

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAKKA IN CYBERSPACE: DIASPORIC ETHNICITY AND THE INTERNET

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With local communities more fully integrated into a global system, understanding everyday social life today means understanding the connections between local communities and the larger-scale global world. But what is local about the Internet? This paper will examine a Hakka community in cyberspace, people located in the United States, Canada, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and other areas throughout the world who participate in a “local” group through Internet communication. It will consider how computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as the Hakka Global Network (HGN) contributes to a global dialogue on Hakka identity. This paper will argue that CMC, through organizations like the HGN, is a new medium that directly challenges definitions of a local community. Can a social group like the HGN be considered a community, and if so, what is “local” about it? To help answer this question, this paper will describe the HGN and other Hakka Internet resources that illustrate how global processes like CMC shape ideas of what it means to be Hakka in the 1990s.

Theoretical Context

Transnational Organizations. Transnational organizations, which provide institutional support for the global movement of people, goods, and ideas across national boundaries, have existed as long as nations (Wolf 1982; Hannerz 1992; Huntington 1973). However, transnational organizations before World War I were not as influential as other social organizations (e.g., the nation-state) in shaping the social practices of local communities (Nye and Keohane 1973). Today, global communication networks such as television and the internet, world trade and market networks, and labor migrations more fully integrate local communities into a global system of interdependence (Featherstone 1990; Wakeman 1988). As a result of these more permeable boundaries, understanding everyday social life means understanding how global processes, through transnational organizations, shape local life — seeing the connections between a local community and the larger-scale global world (Moore 1994, 1987; Strathern 1995).

Transnational analyses have emphasized one of two analytical perspectives. Some studies have focused on what Strathern calls the “concrete models of globalisation” (1995:159) — the structural implications for the “world capitalist system” (Wallerstein 1974; Frank 1966) of transnational organizations (Vallier 1973; Hanson 1980). Studies based on this type of organizational analysis are problematic because they assume a high level of cultural homogeneity within the organizations studied as well as a passivity in the adaptation and interpretation of people in the transnational organization. Also, these studies do not fully account for the influences of informal social networks within institutional frameworks. Other studies have focused on the cultural implications of transnational processes, in topical areas like development, public culture and diaspora identity (Gupta 1992; Escobar 1995). These studies have neglected the strength of objective structures (in Bourdieu’s [1977] sense) and the political asymmetries between nation-states that shape transnational cultural issues. They also stereotype the various institutions (e.g.,

world religious organizations and international business companies) that shape transnational experiences.

This study will combine the strengths of both of these perspectives by focusing concretely on the localization of a transnational organization. Global processes are made local by people — people such as entrepreneurs, tourists, and CMC users who establish sustained social relations across national boundaries. Localization occurs when people together become enmeshed in the complexities of everyday life. In the case of the HGN community, this happens more often through the internet than through face-to-face exchanges. This results in the development of informal social networks of a larger scale that are neither geographically bound nor isolated (Appadurai 1990, 1995).

Understanding social life today, according to Appadurai, involves examining the “production of locality.” Appadurai says that people strive to bridge various levels of disjunction (i.e., spatial separation) and difference (i.e., language or citizenship) by creating “neighborhoods,” an essential element of social life (1995:207). In Appadurai’s model, “locality” is a property of social life (a cultural conception, not a territorial marker, of social groups), while “neighborhoods” are “lifeworlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories” (1995:215) — in other words, the social forms that structure life in a community. Extending Anderson’s (1983) model of the nation-state to the global world (what Appadurai refers to as an “imagined world,” c.f. Strathern 1995), he provides an analytical framework that links together the global, the national, and the local. However, in looking at the internet, a domain that is by definition delocalized, how do we find locality? Can we call the sustained communication characteristic of the internet stable associations? This paper will argue below that we can.

Computer-Mediated Communication. As a global social phenomenon, the internet, email, newsgroups and other aspects of what communications researchers refer to as computer-mediated communications (CMC) cannot be ignored by social scientists. In its nascent stage of theoretical development, CMC research has attempted to approach this global communications phenomenon from widely disparate perspectives. For example, Morris and Ogan (1996) see the internet as a mass medium, but with revised ideas of audience, mediating technology, and community (see also Hewitt 1994; Rose 1996).⁽¹⁾ Some have stressed the distinct nature of the social exchange taking place in CMC (Parks and Floyd 1996; Rai 1995), while others have stressed the political implications of CMC (i.e., McChesney 1996; Leonard 1995; McGurn 1995). These theoretical studies of CMC, although exploratory, all conclude that CMC in general has an impact on social processes outside the internet itself. Parks and Floyd (1996) in particular show how CMC relations often develop into personal relations with more traditional types of social exchanges, and there are numerous stories about how people have met other people (including their future spouses) through the internet.⁽²⁾

This study will focus on the implications of CMC on diaspora identity, examining how CMC discourse shapes Hakka identity and activism. In a similar vein, Rai (1995) has examined a Hindu newsgroup (*alt.hindu*) and found that a diasporic Hindu identity is “being written *through* the lines” (Rai 1995:31) of CMC. Rai argues that examining CMC discourse leads to a productive analysis of diasporic identity because CMC users are: 1) “model minority citizens” in Western countries; 2) representatives of an “authentic other” in Western countries; and 3) key allies in non-Western political movements (1995:44).

Furthermore, diasporic identity is brought into public discourse through the internet. For members (including myself), the messages sent in the HGN are a valuable resource in learning about and defining what it means to be Hakka today. As compared to other transnational organizations that connect people together around the world, the internet in CMC discourse provides a clear delineation of the issues. People get involved in various internet communities specifically to exchange information about particular subjects. In other words, CMC serves as a concrete medium through which to study the more abstract transnational cultural flows described by Hannerz (1992, 1990, 1987).

Furthermore, CMC is not an isolated phenomena but is embedded in everyday life. The discussion between HGN members is not constrained to a grand discourse of Hakka identity. Rather, it is a part of the diasporic experiences of HGN members. In a theoretical examination of diasporas, Clifford (1994) points out that diasporic identity requires more than the border crossing of people, money, goods or information: it requires a vision, however contested, of identity. While being Hakka is linked to other socio-political forces, as delineated by Rai, as a diaspora it also involves a struggle to “define the local, as a distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement” (Clifford 1994:308). In maintaining a sustained dialogue about what it means to be Hakka, the HGN produces locality everyday, every time HGN members check email or browse the web.

Methodology

Fieldwork for this project (if participant-observation over the internet can be called fieldwork) was conducted between October 1995 - October 1996. I discovered the HGN while “surfing the web” (using an internet web browser like Netscape to view hypertext documents). Using a search engine (Webcrawler), I searched for websites that had the word “Hakka,” and found around five separate listings (including my own webpage). I discovered HGN on Francis Chin’s “Hakka Chinese Away from Home” webpage (<http://www.panix.com/~franchin/Hakka/>), and requested to join by sending an email message to Jonathan Teoh. I immediately began to receive numerous email messages from Teoh, all of them postings by HGN members. A typical unedited message is listed below:⁽³⁾

From: XXXX@XXX.XXX.my Thu Jan 25 12:47:26 1996

Subject: The Launch of The Federation of Hakka Association of Malaysia

Hello,

I would like to inform you that The Federation of Hakka Association of Malaysia is going to announce their homepage later in the afternoon. (26th Jan, 1996).

The URL is <http://www.jb-online.com/assoc/hakka/>

The page aims to provide the world-wide hakka people regarding the Hakka association in Malaysia. It also provides the contact lists of person in charge.

Please comment and if you need more info, we are pleased to convey for you.

This project performs systematic discourse analysis on a sample of email messages sent by HGN members to other HGN members from October 1995 - September 1996. A sample of 319 (randomly selected messages from October 1995 - June 1996, and a complete set of messages from July 1996 - September 1996; see Table 1) were inputted into a freeform database (AskSam version 3.0b, 1995, Seaside Software Inc.). Messages were then individually coded by sender, date, and topics/Hakka area addressed. Messages often addressed more than one topic or area, resulting in multiple listings during analysis. Topics were selected if addressed by more than three members. The results can be found in Table 3 below. “Threads” (the tracing of messages back to an initial contribution) were not quantitatively analyzed because messages contained within threads may have been outside the sample frame of HGN messages or may be connected with non-HGN initial contributions (i.e., comments in response to webpages linked with HGN). The coded data was then analyzed to determine the content of CMC discourse on diasporic Hakka identity.

Systematic discourse analysis was found to be the most reliable instrument through which to analyze HGN messages. This project did not rely upon a survey conducted over the internet (hereafter CMC survey) because of the likelihood of methodological errors. Other analysts have found CMC surveys to be misrepresentative of actual populations. Hsieh (1996), who conducted a CMC survey of Hakka people throughout the world, concludes that CMC surveys cannot be considered representative of the whole Hakka population because of sample selection problems resulting from difficulties in gaining access to the internet.⁽⁴⁾ *Byte*, a magazine targeting computer professionals, concludes that CMC surveys are unreliable because the survey medium allows the sample population to select itself (*Byte* 1996). Morris and Ogan (1996) discuss the issue of credibility in internet communication, and the difficulty in establishing veracity in CMC communication.

However, systematic discourse analysis as used here avoids sampling errors and credibility issues by focusing on the discourse itself. First, the units of quantitative analysis in this study are not the email senders themselves, but their messages. Questions of sample representation are limited to the reliability of randomly saving email messages. To help correct for possible systematic errors in saving messages, all HGN email messages were saved for the last three months of this study. Second, the credibility issue is avoided by this study's focus on the nature of the content in HGN messages, and not on their veracity. Email messages, whether they are true or not, are still effective as statements of opinion.

Web sites studied in this project were included if they contained Hakka material and were linked to the HGN, whether directly through announcement in HGN messages or indirectly through other webpages announced in HGN messages. This part of the research project will be analyzed qualitatively, because of methodological issues that will be addressed later and because of the rapid change in the number and content of Hakka-related webpages.

Another method that could further illuminate the social processes taking place in the HGN and the influences of CMC on Hakka diasporic identity would be to conduct network analysis (see J. Johnson 1994; Bernard and Killworth 1976; Mitchell 1971). The use of network analysis could reveal more about HGN discourse by focusing on the senders of the messages themselves. Moreover, ethnographic interviews conducted with HGN members could better situate HGN in the lives of HGN members. However, as an initial study of the HGN, systematic discourse analysis is adequate to illustrate the social processes taking place within the HGN.

The Hakka Global Network

The Hakka Global Network (HGN) is a "manually run Internet mailing list" (Chin 1996) for subscribers who are interested in Hakka culture. It was started in 1995 by Jonathan Teoh Eng, and is still maintained by him. HGN provides a forum for a lively, transnational discourse on Hakka culture and Hakka social experiences. It also announces information on Hakka cultural events in countries throughout the world, the activities of Hakka organizations, and listings of where to obtain Hakka-related material. Additionally, HGN serves as a vital link to other Hakka internet resources including numerous webpages (to be discussed later). In March of 1996, there were 164 subscribers from over 16 countries (see Table 2), and the membership list continues to grow. This number becomes even larger when combined with messages exchanged as a result of web-site visits.⁽⁵⁾

The purposes of the HGN are clearly elucidated in a draft charter to form a newsgroup (an unmoderated CMC discussion group) circulated to HGN members (from Lee "Hakka Chinese Homepage," <http://www.asiawind.com/pub/hakka/charter.htm>):

This internet network is thus proposed to serve the following purposes:

- *To provide a vehicle for reaching Hakkas around the world and establish a virtual community.*

- *To discuss Hakka issues of interest to Hakkas as well as non-Hakkas.*
- *To collect and disseminate news on Hakka cultural development.*
- *To promote the understanding between Hakkas and non-Hakkas.*

Topics that are relevant to Hakkas include but not limited to:

- *Hakka origin & history*
- *Hakka migration path*
- *Hakka various clan/family genealogies*
- *Hakka culture in general: language, literature, music, art, food, clothing*
- *Hakka culture in special localities*
- *Hakka area travel information*
- *Hakka contemporary issues in the world and local communities*

This USENET newsgroup is not concerned with nationalistic issues such as the politics of any particular modern country or political entity or between entities. Please use a entity-specific newsgroup, such as soc.culture.china, soc.culture.hongkong, soc.culture.taiwan, soc.culture.malaysia, etc.

The overall aim of the HGN is the preservation of Hakka culture, as Hakka are being scattered throughout the world. HGN members are critical of the homogenizing influences of global forces (especially communications technology), yet paradoxically are using the global reach of the internet to promote cultural identity.

Who are the members of the HGN? Unsurprisingly, the majority of HGN members appear to be a highly-educated, well-traveled elite group scattered throughout the world (see also Rai 1995). According to a CMC survey conducted by Hsieh (an HGN member and Hakka person living in Canada) and my own observations, most of the HGN members appear to be young male professionals (Hsieh 1996), although some women and non-professionals also participate. Some members are highly knowledgeable about Hakka history and tradition, and are actively involved in various Hakka organizations. As will be discussed below, these members tend to be more active participants in the HGN and are also involved in the creation or maintenance of other Hakka-related internet resources. Other members have less experience with Hakka culture and have joined HGN to find out more about Hakka culture.

Hakka Global Network Discourse

The dialogue taking place over the HGN as represented in the sample largely fits the topical interests listed in the charter presented above. 90% of the messages discuss at least one of the following topics:

- Announcement or discussion of Hakka people or cultural items in non-CMC media (i.e., television, radio, books, magazines)
- Discussion about the Hakka language
- Announcement or discussion of Hakka resources on the internet
- Personal message to another HGN member
- Report or discussion of the current social situation of Hakka people
- Announcement or discussion of Hakka-based associations
- Discussion of Hakka history
- Discussion of Hakka origins
- Report or organization of travel by HGN member(s)
- Discussion of Hakka customs
- Personal note, story, or poem

- Announcement or request for research material

The primary language of HGN messages was English, but there was also discussion and use of a Hakka romanization system (4% of messages used a Hakka romanization system based on a system agreed upon by HGN members). Messages were either initial contributions (requests or announcements) or responses to other messages (as mentioned earlier, threads were not traced).

Below is listed a typical initial request:

From: XXXX@XXX.com Wed Mar 6 10:53:30 1996
Subject: Ancestral Village
Status: RO

Dear fellow hakkas,

My grandad immigrated to North Borneo (malaysia) and worked in a rubber plantation in the 1920s. He unfortunately died when my father was little. As far as he could now remember, my granddad came from a place called 'Nam Liang Lung Kiang Vui', pronounced in hakka (Dragon Wells Village of South Liang??). Does anybody know where this place is?

XXXX@XXX.com

Initial requests were often more personal than initial announcements, and usually were responded to by one or more members in public over HGN. Requests might also be answered privately (sent directly to the requesting party by email), but these responses were not included in the sample frame because they were not part of the “public” HGN discourse. Requests included appeals for more information (both personal and research-related) about a particular Hakka topic, searches for Hakka sites to visit (i.e., tourist sites, Hakka organizations’ addresses, Hakka restaurants), and requests to meet with other HGN members.

In contrast, initial announcements were more lengthy, and included more information than initial requests. Below is a typical initial announcement:

From: XXXX@XXXX.XXXX.edu.au Sun Apr 14 18:25:22 1996
Subject: Chinese surnames and Hakka genealogy

Dear Fellow Members of the Hakka Global Network

I am pleased to inform you I have created a webpage of my Surname (Deng4) and genealogy.

My grandfather made a copy of the family genealogy in 1937 from his ancestral Hakka village in Huizhou (Fui Chew) in Guangdong province. My father preserved record and re-established links with his father's village. I have been computerising it since 1992, and now the internet, with the world wide web and the HGN has made it possible to publish it for anybody interested in genealogical research and Chinese history. Also, I would be very interested to hear from anyone with the same surname who may have other copies of the genealogy.

The genealogical record goes back 115 generations to the origins of the surname Deng4 in the Shang dynasty. Wherever possible, I have tried to link the record with the Chinese historical period. My knowledge of Chinese history is poor, so I would be grateful for any suggestions for improvement HGN members may have. I am grateful to XXXX (another HGN member, my comments) who translated the initial part of the record for me from classical Chinese to English.

He has now used the information from my genealogy for his collection of stories on the origins of Chinese surnames.

I am aware of Clyde Kiang's controversial thesis of the origins of the Hakkas as a sinicized non-Han people of Xiongnu or "Hun" lineage. According to his theory, Hakka genealogical records are only reliable from the Han dynasty (200 AD), and anything before that is "fabrication" as our Hakka ancestors adopted Chinese surnames and genealogies to appear Chinese (please correct me if I am wrong, Clyde). I don't have a problem with that, and I hope this post does not stir up the acrimony present in earlier posts about Hakka origins. I think genealogical records remain interesting pieces of information about Chinese culture and history, whatever their origin.

The URL for my genealogy webpage is:

<http://www.geocities.com/tokyo/3998/>

I hope those of you with webpages of Hakka interest will make a link to my webpage. If all the images (i.e. pictures of Chinese characters) don't load on first attempt, keep hitting the reload button.

Yours sincerely

XXXX

Initial announcements included postings of Hakka-related activities, Hakka internet resources, and availability of Hakka books, videotapes, and magazines. News items on Hakka people throughout the world were often translated into English and posted to HGN. They provided HGN members access to a large number of transnational resources and illustrated Hakka activism throughout the world. HGN members often responded publicly in strong support of the activity posted in initial announcements, and would ask for more follow-up information. Initial announcements, as suggested above, would also provoke intense discussion of issues surrounding Hakka identity, especially those concerning the origin (Han or non-Han) of the Hakka and the Hakka language.

The majority of HGN messages (64%) were responses to initial requests or announcements. A typical response looks like this:⁽⁶⁾

From: XXXX@XXXX.XXXX.com.au Thu May 2 19:27:12 1996

Subject: (fwd) Re: Even Kung FuZi spoke Hakka

XXXX XXXX <XXXX@XXXX.XXXX-X.ac.jp> wrote:

>XXXX@XXXX.edu wrote

>>

>> | My mom is Hakka.

>> |

>> | Long Live Hakka Culture!!

>>

>What is this? I've heard sometimes of this word. Does it define an

>ethnic group, or a group of a language?

>

>XXXX

Both. And actually, Hakka people might be somewhat related to the Japanese or Korean (see the book "Hakka search for a homeland"), some DNA study has been done.

Hakka belief tends to describe themselves as original Han northerners who migrated south. But in modern days this explanation really cannot stand the proof of more scrutinous analysis. That some of their ancestors came from the North is basically accepted, but that they were Han is highly questionable. The book "Hakka search for a homeland" postulates that Hakka originally were descendants of Altaic people, that is, of the not-so-loved historical Xiong-Nu people. That's why the mystery about Hakkas: their ancestors had to hide their background, and at times even fake their genealogy books.

That aside, Hakka people have greatly merged with the She2 (same pronunciation as "snake") tribes, an Austro-Taic people of the historical Chinese South. Two factors contributed to today's Hakka language: 1) the eagerness of the Altaic component of getting rid of their non-sinitic past 2) the likely stronger maternal component of the She2 tribe into present day's Hakka population. As a result, Hakka language's phonology is 100% native to the Southern languages, in fact, nearly identical to the Hoklo language's phonology, except for the stronger preference of Hakka in using more aspirated consonants (p,t,k) over non-aspirated consonants (b,d,g). Hakka also shares peculiar correlation with Hoklo (see Jerry Norman's book: "Chinese"), in vocabulary, which further indicates that the two groups have had a strong overlap in the pre-sinified component of the population.

Like today's Machurians, who struggle for proving their "Chineseness", Hakka scholars in the last century tried their best to paint a picture of Hakka being pure-blooded Han people. In lights of today's further research into the subject, the pure-blooded Han theory starts to crumble. Hakka people have a long way to go towards admitting and starting to appreciate the non-sinitic heritage of their ancestors, both Southern and Northern.

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Responses to initial message in turn drew out more exchanges between HGN. These discussions could go through 4 or 5 generations of responses before fading away from the message traffic. Certain topics, especially the origins of the Hakka and Taiwanese Hakka political activity, generated heated debate between HGN members. Others, such as discussions over Hakka language or the future of Hakka identity, were not as contested, but still attracted many responses. Responses, especially in more heated debate, relied on different sources of credibility. The majority of responses pointed to academic sources of information — a bibliography of Hakka literature was circulated to HGN members periodically, and posted on associated webpages. Some responses were based on media reports, including newspaper, television, and radio stories. Others demonstrated credibility through personal experience/first-hand knowledge, especially of regional circumstances (i.e., Hakka social conditions in Calcutta).

The activism of a core group of people, in both initiating and responding to messages, maintains the level of HGN discourse. In the HGN sample used in this project, there were 79 different HGN members (out of 164 total members, or 48%) who sent 319 messages. Of these 319 messages, the majority (almost 70%) of messages were sent by 11 people (or 14% of the members active during the sample (see Table 4). This over-representation due to individual activism on the HGN results in the disproportionate representation of HGN-member countries (see Table 5, and compare with Table 2). However, caution must be taken not to over-analyze the representation by location, since the current location of the HGN member does not take into account the individual's background. For example, many HGN members currently located in the U.S. have moved there from Taiwan. The breakdown by regions discussed can be found on Table 6.

Activism by HGN members is centered on the maintenance of traditional Hakka markers of identity and the promotion of Hakka identity throughout the world in the face of globalism and

modernity. In discussing the Hakka social and political mobilization in Taiwan, one member writes:

If we accept that modernity has arrived in Taiwan . . . , then it is inevitable that traditional communities, including Hakka ones, will be weakened, possibly to the point of dissolution. . . . Previously, all sorts of ethnic groups could contain their ethnicity within the bounds of traditional, small communities --well, not anymore.

HGN members consistently promote organizations and activities that preserve elements of Hakka culture, especially the public use of the Hakka language and traditional Hakka customs (such as theatre and music) — the cultural elements that Handler (1988) refers to as the *patrimoine* (the objectified heritage of an ethnic group).

Like the Quebecois folklorists in Handler's study, HGN members are not preserving mythical, pristine Hakka folkways, but are actively inventing new Hakka traditions, in a manner intelligible to the people of today. The discussion surrounding a theatre group's revival of "tai-hi" (described by an HGN member as a Hakka version of Peking Opera) pointedly demonstrates this point. While "tai hi" is being promoted as a traditional marker of Hakka identity, it is a relatively recent invention according to one HGN member. Tai-hi is explained in a message to HGN members as being developed in Taiwan about one hundred years ago (and is not thought to be brought over by Hakka immigrants from Guangdong), and was popular in temple festivals and a regular feature of theatre in the 1940's - 1960's.

Another example of this "invented tradition" is in the use of a romanized version of Hakka in various email messages as an alternative to English and to Chinese characters. The romanization system, compiled by Jonathan Teoh, is based on a system used in a Hakka vernacular Bible used by the Bible Society in Taiwan (see Appendix 2). Although HGN members report as many as 10 different systems of Hakka romanization, the Bible system seems to be the one that HGN members agreed to use in sending messages to each other. According to another HGN member, it is also the system used by the Taiwanese government-published Hakka textbook for children. The discussion of the romanization system also provoked an extensive discussion of regional differences in vernacular Hakka. The desire of HGN members to use a Hakka romanization system is linked with the goal of keeping the Hakka language alive, and is linked with HGN members' activism in promoting the use of Hakka (instead of Mandarin or any other language/dialect) during Hakka organizational meetings. However, the dominant language of HGN communication continues to be English.

HGN activity is not just confined to the internet, but spills over into the "real world." As mentioned earlier, the most discussed topic (18%) involved a discussion of Hakka resources outside the internet including Hakka-based radio or television shows, newspaper stories, music, or books. These announcements, although usually available to regional audiences (i.e., Taiwan or Singapore television viewers, California radio listeners) were of great interest to members outside the region, and stimulated many exchanges. The announcement of Hakka organizations and various Hakka-based activity to HGN members further illustrates how the global reach of CMC is connected to social events in different locations. For example, an HGN member made an initial request for information about how to join a US-based Taiwanese Hakka organization. Another active HGN member responded, describing the US organization (headquartered in Dallas) and its 12 local chapters scattered throughout the country. He also discussed the various conventions and other activities that they have held in the past couple of years. Many Hakka associations located throughout the world, such as the 3d International Hakkaology Conference and the 13th World Hakka Grand Gathering in Singapore, became "local" activities for HGN members as news, plans, and other information was exchanged between members. In fact, the 3d International Hakkaology Conference in turn stimulated much discussion over HGN after it was held.

The localization of the HGN becomes more transparent in face-to-face meetings and shared travel organized through HGN. Many HGN members reported meeting other members in various locales throughout the world like Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States, and in China. Some members, when planning a trip somewhere, would ask if any HGN members lived there or could recommend any good places to visit (or to eat — one series of messages concerned different Hakka restaurants around the world). The personal encounters, as reported by HGN members, reinforces social ties established through CMC. This is congruent with the conclusion of Parks and Floyd (1996) that CMC social relations are socially meaningful, and must be included in contemporary social analyses.

Other Hakka Internet Resources

The systematic discourse analysis used in this study has focused on the *communication between people* (many-to-many, in the typology of Morris and Ogan, see above note 1) through CMC. As a result, this project has largely neglected the analysis of webpages, which can be considered an individual's publication to others who seek out such information. The proper methodology for examining webpages would be similar to the textual analysis used by anthropologists and other cultural analysts, and not the categorization used in this study. However, to understand the full impact of CMC on Hakka identity, this paper must situate HGN within its larger internet context, especially Hakka webpages associated with HGN.

— Webpages are consulted by internet users to find information about a subject (i.e., Hakka Culture), and are usually linked (connected through hypertext) with other webpages. Webpages contain an array of texts that users can browse through in any order. In addition to text, most webpages also publish photographs, pictures, sounds (i.e., music), and other types of multimedia. For many CMC users, webpages are the first introduction of a particular subject, and can therefore strongly influence the opinions of CMC users (but see the discussion of “credibility” in Morris and Ogan 1996). Many HGN members have first discovered its existence while browsing through a webpage. HGN announcements of new Hakka material on the internet repeatedly refer to a number of Hakka webpages (see Table 7).

On the various HGN-related Hakka webpages, there is a vast assortment of Hakka material. Bibliographies and locations of Hakka associations worldwide tell web browsers how to find out more about Hakka culture or how to get involved in the promotion and preservation of Hakka traditions. Genealogies have also been published on various webpages, as have other Hakka cultural material — including many songs and pictures. There are maps of Hakka locations worldwide, and various articles of famous Hakka people and Hakka history. These materials are often connected with the discussions taking place over the HGN. For example, the HGN discussions of the origins of the Hakka have stimulated explanations of Hakka origins on different webpages. These, in turn, have fed back into the HGN discussion, resulting in many lively and informative exchanges.

The Hakka Global Network as a “Local Transnational Hakka Community”

In order to examine the impact of HGN on the diasporic Hakka identity, this study has asserted that HGN should be treated as a “local transnational Hakka community.” The first question that must be answered, then, is whether or not HGN is a community. As this paper has described in examining HGN discourse, exchanges between members are sustained, even expanding to more lengthy positions as seen in related Hakka webpages. Most messages were responses to initial messages and often belonged to very complex threads. Members make constant reference to previous comments or announcements. Moreover, HGN-related Hakka webpages often refer back to HGN and to other Hakka webpages through links. HGN members also meet

outside cyberspace, further reinforcing ties between HGN members. Furthermore, HGN recognizes itself as a “virtual community” that connects Hakka scattered around the world. Although a very new organization, HGN has constantly demonstrated the characteristics of a “neighborhood” as described by Appadurai. Although its future stability remains to be seen, the continued high volume of message traffic within HGN suggests that HGN, in one form or another, will continue to be a presence in cyberspace.

The second question that must be answered is what makes the HGN a Hakka community. The underlying purpose of HGN is the preservation and promotion of Hakka culture; the most discussed category in HGN discourse was the announcement or discussion of Hakka-related items in non-CMC media. The overwhelming adherence by HGN members to the parameters of discussion listed in the charter above depicts HGN members’ interest in maintaining a sense of Hakka identity. Moreover, HGN discourse shapes non-CMC Hakka activities, because HGN members, especially activists, are deeply involved in non-CMC organizations. HGN and the related websites serve as an additional medium in organizing and publicizing the activities of Hakka organizations. CMC also serves to link together disparate groups interested in Hakka culture. Hakka bibliographies and resources were constantly included in HGN messages, making the non-academic Hakka community aware of academic studies. Conversely, Hakka researchers (including myself) had access to a wealth of information through HGN and related websites. HGN members even provided detailed critiques of recently-published academic studies, and publicized academic conferences (including the 3d International Hakkaology Conference).

The third issue that is raised in this analysis of HGN is its transnational nature. The greatest strength of CMC lies in its ability to almost simultaneously connect different areas of the world. The composition of HGN members by nationality illustrates how HGN is a transnational Hakka community. It is transnational in the sense that messages are constantly crossing national borders. In the example of a response type message, for example, an initial message written in the United States was responded to with a query from Japan, and in turn was answered by another HGN member in Australia. Moreover, the transnational exchange of information (i.e., a news story about a murder of a Hakka woman who immigrated to Canada from Calcutta) brings together different localities, creating both an awareness of the diasporic Hakka identity and a sense of locality to HGN.

The fourth and most difficult issue to resolve is the local-ness of the HGN community. This issue brings to the forefront how CMC and other global processes challenge traditional definitions of locality. What is local about the internet? This is where Appadurai’s perspective on understanding social life today becomes crucial. Strictly speaking, there is nothing local about the internet — by definition, the internet is an international network, a global phenomenon that links together different localities. However, the production of locality as described by Appadurai is readily apparent in HGN discourse. The use of the first-person in HGN messages, the personal nature of initial requests and responses, the setting up of non-CMC encounters between HGN members, the organizing of travel groups to Hakka areas, the publication of genealogies, and most of all the direct response to HGN messages by HGN members (usually very specific in its reference) — all of these underscore the striving of the HGN community to establish “neighborhoods” as described by Appadurai. HGN and related websites are a small fraction of the message traffic taking place in the internet, and are probably a fraction of the total email messages received by HGN members. However, HGN members recognize each other by name, through the exchanges taking place in HGN discussions. In other words, locality as an objective thing is not something that HGN members can claim for their community, and is increasingly becoming a difficult thing for non-virtual communities to define. However, the striving for locality by the HGN community is what makes it local for HGN members.

Conclusion

Through the use of systematic discourse analysis of HGN messages, this study has attempted to illustrate the importance of studying the links between the local and the global in understanding social life today in the 1990s. In his keynote speech given at the 1st International Conference on Hakkaology in Hong Kong, Wang Gung-wu proposes that one illuminating way for cultural and ethnic studies to understand the present situation is the “study of identity maintenance among the Hakka” (Wang 1994: xxxiv). He further suggests that the Hakka have long been strategizing how to maintain a sense of Hakka identity, as evidenced in the history of premodern China. From my analysis of HGN discourse, I suggest that the HGN is one such strategy that is being used by Hakka activists in shaping a diasporic Hakka identity. The HGN is a community literally embedded in a transnational network, with its own diasporic cultural forms (Clifford 1994) that are used by activists to promote Hakka identity.

CMC offers Hakka activists a venue through which to connect with other activists and interested parties that are spatially separated. By definition, it is transnational — the internet itself is a borderland, “a site of regulated and subversive crossing” (Clifford 1994:303). What makes the HGN a part of diaspora culture is the constant discussion, search, and critique of Hakka identity. Different perspectives on Hakka identity are constantly exchanged within the HGN, this local transnational Hakka community. HGN discourse on Hakka identity enters the mainstream of Hakka diaspora ethnicity through the multiple attachments of the HGN members themselves. With CMC, the diasporic social processes become further pronounced due to the rapidity of exchange and accessibility to large amounts of information by individual users scattered throughout the world.

Note:

(1) They construct a typology of the internet of four categories, based on the relationship between message producers and audiences: (a) one-to-one asynchronous communication (e.g., email); (b) many-to-many asynchronous communication (e.g., newsgroups, listservers); (c) synchronous communication (e.g. Internet Relay Chat rooms); and (d) asynchronous communication characterized by the receiver’s seeking out a site to access information (e.g. Web sites) (Morris and Ogan 1996:42-43). This paper will focus on type (b), where (b) is the HGN, a moderated, manually-run list.

(2) For example, I know of a Chinese-American woman who met her husband of Chinese ancestry initially through email correspondence, before actually meeting face-to-face, while I myself have met many other people who I first ran into through the internet.

(3) Names and email addresses in sample messages are marked out, but web addresses have been left in. Email messages are more informal dissemination of information than other public media such as newspapers or internet webpages. Nearly all messages are written in the first-person.

(4) Hsieh (1996) recognizes the strengths and limitations of internet research, and resolves statistical issues by treating her survey group as a population/case study, and not as a sample.

(5) This is one reason why the number of different senders in the sample taken from HGN messages exceeds the total membership list. Other reasons include the later date of the sample and the forwarding of queries made by non-members.

(6) Lines preceded with a “>” indicate the message to which this member is responding. Lines with a “>>” indicate an even earlier message to which the first message responded.

(7) The location of HGN membership was calculated by tabulating the country suffix on members' internet addresses (all com, edu, and net suffixes were calculated as US). This does not necessarily reflect the nationality of the subscriber, and many US addresses were used by non-US citizens currently living in the United States. From March 5, 1996 listing on S.L. Lee homepage (<http://www.asiawind.com/pub/hakka/>).

(8) Note that the total number of different topics discussed exceeds the message sample size. This is because many email messages discuss multiple topics simultaneously.

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Sample of HGN messages by date

Date	No. of messages
Nov 95	26
Dec 95	13
Jan 96	13
Feb 96	28
Mar 96	25
Apr 96	10
May 96	29
Jun 96	43
Jul 96	71
Aug 96	28
Sep 96	33
Total	319

Table 2: HGN Members, by Location⁽⁷⁾

Country	No. Of Subscribers	Percentage
United States	85	52%
Europe	18	11%
Singapore	15	9%
Malaysia	13	8%
Canada	10	6%
Hong Kong	6	4%
Australia	4	2%
New Zealand	4	2%
Taiwan	4	2%
Indonesia	2	1%
China	1	1%
Japan	1	1%
South Korea	1	1%
Total	164	100%

Table 3: HGN messages according to topics discussed⁽⁸⁾

Announcement or discussion of Hakka people or cultural items in non-CMC media (i.e., television, radio, books, magazines)	59	18%
Discussion about the Hakka language	55	17%
Announcement or discussion of Hakka resources on the internet	44	14%
Personal message to another HGN member	40	13%
Report or discussion of the current social situation of Hakka people	36	11%
Announcement or discussion of Hakka-based associations	31	10%
Discussion of Hakka history	25	8%
Discussion of Hakka origins	23	7%
Report or organization of travel by HGN member(s)	21	7%
Discussion of Hakka customs	20	6%
Personal note, story, or poem	18	6%
Announcement or request for research material	14	4%
Messages using Hakka romanization	13	4%
Announcement or discussion of Chinese software	12	4%
Discussion concerning Lee Deng Hui and/or the Taiwanese elections of 1995	12	4%
Discussion about Hakka Christianity	9	3%
Discussion about Hakka identity	9	3%
Discussion about diaspora identity	8	3%
Administrative announcement to HGN members	8	3%
Discussion of Hakka cuisine	8	3%
Discussion/Critique of academic studies about the Hakka	5	2%

Table 4: 11 Most Active HGN Members

HGN member location	No. of Messages
HGN member in Taiwan	50
HGN Member in the US (.com)	48
HGN Member in the US (.edu)	36
HGN Member in Hong Kong (.net)	24
HGN Member in Australia (.com.au)	20
HGN Member in the US and List Moderator (.edu)	13
HGN Member in Canada	9
HGN Member in the US (.edu)	6
HGN Member in the US (.com)	5
HGN Member in Taiwan	5
HGN Member in the US (.com)	5
Total for 11 Most Active HGN Members	221

Table 5: HGN Messages Divided by Country

Ranked by No. of Messages			Ranked by No. of Senders		
Country	No. of Messages	Percentage	Country	No. of Senders	Percentage
United States	162	51%	United States	37	47%
Taiwan	60	19%	Singapore	10	13%
Hong Kong	26	8%	Australia	5	6%
Australia	25	8%	Canada	5	6%
Canada	15	5%	Malaysia	5	6%
Singapore	15	5%	Taiwan	5	6%
Malaysia	5	2%	Hong Kong	3	4%
Indonesia	3	1%	United Kingdom	3	4%
United Kingdom	3	1%	Indonesia	2	3%
Netherlands	2	1%	Netherlands	2	3%
Zaire	2	1%	Japan	1	1%
Japan	1	0%	Zaire	1	1%
	319	100%		79	100%

Table 6: HGN messages according to area discussed

Areas Discussed in HGN Message	No. of Messages	Percentage
Taiwan	56	18%
United States	17	5%
Malaysia	16	5%
Meixian	14	4%
Singapore	12	4%
India	10	3%
Japan	7	2%
Canada	6	2%
Hong Kong	5	2%
Fujian	4	1%
Indonesia	5	2%
Miscellaneous areas (Tahiti, Mauritius, Brazil, Australia, England)	5	2%
Mainland Area (Jiangxi, Guangdong)	3	1%
Region Discussed in HGN Message		
Taiwan	56	18%
Outside Southeast Asia	45	14%
Southeast Asia	27	8%
Mainland	21	7%

Table 7: HGN-related Hakka Webpages

Homepage	URL (highlight of contents)
Hakka Chinese Away From Home Page: Francis Chin	http://www.panix.com/~franchin/Hakka/ (bibliography; HGN description; Hakka links; General Hakka Information)
Hakka Chinese Homepage S.L. Lee	http://www.asiawind.com/pub/hakka/ (listing of Hakka associations; Hakka houses; HGN description; Zhang genealogy; Hakka Forum; Hakka and Japanese Culture; Hakka Language; Hakka Migration History; Hakka Origins; Hakka and Xiongnu (origins); Hakka Women)
Ya-Ping : Hakka Chinese Page Ya-Ping Wong	http://www.grfn.org/%7Eypwong/Hakka/ (HGN description; Hakka links)
Changting Home Page Li Jianmin	http://www.u.arizona.edu/~jml/Changting/ (virtual tour of Changting County, Fujian; Hakka definition; Hakka world distribution,
Lim's Hakka page in Taiwan Lim KonLiong	http://wwwhome.fancy.com.tw/~limkl/limkl.html (Hakka songs)
The Federation of Hakka Association of Malaysia	http://www.jb-online.com/assoc/hakka/
Introduction to Deng Genealogy Francis THIEN Chung Kong	http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/3998/ (Deng genealogy)
Shirley Hsieh's Web Site Shirley Hsieh	http://www.io.org/~pcmarsh/hakka/shirley.htm (thesis; Hakka survey)
Hakka Highlander Homepage: Nam Low	http://www.hkstar.com/~nclow (have not visited)

Appendix 2: Hakka Romanization

Easy Hakka written/compiled by Jonathan Teoh teoh@cs.utk.edu

This romanized Hakka system is used by The Bible Society in the R.O.C. for its Hakka bible. There are several romanized Hakka writing systems and character-based systems. Feel free to use any system you want in posting articles; I opted for this system since this is the only system that I have. If you have any Hakka writing system, feel free to share with us.

Hakka language has 6 tones:

- 1 fon as in fon-hi(like)
 - chiang as in green
 - pa as in father
- 2 theu2 as in head
 - ngien2 as in year
 - pho2 as in grandmom
- 3 hi3 as in fon-hi
 - lo3 as in old
 - ho3 as in good
- 4 mien4 as in face
 - oi4 as in love, want
 - yen4 as in far
- 5 sut5 as in eat
 - thuk5 as in read
 - hok5 as in hok-sang(student)
- 6 chuk6 as in porridge
 - hak6 as in Hakka, ngin-hak(guest)
 - vuk6 as in vuk-ha(house)

TIME

- am4-pu1.....evening, night
- ngit4-su2-theu2.....day time
- thien1-kong1.....day time, morning
- thien1-kong1-ngit4..tomorrow
- mi1-ngit4.....everyday
- li2-ha2 or lia3-ha4.now
- kim1-ha2.....now
- ngien2.....year
- ngiet5.....month, yit4-ngiet5:January
- ngit4.....day
- theu2-pai3.....previously, last time
- yu1-yit4-pai3.....one time
- li1-pai4-liuk4.....Saturday
- sup5-ngi4-tiam3.....twelve o'clock

RELATIONSHIP

se4-moi4.....miss, young lady
hok5-sang1.....student
sin1-sang1.....teacher
lo3-kung1.....husband
pu1-ngiong2.....wife
kung1-pho2.....husband and wife, couple
fu4-ngin2-ka1.....married woman
lai4-e3.....son
moi4-e3.....daughter
pa1.....father
mak4.....mother
A-kung1.....grandfather
A-pho2.....grandmother
pak4.....uncle

PRONOUN

ngai2.....I, me
Ngi2.....you
ki2.....he/she
Thai4-ka1.....Everyone
Ngai2-teu1.....we
Ngi2-teu1.....you all
ke4.....that/there
ke4-teu1.....those
ke4-vi4.....that place
lia3/li3.....this/here
lia3-teu1.....these
li3-teu1.....these
lia3-vi4.....here
li3-vi1,li3-vi4.....here
nai4-vi4.....where
yu1-teu1.....some

NUMBER

yit1/yit4.....one
ngi4/liong3.....two
sam1.....three
si1/si4.....four
ng3.....five
liuk4.....six
chhit4.....seven
pat4.....eight
kiu3.....nine
sup5.....ten

pak4.....hundred
chhien1.....thousand
van1/van4.....ten thousand

ADJECTIVES AND VERBS

thang1.....hear
thang1-to1.....have heard
thang3-ko3.....have heard
khon4.....see
khon4-to1,khon4-ko3,khon4-tau3..have seen
oi4.....love, want
kong3.....say
sia3.....write
ngoi4-poi4.....outside
ti1-poi4.....inside
ha1-poi4.....Down
ngip5.....enter
loi2.....come
hiau3.....understand, know
voi1/voi4.....know, will, will do
siong3.....think
thiam2.....sweet
mai1.....buy
chim1.....kiss
song1-sim1.....sad
ngiong3-pan1.....how

BODY

ngi3-kung1.....ear
muk4-chu1.....eye

COLOR

vu1-set4.....black, dark color
vong2-set4.....yellow
fung2-set4.....red

Practice 1>>>

Ngi he ma-ngin ? Who are you ?
Ngi2 he4 ma3-ngin2
Ngai he Hak-ngin Iam Hakka
Ngai2 he4 Hak6 ngin2

Ke-ngit ki hi nai-vi ? That day where did he/she go ?
Ke4 ngit4 ki2 hi4 nai4-vi4 ?
Ke-ngit ki chon vuk-ha That day he/she went home
Ke4-ngit4 ki2 chon3 vuk6-ha1

Ngai-teu oi hi sin-sang ke vuk-ha We want to go to teacher's house
Ngai2 teu1 oi4 hi4 sin1 sang1 ke4 vuk6-ha1

Thai-ka ho! Ngai-teu fi-song fon-hi hok Hak-fa
Hi everyone! We are very glad to learn Hakka language
Thai4-ka1 ho3! Ngai2-teu1 fi1-song2 fon1-hi3 hok5 Hak6-fa1

That is all for today, when I construct more, I will add to this list.

VT4693, 10th month, 15th day

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