

A search for a place to call home: Negotiation of home, identity and senses of belonging among new migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) to New.

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A search for a place to call home: Negotiation of home, identity and senses of belonging among new migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) to New Zealand

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Abstract

Research on transnational emotions places particular emphasis on the notion of "home" to migrants because of its centrality in identity construction, especially the sense of belonging. This paper charts out how the concept of home, sense of identity and social spaces are shaped during increased mobility and transnationalism among highly-educated and skilled new PRC migrants.<sup>1</sup> Drawing theories from "emotional transnationalism", "critical geographies of home", "material geographies of home" and "translocal geographies", this paper engages with a critical analysis of the emotional spaces of home and identity and belonging based on the author's

personal experience and reflection as a migrant herself and empirical data collected from 47 in-depth interviews with migrants who are originally from the PRC and have demonstrated great transnational mobility and intentions. This paper demonstrates the significant value of using an autobiographical approach to interrogate research questions and empirical data in transnational migration studies. It also makes theoretical contribution to the understanding of how increased transnational mobility shapes migrants' ideas of home, sense of identity and emotional relations with different space/places.



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## Keywords

Immigration; Transnationalism; Chinese; New Zealand; China

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- New Chinese migrants in the New Zealand context is a term that usually refers to Chinese who migrated to New Zealand after the introduction of the Immigration Policy Review in 1986, which abolished the “traditional origin” preference for British migrants. Among the new Chinese migrants, the three major sources are immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC. These three groups plus Chinese from other countries (e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia etc.) are all categorized as new Chinese migrants in New Zealand. New Chinese migrants are distinct from the early Chinese migrants in New Zealand. The early Chinese migrants were mostly uneducated male peasants from rural Southern China, and they migrated primarily because of the economic opportunities found in the gold mines in the Western world and the tin mines and plantations in

Central America. However, the majority of contemporary Chinese migrants are highly educated and possess specialized skills or financial capital, which lets them qualify and meet the entry criteria of New Zealand.

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