users to send and receive SMS for free between PCs and mobile phones. Some participants also MSN, which is the only social media developed by a foreign company, and it was initially introduced in Mainland China by those who had used the platform when they were living overseas and now are mostly used by employees in foreign companies and their business contacts. As the users and marketing segments of these services are different, participants tend to believe that the users of different platforms have different identities and prefer to use different platforms based on their self-concept. For participants who use all of these services, they disclose separate aspects of themselves and format different identities in these platforms corresponding to the publish self-images they want to deliver.

The most popular forums include Douban, Tianya, Maopu, while there were significant differences in participants' particular preferences. One common finding was that almost all acted as "lurkers" who preferred reading and scanning useful information and entertaining themselves with content, but seldom contributing

original content[24], although some occasionally commented on others' posts, and the

oldest male participant enjoyed answering others' professional questions in a

Question & Answer forum.

---

[24] In most online communities, 90% of users were lurkers who never contributed any content, 9% of users contributed a little, and only 1% of them were heavy contributors who account for almost all the contents (Nielsen, 2006; Nonnecke & Preece, 2000).

Chapter 6 ICT Gadgets and Life Goal: Becoming a Member of the Urban Middle Class

According to the identity formation theory which discussed in Chapter 3, the youth in this study are experiencing the growing pains in discovering their real selves and in making major commitments in life goal, lifestyle, and relationships. During the process, they explore the alternatives, make commitments to choices, and combine all the aspects of identity into an integral identity to become an adult, independent and mature, with all the attributes developed from the previous life experience. For the participants of the study, the most significant feature separate them to other groups is the distinct between their current situation and their life goal - to be a member of the urban middle class.

This chapter addresses how ICT gadgets are connected with the participants' life goal. It will show that the purchasing power of the gadgets, the choosing of the brands, the personalization of the devices, the information stored in are all closely related to the migrant graduate workers' identity formation, with special attention to the aspect of class-based identity.

6.1 Autonomy in Maturity: From a Gift to the First Big Purchase

For the youth, to become a member of the urban middle class is a long term project. The first step toward it is to become an autonomy individual with financial independence. For the youth, the mark of financial independence is closely related with the purchasing power of the ICT gadgets.

The majority of participants received their first mobile phone and computer around the age of 20, after graduating from high school, in their first or second year of

college. Parents gave the mobile phone and/or computer to the young adults mainly for three reasons. Firstly, the parents wanted to be able to keep in touch with their kids after they leave home to pursue higher education in another province, and the participants also wanted to stay in contact with their friends. Secondly, these gadgets are presented as gifts or rewards for gaining admission to college, which is highly valued in Chinese society. Thirdly, many parents felt pressured into buying mobile phones for their children as other parents had also done so similarly.

This stage, where they obtained their first computer and (or) mobile phone, also marks the end of their adolescence and the beginning of young adulthood. The college years also mark a change to the size and extent of their living space; at this age, youths engage in more social activities and spend most of the time within their peer group and their communications could span the entire country, as the youths and their friends attended universities across the country. Aside from the ICTs' practical utility, in Chinese society, owning the first personal computer and mobile phone also signifies "a rite of passage" or "a symbol of emancipation" (Rich Ling, 2000; Rich. Ling & Yttri, 2002); this was similar to ancient China, when young adults at twenty would pin up their hair to symbolize adulthood. For the participants, using a computer without supervision, or carrying around a mobile phone, sent the message that the individual was no longer to be treated as "a kid" or an adolescent, but was fast approaching adulthood and maturity. Furthermore, as ICTs become so integrated with the complexities of modern lifestyles, these young adults begin to experience the modern and dominant mediated ways in communications and work when they use ICTs. What they felt was not only the convenience brought about by these technologies, but also the brand new experience linked to autonomy, independence and modernity:

My first mobile phone meant a lot to me. It indicated a new life stage. Having a phone, leaving my home, the phone was the tool for independence outside.

(Juan, 24, female, town, No.14)

I could do whatever I liked with my personal computer and not worry that my parents would check it… Before it, my communication was just face to face communication or calling via landline telephones, we classmates were playing like kids. After I had the computer, I felt like that I was "in" the society, not only the connection between family and school; instead, I was facing the whole society. In this sense, I felt like that I was an adult after I owned my personal computer.

(Lv, male, 25, town, No.1)

While some felt excited and grown up when they received their first mobile phone or computer, especially the computer, their emotions towards these gadgets subsequently changed in their lives, which suggests that these personal gadgets are regarded as symbols of autonomy. The following table illustrates Qi's experience, which is a case in point.

Table 2: Qi's history of changing mobile phones

No.	Time	Source	Brand and features	Emotions
1	Final year of high school	Mother's used mobile phone	Little smart	"Not my phone" "a sign and tool for my parents to watch and supervise me" " I hated it and the last thing I wanted was it to ring"

2	Year one in college	bought by parents	TCL brand and advertised by Kim Hee-sun, feminine, troublesome to use	I didn't hate it so much as the first one, but I still wasn't satisfied with many of its aspects. Because the phone was brought by them, I didn't like it. What's more, it was troublesome to use. It was feminine and that was their aesthetic, which was none of my business.
3	Year two	a promotional gift received by parents	Sony Ericsson T618, non-smartphone, "the signature mobile phone for its transformation" "much advanced than the former one" "had a colour screen and I could custom the string"	It was OK.
4	Year 4	Self-bought (saved living expenses)	W800C, Sony Ericsson music mobile phone	I liked the phones which I chose.
5	After worked for one year	Self- bought (salary)	Smartphone, worth RMB 2225(about S$450), "much powerful than all of my other phones"	

Source: The interview with Qi (male, 25, Town, No.13)

For participants from low economic backgrounds in China, the situation and their emotions towards these gadgets are more complicated than that of their counterparts in developed countries. For them, low-end, used and parent-chosen phones received during adolescence were regarded as a sign and tool for parental supervision and was psychologically rejected by some participants, while functional, preferred branded and self-purchased phones manifested financial independence and autonomy. Even before they could afford a mobile phone with their salary, they saved money from their living expenses to buy a mobile phone, just so they could have complete autonomy to choose their own phone. For someone like Qi, purchasing a

mobile phone meant resisting parental control, while for others, it signified their

independence. Because their ability to buy a home was still far off, they derived a

sense of independence from buying something they could afford, such as a mobile

phone or laptop. It means a lot to them to be able to purchase such gadgets on their

own. Others felt ashamed that they still had to depend on their parents; those who still

longed for a personal computer felt motivated to save money towards that purchase.

6.2 A Story about Class: Distinctions between Apple's Fourth Generation and Four Bags of Apples

This section will explore the relationship between the choosing of the brands

and their identity construction in terms of class which is the centre of their life goal to

becoming a member of the urban middle class.

The majority of participants used branded mobile phones and laptops such as

Nokia, Sony Eriksson, Lenovo (including ThinkPad), HP, Dell, ASUS, and Sony.

They regard mobile phones and laptop computers as symbols of socioeconomic status

and income, which also serve as footnotes to their tastes and preferences. For them,

their common ambition is to be a member of the "new middle class," through their

efforts and hard work, and several explicitly expressed their desire to "make a big

fortune." Not all of them had decided to settle down permanently in Beijing;

nevertheless, they admired the "new middle class" and used them as role models. The

new middle class is an emergent social class, but they are not owners of capital;

instead, they are processors of managerial and technical skills, and most importantly,

they share the same background with these migrant graduates. Their wealth is no

longer displayed by the classical symbols of Asian affluence, but by Western icons of

modernity: a meal at McDonalds or the ubiquitous mobile phone have become potent

status symbols (Robison & Goodman, 1996, p. 1). These are trendsetters, their fashion trends closely followed by other graduate workers. Purchasing luxury cars and houses is, for now, far beyond their reach, but a fancy mobile phone or laptop is possible. It should be noted that, to a large extent, the participants do not use fancy devices as a way to flaunt; instead, these gadgets serve as a portable reminder to themselves as their ultimate goals and desired lifestyle.

> *I think the computer and mobile phone can reflect one's social status. After I graduated, I got in touch with some successful people. Almost all the items they are using are advanced. They use iPhone 4 after it just released, as well as iPad. In my opinion, they don't use these gadgets for showing off; instead, they just have a belief that in whatever they do, including in enjoyment, they should be ahead of others. They won't be the laggards of society. It's like that they always fly first class. It's just their standard of always being in the leading position. They are reminding themselves of their ideal and on the other hand, their identity and status are really consistent with the images implied by their gadgets. And that is also my direction. That's why I got this iPhone 4. It is a personal notion as well as one suggested by my girlfriend. She bought me this. When I see it, do I like it? Yes! So drive myself to achieve this lifestyle. That's it! I motivate myself by material goals.*
>
> (Bing, 26, male, village, No. 18)
>
> *I've wanted a very good and high-end mobile phone for a long time. Though a phone is just used to contact others, you can use it whether it's good or not, I just really want to use a better one. I envy others who use a better phone in*

trains or somewhere else. I felt that these people are high in social status and

are extremely rich.

(Yuan, 23, female, village, No.30)

With regard to the brands, while some participants supported domestic mobile phones and their favourite brands, the majority of participants desired iPhone 4 the most. Interestingly, even though some of them have never seen an iPhone, they claimed that it was the most advanced mobile phone, based on advertisements and conversations with others. Many expressed their fervent wish to own an iPhone 4, because some of them believed that having such an expensive phone symbolized social status and class, while for others, having such a stylish phone signified unique and unconventional tastes, closely linked to the notion of technological modernity.

My favourite is Apple. I think its design is very good and it is beautiful. I

seldom see people using Apple. For iPhone 4, I just know a joke about it; I

have never seen someone using it. The joke is "Company bonuses, and

someone have the four generations of Apple, while others have four bags of

apples."[25] Why I like Apple is because, according to my knowledge, it has a

good-looking design and good quality, and a secondary reason is I think the

name "Apple" sounds nice.

(Shan, male, 23, village, No.31)

Why do I want to use iPhone 4? It is not a comparison; (Laughs) it is just envy,

jealousy and hatred. I don't have an iPhone ah. I wish to use it ah. It must be

good to use. I certainly would envy those using it, but the price is in the way. A

---

[25] In Mandarin, the pronunciations of "generation" and "bag" are the same.

phone priced at around RMB 4000 is certainly different from other phones

worth RMB 1800. To a certain extent, phone reflects the user's income and

taste.

(Lv, male, 25, town, No.1)

I like the iPhone because it looks fun. The iPhone 5 is beautiful; I saw its

picture a couple of days ago. I also played with my co-worker's iPhone 4 and

it is like a small computer. It is indeed much advanced and advantaged than

other phones…I cannot afford it now as well as iPhone5 when it is released

next year. I can only afford Nokia. One's phone can display one's income

level.

(Hua, female, 24, town, No.6)

The class distinction in using mobile phones is also reflected in different telecom services or telecom brands and mobile phone numbers (G. Bell, 2006; Wallis, 2008). Similar findings were also found in this research, and it further suggested that the telecom services are classified by socio-economic levels, and people in particular class with certain income level use corresponding services. Go tone, World Wind Business and 3G services are considered to be at the higher end of the market, and are believed to be the choice of the higher class or those with high incomes, while Mzone, Easy own and others are at the lower end, used by the less affluent masses. This distinction is also consistent with the marketing segments of these services. While one's class and income dictates whether the choice of higher-end or lower-end service, the particular service is chosen based on one's personal and practical needs. In a participant's words:

The leaders like to use Go tone or World Wind Business; some advanced ones use 3G services. I feel people using Mzone belong to the same group. Only we, kids who just graduated from colleges, use Mzone. Those who don't send many messages, or who make calls occasionally, then they use Easy own.

<div align="right">(Lv, male, 25, town, No.1)</div>

The participants' belief that one's gadgets reflect social class may explain why many paid attention to others' telecom services and phone numbers, and regarded high-end telecom services and even-ending numbers and lucky numbers such as "six," "eight" and "nine"[26] as used by the privileged class. Moreover, those in sales jobs were especially concerned about the kind of image their mobile phone number and telecom service would deliver to their clients.

I always used China Mobile. When I joined this company, the staff bought me a Unicom card beginning with 1314. I was not happy with it, because people will think only rookies use this kind of number. The company's policy was that sales people use Go tone, which is postpaid. I particularly expected that I could be a salesperson one day, then I could use Go tone. It would be great that I have a number of Go tones. Then, I could do the sales job and use Go tone finally. Everyone regards people using Go tone as business people. It really matters how your clients regard you. Once they have a good impression of you, many things can be done with less effort.

<div align="right">(Mo, female, 26, village, No.5)</div>

---

[26] Number "six" "eight" and "nine" are regarded as lucky numbers in China, because they have symbolic meanings such as "smooth" (six), "fortune" (eight) and "long-lasting" (nine).

As portable gadgets worn on the body, ICTs have been adopted by people worldwide as class symbols; however, the connection between ICT consumption and class identity among this group is much more significant than for other groups studied in prior literature.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, consumption and ICTs are themes of modernity. Consumption enables "people to redefine their social status in terms of consumption and lifestyle" (Yan, 2000, p. 179). Bourdieu used habitus to describe the norms and practices of particular social classes, and to explain the correlation between consumption and class in modern society (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1996). To Bourdieu, "Social class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production, but by the class habitus which is 'normally' associated with that position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 372). Moreover, habitus, the naturally attached, dominant values of society are legitimized by institutional habitus; for example, the knowledge of the middle class are orientated, normalized and naturalized in mainstream higher education (Reay, 2001). For the rural-to-urban graduate workers, what they learn at university serves both as preparation for employment, and as cultural apprenticeship for their anticipated or confirmed class status. Thus, ICTs have penetrated and become integrated with day-to-day functioning in modern life, serving as a feature and symbol of modernity, and "the reality" was enhanced by the overwhelming advertisements in media and gossips in daily life. As was evident during the interviews, participants used words such as portable, visible, branded, styled, qualified, hi-tech, beautiful, fancy, expensive, and modern, to describe these ICTs. By the close intertwining of enjoyment and modern lifestyle, ICT consumption seems to be more than the explicit showing off of one's purchasing power.

In China, the particular circumstances may strengthen the connection between

class identity and ICT consumption where, on the one hand, "identity construction and social status through consumption are perhaps the most striking visual differences in the realm of people's everyday lives since the eighties" (Wallis, 2008, p. 107). On the other hand, ICT gadgets are always used as symbols of status (in "*sidajian*"), and an extreme example is that computers and telephones were configured as devices for the elites. Thus, it is no wonder that the new middle class adopted ICT devices to symbolize their class and wealth, and are emulated by the graduate workers who were educated by institutional habitus and cultivated by media and daily life where filled with ICTs. Those from the lower socio-economic groups aspired to imitate their middle-class counterparts with regard to attitudes, behaviour, dress, language, and lifestyle; through their university education, they hope—rather, expect—to leave behind their humble class backgrounds and to "assimilate" into a new elite social class. Academic qualifications, such as a university degree, become not only "badges of ability" and marks of social "distinction," but also facilitated entry into "middle-class" society. The strong relationship among ICT consumption, lifestyle and social class led participants into believing that pursuing these ICT devices would drive them towards the lifestyle of the social class which they hoped to be a part of.

6.3 Taste, Group and Individuation: Brand Fans and My Unique Gadgets

Last section emphasizes the class-based identity construction in term of economic aspect; however, as discussed in chapter 3, class is also closely related with taste, culture and lifestyle. For the youth, becoming a member of the urban middle class, also means leading a lifestyle with unique taste, belonging to a distinctive group and also, being a unique individual. This section will discuss "us" and "other", and "I" and "other" in the aspect of the choice and personalization of the gadgets, and

explore the interactions between these actions and the identity representation and construction with focus on the class-related tastes.

While most of them use legal branded smartphones, they hold particular opinions towards feature phones (conventional non-smartphones), contraband mobile phones and imitation mobile phones. All had used, and some were still using, feature phones, which they regarded as dated and "not cool." Some of them had used, or were using, contraband phones, which was acceptable to many. Several others had used, or were using, imitation phones given by their parents and/or as a temporary measure; for the majority, these phones were disgraceful and unacceptable. Moreover, they tended to think that users of these phones had particular identities with particular socio-economic levels linked to technical literacy, education and/or income.

> *What I have is just a shanzhai Apple phone, which is not my phone. I got it from my home, and my mother has an identical one. They always buy shanzhai things. In fact, I don't like imitation items, but my parents have no idea about these and every time they buy a phone is shanzhai phone. I will buy a really good one after I rid myself of the habit of losing phone.*
>
> (Cui, 25, female, village, No.27)

> *I think those who use contraband phones can be called mobile phone chasers, who want to use the high-end phones, which haven't been released in China. For the shanzhai phone, the users may not have particularly low incomes, but less educated. People having been to college generally will not use the shanzhai phone. Because the shanzhai phone, after all, is not genuine. I think it is a matter of "face."*
>
> (Jing, male, 25, village, No.7)

I think the people using shanzhai phones are the country bumpkins and rustic

countrymen.

(Doudou, female, 23, town, No.10)

Specifically, the imitation phone is closely identified with those who lack

education, such as their parents and migrant or peasant workers (*mingong*), and the

feature phone was mostly used by people who do not keep up with fashion, while

users of contraband mobile phones were perceived to be price-sensitive, fashion-

sensitive, technological geeks, confident in their knowledge in distinguishing genuine

mobile phones from fake ones.

Even among the high-end products such as Apple and IBM, their

interpretations about the two brands are significantly different, reflecting their

preferences and the identity construction behind the preference.

The people using iPhone emphasize operability; they are very concerned

about the latest kind of fashion.

(Yang, male, 24, village, No.4)

One's computer can display one's personality, taste and preference. We

several friends were all interested in some models of IBM, from T41 to T43,

those classical models. Because we share the same preference, we feel like we

are the same kind of persons. And persons using fancy notebooks, such as

Apple, belong to another group.

(Lv, male, 25, town, No.1)

As it shows above, the youth tend to link the apple product with fashion and

fancy with an emphasis in design, while relate the IBM PC to high-quality and solidly

built with an emphasis in quality. The participants also tend to have the stereotypes

about the people who use the two brands. In most of their view, the people use apple

products, especially the Mac PC and Iphone are who always want to be the front of

the fashion and the technology, and they are affordable and sensitive about the fashion.

While they also think that there are some youth in their group purchase the fancy

products with the saving for several months, not because the real need, but the desire

for the lifestyle the apple products implies – elegant, prestige, exclusivity and/or

richness. For the participants, the image of the IBM pc users is more about the

professional businessman. They are consistent and efficient, and play in lower key.

This image is also related to the lifestyle of the middle class with the focus on work

and professionalism.

Moreover, the distinct in the interpretations of the gadgets also separates the

youth into different sub-groups. As discussed in Chapter 3, ICTs devices can reflect

one's belonging or membership in certain groups. Group identity is attached to

particular brands. Participants regarded users of different brands as having particular

tastes and belonging to separate groups. According to social identity theory, people in

the same group choose particular norms and patterns of behaviours to reflect their

identity (Akerlof & Kranton, 2009); cultural products are used as popular symbols to

identify and distinguish between "us" and "others." It was found that college students

stopped using a cultural product that was adopted by outsiders, and when asked to

make a publicly visible choice, youths were less likely to choose a product that was

associated with an avoidance group (Berger & Heath, 2008). Similarly in this research,

participants tend to think in terms of the tastes associated with a particular brand, and

preferences for the kinds of mobile phone and computer indicate one's belonging and

identity. For them, the choice between different brands reflects different subgroups

within them, and many used examples such as Apple and ThinkPad to illustrate such

differences, although only a few actually used these brands. And since some had used and/or were using contraband ICTs, contraband ICTs were regarded as acceptable, and some linked this with technological literature and youth identity, particularly users of smartphones, since many of them are using, or aspired to using smartphones. Moreover, using imitation phones and dated mobile phones indicates "other groups" suggesting less-educated, lowly paid and of rustic-tastes. The brand, technology, features and price associated with these gadgets are carefully noted by the group and used to identify and separate "us" from "others."

As discussed in the previous last section, central to Bourdieu's concept of taste is habitus and cultural capital—a form of capital that can be embodied, such as distinct types of knowledge, competencies, practices, and tastes that are cultivated over time. It can also be objectified "in the form of cultural goods," such as artworks, instruments, machines, and books as well as institutionalized, as in the form of a university degree (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). For the participants, the habitus and cultural goods related to higher class- the Apple and ThinkPad gadgets used by the wealthy, are admired; while the gadgets related to lower class- the imitation ones used by the unwanted class and groups, are disdained. As Baudrillard (2000) claimed, objects of consumption operate within the logic of signification and bear little relationship to functional use. ICT devices are used as signs to group individuals and to differentiate others as well as to confer identity.

Besides being the fans of a particular brand to indicate one's taste and group, the youth also represent one's taste and individual identity through personalizing their gadgets. As Bell (2006) and Fujimoto (2005) had found, ICT users personalized their gadgets with stylish decorations to represent individual identity information. This research showed similar findings. Most of the participants paid special attention to

personalization as they believed their choice of wallpaper and ring tones would reveal information about themselves, such as taste and personality. Only two males chose the default blue background on their computer screen, explaining that it was because they believed that simplification also revealed their personality—that they liked simplicity—and emphasized their focus on performance and efficiency instead. Among the other participants, the popular wallpaper choice were images of themselves or their idols, celebrities, scenes, cartoons, or movies. They would pay special attention in choosing the wallpaper for their office computer, because others could see it, and draw conclusions about them based on what they saw.

Their wallpapers can be classified into four categories. Firstly, the most popular was nature and beautiful scenery (see Appendix 1, picture 4); those who spent more than eight hours on the computer often chose the colour green, as it was believed to be good for the eyes. Secondly, images related to their hobbies and special interests were also popular, such as pictures of cars, celebrities, movies, televisions, cartoon, animals, social events, and religions. Thirdly, pictures connected to inner feelings and longing; lastly, photos of themselves or of themselves with others (see Appendix 1, picture 5). Some amount of overlapping exists. For example, the most popular choice—scenery—may also disclose the user's longing for nature and a slower pace of life, the opposite of their crowded room, repressed living conditions, and pressured mind. Moreover, pictures in the second category are also directly and indirectly linked to their desires and longing. For example, one participant, who liked dogs, used a picture of a cute puppy drenched in the rain, which portrayed the puppy having the faith to overcome challenges (see Appendix 1, picture 6). The participant used the image to encourage himself to be optimistic and positive in the face of

difficulty. Images emphasizing beauty, cars, or religions may also relate to participants' inner wishes in a larger context.

I choose my desktop picture based on my mood and tastes. I like things that look elegant. The desktop picture of my office computer is of Song Hye Kyo[27]. I combined three pictures together by myself (see Appendix 1, picture 7). *The desktop picture of the computer at home is of Zhao Wei[28]. It is not because I like the two stars; instead, I like the overall composition and the feel of those pictures. More thought goes into choosing the wallpaper of my office computer, because I have to consider others' feelings. Thus, it should be more refined and cultured…for a personal computer, I may choose some cartoons and things about lovers. For mobile phone pictures, I often choose nice photos of myself or pictures with others, such as relatives, sisters, but not boyfriend. I feel weird if I use photos of my boyfriend and me. I don't know why.*

(Qin, 25, female, town, No.32)

The screensaver of my phone is a photo of my ex-girlfriend and me. Now it has become a habit and I don't want to change it. When I saw this picture, I don't think much. I just use it for two years. Others asked me why I hadn't changed it. I just said I feel comfortable when I see it. I will change it when I accept another girl, then I will replace these.

(Liang, male, 26, village, No.17)

[The participant's desktop was a picture of a gold bullion in the shape of "$"and dolour bills (see Appendix 1, picture 8).] *The gold colour is especially prominent, in the evening, after the light is turned off, I look at the screen and*

---

[27] A famous South Korean actress.
[28] A famous Chinese actress.

it makes my nerves tingle, then remind myself over and over again—I want to

make money! I want to make money! Just this, nothing else.

<div align="right">(Bing, male, 26, village, No. 18)</div>

With regard to ring tones, the majority of participants claimed that because the ring tones were heard by others, they had to consider others' feelings and the kind of image these ring tones could deliver. Some chose from the pre-installed options, or simply used the default ring tones as they thought the music or melody was classic, "neutral" and could be used for different occasions. Others uploaded music, including game music and popular music, to show their preference and tastes. One participant said he used unique ring tones to identify his mobile phone when it rang. Those using self-setting ring tones changed their ring tones much more frequently than those using pre-installed music. One male participant said he chose an unpleasant ring tone for calls from his boss to distinguish from other calls. The materials they used are from cartoons, television programs and games and these cultural products are closely related to the popular culture of the post-80s generation. Some were from the participants' childhood memory, while others were based on current cultural consumption. Because the theme songs were familiar among this generation, whenever their phone rang, those around may also resonate from their shared generational experiences. Similar to the choice of wallpaper, a particular kind of music is linked to certain personalities and identities. For example, a Christian participant chose church music with a long prelude, and she explained that although she likes this song, she had to be considerate of others, and the long prelude was just "ding ding ding" music, and the part with lyrics appeared much later which seldom

showed. Thus, the choice of ring tones is also a result of personal preference and social consideration.

I think my ring tone is lovely. I think it can symbolize my age and gender; older people and males won't use such a ring tone. It can show my outgoing and lively personality. I always try to use music that is not "old-fashioned" or "rustic," because when girls get together in college, we would discuss the ring tones and sometimes I was criticized for using rustic ones.

(Jie, female, 23, village, No.37)

I choose the nostalgic ones, the music of Super Mario, Battle City, the games we played during elementary school, because there was no opportunity to play them enough. When I grew up and found these things still exist, I felt nostalgic. As I use them as ring tones, I feel very close to these things… I think people who select the type of music are not mature enough. When the phone rings, people will recognize the music, but no one else would use this as their ringtone, because it's too childish.

(Shixi, male, 22, town, no. 20)

Several also had decorative objects attached to their gadgets. Generally, these items reflected three aspects. The first one is their own images, with several females choosing small and good-looking personal photos as stickers on their phones (see Appendix 1, picture 9). Secondly, some decorations relate to the user's life experiences and could be creatively applied to disclose some personal information. For example, a participant pasted two stickers with logos of sports competitions he had managed on his laptop as it reflected his work experience and served as a resume

or personal advertisement when he used his laptop at work. Thirdly, some decorative items relate to the user's relationships with others, including lovers, parents and siblings. For example, a male participant from Xinjiang attached a jade to his mobile phone (see Appendix1, picture 10); Xinjiang is known for its jade and it is customary to present jade as a gift or amulet, to wish the other safety and peace: "It was a gift from my father. He gave it to me then I left home. I replaced phones, but I always keep it. I have gotten used to seeing it with my phone. It makes the phone my phone" (Lv, male, 25, town, No.1).

Besides what has been discussed, there are two other points to note. First, there are differences in personalizing one's mobile phones, personal computer and office computer. As the computer is more related to work, the space in which the computer is located is more public, such as in shared rooms and offices, and the screen being larger and more visible, the participants try to avoid using too private, styled images and personally preferred images in the personal and semi-personal gadgets used in relatively public place, and the same concern goes with the choice of ting tones. Second, the participants tend to label their possessions by personalizing these personal gadgets, by attaching personal preference and taste, self-image and symbols of personal relationship.

6.4 Conclusion

ICTs are an inherent part of the participants' life goal, and are adopted and personalized by the participants as symbols of independence, class, tastes and groups. The interrelationship between consumption and perception of ICT and class identity is impressively significant, with noticeably different affiliations in one's actual class, desired class and despised class and corresponding ICT symbols. And consumption is

the underlying theme which links class or purchasing power with lifestyle, making objects of consumption operate within the logic of signification.

In summary the ICTs are related to their life goals in following aspects: (1) these personal gadgets are used by the group as the mark of the financial independence, and are further regarded as symbols of mental independence and autonomy because of the close parental control in the choosing and using these devices. Having the authority and the purchasing ability to choose the devices is the first step toward their long term goal. (2) The groups pay noticeable attention to the brands and the features of the ICTs devices, and telecom service. The dictions between the gadgets they are using and the ones the upper class is using stimulate them, and they tended to regard the high-end gadgets as symbols of success and fashion, and these gadgets are used to remind themselves of their goal and desired lifestyle. (3) These youth tend to regard the gadgets with different features and brands are symbols of "us" and "other", since typical images are associated with different gadgets. Moreover, they differentiate their gadget from others by personalization.

In shows that the choosing of ICT gadgets is the outcome of a combination of the user's many aspects. Initially, the income levels closely linked with class dictates the range within which one can afford. Then they focus on different aspects because of individual needs; this is influenced by psychological status, personality, tastes, and age—that is, the images they want to deliver. For example, people also tend to choose the gadgets' brands and telecom service which reflect their group identity, and exclude others using gadgets with unacceptable features, such as imitation phone and gendered devices featuring the opposite gender. Lastly, the participants view these devices as more than technological artefacts, being personal and personalized devices closely associated with their memories and saved information, as mementos of the

past and ongoing events, and reminders of one's ego identity. In summary, the owners consciously adopt and personalize the devices to symbolize their class-based identities and their life goal, which are associated with social status, income levels, education level and group memberships.

Chapter 7 ICT Communication Tools and Relationship Development in Communities: Building and Maintaining Relationships

Besides the life goal, the relationship is another important aspect for the youths' identity formation during their early adulthood. How they utilize ICTs built long-term relationship and during it to reveal and construct one's social identity in the unit of community? This chapter explores how ICTs are used as social connection tools to built and maintain relationships and format one's membership identity in practice-oriented communities, close relationship-oriented communities and interest-oriented communities though functional, emotional and cultural connectedness.

Generally, there are four elements to "sense of community": membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Different categories are used to classify communities and online communities. In this research, practice-oriented communities refer to professional communities or communities in workplaces where power and control significantly impact one's ICT usage, and these impacts reveal one's identity within an organization. Relationship-oriented communities refer to communities in which members are mainly connected with each other by relationships, such as kinship networks, peers and friend networks. *Guanxi* and social capital play an important role in how ICTs are used to construct, display and feel the membership identity in such communities. Lastly, interest-oriented communities are communities constructed by people with shared interests, where movie, music, books, comics and network events are talked and popular cultures intensive exist. This subsection investigates how membership in a larger cultural community is achieved through content consumption via ICTs, with special attention on the youth culture and contemporary culture.

7.1 Practice-oriented Communities: Constrains and Strategies

Particular occupations and workplace environments are constitutive of power relations and practices within which hierarchies are centred. Some participants reported that their companies forbid them from accessing certain websites and applications during office hours, such as all SNSs, some instant messengers and some portal websites. Two participants said they were not allowed to access the Internet on their computers, and could only surf the Internet at an Internet café. However, some ignored the restrictions and claimed that as long as they finished their work, they were allowed "relaxation time," and that others were doing the same. Those who worked in creative industries reported that the restrictions were loosely applied and they could access the Internet whenever they wanted, and could listen to music by using a headphone. By so doing, these participants partly transformed the public workplace into personalized and private space by occupying the space for personal use, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Similar to Wallis' study (2008) of migrant workers who used mobile phones at their workplace to subvert authority, these migrant graduate workers' actions could also be interpreted as passive resistance by low-end workers against their employers, but the tensions between these participants and their supervisors were not as tight as that in the case of migrant women. The more notable and interesting ICT use in these communities was how these participants actively used ICTs to fit into different organizational cultures and to construct particular ICT etiquette to react with the hierarchy structure in various companies.

A participant gave a detailed example of how he, his colleagues and his boss interacted through QQ status, QQ group and FTF.

Once I cursed my department head in my QQ status with letters, and several co-workers understood my message. They laughed at me at the same time. I just want to vent my anger…they won't tell this to the boss, because they sometimes do the same. It is fun that obscurely composing something in a status update and some gossipy co-workers who keep tracing others' status would discover these first…and once I wrote an exceptional status… it was screenshot by a co-worker and sent to the QQ group of our project team. Our project team is fun. They were chatting and laughing about this in the QQ group for a whole morning… Our boss (not the department head) would also scan our status messages every morning to know our status and sometimes turned to me face to face and asked, "Why was your status not so good? Was it caused by my criticism?" Anyway, we use it to say something we cannot tell him directly and he would interact with us based on our status.

<div align="right">(Nanjing, male, 23, village, No.9)</div>

Often, superior and co-workers scanned each other's status with different objectives. Co-workers viewed it as fun, while bosses used it as a form of supervision. Moreover, the co-workers could only discuss these things online, while pretending to work; bosses have the right to openly and "functionally" use QQ during working hours, ask to see a subordinate face-to-face to show that he cared and understood. For the participants, the action of posting some particular status was not simply to vent; it revolved around the objective of skilfully expressing something that could both attract the boss's attention without infuriating him, as well as amuse co-workers through QQ status in a half-public and half-private manner.

This participant worked in a web company where the organizational culture was relatively open and non-hierarchical. Six participants at a state-owned enterprise with a more hierarchical structure provided information about their ICT interaction with the leaders[29], clients and colleagues. All were asked to add their leaders to their QQ profile; however, they only talked to their immediate supervisor, who was about the same age and in the same office, and there was little exchange between them and those several rungs above. Asked why they did not actively talk to these leaders online and instead had to report to their office, besides the fact that many superiors were not technologically savvy or familiar with these ICT applications because of their age, one participant gave the fundamental reason in terms of culture: "After all, leader is leader." This participant also said that sometimes when he had to send some information on his computer to his superiors, which could be sent directly via QQ (to computer) or Fetion (to his phone), he would chose not to use that route; instead, he would send the message from his computer to his mobile phone via Fetion, and then text message his superior. He thought that it was "not convenient, feel embarrassed" to befriend his supervisor on Fetion. Moreover, all these six participants would consider how to address their superiors, whether to send a text message, or telephone them instead; and, if so, when was a good time to call. After the call had gone through, they would immediately ask their superior whether it was convenient to talk, or they would text message their superior before calling. And if the superior happed to be on a business trip and failed to respond, the participants would ask their colleagues who were on the business trip with the superior to obtain further information before deciding how best to contact him.

---

[29] In stated-owned enterprises and governments, the persons in higher rankings are generally called "leader" in China.

In summary, ICTs help to create a modern workplace community, and individuals' ICT access and practice are based on the hierarchy within an organization. This particular usage, including the interaction between different roles and the business etiquette in ICT communications, reveal social class and status. Interestingly, the junior post-1980 generation workers tended to regard the traditional ICT communications, such as message and voice calls, as more professional and formal, while the latest free ICT communications were felt to be too informal and uncomfortable to be used at work. The only exception was when their working relationship had become closer and it was evident that the latest ICT platforms were generally used among peers and close networks.

7.2 Close Relationship-Oriented Communities: Emotions, Memory and Connection

Many of the participants had the experience of receiving the gadgets from people which in the close relationship, such as parents, relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends. Some were new; others were second-hand items. Among the gifts, the most treasured were their first mobile phones and computers, and those given by boyfriends or girlfriends. The mobile phones used to contact their loved ones, including lovers and friends, were seen as carriers of memories in the form of the mobile phone itself, along with the messages and pictures saved within, and particular ring tones, all of which evoked memories of past events. The deep emotional connections between users and their mobile phones related to their life stories, and the complex feelings of attachment and memories anchored them to their concept of self. Some examples follow:

I broke up with my first boyfriend, was broken-hearted, and I would recall many memories when I saw it. There were many messages in it. When I was in love, I frequently read these messages and was reluctant to delete them, but then I became too sad to read them. I don't know where it is now, perhaps being displaced.

(Doudou, female, 23, town, No.10)

There are emotions attached with my first TCL phone and Samsung diva. I protected my first phone very well and treasured it… the other one was connected with my first love and friendship. In college, we friends always texted each others, but we seldom text now, just call directly. Then we emphasized emotional connections, but now not so much…The Samsung Diva was given by my boyfriend. By the time I lost it, I had already broken up with him, so even though I liked the phone, I didn't care too much; rather, I just felt that out of sight, out of mind. The phones carried something in life, so they left a deep impression, while other phones are just "passing travellers."

(Juan, 24, female, town, No.14)

We were simple then. I borrowed other's phone to text the girl I liked and to chat. Our communications are mostly by phone. Now I don't have feelings about that girl any more, but hearing the particular ring tone thrills and excites me, and I recall the past me who was particularly naïve and pure. The ring tone was full of catchy rhythms and I felt that my heart jumped with it. I only had such a yearning for good version at that time.

(Yu, 26, male, village, No. 26)

As ICTs have become highly integrated in daily life, having been presented as a gift and being used as the main communication tools between loved ones and in close relationships, the gadgets were embedded in and associated with past events, feelings, and also the "past me," leaving deep impressions for the participants. These gadgets linked to one's ego identity, which emphasizes inner feelings, and personal identity, which refers to the more concrete aspects of individual experience in interaction (Côté, 1996), by relating with their first love, friendship in college and the yesteryears, which are intensively emotional. On the other hand, the messages, photos in the gadget and even ring tones serve as tangible memories for their life stories. Thus, the participants integrated the concept of the "past me" with these memory carriers and carried enduring symbolic meanings with these inanimate and lifeless gadgets, turning them into symbols of an image about a past, simpler, and perhaps better, times, constituting first love, pure friendship, the yesteryears when personal connections were valued, and the schoolgirl or schoolboy "past me" who was simpler and purer.

Besides sending as gifts, and using as a memory carrier, the primary purpose of ICTs in the aspect of relationship is to maintain and strengthen relationships; this function has long been commonly used in Chinese society where *guanxi* is extremely valued. As an example, sending messages to express greetings during festivals is widely used by the Chinese, who sent more than 26 billion messages during the seven days of Chinese New Year (MIIT, 2011). For the participants, they keep contact with their social networks through various ICTs, such as instant messengers (QQ and Fetion), SNS (Renren), SMS and voice calls. For example, social media allows them to keep track of their friends and events in their lives by browsing their profiles/walls. In a participant's words, "*The main use of Renren is blogging and showing photos.*

Those paying close attention to my profile are my good friends, and I also follow

closely their pages. Who broke up, who got an offer. We know these without

gossiping"(Lv, male, 25, town, No.1).

Besides this functional use in obtaining information, participants reported that

it was important also to generate a feeling of connectedness, which could result from

updating status, active information sharing modulated by the amount of information

shared (Köbler, Riedl, Vetter, Leimeister, & Krcmar, 2010). ICTs enabled them to

feel connected to their friends and families from afar and to continue their close

relationships. Most importantly, the participants tended place importance in their

interactions with others, including their popularity and the closeness of particular

relationship. These can be shown in the following aspects.

First is the method of communication used. It suggests that particular

communication method links with particular groups. More traditional forms of

communication, such as voice calls and SMS, are widely used among close networks

and hierarchy relations to show intimacy or respect; the latest communication tools,

such as instant messaging and SNS, are also used in intimate and private relationships,

but mostly among peers, as these tools are more casual and youth culture-portrayed.

The most open platform, such as discussion forums, were only used with strangers

who shared the same interests and can be regarded as the most alienated

communication tool; at the opposite end, the webcam was used only with those

closest, and was also the most private communication tool. Because of the strong

connection between the communication tools and relationships, people would expect

others within particular relationships or with a particular identity to choose a

particular way to contact with them, and if someone chose a tool that was not

appropriate or not expected, there would be unhappiness and even embarrassment.

Once I was chatting with a girl. She requested a video call and I accepted. Perhaps she didn't mean to do it, but she was scantily clad and her actions were too… too provocative. And I never use webcam call with other girls again, especially after meeting my girlfriend. It is not appropriate.

(Bing, male, 26, village, No.18)

Second is the frequency in connection, such as browsing[30] and commenting. ICTs reflects individuals' social identity, such as implying one's popularity by the number of messages/calls/comments received and names in the contact list/friends list, and as markers of in-group/out-group boundaries (Ling & Yttri, 2002). An opposite example will serve to illustrate this connection. A participant once carried out a little experiment, using himself as the subject, to test his popularity; after realizing that he had forgotten to bring his phone with him, he decided not to go home and get it, choosing to leave it at home to see the number of missed calls and messages he would get when he returned home, and was disappointed to know that no one had tried to contact him that day.

The third is the contents of the comments, which are "*permanent restored in one's website*", "*posted after thought*" and *"open to others"* to *"express wishes in literal languages which are different from the daily spoken language"* and serve as social grooming. Hyper-coordination in mobile phone communication (Ling & Yttri, 2002) is also applied here, in this "emotional and social communication," particularly through idle chatting, mural commenting, small talk and in-depth discussion which is either important in content or in expressive and emotional reasons, these "social glue"

---

[30] Both Renren and QQ space allow users to view who had recently browsed their pages.

among the youth (Johnsen, 2003, p. 167; Taylor & Harper, 2003) are crucial for these migrant workers.

Lastly, the users' settings, for example, some participants filter viewers of their QQ space through private settings, and almost all the participants classified their contacts in QQ into subgroups, including online friends, friends, important friends, family, junior high school/ high school/college classmates and colleagues. In turn, it is the interaction between close relationship and comments from "loyal readers" that motivate the writers to keep on expressing. In general, the participants in this research reported that they highly valued the fact that these sites helped them maintain their social networks; this was different from findings in other research that suggest that social media were basically useless in maintaining participants' relationships.

In summary, when the participants are establishing their identities with commitments to recognized roles in communities and to others within intimate relationships, ICTs bring about person-to-person connectivity and allow the participants to develop more selective person-to-person social networks (Campbell & Park, 2008) and to maintain regular accessibility and connection or "ambient virtual co-presence" between distanced individuals, especially for close distanced contacts, in this sense, individuals become "more of an autonomous communication node" (Wellman, 2001, p. 238). And the nodes tend to create and maintain relationships with other nodes in one's social network to establish one's recognized personal and social identity. They tend to view themselves in the interactions with others, which are integrated by ICTs which makes the interaction permanent saved, more visible, traceable and open.

7.3 Interest-Oriented Communities: "We" and "Other" in Youth Culture

Content consumption always links to one's cultural identity. This section will explore how the content consumption related to the concept of "we" and "other" in youth culture. For the participants, their relationships with contemporary culture and online youth culture can be explored in three aspects, the content or topic they consume, the platform or the particular website they prefer and their particular consumption behaviours in these sites.

Most of the graduate workers pay special attention to cultural products, such as comics, movies, music, literature, network events, sports, and certain topics, such as housing price, the gap between rich and poor, hiring of graduates, network events, marriage and romantic relationships, fashion and entertainment, and culture and art. These contents can be classified into news/information-oriented content, and popular culture-oriented content. Both kinds are integrated into Chinese contemporary society and culture. The frequently used source platforms, portal websites and some particular UGCs, such as Douban, Tianya, Maopu (Mop) and other discussion forums, are all dedicated, online interest-oriented communities. These online communities feature and serve different youth groups with separate interests. Douban is the largest Chinese website devoted to movies, books, and music reviews. Tianya is a popular forum closely linking with grassroots culture and is also the birthplace for many network events; it has a special focus on history and culture in some of its sub-forums and some famous Internet writers are registered users. Maopu is a more entertaining forum popular among the youth, especially males, where all kinds of photos, videos, games and especially memes about entertainment and even vulgar contents can be found. In a participant's words, "*Users in Douban are those who like to appear to be petty bourgeois (xiaozi), and users in Tianya and Maopu are those like vulgar, spoof,*

and more fun, especially users in Maopu are really a group of people who can play. And I use them all and I have all of these characters. And I prefer Maopu, purely for fun. I use Douban as a tool to search book, music and movie. (Nanjing, male, village, 23, No.9) These interest-oriented UGCs emerged as a modern cultural phenomenon, portrayed in popular culture. When browsing these websites, they would read through the content, paying special attention to the comments portion; some would contribute some comments and/or respond to others' comments.

As many scholars suggested, content consumption or culture consumption, being a particular kind of consumption, is closely connected with the expression of identity. For example, teenagers spend a large proportion of their money on "symbolic goods" which have a social function and are considered important for individual identity, such as records and watching films (Abrams, 1959, p. 10). People consume certain kinds of content that express certain kinds of basic socio-cultural values to which they are attracted and want to comment on. The participants in this research consumed comics, movies, music, literature, network events, sports and other contents closely related with Chinese youths, which are important elements of popular and contemporary culture in UGCs. They also communicated with other members on these sites, or discussed these content offline. Their consumption included initial consumption of these contents, and secondary interactions with others; and further, some labeled these contents in their profiles. The three procedures of consumption can be understood as a constituent of selfhood, of social and cultural identity. In this sense, online interest-oriented communities not only provide a platform for the participants to consume particular contents, but also the opportunity to link with others with shared interests and probably similar identities by consuming the same

contents, interacting among these weak or strong ties and labelling themselves with cultural items.

> *I frequently log into comics forums to read the newly updated ones; many of these comics cannot be read anywhere else. I experienced a feeling of support after I found that there are people who shared similar interests. We sometimes chat with each other and feel a kind of connection which I cannot have offline.*
>
> (Yu, male, 26, village, No.34)
>
> *I think Douban serves a particular group of people. I'm not active in it, but I pay attention to some movie, book, activities and some groups. I just browse the contents as an onlooker. I somewhat like Douban…for the discussion groups, I just click "care" not "join." I think the users in Douban are high-end users. The topics in Renren and Douban are different in levels…I pay attention to the people who have the same interests.*
>
> (Ming, female, 25, village, No.39)

One's preference and consumption for particular cultural contents is a very powerful way to communicate one's basic, socio-cultural values. By consuming particular contents on particular sites, people want to express who they are; to which groups they belong, and what is their identity. In that sense, they express who they are, or want to be, and consumption (partly) creates an identity to communicate messages to the relevant "audience" (Cosgel, 1992; Dolfsma, 1999). The youth consumes conspicuously—particularly popular culture, which is a means to express identity and simultaneously distinguish "us" and "them" or "others". In summary, the participants

incorporate themselves into the society and the youth group by consuming particular popular cultures.

7.4 Conclusion

Committed relationship is an important aspect of the youth during the process of identity formation. These participants built and maintain the important relationships in practice-oriented, relationship-oriented and interest-oriented communities. ICTs, being social connection tools, including the more traditional communications, such as SMS and voice call, and the new media communications, such as social media, help to create—and incorporate participants into—such communities, an important and useful tool for the young, junior workers from low economic background but are well-educated, in terms of restrained ICT access and practice based on hierarchical structure or providing commutation methods for social networking or the platforms for content consumption. Participants' particular ICT usage within these communities, such as the business etiquette, particular connection tools used, frequency of connection, and the three procedures in content consumption, reveal their social identity, personal identity and cultural identity. Living within communities, the participants tend to view themselves and their interactions with others, including their colleagues, supervisors, intimate friends and people with shared interests. Because of ICTs, these interactions can be saved and are traceable, are more text-based and open than the traditional face-to-face interactions. In interactions with these strong ties and weak ties, participants felt a sense of bond with individuals and particular communities, and with certain recognized identities.

In summary, the participants use ICTs as social connection tools to connect with others in functional, emotional and cultural dimensions. The particular usages of

ICTs in interactions with others, including the constraints and etiquette in practice-oriented communities, the closeness and intimacy in relationship-oriented communities, and the content consumption in online interested-oriented communities, reveal and construct individuals' membership and social identity in organizations, personal social networks, and contemporary youth culture.

Chapter 8 identity representation and exploration online: the real identity, the alternative identity and the ideal identity

As Livingstone noted (2008), CMC provides new opportunities for "self-expression, sociability, community engagement, creativity and new literacies" (p. 394). That is to say, ICTs provide the platform for the representation and exploration of the identity which is pivotal for the identity formation of the youth.

Individuals utilize online identity tools to construct their virtual identities, which are closely related with the creators' real offline identity. This chapter discusses how participants use nicknames, real names, pictures and narratives about themselves, and their interactions with others in various platforms, to disclose their real identity, to present and format online identity. The main platforms studied are QQ and Renren, the most popular instant messenger and SNS among the participants, and some other similar but less popular platforms, such as Fetion and MSN; some anonymous platforms, such as forums and games, will also be mentioned as complementary or as comparison. Moreover, as Renren is a real-name environment, most participants used their real names and personal photos and there is limited room for participants to create an "online identity" compared with QQ, which was originally an anonymous platform. Thus, the nicknames and profile pictures studied are mainly from QQ, while other identity tools such as status, narratives and wall pictures in both QQ and Renren will be studied.

8.1 Nickname: A Self-given Name

Only a rare few used their real names within anonymous environments. For many participants, the nickname may be the most interesting identity tool with which

to disclose their personal identity and to format an online identity by creating constructed images. Curtis (1997) noted that many nicknames are drawn "from or inspired by myth, fantasy, or other literature, common names from real life, names of concepts, animals, and everyday objects that have representative connotations" (pp. 126-127). Besides all the materials mentioned, these participants also used other sources, such as names from games, televisions, their offline nicknames, poetic words without specific meanings, a part of their lovers' name or online nicknames. Many participants also combine two sources together to create a unique online moniker. The term "imagery" can be used to explain the connection between these names and the images or concepts they want to deliver, and in most cases, they did not originally create new imageries; instead, they use imageries existing in literature and common sense. These imageries are linked with particular images, concepts or stereotypes. Not only do the names reveal personal information about their users, such as real name (characters with the same pronunciation or *pinyin* versions of their names), physical appearance (tall, thin), hobbies (television, games, literature), character (simple and honest), it tells about the person's state of mind, aspiration and yearning (examples of participants' nickname are shown in Appendix 2).

These online nicknames are an inherent part of their online identity and a shadow for their offline identity, and many participants tended to use one nickname for a long period of time. As Bechar-Israeli (1995) suggested, online nicknames related to the user's identity in some way, including profession or hobby, personality traits, physical appearance, physiological or psychological state, aspirations or dreams. The functions of online nicknames can be compared to the offline alternative names, which include stage names, pen names and nicknames given by others. Stage names serve to call attention to the person; pen names may used to intentionally mask other

aspects of identity, just as the 19th century women writers often used masculine-sounding pen names because women were generally excluded from being writers; the offline nicknames are given by others to indentify the person's traits or to express emotions. The online nickname has all the above functions. If the offline nickname given by others reflects more the way they are seen by others, the online self-chosen nickname are more about the owner's self-image. Moreover, just as a person may have more than one nickname offline, depending on the number of social circles, the participants tended to also use different nicknames in separate platforms through which different social circles were contacted. In summary, as a long-term use, self-chosen, text-based and extreme short code, the nickname encodes rich identity-related information and shapes the theme of one's online identity.

8.2 Profile Picture: An Self-chosen Image

Unlike the nickname, which may be highly coded and can be ambiguous, the profile picture more directly and visually presents one's online image and identity. Among the participants, the most popular choices were personal photos, pictures of animals, pictures chosen from the pre-set options, cartoons, and celebrity's photos. Similar to the nickname, the profile picture also connects with participants' identity and personal information, such as gender (pictures or cartoons of a person with the same gender), age (creative self-taken photos), state of mind (different icons for each day in a week to present the user's feeling) (see Appendix 1, picture11), life situations (a picture labeled as "distance relationship" to indicate romantic relationship status) (see Appendix 1, picture 12), character (using picture with an appeared outgoing girl, see Appendix 1, picture 13), aspirations (a picture of an eagle to show one's religion and to encourage oneself to achieve the eagle's divinity, see Appendix 1, picture 14),

special interests (pictures from televisions or movies). And many of these pictures have more than one function; for example, the "cute ox" picture (see Appendix 1, picture 15) used by a participant encodes information including age (born in the year of the ox) and character or desired character (outgoing and fun); the "eagle" picture used by another participant encodes information including religion and aspirations; or, in her words, "Jesus has four sides…eagle delegates the side of divinity. It flies in the sky and can look down from the sky, and accurately do all kinds of things…I desire and want this side most" (Mo, female, village, No.5).

Participants' choice of images falls within one of three categories, based on what aspect of themselves they want to display in their profile picture. Firstly, some participants refined their daily images and chose their best-looking photos.

I chose my own photo, because it is a super nice shot and I look very handsome in it. Many people say the picture is as bright as the sunshine.

(Bing, male, village, 26, No.18)

Secondly, some participants try to show the "real self" or the "inner self" by using pictures with a person or a figure depicting the same character as themselves, or using cartoons to reveal their real character and inner feelings.

My profile picture is a girl who is very ladylike, gentle and quiet, just like my character. I chose it and used it for 4 or 5 years…Because I am introvert, I definitely would choose an icon that can represent me.

(Yi, female, 25, village, 28)

My former prolife image was of a rabbit with a winking eye. I find it very lovely and cheerful. For me, though I appear to be an introvert, I feel that I am cheerful and outgoing on the inside. Then, after I changed my nickname, I used a white chrysanthemum, which symbolizes purity, quiet and peace.

(Ju, female, 29, village, No. 25)

The profile picture is a cartoon by Tianchaoyu. It is a boy holding his big head… there is no similarity between the physical image of the boy and me. I use it to show my feelings: "now I don't want to do anything; I just want to miss you idly, like this" (the lines besides the cartoon).

(Ying, male, 23, town, 21)

Lastly, some participants try to represent their desired images, inventing a side of themselves which cannot be fully displayed, or to express their aspirations by using pictures with their desired images, whether in the form of their desired character, status or physical appearance. Because the QQ profile picture is rather small, and in many cases, it is difficult to accurately identify the person in the photo, some participants took advantage of this by surreptitiously "borrowing" and using celebrities' photos which others assume to be their own photo. It should be noted that, although these pictures are not their own, there is still some form of connection or similarities between the users and the pictures:

I choose a photo of Fan Bingbing[31]. There is connection between my character and this photo. I admire her bohemian expression and cool status in the photo, especially the expressions in her eyes. Perhaps it's what I desire. And the icon

---

[31] One of the most famous actresses in China.

is rather small, not very clear, so my classmates always assume it is a photo of me.

<div align="right">(Cui, female, 25, village, No.27)</div>

It is a girl with yellow hair and big twinkling eyes…I liked that pair of big eyes. There is similarity between the image and me—yellow hair and big eyes, but with different character. The picture looks brighter and more outgoing than me. I want to be like that.

<div align="right">(Hong, female, 26, village, No.26)</div>

I used the image of "puss in boots" from the cartoon Shrek. I chose it because I like its image. It pretended to be poor with enlarged pupils. It is lovely. There is no connection between the image and mine. I'm not such a lovely guy in life; rather, I appear to be a little sarcastic, like picking on others' errors. But I feel that I want to be like the cat sometimes.

<div align="right">(Qi, male, 25, town, No.13)</div>

The participants also believe that others' nickname and profile picture can reflect the person's real identity and aims.

Once, a stranger tried to befriend me. His profile picture is a bearded man, which scared me, and I refused his advances immediately. I think there are strong connections between one's icon and his real image. Another time, a person named "one night stand" wanted to befriend me, and I also refused.

<div align="right">(Ju, female, 29, village, No. 25)</div>

The profile picture provides the participants with an opportunity to create their online image, which is not necessarily related to their real image. However, some used their real images to portray their best face, while others tried to disclose their real character, inner emotions and desires by using constructed images. Not only did they link their images with their profile picture, they also reviewed others. In summary, the participants creatively and carefully made use of profile pictures to display and construct an online identity closely related to their offline self.

8.3 Status Message: A Sentence Voicing for Yourself

Many platforms allow the users to write status messages about themselves, such as QQ, Renren, and Fetion. The length of these messages is rather short[32] and similar to the micro-blogging function. The frequently changed messages in instant messengers, micro blogs and SNS serve as ad-hoc status reports about participants' current emotional and situational state, as most "daily chatter" and "talk about daily routine or what people are currently doing" (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007) to share emotions, current activities and to support their psychological need for connectedness (Köbler, et al., 2010). These ad hoc status messages convey much personal information, directly or indirectly. Generally, participants' status messages can be categorized into three dimensions: whether current or for a longer period; whether about events or emotion; whether posting mainly to oneself or to others, including particular person(s) or general public. Some participants strongly linked this with self-disclosure, writing mainly for themselves, and did not care whether others

---

[32] For example, the maximum length of QQ status is 100 bytes; characters and special symbols accounted for two bytes and a letter accounted for one byte, making 50Chinese characters or 100 letters for maximum; the maximum length for Renren status is 240 characters, which extend from the former 140 characters limitation.

could understand, while other participants wrote these messages for both themselves and others, to allow their friends to know more about their current situations.

Current situational and emotional status, such as one's mood, news, or funny words, would be changed frequently, while the long-term status, such as a promise, an advertisement, a motto, and a goal, would be kept for several months or years.

My QQ signature is the name of a novel. It talks about a long distance relationship, and the hero and heroine finally got together after seven years of separation. I use it to express my wish. I used it for a long time and I plan to keep it during the five years when she is England.

(Ying, male, 23, town, No. 21)

Some status messages are straightforward, while others are intentionally constructed to be obscure. Often, the online wording is consistent with participants' offline writing style and personality, or the style of the online narrative reflects their real character or is internally constructed to create a particular online image.

I won't post my status in very straightforward manner; instead, it would be more literary and obtuse, in a way that reflected me, but not directly. My online image is also obtuse and implicit and subtle, not explicit, as well as my writing style.

(Zhen, female, 23, village, No.23)

Moreover, some casual and plain messages may convey more personal information than the writer expects. For example, one participant's status was stated

as, "*The price of the electronic multiple unit from Beijing to Chengdu is barely acceptable*" (Pang, male, 23, village, No.23). This message not only indicates the writer's focus, but also his or her work location and hometown, income status, and so on.

In summary, the writer's content and writing style of the status message presents the writer's voice, both in terms of disclosing personal information and constructing the online image.

8.4 Text Blog and Photo Blog: An Online Home (page)

For the participants, the main platforms for blogging were Renren and QQ space. Some participants enjoyed blogging, while others hardly wrote any. Most liked to post their photos to Renren and QQ. They tended to choose nice-looking wall pictures and profile photos taken on vacation, while the females preferred to use their photos. They also uploaded group photos with friends, or friends' photos and funny pictures; as one participant said:

> *I like to upload my friends' photos even though I was not there. I think*
> *perhaps I just want to show that I'm not alone here…I have many friends,*
> *although they are not physically with me. My friends also like to do the same.*
>
> (Juan, 24, female, town, No.14)

These text and photo blogs also document the users' mentality and growth. Blogs serve as footnotes of individuals' nicknames and long versions of status messages in which users can describe events and express their emotions in a longer and more detailed manner; therefore, more personal information may be delivered and

the users felt attached with particular online blogging platform. After using QQ space

for many years, with hundreds of blogs about her feelings, a participant said:

For me, there is nowhere else like QQ space where I can display a real self for

so many years. I often write these blogs at night, after I've experienced

something, no matter happy or sorrowful… they are the real reflection of life.

I have a feeling of belonging to QQ space with regards to this aspect. It's my

home online. And the people who paid sustained attention to my space are

friends for years, friends who have grown with me and my family, and the

potential good friends.

(Doudou, female, 23, town, No. 10)

There were notable differences in their text and photo blogging, with texts

being posted to QQ space, and photos to Renren. Many thought Renren was too open,

while QQ space appeared more hidden, because of the different settings and

appearances. In Renren, the background colour is white, much brighter than QQ space,

and the user's posts would automatically be shown on their friends' profile page;

more importantly, Renren is a real name environment, but participants occasionally

befriended offline strangers. In QQ space, the user's post is shown only when one

clicks on an icon of the user's profile window, which requires more effort and, thus,

can only be read by those who really want to. The background colour and other

settings can also be personalized, giving the user a feeling of personalized space.

Moreover, although most of the friends in QQ are also offline friends, the names

shown are nicknames; the hybrid between reality and virtual creates a bizarre and

ambiguous atmosphere where someone may be encouraged to speak more to the

audience. Because of these differences between QQ space and Renren, participants are more willing to disclose private and personal issues, and their inner self in the form of text in QQ space: an apparently hidden space, behind a nickname, to their offline friends, who are not strangers as in Renren.

As Booth (2008) suggested, the persona constructed online is not constant, but is in a continuous state of flux, constantly updated in the forms of status, blogs, and wallpaper. The text and photo blogs provide a platform by which to reveal one's identity in a more detailed and continuous manner. The participant choosing different platforms from which to blog, continuing to broadcast or narrowcast their situations and emotions, revealing and constructing their identities in a continuous form, was likely to feel emotionally and psychologically attached to these web pages.

8.5 Conclusion

In summary, participants adopt nicknames, profile pictures, status messages and blogs as a set of identity tools to convey offline identity and construct online identity which would be unitized as an alternative identity during the process of identity exploration and commitment. Some participants used these identity tools as veils to make the real persona appear indistinct and inviting, while others used them as masks to hide the "superficial self," meanwhile show the pent-up "real self." All these identity tools tend to encode identity information within. Take the nickname, for example. Because some of the sources of their nickname are from classical literature, such as Mengzi, Greek mythology or poetry, they show that the person behind the online name is educated and cultured, and at the same time, it compels those within

the similar educational level to decode and understand the person's constructed images.

There was consistency between one's nickname, profile picture, status and blogs, but these consistencies may not be so visible for some, while they may be more prominent in others. For example, the participant who used "ox" in his nickname, chose a picture of a styled ox's picture; the participant who used his real name as nickname, chose a personal photo and talked about his current status in QQ signature and the life experiences in his blogs; the participant who chose a meaningless nickname, used a blurred and bloody picture which he also claimed to be "meaningless," used hash code as his status, and only one or two entries in his blogs talking about things, but not about himself; the participant who was called "ju" (chrysanthemum), also used "chrysanthemum" in her online name, and chose to use a picture of a chrysanthemum, and once used "heart is peaceful as a chrysanthemum" as her status message and wrote many blogs about her inner feelings.

There were some similarities in the use of these tools among participants. First, they tended to use different nicknames, profile pictures, status messages and blogs in various platforms where different groups of people would be contacted, because users want to disclose different aspects of their self in front of different groups of people. For example, nicknames used in the business environment were less about personal relationships, and the females also avoided "cute" or "girlish" names which they may use in a more personal environment, while male participants used more explicit words in more anonymous environments to show their inner desires which could be suppressed in real life and other less anonymous CMC. In the case of the profile pictures, a participant used an eagle image in her personal QQ and a girl's image in

her business QQ, as she did not want to disclose her religion in her business

environment and using a gendered image makes the clients and business partners

aware of her gender and know how to address her, even in the first online talk. This

also applies to status messages and blogs, as the participant did not want to disclose

much private information and emotional status to co-workers and their parents.

Secondly, most participants tended to construct these identity tools to serve as

filters and to divide different groups by shared identity or intimacy. For example,

participants may adopt nicknames from games, which could only be understood by

game players, while names with lovers' names would only be noticed by

acquaintances or friends. The encoded meaning in a chosen nickname may only be

fully understood by the individual's close friends (such as friends who knew the

participant's offline nickname) and people from the same group (such as game

players); acquaintances may only uncover a partial meaning, while strangers would

simply ignore them. This filterable function also applied to profile pictures. For

example, only close friends or people from the same religion may fully understand

why the participant chose an eagle as her profile picture. One participant used the

picture tagged "distant relationship"; strangers or acquaintances may understand this

to mean that the person behind the picture may be in the stage of a distant relationship,

and friends and others who have had the same experience may also partly understand

the user's feelings and psychological status, but only close friends would know the

complete and real picture that the couple had not been contact for a long time and the

relationship had already become something of the past[33]. In the case of blogs, the

---

[33] I interviewed several participants in the same company; this was the story told by the participant's close friend and coworker after I had interviewed her.

preference of posting detailed text blog in QQ instead of Renren also illustrates that they intended to filter the audience, as the more close contacts are in QQ.

In conclusion, the participants creatively use material from literature, animals, offline nicknames, physical appearance, real name, or a lover's name, as their moniker; upload their best photos, group photos, styled pictures and pictures of celebrities, concepts and animals as representation of themselves; and post mottos, goals, situational and emotional status and longer blogs to speak for what they stood for. These identity tools were integrated to disclose their real offline identity, to construct a better or ideal identity, or to form an alternative visual identity, which may then be used to show the real inner self that was suppressed in daily life. To successfully construct a particular identity was to encode imagery onto a created identity, inviting others to decode, understand, and perceive the constructed identity behind the imagery. These identity tools explicitly or subtly disclose participants' personal information, speaking on their behalf about their ideal images, psychological states, aspirations, and yearnings. Lastly, after a long time, some identity tools may become an indivisible part of the users; in a female participant's words: "I have to be determined when I decided to change it, but I was so reluctant so I keep it as the name of my personal space" (Ju, female, 29, village, 25).

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The migrant graduate workers who are from the lower socioeconomic background, without influential social network, armed with only a degree certificate and the ICT literacy, dreamed to become a member of the urban middle class. Various contradictions encoded into their identity because of the social context of today's China. The contradictions amongst their lower socioeconomic background, the past life experience in underdevelopment regions (often rural areas), the current life situation as urbanites and white –collar workers, and their ambition - to be members of the urban middle class are the root of the struggles that the group are experiencing during the process of identity exploration, identity representation and identity construction. And all the contradictions and the struggles of the migrant graduate youth are embedded in the economical, social, historical and culture context of China.

This research is situated within the particular socio-culture and historical context of China, arguably the most dynamically developing country that has been fundamentally transformed by the 30-year "reforms and opening." The marketization, urbanization and other reforms process and construction have been a notable achievement in the past 30 years; these reforms have brought about tremendous changes and revolutions to China's society as well as the Chinese people. Among them, migrants have become a permanent fixture in China's cities, seemingly left behind as the forces, set in motion by the reforms of the late seventies and eighties, have taken hold. Unlike the migrant workers ("*nongmin gong*") who form the majority of migrants and are marginalized because of their lack of education and low-paying jobs, the research participants in this study are the young, rural-to-urban

university graduates now working in white-collar positions in offices, and form the bulk of the educated post-1980s generation, although the two groups share the same background and some of life's experiences. As the main migrant manpower resource in higher-paying sectors in modern cities, these youths are largely influenced by, and also reflect, these social and cultural revolutions, including their current life, ambitions and hybrid identity. They fight for their future, differentiating themselves from the migrant workers and their peasant parents by becoming members of the new middle class.

On the other hand, as modernization is sweeping China, with a growing tendency toward individualism, consumption and ICTs penetration, the youth are more likely to identify themselves with their group, and to differentiate themselves from others by consumption, both in material and culture goods. In this process, ICTs provide the material gadgets, the communication channels, the digital platforms and contents to consume. For the participants in this study, whose life experiences are closely linked to the history of the introduction and development of ICTs in China, the youths from the less developed regions of a developing country seek to address themselves as technologically modern youth and imitate their desired class by performing and formatting their desired identity in the digital era.

It is found that during the process of their identity construction in the youth adulthood, the ICTs are creatively employed in the representation, creation and exploration of their real identity, alternative identity, ideal identity and committed identity. Moreover, their ICT use is an integral part of the process of the identity construction, with notable relationship with their life goal and relationship maintenance. This thesis also explored the interplay of ICTs and identity among the Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers during the process of identity construction:

how one's real/desired identity effects one's ICT devices adoption, choice, personalization and usage; how the potential offered by ICTs is employed in the representation and formation of participants' personal, social and cultural identities. Among these identity, their class-based identity is dynamically interact with their ICT use, including the purchasing power of the gadgets, the choosing of the brands, the different tastes and their position in the practice-oriented committees.

In so doing, this thesis has contributed to academic literature on technology domestication by focusing on this understudied population with its unique characteristics and life pressures. It has also brought an additional dimension to migration literature by understanding how the identities of migrant workers can be explored and possibly realized through their acquisition and use of consumer goods such as ICTs. The strong connection between one's real and desired identity and ICTs adoption and usage was found among the group in three aspects. Firstly, an individual's real identity and desired identity highly affect one's preference in ICT devices and usage, as ICTs, such as mobile phones and laptops are portable, visible, affordable and with a wide rang, and thus have the potential to be "identity-sensitive" symbols. The participants tend to consume the gadgets with the features which correspond to their identity, and also, the ICTs have become symbols that are used in this group to present individuals' offline identity, including independence, class, group identity, inner self and gender. The personal and personalized gadgets explicitly or subtly disclose the user's taste, personality and longing, which are closely related to his or her identity. In the second aspect, because of the platform and tools provided by the ICTs in the cyberspace, certain online identity tools, such as nickname, profile picture, status messages and blogs, are creatively used to disclose one's real identity and to construct online identity. The participants present their offline selves and do

not stay disembodied online. Besides, they encode and disclose rich information about their identities using these online identity tools to openly share certain aspects of themselves they want to share, and to construct a better online image. To successfully construct their online image, they take advantage of existing stereotyped images and encode the imagery into their online identity tools and selectively disclose information with different "audience" on different occasions by creating different online images, using different platforms to filter out the audience, manage privacy setting and incomprehensible encoding. Lastly, the social networking tools provided by the ICTs are incorporated in the practice-oriented, relationship-oriented and interest-oriented communities. They are used in functional, emotional and cultural connections and the particular usage of social connection tools, including the constraints and business etiquette in ICT usage at workplaces, the interactions between the ICT use and different contact, the consumption behaviour in digital contents, all of which reveal individuals' personal identity, social identity and cultural identity. In summary, the adoption and usage of these technological and cultural artefacts is deeply implicated in the formation and expression of identity.

Based on the above discussion, the question now is how this very localized study about a particular youth group informs us about the bigger picture on ICT use and identity formation. The study aimed to contribute to the scholarship in understanding ICTs' symbolic, transmission and cultural meanings for their users and the ICT usage among the people living in the modern world, which is highly integrated by consumption and ICTs. The significance of the research is as follows. Firstly, from the macro perspective, this group is living in the shared background of the global modernity where consumerism enables some people to redefine their social status in terms of consumption and lifestyle and where ICTs are highly integrated in

daily life; thus, the most significant finding of the research, the strong connection between ICT gadgets and social class (which is so significantly perceived by these participants and among this generation that it has become part of their language) may also apply to other groups that are largely influenced by consumption and ICTs. Secondly, from the micro perspective, the psychological status of these migrants, their alienation, embarrassment, self-doubt, intellectual excitement, struggle, compromise, and grief in transforming their identity, are reflected in their ICT usage and in this research, identity is regarded as a performative "production" which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation. Therefore, the findings in the interplay of the performative identity and ICTs usage may also apply to other groups trying to transform their identity. Moreover, based on the research, some of the potential sources of identity formation are unfolded and need to be paid more attention by the future research, such as life experience including one's memories and the information stored in the ICTs.

There are also limitations to this research. Because of the time and word limit, some analysis could not be conducted or fully developed, such as the difference in the ICTs usage between participants from the villages and rural towns or between participants from major universities and those from colleges/technical schools; there also was also a six-month span between interviewees in the first round and second round interviews, meaningful in terms of ICT development and advancement, but which was not explored by comparison. Moreover, limited by my knowledge about political issues, the political aspect of the ICTs use, especially in the dimension of ICT content consumption, is almost bypassed. However, the thesis would be more solid with the exploration in this aspect, as political issues are always popular topics

online among some of these youths, and the phenomenon is closely related to the tropic of authority and empowerment.

These limitations can be solved by future studies. More research could be conducted to explore (1) how ICTs were used to cope with the identity struggle, (2) the relationship of the online buzzword and youth identity, (3) what new potential was offered by newer ICTs, such as micro blogs, iPhone/iPad applications, in identity representation, identity exploration and identity formation.

Reference

Abrams, M. (1959). *The teenage consumer*. London: London Press Exchange.

Akerlof, G. A., & Kranton, R. E. (2009). `Identity and the Economics of Organizations', Journal of Economic Perspectives, 19 (1), Winter, 9-32. *INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF CRITICAL WRITINGS IN ECONOMICS, 3*(238), 398-421.

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social Identity Theory and the Organization. *Academy of Management Review, 14*(1), 20-39.

Association, A. A. (2004). American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethnography and Institutional Review Boards Retrieved October 11, 2011, from http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/irb.htm

Bai, L. (2006). Graduate unemployment dilemmas and challenges in China's move to mass higher education. [Research Report]. *The China Quarterly, 185*, 128-144. doi: 10.1017/S0305741006000087

Barker, V., & Ota, H. (2011). Mixi Diary versus Facebook Photos: Social Networking Site use among Japanese and Caucasian American Females. [Article]. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 40*(1), 39-63. doi: 10.1080/17475759.2011.558321

Baudrillard, J. (2000). The Ideological Genesis of Needs. In J. B. Schor & D. B. Holt (Eds.), *The Consumer Society Reader* (pp. 57-80). New York: The New Press.

Baumeister, R. F. (1998). The self. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 680-740). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Bechar-Israeli, H. (1995). From <Bonehead> to <cLoNehEAd>: Nicknames, Play and Identity on Internet Relay Chat. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 1*(2).

Bell, D. (1973). *The Coming of Post-industrial Society*. New York: Basic Books.

Bell, G. (2006). The age of the thumb: A cultural reading of mobile technologies from Asia. *Knowledge, Technology, & Policy, 19*(2), 41-57.

Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2007). Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(2), 121-134.

Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2008). Who Drives Divergence? Identity Signaling, Outgroup Dissimilarity, and the Abandonment of Cultural Tastes. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(3), 593-607.

Berger, J., & Rand, L. (2008). Shifting signals to help health: Using identity signaling to reduce risky health behaviors. *J. Consum. Res. Journal of Consumer Research, 35*(3), 509-518.

Booth, P. (2008). Rereading fandom: MySpace character personas and narrative identification. *Crit. Stud. Media Commun. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 25*(5), 514-536.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinctions. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste.* (R. Nice, Trans.). Boston: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1996). *Reproduction*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(1), 210-230. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Brettell, C. B. (2006). Political belonging and cultural belonging: immigration status, citizenship, and identity among four immigrant populations in a Southwestern city. *American Behavioral Scientist, 50*(1), 70-99. doi: 10.1177/0002764206289655

Bu, W., & Liu, X. (2004). Research Report on Media Advocacy Strategies for Reproductive

Health among Migrant Youth in Henan and Shaanxi Beijing: The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Cai, F., & Wang, D. (2009). Impacts of internal migration on economic growth and urban development in China. In J. Dewind & J. Holdaway (Eds.), *Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration* (pp. 245-272). London: Hammersmith Press.

Campanella, T. J. (2008). *Concrete dragon: China's urban revolution and what it means for the world*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Campbell, S. (2008). Perceptions of Mobile Phone Use in Public: The Roles of Individualism, Collectivism, and Focus of the Setting. *Communication Reports, 21*(2), 70-81.

Campbell, S. W., & Park, Y. J. (2008). Social Implications of Mobile Telephony: The Rise of Personal Communication Society. *SOCIOLOGY COMPASS -ELECTRONIC EDITION-, 2*(2), 371-387.

Campbell, S. W., & Russo, T. C. (2003). The cocial construction of mobile telephony: an application of the social influence model to perceptions and uses of mobile phones within personal communication networks. *Communication Monographs, 70*(4), 317-334.

Carey, J. W. (1989). *Communication as culture : essays on media and society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Cartier, C., Castells, M., & Qiu, J. L. (2005). The Information Have-Less: Inequality, Mobility, and Translocal Networks in Chinese Cities. *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID), 40*(2), 9-34.

Castells, M. (1998). *The End of Millennium*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2004). The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy. In M. Castells (Ed.), *The Network Society: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (pp. 10-11). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Pub.

. China Informatization Development Report 2006. (2006). Beijing: State Council Informatization Office.

China, N. B. o. S. o. (1982). *The official report on the national population census in 1982*. Beijing: Retrieved from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20020404_16769.htm.

China, N. B. o. S. o. (1990). *The official report on the national population census in 1990*. Beijing: Retrieved from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20020404_16771.htm.

China, N. B. o. S. o. (2000). *The official report on the national population census in 2000*. Beijing: Retrieved from http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20020331_15434.htm.

China, N. B. o. S. o. (2011). *The official report on the sixth national population census*. Beijing: Retrieved from http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj_detail.jsp?searchword=%B5%DA%C1%F9%B4%CE%C8%AB%B9%FA%C8%CB%BF%DA&channelid=6697&record=13.

China, N. B. o. S. o. (2012). Data of the Sixth National Census Retrieved 25, August, 2012, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj_detail.jsp?searchword=%C8%CB%BF%DA&channelid=6697&record=14

Chu, W.-c., & Yang, S. (2006). Mobile Phones and New Migrant Workers in a South China Village: An Initial Analysis of the Interplay between the 'Social' and the 'Technological'. In L. F. a. S. Y. Pui-lam Law (Ed.), *New Technologies in Global Societies* (pp. 221-244). Singapore: World Scientific.

Clifford, J. (1986). Introduction: Partial Truths. In J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus (Eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and*

Politics of Ethnography (pp. 1-26). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clifford, J. (2010). Partial Truths. In P. A. Erickson & L. D. Murphy (Eds.), *Readings for A history of anthropological theory* (3 ed., pp. 469-490). Toronto; New York: University of Toronto Press.

CNNIC. (2010). *the 26th statistical report on internet development in China*. Retrieved from http://www.cnnic.cn/uploadfiles/pdf/2010/7/15/100708.pdf

Coleman, R. P., Rainwater, L., & McClelland, K. A. (1978). *Social standing in America : new dimensions of class*. New York: Basic Books.

Cooley, C. (1902). *Human Nature and Social Order*. New York: Scribners.

Côté, J. E. (1996). Sociological perspectives on identity formation: the cultureidentity link and identity capital. *Journal of Adolescence, 19*(5), 417-428.

Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. (2002). *Identity formation, agency, and culture : a social psychological synthesis*. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Curtis, P. (1997). Mudding: Social phenomena in text-based virtual realities. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), *Culture of the Internet* (pp. 121-142). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Dai, X. (2007). The digital revolution and development: The impact of Chinese policy and strategies. *Development, 50*(3), 24-29.

Davis, D. S., & Feng, W. (Eds.). (2008). *Creating Wealth and Poverty in Postsocialist China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Department of Population and Employment Statistics, N. B. o. S. o. C. (2010). China Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook.

Dong, D. (2003, 2003/05/23/2003 Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA). *Resistance within Contexts:A Study of University BBS Youth Culture in China.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association, 2003 Annual Meeting, , San Diego, CA.

Doorn, N. v., Zoonen, L. v., & Wyatt, S. (2007). Writing from experience: Presentations of gender identity on weblogs *European Journal of Women's Studies, 14*(2), 143-158.

Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*(2), 415-441.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1143-1168. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1973). Growth and crisis. In T. Millon (Ed.), *Theories of Psychopathology and Personality* (pp. 136-156). Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co.

Ewen, S. (1988). *All consuming images : the politics of style in contemporary culture*. New York: Basic Books.

Fang, C. I. (2009). The urbanization and urban development in China after the reform and opening-up *Economic Geography, 29*(1), 19-25.

Fortunati, L. (2002). The mobile phone: Towards new categories and social relations. *Information, Communication and Society, 5*(4), 513–529.

Fox, K. (2001). Evolution, Alienation and Gossip, the Role of Mobile Communications in

the 21st Century Retrieved November, 1, 2011, from
http://www.sirc.org/publik/gossip.shtml

Freeman, C. (2009). Urban revolution and social change in contemporary China. [Review]. *The SAIS Review of international Affairs, 29*(1), 121-127.

Gant, D., & Kiesler, S. (2001). Blurring the boundaries: Cell Phones, mobility and the line between work and personal life. In B. Brown, N. Green & R. Harper (Eds.), *Wireless World: Social and Interactional Aspects of the Mobile Age* (pp. 121-132). London: Springer.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture *Interpretation of Cultures* (pp. 3-30). New York: Basic Books.

Genoni, P., Merrick, H., & Willson, M. (2005). The use of the Internet to activate latent ties in scholarly communities. *First Monday, 10*. Retrieved from http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=21361&local_base=gen01-era02

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity : self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Gilbert, D. L. (1998). The American class structure in an age of growing inequality, from http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/37653003.html

Giorgi, A. (1975). An application of phenomenological method in psychology. In A. Giorgi, C. Fischer & E. Murray (Eds.), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological Psychology (II)* (pp. 82-103). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

Gold, T., Guthrie, D., & Wank, D. L. (2002). An Introduction to the Study of Guanxi. In T. Gold, D. Guthrie & D. L. Wank (Eds.), *Social connections in China : institutions, culture, and the changing nature of guanxi* (pp. 3-20). Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goodman, D. S. (1996). The People's Republic of China: The party-state, capitalist revolution and new entrepreneurs. In R. Robison & D. S. G. Goodman (Eds.), *The new rich in Asia: Mobile phones, McDonalds and middle-class revolution* (pp. 225–242). London: Routledge.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The trength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology, 78*(6), 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1*, 201-233.

Gray, A. (2003). *Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Methods and Lived Cultures*. London: Sage.

Green, E., & Singleton, C. (2007). Mobile selves: gender, ethnicity and mobile phones in the everyday lives of young Pakistani-British women and men. *Information, Communication & Society, 10*(4), 506-526. doi: 10.1080/13691180701560036

Green, N. (2003). Outwardly Mobile: Young People and Mobile Technologies. In J. E. Katz (Ed.), *Machines That Become Us: The Social Context of Personal Communication Technology* (pp. 201-217). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Greenfield, P. M., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2003). Online discourse in a teen chatroom: New codes and new modes of coherence in a visual medium. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 24*(6), 713-738.

Grinberg, L., & Grinberg, R. (1989). *Psychoanalytic Persperctives on Migration and Exile*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gross, F. L. (1987). *Introducing Erik Erikson: An invitation to his thinking*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Grotevant, H. D. (1987). Toward a Process Model of Identity Formation. *Journal of Adolescent Research Journal of Adolescent Research, 2*(3), 203-222.

Gullestad, M. (1992). *The art of social relations : essays on culture, social action and everyday life in modern Norway*. Oslo, Norway; New York: Scandinavian University Press ; Oxford University Press [distributor].

Hambides, Z. (2010). China's growing army of unemployed graduates Retrieved 5 Otcober, 2010, from http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/oct2010/chin-o04.shtml

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Haythornthwaite, C. (2002). Strong, Weak, and Latent Ties and the Impact of New Media. *The Information Society, 18*(5), 385-401.

Henderson, J. V. (1988). *Urban Development: Theory, Fact and Illusion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hjorth, L. (2008). Being real in the mobile reel: A case study on convergent mobile media as domesticated new media in Seoul, South Korea. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 14*(1), 91-104. doi: 10.1177/1354856507084421

Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 58*(4), 255-269.

Horst, H. A., & Miller, D. (2006). Link-up. In H. A. Horst & D. Miller (Eds.), *The cell phone : an anthropology of communication* (pp. 81-102). Oxford; New York: Berg.

Huang, X. (2008). Guanxi networks and job searches in China's emerging labour market: a qualitative investigation. *Work, Employment & Society, 22*(3), 467-484.

Ito, M. (2004). *Personal Portable Pedestrian: Lessons from Japanese Mobile Phone Use*. Paper presented at the Mobile Communication and Social Change Conference, Seoul, South Korea.

Ito, M. (2005a). Introduction: Personal, Portable, Pedestrian. In M. Ito, D. Okabe & M. Matsuda (Eds.), *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (pp. 1-16). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ito, M. (2005b). Mobile phones, Japanese youth, and the re-placement of social contact. In R. Ling & P. E. Pedersen (Eds.), *Mobile Communications: Re-Negotiation of the Social Sphere* (pp. 131-148). London: Springer.

Ito, M., & Okabe, D. (2005). Technosocial Situations: Emergent Structuring of Mobile E-Mail Use. In M. Ito, D. Okabe & M. Matsuda (Eds.), *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (pp. 257-273). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Holt.

Java, A., Song, X., Finin, T., & Tseng, B. (2007). *Why we twitter: understanding microblogging usage and communities.* Paper presented at the the 9th WebKDD and 1st SNA-KDD 2007 workshop on Web mining and social network analysis, San Jose, California.

Jin, Z. (2010). Beijing residents struggle to get on housing ladder, *China Daily*. Retrieved from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-07/19/content_10121252.htm

Johnsen, T. E. (2003). The social context of the mobile phone use of Norwegian teens. In J. E. Katz (Ed.), *Machines that become us : the social context of personal communication technology*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Johnson, K. (2000). *Television and social change in rural India*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Kan, M. (2010). China Unicom sells 100,000 iPhone 4s in first four days Retrieved 5 Oct, 2010, from http://www.macworld.com/article/154419/2010/09/iphone4_china_100k.html

Kasesniemi, E.-L. (2001). Finnish teenagers and mobile communication: chatting and storytelling in text messages (H. Liikala, Trans.). In A. Furlong & I. Guidikova (Eds.), *Transitions of youth citizenship in Europe : culture, subculture and identity* (pp. 157-180). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Pub.

Katz, J., & Sugiyama, S. (2006). Mobile phones as fashion statements: evidence from student surveys in the US and Japan. *New Media & Society, 8*(2), 321-337.

Kelley, M. J. (2006). Mobile Phone Use in AA Networks: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 34*(2), 191-208.

Kim, c. (2009). Make a Cultural Difference: Cyworld and MySpace. [Article]. *Conference Papers -- International Communication Association*, 1-26.

Kim, H., & Papacharissi, Z. (2003). Cross-cultural differences in online self-presentation: A content analysis of personal Korean and US home pages. *Asian Journal of Communication, 13*, 100-119.

Kling, R. (1990). More information, better jobs? Occupational stratification and labor-market segmentation in the United States' information labor force. *The Information Society, 7*(2), 77-107.

Knight, J., & Yueh, L. (2004). Job mobility of residents and migrants in urban China. *Journal of Comparative Economics, 32*(4), 637-660.

Köbler, F., Riedl, C., Vetter, C., Leimeister, J. M., & Krcmar, H. (2010, August 12-15). *Social Connectedness on Facebook - An Explorative Study on Status Message Usage* Paper presented at the the Sixteenth Americas Conference on Information Systems, Lima, Peru.

Kraus, W. (2006). The narrative negotiation of identity and belonging. *NARRATIVE INQUIRY, 16*(1), 103-111.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews : an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.

Law, P.-l., & Chu, W.-c. R. (2008). ICTs and Migrant Workers in Contemporary China. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy, 21*(2), 43-45. doi: 10.1007/s12130-008-9049-5

Law, P. L., & Chu, W. C. R. (2008). ICTs and migrant workers in contemporary China. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy, 21*(2), 43-45. doi: 10.1007/s12130-008-9049-5

Lenhart, A. (2010, Dec 1,2010). Is the age at which kids get cell phones getting younger? Retrieved October 30, 2011, from http://www.pewinternet.org/Commentary/2010/December/Is-the-age-at-which-kids-get-cell-phones-getting-younger.aspx

Li, C. (2011). Renren dou Waidiren Retrieved Apri, 27, 2011, from http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_46e7ba4101017o8w.html?tj=1

Li, T., & Zhang, J. (2010). What determines employment opportunity for college graduates in China after higher education reform? *China Economic Review, 21*(1), 38-50. doi: 10.1016/j.chieco.2009.10.001

Li, Y. (2005). *The structure and evolution of Chinese social stratification*. Lanham Md.: University Press of America.

Lian, S. (Ed.). (2009). *Ant Tribe*. Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press.

Licoppe, C. (2003). Two Modes of Maintaining Interpersonal Relations throughTelephone: From the Domestic to the Mobile Phone. In J. E. Katz (Ed.), *Machines that become us : the social context of personal communication technology* (pp. 171-186). New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Ling, R. (1998). 'One can talk about common manners!': The use of mobile telephones in inappropriate situations. *Telektronikk., 94*(2), 65.

Ling, R. (2000). "We will be reached": the use of mobile telephony among Norwegian youth. *Information Technology & People, 13*(2), 102-120.

Ling, R. (2003). Fashion and Vulgarity in the Adoption of the Mobile Telephone among Teens in Norway. In L. Fortunati, J. E. Katz & R. Riccini (Eds.), *Mediating the Human Body: Technology, Communication and Fashion* (pp. 93-102). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ling, R. (2004). *The mobile connection : the cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann.

Ling, R., & Yttri, B. (2002). Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In J. E. Katz & A. Aakhus (Eds.), *Perpetual Contact. Mobile Communications, Private Talk, Public Performance* (pp. 139-169). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Ling, R. S., & Campbell, S. W. (2011). *Mobile communication : bringing us together and tearing us apart*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Liu, F. (2009). It is not merely about life on the screen: urban Chinese youth and the Internet café. *Journal of Youth Studies, 12*(2), 167-184. doi: 10.1080/13676260802590386

Liu, F. (2010). *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*. New York: Routledge.

Liu, F. (2011a). The norm of the 'good' netizen and the construction of the 'proper' wired self: The case of Chinese urban youth. [Article]. *New Media & Society, 13*(1), 7-22. doi: 10.1177/1461444809360701

Liu, F. (2011b). Wired for fun : Narratives by members of China's E-generation. *Young, 19*(69).

Liu, J. (2010). Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China. [Book Review]. *Global Media & Communication, 6*(2), 231-234.

Liu, Y., & Wu, F. (2006). The state, institutional transition and the creation of new urban poverty. *Social Policy & Administration, 40*(2), 121-137.

Livingstone, S. (2008). Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression. *New Media & Society, 10*(3), 393-411. doi: 10.1177/1461444808089415

Lobet-Maris, C. (2003). Mobile Phone Tribes: Youth and Social Identity." In In J. E. K. a. R. R. Leopoldina Fortunati (Ed.), *Mediating*

the Human Body: Technology, Communication, and Fashion (pp. 87-92). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ma, E., & Cheng, H. (2005). 'Naked' Bodies: Experimenting with Intimate Relations among Migrant Workers in South China. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 8*(3), 307-328.

Mackay, H., & Gillespie, G. (1992). Extending the Social Shaping of Technology Approach: Ideology and Appropriation. *Social Studies of Science, 22*(4), 685-716.

Manago, A. M., Graham, M. B., Greenfield, P. M., & Salimkhan, G. (2008). Self-presentation and gender on MySpace. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(6), 446-458.

Marcheva, M. (2011). The Networked Diaspora: Bulgarian Migrants on Facebook. [Article]. *M/C Journal, 14*(2), 6-6.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 3*(5), 551-558.

Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media and Society New Media and Society, 13*(1), 114-133.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1959). *The communist manifesto*. New York: Doubleday.

Matteson, D. R. (1977). Exploration and commitment: Sex differences and methodological problems in the use of identity status categories. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 6*(4), 353-374.

McAdams, D. P. (1997). The case for unity in the (post) modern self: A modest proposal. In R. D. Ashmore & L. J. Jussim (Eds.), *Self and identity: Fundamental issues* (pp. 46-78). New York: Oxford University Press.

McEwen, W., Fang, X., Zhang, C., & Burkholder, R. (2006). Inside the mind of the Chinese consumer. *Harvard Business Review, Match,* 68–76.

McKenna, K. Y. A., & Bargh, J. A. (2000). Plan 9 From Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*(1), 57-75.

McLuhan, M. (1965). *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw Hill.

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *J. Community Psychol. Journal of Community Psychology, 14*(1), 6-23.

Mead, G. (Ed.). (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meng, X., & Zhang, J. (2001). The two-tier labor market in urban China occupational segregation and wage differentials between urban residents and rural migrants in Shanghai. *Journal of Comparative Economics, 29*(3), 485-504. doi: 10.1006/jcec.2001.1730

MIIT. (2011). Rapid growth in telecom consumption during the Spring Festival, the network running smoothly Retrieved October, 18, 2011, from http://yxj.miit.gov.cn/n11293472/n11295057/n11298508/13593035.html

MOE. (1998). *Mianxiang 21 shiji jiaoyu zhenxing xingdong jihua*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/level3.jsp?tablename=208&infoid=3337.

MOE. (2008a). *Data on enrolment, number of graduates, number of new entrants of schools of all types and level providing formal programs*. Beijing: Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/89/info1261469797229789.htm.

MOE. (2008b). *Gross enrolment rate of schools by level*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/96/info1261548667642896.htm.

Morley, D., & Brunsdon, C. (1999). *The Nationwide television studies*. London; New York: Routledge.

Murtagh, G. M. (2002). Seeing the "Rules": Preliminary Observations of Action, Interaction and Mobile Phone Use. In B. Brown, N. Green & R. Harper (Eds.), *Wireless world : social and interactional aspects of the mobile age* (pp. 81-91). London; New York: Springer.

Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social Capital, Intellectual Capital, and the Organizational Advantage. *The Academy of Management review., 23*(2), 242.

News, T. B. (2010). The migrant population in Beijing is more than 10,00 million Retrieved 3, May, 2011, from http://news.bjnews.com.cn/2010/0723/83265.shtml

Ngai, P. (1999). Becoming dagongmei (working girls): The politics of identity and defference in reform China. *The China Journal, 42*(7), 1-18.

Ngan, R., & Ma, S. (2008). The relationship of mobile telephony to job mobility in China's Pearl River Delta. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy, 21*(2), 55-63. doi: 10.1007/s12130-008-9046-8

Nielsen, J. (2006, October 9). Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute Retrieved October, 11, 2011, from http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html

Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2000). Lurker Demographics: Counting the Silent. *CHI - CONFERENCE-*, 73-80.

O'Brien, M. (2010). *Consuming Talk: Youth Culture and the Mobile Phone.* Doctor of Philosophy, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Retrieved from http://eprints.nuim.ie/2253/1/MOB_PhD.pdf Available from http://worldcat.org /z-wcorg/ database.

OECD. (2006). Information technology outlook 2006. Paris: OECD.

Oksman, V., & Rautiainen, P. (2003). Extension of the Hand: Children's and Teenagers' Relationship with the Mobile Phone in Finland. In L. Fortunati, J. E. Katz & R. R. (Eds.), *Mediating the Human Body: Technology, Communication, and Fashion* (pp. 103-111). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Oksman, V., & Rautiainen, P. (2003). Perhaps It's a Body Part:" How the Mobile Phone Became an Organic Part of the Everyday Lives of Finnish Children and Teenagers. In J. E. Katz (Ed.), *Machines That Become Us: The Social Context of Personal*

Communication Technology (pp. 293-308). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Oreglia, E. (2007). The Service Industry and Young Migrant Women in Beijing. Berkeley, CA: Intel.

Ornebring, H. (2008). The consumer as producer of what? *Journalism Stud. Journalism Studies, 9*(5), 771-785.

Özcan, Y. Z., & Koçak, A. (2003). Research note: A need or a status symbol? use of cellular telephones in Turkey. *European Journal of Communication, 18*(2), 241-254. doi: 10.1177/0267323103018002004

Palen, L., Salzmann, M., & Youngs, E. (2000). *Going wireless: behavior & practice of new mobile phone users.* Paper presented at the the 2000 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life: Characteristics of Personal Home Pages. *JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY, 79*, 643-660.

Pearson, E. (2009). All the world wide web's a stage: The performance of identity in online social networks. *First Monday First Monday, 14*(3).

Peng, Y. (2008). Internet Use of Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy, 21*(2), 47-54. doi: 10.1007/s12130-008-9048-6

Peng, Y., & Chu, R. W.-c. (2012a). ICT Use with Chinese Characteristics. In R. W.-c. C. L. Fortunati, P.-L. Law & S. Yang (Eds.), *Mobile Communication and Greater China*. London: Routledge.

Peng, Y., & Chu, R. W.-c. (2012b). Mobile Phone Usage in China. In R. W.-c. C. L. Fortunati, P.-L. Law & S. Yang (Eds.), *Mobile Communication and Greater China*. London: Routledge.

Pettis, M. (2009, 31 Mar, 2009). China: Graduating this Year? Retrieved 5, October, 2010, from http://wallstreetpit.com/3578-china-graduating-this-year

Phua, J., & Jin, S.-A. A. (2011). 'Finding a home away from home': the use of social networking sites by Asia-Pacific students in the United States for bridging and bonding social capital. *Asian Journal of Communication, 21*(5), 504-519.

Pocha, J. S. (2006). China's hunger for luxury goods grows: Booming nation expected to be No. 2 buyer by 2015, *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved from http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2006/03/21/chinas_hunger_for_luxury_goods_grows/.

Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*, 1-24.

Poster, M. (2004). Consumption and digital commodities in the everyday. *Cultural Studies, 18*(2/3), 409-423.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone : the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Qiu, J. L. (2008). Working-class ICTs, migrants, and empowerment in South China. [Article]. *Asian Journal of Communication, 18*(4), 333-347. doi: 10.1080/01292980802344232

Qiu, J. L. (2009). *Working-class network society : communication technology and the information have-less in urban China*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Qiu, J. L. (2010a). Mobile communication research in Asia: changing technological and intellectual geopolitics? *Asian Journal of Communication, 20*(2), 213-229. doi: 10.1080/01292981003693393

Qiu, J. L. (2010b). Mobile Phones, the Bottom of the Pyramid and Working-Class Information Society in China. *The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries, 44*(2), 1-14.

Reay, D., David, M., & Ball, S. (2001). Making a difference? Institutional habituses and higher education choice. *5*(4). Retrieved from Sociological Research Online website: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/5/4/reay.html

Robison, R., & Goodman, D. S. G. (Eds.). (1996). *The New rich in Asia : mobile phones, McDonalds and middle-class revolution*. London ; New York: Routledge.

Rosen, S. (2009). Contemporary Chinese youth and the state. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 68*(2), 359-369.

Satchell, C., & Graham, C. (2010). Conveying identity with mobile content. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing, 14*(3), 251-259. doi: 10.1007/s00779-009-0254-3

Satchell, C., Singh, S., & Zic, J. (2004). 3G mutimedia content production as social communication. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems, 11*(2), 11.

Scott, J. W. (1992). Experience. In J. B. J. W. Scott (Ed.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (pp. 22-40). New York: Routledge.

Servon, L. (2002). *Bridging the Digital Divide*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Šmahel, D., Blinka, L., & Ledabyl, O. (2008). Playing MMORPGs: Connections between Addiction and Identifying with a Character. *CyberPsychology and Behavior, 11*(6), 715-718.

Smahel, D., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2007). "Any Girls Want to Chat Press 911" : Partner Selection in Monitored and Unmonitored Teen Chat Rooms. *CyberPsychology and Behavior, 10*(3), 346-353.

Stevens, R. (1983). *Erik Erikson, An Introduction*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version*. Palo Alto: Benjamin/Cummings.

Subrahmanyam, K., Garcia, E. C., Harsono, S. L., Li, J., & Lipana, L. (2009). In their words : Connecting online weblogs to developmental processes. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 27*(1), 219-245.

Subrahmanyam, K., Greenfield, P. M., & Tynes, B. (2004). Constructing Sexuality and Identity in an Online Teen Chat Room. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology: An International Lifespan Journal, 25*(6), 651-666.

Subrahmanyam, K., & Šmahel, D. (2011). *Digital youth : the role of media in development*. New York: Springer.

Subrahmanyam, K., Šmahel, D., & Greenfield, P. (2006). Connecting Developmental Constructions to the Internet: Identity Presentation and Sexual Exploration in Online Teen Chat Rooms. *Developmental Psychology Developmental Psychology, 42*(3), 395-406.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey: Brooks-Cole.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity of intergroup relations. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

Taraszow, T., Aristodemou, E., Shitta, G., Laouris, Y., & Arsoy, A. (2010). Disclosure of personal and contact information by young people in social networking sites: An analysis using Facebook profiles as an example. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics, 6*(1), 81-101.

Taylor, A. S., & Harper, R. (2003). The Gift of the Gab?: A Design Oriented Sociology of Young People's Use of Mobiles. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work, 12*(3), 267-296.

TechWeb. (2009). The sales of PCs in China 2008, from http://www.techweb.com.cn/data/2009-02-18/388940.shtml

Tencent. (2011, November, 16, 2011). The latest 24-hour online data of Tencent QQ Retrieved November, 17, 2011, from http://im.qq.com/online.shtml#qq

Terry, D. J., & Hogg, M. A. (1996). Group Norms and the Attitude-Behavior Relationship: A Role for Group Identification. *Personality & social psychology bulletin, 22*(8), 776.

Thompson, W. E., & Hickey, J. V. (2005). *Society in focus : an introduction to sociology*. Boston [Mass.]: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Tian, L. (2008). The chengzhongcun land market in China: boon or bane? —A perspective on property rights. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32*(2), 282–304.

Trow, M. (1973). Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education *Policies for Higher Education, Conference on Future Structures of Post-secondary Education* (pp. 63). Paris: OECD.

Truch, A., & Hulme, M. (2004). *Exploring the implications for social identity of the new sociology of the mobile phone*. Paper presented at the The Global and Local in Mobile Communication: Places, Images, People, and Connections, Budapest, Hungary.

Turkle, S. (1997). *Life on the screen : identity in the age of the Internet*. New York, NY: Touchstone.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

University, T. L. M. R. C. o. B. N. (2012). Report on China's labor market 2011 Beijing: The Labor Market Research Center of Beijing Normal University.

Van Dijk, J. (2005). *The Deepening Divide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wallis, C. (2008). *Technomobility in the margins mobile phones and young rural women in Beijing.* PHD, University of Southern California, California, USA.

Wang, C., & Lin, X. (2009). Migration of Chinese consumption values: Traditions, modernization, and cultural renaissance. *Journal of Business Ethics, 88*(3), 399-409. doi: 10.1007/s10551-009-0308-5

Wang, Y. (2007). From socialist welfare support to home-ownership: the experience of China. In R. Groves, A. Murie & C. Watson (Eds.), *Housing and the New Welfare State: Perspectives from East Asia and Europe* (pp. 127-154). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Wang, Y. P., Wang, Y., & Wu, J. (2009). Urbanization and informal development in China: urban villages in Shenzhen. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 33*(4), 957-974.

Warner, W. L., Meeker, M., & Eells, K. (1949). *Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status*. Chicago: Science Research Associates.

Weber, M. (2003). *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*. London: Routledge.

Wei, R., & Pan, Z. (1999). Mass media and consumerist values in the people's republic of china. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 11*(1), 75-96.

Wei, W. (2012). Diaosi: the birth of a word. *Free Talk* Retrieved August, 26, 2012, from http://news.ifeng.com/opinion/special/diaosi/

Wellman, B. (2001). Physical Place and Cyberplace: The Rise of Personalized Networking. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 25*(2), 227-252.

Wellman, B., & Haythornthwaite, C. A. (2002). *The Internet in everyday life*. Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Pub.

Wellman, B., & Potter, S. (1999). The Elements of Personal Community. In B. Wellman (Ed.), *Networks in the global village : life in contemporary communities* (pp. 49-82). Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.

Woodward, K. (2004). Questions of identity. In K. Woodward (Ed.), *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity* (2 ed., pp. 33). London and New York: The Open University.

Wu, F. (2009). Land development, inequality and urban villages in China. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 33*(4), 885-889. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00935.x

Wulff, H. (1995). Introduction: Introducing youth culture in its own right: the state of art and new possibilities. In V. Amit-Talai & H. Wulff (Eds.), *Youth cultures: A Cross Cultural Perspective* (pp. 1-18). London: Routledge.

Yan, Y. (1996). *The flow of gifts : reciprocity and social networks in a Chinese village*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Yan, Y. (2000). The Politics of Consumerism in Chinese Society. In T. White (Ed.), *In China Briefing 2000: The Continuing Transformation* (pp. 179). Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe.

Yang, K. (2008). A Preliminary Study on the Use of Mobile Phones amongst Migrant Workers in Beijing. *Knowledge, Technology & Policy, 21*(2), 65-72.

Yang, M. M.-h. (1994). *Gifts, favors, and banquets : the art of social relationships in China*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Yang, S., & Song, J. (2004, October). *College students' Self-positioning and the Cell-phone Consumption*. Paper presented at the Mobile Communication and Social Change, Seoul, Korea.

Yardi, S., & Boyd, D. (2010). Dynamic Debates: An Analysis of Group Polarization Over Time on Twitter. *The Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 30*(5), 316-327.

Yu, L., & Tng, T. (2003). Culture and design for mobile phones in China. In J. Katz (Ed.), *Machines that Become Us: The Social Context of Communication Technology* (pp. 187-198). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Zhang, X. (2008). The changes in san dajian during the 30-year gaige kaifang Retrieved 6, May, 2011, from http://news.daynews.com.cn/shxw/548014.html

Zhao, X. (2009). China's growing postgrad 'ant tribes':Chinese university graduates are turning into ants _in a manner of speaking Retrieved 27 November, 2009, from http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/none/china-buzz-ant-tribe-460917

Zhao, Y. H. (2000). Rural-to-urban labor migration in China: The past and the present. In L. West & Y. H. Zhao (Eds.), *Rural Labor Flows in China* (pp. 15-33). Berkeley: University of California.

Zhou, J., Lin, Z., & Fang, C. (2009). Qingzhu jianguo 60nian: Jilu jiadian shenghuo dabianqian Retrieved April, 29, 2011, from http://tech.163.com/digi/special/00163O6L/hea60.html

Appendix 1

Examples of participants' QQ profile pictures

Picture1: a female participant's room which was originally a kitchen

Picture2: a male participant's shared room in the basement with his second-hand ThinkPad laptop

Picture 3: a male participant's ThinkPad laptop in his single room with

Picture 4: a male participant's mobile phone desktop picture with landscape

Picture 5: a male participant's mobile phone desktop picture of his girlfriend
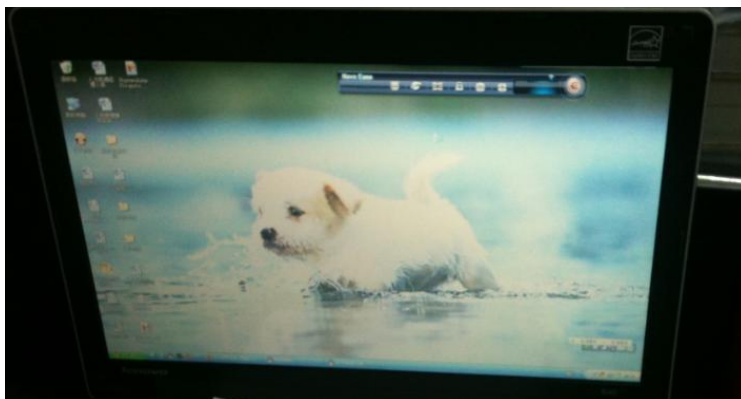
Picture 6: a male participant's laptop screen with an image of a dog

Picture 7: a female participant's desktop computer in her office with a desktop picture of Song Hye Kyo

Picture 8: a male participant's laptop in his room with a desktop picture of gold bullion and dollar bills

Picture 9: a female participant's mobile phone attached with her photo

Picture 10: a male participant's mobile phone attached with jade

Picture11: a male participant's QQ profile pictures from Sunday to Saturday indicating his different moods each day

Picture12: a male participant's QQ profile picture depicting a couple in a distant relationship

Picture13: a female participant's QQ profile picture with an image of a girl with a twinkling eye

Picture14: a female participant's QQ profile picture with an image of an eagle

Picture15: a male participant's QQ profile picture with an image of a cute "ox"

Appendix 2

Table 3: Examples of participants' online nicknames

Participant No.	Nickname	Platforms	Source	Literal Meanings	Participants' excerpts in explaining nickname's actual meanings
1	凤凰劫 (Pinyin: Fenghuangjie)	QQ	Mythology and movie	Phoenix catastrophe[34]	I changed my former name to this when I broke my leg. It's an encouragement to me that I will conquer this difficulty.
2	花满朝 (huamanzhao)	QQ	Name of a Chinese traditional festival	Full of flowers	I pay attention to the Chinese traditional festival and there was a festival named "flowery festival" then I got the name.
2	花花牛 (huahuaniu)	More anonymous environments	Change from the above nick	Flowery Ox	I add my animal zodiac "ox" to this name. I display

---

[34] According to Chinese mythology, the phoenix becomes reborn after dying in the fire.

#	Name	Environment			Reason
			name		the more superficial aspects in Renren, QQ, and I use this name to display the other side of me which is suppressed in daily life.
2	**[35]	Totally anonymous environments, such as Games	Nil	Nil	I use sexually-explicit and very violent nicknames in games to vent my suppressed emotions. It is easier to vent using an obscene nickname.
3	SS	All	Nil	No meaning	It's simple and casual, just like my character.
4	嗨，我是**[36]	QQ	Real name	Hi, I'm **[37]	People know who I am, and

---

[35] The participant did not want to reveal the specific name, only that "it's very pornographic and very violent."

[36] [11] ** indicates the participant's real name.

	(hai, woshi**)				I can be more easily found when I use my real name. My online information is real and I don't like fake things.
6	杆杆儿 (gangan'er)	QQ and some forums	Nickname in dialect	Pole	I was extremely thin when I was in high school. My friends call me "pole". I like to use these real world name in QQ.
7	水静水狂 (shuijing shuikuang)	All	Real name and character	Water is quite and crazy	It shows my personality; I can be quiet and crazy and the character "shui" is from my real name.
13	丑陋的奥利翁 (choulou de aoliweng)	QQ	Offline nickname and Myth	Ugly Orion	Orion is a god from Greek mythology. He was the lover of Luna (the goddess of moon). Their

					story is sad and I like Luna. Using "ugly" is because my nicknames given by others always have this character "chou" (means ugly).
14	岚蓝 (lanlan)	QQ	Word in poetry and colour	Blue rainsy	I just like the feeling created by the combination of these words.
15	雨花石 (yuhuashi)	Business QQ and Fetion	Objects with special meaning	Drizzly shingle[38]	There is a legend about the drizzly shingles which says that these stones are stained with blood. I wish to be a real man with experience.
25	东篱采菊 (donglicaiju)	QQ (Current	Poetry	Picking chrysanthemum at	There is my name in it "ju" (chrysanthemu

[38] Drizzly shingle or yuhua stone is a typical natural stone produced in the special geographic environment of Nanjing.

				the eastern fence	m) and it is the reflection of my state of mind which is leisurely and calm.
25	扁舟子 (pianzhou zi)	QQ (Former name)	Poetry	The wanderer sailing his boat	I once used it. It was also the reflection of my mind, when I was drifting and wandering.

Appendix 3
Interview Guide

This interview is designed to gather information about your use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies). You will be asked some background questions about yourself and your ICT use. The information you provide will be kept confidential. All of your answers are voluntary, and there is no right or wrong answer for each question. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

SECTION 1: Background Questions

1.   Describe your life in Beijing (job/residence/social network).

2.   How do you feel about your higher education? What was your ambition when you were in school? What is your ambition now?

3.   Tell me something about your family and your hometown.

4.   Are there differences between yourself and the locals?

5.   Can you describe your feelings as a member of post-1980s generation?

- Growth, ambitions, social reality, social pressures.

6.   Are you familiar with the term "ant tribe" (*yizu*)? Do you think you belong to this group?

SECTION 2: Computer Use

7.   Can you explain the impact of computers on your life, from when you first used it?

- Describe your experience with your first computer.

- Why was your first computer replaced?

8. (link to Q6 in questionnaire): Explain why you wanted to own that particular computer.

9. (Link to Q7): Tell me about your experience of sharing computers with others.

- Were/Are there conflicts with sharing and time allocation?

10. (link to Q8 and Q11): Can you show me your computer? Do you like it? How do you personalize your computer?

11. (link to Q12): How does your computer reflect aspects of yourself?

12. In a typical day (weekdays and weekends), what is your computer usage (both your office computer and your personal computer), from the moment you wake up, to when you go to bed?

13. Referring to question 2 in the questionnaire, can you describe your activities with your office computer in more detail? Referring to question 5 in the questionnaire, can you describe your activities with your personal computer in more detail?

- Instant messaging/social networking sites/discussion forums/blogs/micro blogs.

14. (link to Q17): Can you explain who, or what topics, you, and the people around you, pay attention to?

- (link to Q18): Can you explain why you notice these topics which

others may not pay attention to?

15. (link to Q20): Why do you pay attention to these events?

- Do you discuss these topics online and (or) offline?

16. Have you ever lost your computer, or was there ever a time when you could not use it when you wanted to? Describe your experience.

17. What does your computer mean to you?

18. What does network mean to you?

SECTION 3: Mobile Phone Use

19. Can you describe the impact of mobile phones to you, from when you first used it?

- Describe your experience with your first phone?

- How many phones have you changed? Why were they replaced?

20. (link to Q30 and Q31): Can you show me your mobile phone? Do you like your phone? How do you personalize your phone?

21. (link to Q28): Why do you want to own this particular mobile phone?

22. (link to Q32): How does your mobile phone reflect aspects of yourself?

23. (link to Q33 and Q34): What are your thoughts on contraband mobile phones and imitation brands?

- What kinds of people, in your opinion, use these phones?

- Do you tell others that your mobile phone is *shuihuo?*

24. (link to Q35): Why do you use this particular telecom service?

25. Can you describe, in a typical day (weekday and weekend), your typical mobile phone usage, from the moment you wake up, to the time you go to bed.

26. (link to Q46): Explain whether you would show the contents of your mobile phone to others? Why, or why not?

27. Where do you usually use your phone? When do you usually use your phone? Are there places or times when you are not allowed to use your phone? Are there times or places when you do not feel comfortable using your phone? Are the instances when you turn off your mobile phone? When, and where?

28. Have you ever lost your mobile phone, or forgotten to take your mobile phone with you? Describe your experience.

29. What does your mobile phone mean to you?

SECTION 4: Probing Questions

30. (link to Q43 and Q44): How do you choose particular ways (e.g., email, SMS, voice call, instant messaging and SNS) with which to communicate with particular group of people?

- What are the differences and similarities in the way you use the computer and mobile phone to contact others?

- Do you use both mobile phone and computer with the same person or group of persons?

- With different groups of person (e.g., strong ties and weak ties)?

- Do you use both the computer and mobile phone at the same time?

31. Can you explain the differences when you are online and offline?

32. Can you identify other people online? (e.g., online writers or people you talk to)?

33. (link to Q21): Why do/don't you use your real name on line?

34. (link to Q22/Q24/Q25): Describe your experience participating in online group activities.

- online discussions about *yizu*.
- online discussions about the post-1980s generation.

35. Can you describe the typical online behaviour of the post-1980s generation? What is the difference between your online behaviour and this typical one?

36. (link to Q45): Describe your experience using media other than the computer and mobile phone. What is the effect of all the media on you?

Appendix 4

No.

_____

Dear Respondent,

      I am a Masters student from the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore, and I am conducting a study on ICT use and identity formation by Chinese rural-to-urban graduate workers. Please complete this survey as best as you can. It will take approximately 25 minutes of your time. Be rest assured that your responses will only be used for academic purposes, and the information will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your kind assistance. If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at a0066318@nus.edu.sg.

SECTION 1: ICT USE

1. **Do you have an office computer?**
   1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No (proceed to question 3)

2. **What activities do you perform when you are online with your office computer? (You may choose more than one option.)**
1) ☐ Use OA office system	11) ☐ Apply for jobs online
2) ☐ Receive/ send Email	12) ☐ Online education
3) ☐ Read industry information	13) ☐ Buy/sell stocks online
4) ☐ Read news	14) ☐ Instant messaging (e.g., QQ)
5) ☐ Use search engines	15) ☐ Use social networking media
6) ☐ Listen to music online	16) ☐ Participate in discussion forums
7) ☐ Watch videos online	
8) ☐ Play online games	17) ☐ Blogging/personal online space
9) ☐ Download music/videos	
10) ☐ Shop online /online payment	18) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

3. **Do you have a personal computer?**
   1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No (proceed to question 6)

4. **What is the model of your personal computer? Please specify: _____**

5. **What activities do you perform when you are online with your personal computer? (You may choose more than one option.)**
1) ☐ Use OA office system	7) ☐ Watch videos online
2) ☐ Receive/ send Email	8) ☐ Play online games
3) ☐ Read industry information	9) ☐ Download music/videos
4) ☐ Read news	10) ☐ Shop online / Online payment
5) ☐ Use search engines	11) ☐ Apply for jobs online
6) ☐ Listen to music online	12) ☐ Online education

160

13) ☐ Buy/sell stocks online   forums
14) ☐ Instant messaging (e.g., QQ)   17) ☐ Blogging/personal online
15) ☐ Use social networking media   space
16) ☐ Participate in discussion   18) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

6. **Which is your most desired computer? Please specify: _____**

7. **Do you share a computer with others in your living place?**
   1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

8. **Are you willing to display the contents of your computer (including applications, pictures and movies, and other contents)?**
   1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No   3) ☐ Depends

9. **How many personal computer have you used? State in chronological order:**

   _____

10. **Which are the most important elements when you choose a computer? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Brand   5) ☐ Weight
    2) ☐ Price   6) ☐ Others, please specify:
    3) ☐ Function   _____
    4) ☐ Design

11. **Do you personalize your computer (e.g., wallpaper/theme)?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

12. **What information does your computer reveal about you (you may choose more than one option)?**
    1) ☐ Age   5) ☐ Personality
    2) ☐ Gender   6) ☐ Taste
    3) ☐ Income   7) ☐ Preferences
    4) ☐ Socioeconomic status   8) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

13. **Do you use these instant messaging applications? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ QQ   4) ☐ Gtalk
    2) ☐ MSN   5) ☐ Others, please specify: _____
    3) ☐ Fetion

14. **Do you use these social networking sites? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Renren   5) ☐ Myspace
    2) ☐ Zhanzuo   6) ☐ Ruolin
    3) ☐ Kaixin   7) ☐ Others, please specify: _____
    4) ☐ 51 net

15. **Do you use these forums? (You may choose more than one option.)**

1) ☐ Tianya			5) ☐ Sina forum		
2) ☐ Douban			6) ☐ Sohu community		
3) ☐ Maopu			7) ☐ Neteasy beijing community		
4) ☐ Xici hutong			8) ☐ Others, please specify: _____		

16. **Do you use these weblogs? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Sina blog   7) ☐ Blognet
    2) ☐ Sohu blog   8) ☐ BlogChina
    3) ☐ Neteasy blog   9) ☐ Sina microblog
    4) ☐ Renren blog   10) ☐ Sohu microblog
    5) ☐ Qzone   11) ☐ Neteasy microblog
    6) ☐ Blogbus   12) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

17. **What topics do you and those around you pay attention to? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Housing price   7) ☐ Network events
    2) ☐ Stock market   8) ☐ Marriage and romantic
    3) ☐ Corruption   relationships
    4) ☐ The gap between rich and poor   9) ☐ Fashion and entertainment
    5) ☐ Hiring of graduates   10) ☐ Culture and art
    6) ☐ Social security   11) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

18. **Do you pay special attention to some aspects that others ignore? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Housing price   7) ☐ Network events
    2) ☐ Stock market   8) ☐ Marriage and romantic
    3) ☐ Corruption   relationships
    4) ☐ The gap between rich and poor   9) ☐ Fashion and entertainment
    5) ☐ Hiring of graduates   10) ☐ Culture and art
    6) ☐ Social security   11) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

19. **Which channel provides you with information you can trust on the following?**

	Government	Newspaper	TV	Network	Experts	Civil rumours
Corruption						
The gap between rich and poor						
Graduates' employment						
Social security						
House price						
Stock market						

20. **Do you familiar with these network events? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Accident caused by Li Qiming
    2) ☐ QQ Vs. 360
    3) ☐ High-rise apartment fire in Shanghai
    4) ☐ Rabbit abuse
    5) ☐ Phoenix woman committing suicide
    6) ☐ Philippine police questioned
    7) ☐ Maternal anus sewn
    8) ☐ Forged degree by Tang Jun
    9) ☐ The release of the diaries belonging to the Secretary of Tobacco's lover
    10) ☐ Rebate scandal at hospital

21. **Do you use your real name online?**
    1) ☐ Yes, please specify: _____   2) ☐ No

22. **Which role did you play in network group activities (e.g., Social search, online support, network joint signatures)? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Organizer   4) ☐ Standby
    2) ☐ Active participant   5) ☐ Do not participate at all
    3) ☐ Ordinary participant

23. **Do you make friends online?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

24. **Have you participated in the online discussions about the post-1980s generation?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

25. **Have you participated in the online discussions about *Yizu*?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

26. **What is the model of your mobile phone? Please specify: _____**

27. **How many mobile phone have you used? State in chronological order:**

    _____

28. **What is your most desired mobile phone? Please specify: _____**

29. **Which are the most important elements when you choose a mobile phone? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Brand   5) ☐ Weight
    2) ☐ Price   6) ☐ Others, please specify:
    3) ☐ Function   _____
    4) ☐ Design

30. **Are you willing to display your mobile phone?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No   3) ☐ Depends

31. **Do you personalize your mobile phone (e.g., choosing wallpaper, ring tones)?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

32. **What information does your computer reveal about you (you may choose more than one option)?**
    1) ☐ Age   5) ☐ Personality
    2) ☐ Gender   6) ☐ Taste
    3) ☐ Income   7) ☐ Preferences
    4) ☐ Socioeconomic status   8) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

33. **Have you used contraband mobile phone?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

34. **Have you used mobile phones that are imitations of popular brands?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No

35. **Which mobile service do you use?**
    1) ☐ Go tone   6) ☐ E surfing
    2) ☐ Mzone   7) ☐ Wind business
    3) ☐ Easy own   8) ☐ G3
    4) ☐ U-power   9) ☐ WOW
    5) ☐ Ruyitong   10) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

36. **How much do you pay for mobile phone telecom service per month?**
    1) ☐ < RMB 50   3) ☐ RMB 101-300
    2) ☐ RMB 50-100   4) ☐ > RMB 300

37. **How many messages do you send per month?**
    1) ☐ <50   3) ☐ 200-500
    2) ☐ 50-200   4) ☐ >500

38. **How many calls do you make and receive per day?**
    1) ☐ <5   3) ☐ 11-20
    2) ☐ 5-10   4) ☐ >20

39. **Do you surfer the Internet using your mobile phone?**
    1) ☐ Yes (please specify :_____)   2) ☐ No

40. **Which are the functions you use most frequently on your mobile phone? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Camera   6) ☐ Music player
    2) ☐ Radio   7) ☐ Added applications (e.g.,
    3) ☐ Alarm   games)
    4) ☐ Calculator   8) ☐ Others, please specify: _____
    5) ☐ Notes

41. **Do you use these services on you mobile phone? (You may choose more than one option.)**

1) ☐ Mobile phone newspaper
2) ☐ Visit websites
3) ☐ Mobile instant messaging
4) ☐ Mobile phone novel

5) ☐ Online music
6) ☐ Online video
7) ☐ Online game
8) ☐ Others, please specify:

42. **Are you willing to display the contents of your mobile phone (including applications, pictures and so on) to others?**
    1) ☐ Yes   2) ☐ No   3) ☐ Depends

43. **Which communications platforms do you use to contact different group of people? (You may choose more than one option.)**

	Mobile phone	SMS	Email	Instant messaging	Mobile instant messaging	SNS	Blog	Microblog	Forum	FTF
Relatives										
Friedens										
Colleagues										
Boy/girl friend										
Others										

44. **Which of the following so you use to contact others? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ Mobile phone
    2) ☐ SMS
    3) ☐ Email
    4) ☐ Instant messaging
    5) ☐ SNS

    6) ☐ Blog
    7) ☐ Microblog
    8) ☐ Forum
    9) ☐ FTF

45. **Do you own, or have access to the following? (You may choose more than one option.)**
    1) ☐ MP3
    2) ☐ MP4
    3) ☐ PSP
    4) ☐ Digital camera

    5) ☐ DV
    6) ☐ Wireless WAN card
    7) ☐ Tablet
    8) ☐ Others, please specify: _____

SECTION 2: Demographics

46. **What is your age? Please specify:** _____

47. **What is your gender?**
    1) ☐ Female   2) ☐ Male

48. **What is your highest qualification?**
    1) ☐ Diploma/ Advanced Diploma
    2) ☐ Bachelor's Degree from a general university or college
    3) ☐ Bachelor's Degree from a major university
    4) ☐ Master's /PhD Degree

49. **Which industry do you work in?**

1) ☐ Government/public service/NGO
2) ☐ IT
3) ☐ Engineering/Manufacturing
4) ☐ Banking/Finance
5) ☐ Real estate/Architecture
6) ☐ Media/Press/Culture/Art
7) ☐ Wholesale/Retail
8) ☐ Healthcare/Nursing/Beauty
9) ☐ Education/Research
10) ☐ Others, please specify: ____

50. How many years have you been working?
1) ☐ < 1 year
2) ☐ 1-3 years
3) ☐ 4-5 years

51. What is your average monthly income?
1) ☐ <RMB 2000
2) ☐ RMB 2,001 to RMB 4,000
3) ☐ RMB 4,001 to RMB 7,000
4) ☐ RMB 7,000 to RMB 10,000
5) ☐ >RMB 10,000

52. How many years have you been working?
4) ☐ < 1 year
5) ☐ 1-3 years
6) ☐ 4-5 years

53. What is your average monthly income?
6) ☐ <RMB 2000
7) ☐ RMB 2,001 to RMB 4,000
8) ☐ RMB 4,001 to RMB 7,000
9) ☐ RMB 7,000 to RMB 10,000
10) ☐ >RMB 10,000

End of Survey.
Thanks for your cooperation!