Reframing Identity Politics 1.0 to 2.0:

A Postpositivist Response to 21st Century Sinophobia

JoRIE Journal of Research for International Educators

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Vol 2 :1 2023

Abstract

Decried by both sides of the political spectrum, identity politics continues to be the source of tension across the world. To address the problem, this article investigates the impact of Sinophobia on diasporic Chinese-identified individuals in Vancouver and Sydney under the rise of China in the 21st century today. This article argues how its common mode of practice (Identity Politics 1.0) is grounded on a positivist notion of identity politics that fosters divisiveness and hostility. Drawing on Stuart Hall's work on diasporic identity, it analyzes how the politics of identity can be reconfigured to remain a tool for social justice as it was originally proposed in the Combahee River Collective Statement in 1977. In this multi-sited inquiry, data was collected through a combined method of interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, as well as sourcing data through various forms of digital archives. The purpose is to explore the identity formation process of individuals to examine how they negotiate their Chineseness within three levels of societal relations: interpersonal, municipal, and national. The findings unpack a postpositivist framework called Identity Politics 2.0 that re-conceptualizes identity where, as Tony Bennett suggests, its process can disrupt hegemonic formations so that new meanings of identity are generated to affirm one's humanity and where new political directions can emerge to support social justice and foster coalition across differences particularly under shared problems of an interconnected world.

Key words: identity politics, identity, diasporic, Chineseness, Sinophobia

Introduction

Given the societal tensions around the world today, the question guiding the 2021 Holberg Debate was: *"Does identity politics as it is currently manifesting itself offer a suitable avenue towards social justice, or has it become a recipe for cultural antagonism, political polarization, and new forms of injustice?".* It is not a new debate. Clifford (2000) points out the pitfalls of identity politics over two decades ago. These are well documented from events of the decade such as the "tragedy of former Yugoslavia" (p. 95) and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Identity continues to be a site for affirming one's humanity and for challenging oppression, as we see today from the Black Lives Matter movement in US to protest police brutality against Black people and the REDress Project in Canada to highlight the uninterrogated violence against Indigenous women. Yet, it also continues to be heavily critiqued from both ends of the political spectrum, where even those who practice it in their struggle against oppression are vilified. Should the politics of identity then, be ended, as Fukuyama (2018) argues?

This article is part of a bigger study where the guiding question begins with how such a tool for social justice in the 1960s ends up under attack, even as it continues to be used for weaponizing one's identity against injustice, both real and as imagined victimhood. Despite the recognition of how divisive and oppressive identity politics has been and could be, it persists across time and space, shaping relations between people in the society.

In arguing that identity politics should remain an important tool for social justice, this study looks into the way identity politics has been conceptualized and practiced in order to understand how its promise turned to peril, especially for marginalized members of the society. It posits that the dominant mode of practicing identity politics (called Identity Politics 1.0 in this study) is grounded on a positivist understanding and practice of identity politics where identity is conceived as an essentialized whole (Hall, 1987) and politics is analyzed from a single centre of an intendant or from the perspective of who wields it (Foucault, 1997/2003). This practice of identity politics draws from a taken-for-granted common-sense understanding of identity and politics that Ang (2001) describes as "particularist, exclusionary, and deterministic" (p. 150)

The purpose of this study is to explore another mode of identity politics by going beyond the assumption that identity politics is "a self-defined constituency acting in the interests (for the politics) of that definition" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 87) where its practice has "fractured coalitions and breeds distrust" (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006, p. 3). To do so, it has three major objectives. The first is to discuss the impact of Identity Politics 1.0 and how its positivist understanding undermined its promise. The second is to unpack how the identity formation process inform the importance of identity as a site for political work such as self-affirming humanization and for resisting injustice. Third, this article proposes and demonstrates how another mode of identity politics, called Identity Politics 2.0, can be understood, and perhaps practiced differently.

To do so, this study looks into the impact of historical and contemporary Sinophobia, because it highlights how a visible identity is easily reduced to a monolithic essentialized homogeneity such as Chineseness and becomes a repository for anxieties or hostilities whose roots are often multiple and intertwined. It reflects a mode of identity politics that has produced and justified tensions between individuals and communities, resulting in the withholding of dignity and justice even in supposed liberal democracies. The impact of which is seen in both policy initiatives and societal relations, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Americas (Hu-deHart, 2010), and the White Australia Policy in Australia (Tsolidis, 2018) from the 19th to the 20th century. The most recent incident is the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, when speculations were rife about Wuhan province in China being the origin of the deadly global virus, which was further exacerbated when then US President Trump referred to the source as the "Chinese virus". Described by Hansen (NCTE, May 8, 2021) as the "other pandemic" in 2020, the spate of anti-Asian violence that erupted in major cities across the world does not differentiate whether the victims were "Chinese" or not, as long as they look "Chinese".

To disrupt such essentialized understanding of identity, this study is grounded on Stuart Hall's work on identity and applies a postpositivist analysis to unpack fluid multiplicity and ambivalence of identity. Polkinghorne (1983) describes post positivism as "an attitude about knowledge characterized by the linguistic turn in science,.…the systems theory, …theory of agency in human action, … and the questioning of foundational truths" (p. 20-22). Thus, this analysis explores the political possibilities of identity as a tool for social justice where identity become a site for navigating inequitable power relations and for affirming, particularly, the humanity of those ascribed in essentialized ways such as Sinophobia. As a more nuanced approach to exploring the intertwining individual and collective aspects of the identity formation process, this study examines how the process responds to discourses on Chineseness and shapes relations for diasporic Chinese-identified individuals in Vancouver and Sydney. How have they responded and reconfigured their own Chineseness within the current context of China's 21st century ascendance as a global power?

In proposing Identity Politics 2.0, this study contributes to how individuals and communities might understand identity differences better and practice a politics 1) where relations are transformed to resist dehumanizing characterizations and practices as well as to struggle for social justice, and 2) where identity differences enhance, rather than diminish our ability to live "together-in-difference" (Ang, 2003).

Identity Politics and Chineseness 1.0

Lichterman (1999) defines "identity politics" broadly as a "widely accessible tag for social movements since the 1960s that seek public recognition or advocate rights for groups that identify by gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or religion" (p. 136). Many group-based recognition, representation, and access to opportunities show the promise of identity-based movements. These can be seen in the large-scale movements such as "second wave feminism, Black Civil Rights, gay and lesbian liberation and American Indian movements" (Heyes, 2017). While they have generated awareness of and a measure of success for many social movements, these struggles have also produced conflicting and contradictory impact. This common practice of identity-based politics tends to imply the production of individual and community identities as exclusive and fixed discursive entities, which critics on the Right and the Left have dismissed as detrimental to societal cohesion. The Right sees identity politics as divisive and as fomenting resentment (Fukuyama, 2018) while on the Left, self-confessed "liberal" Mark Lilla (August 25, 2017) declares, "the age of identity liberalism must be brought to an end" because "too many liberals and leftists, indulging in a politics of 'narcissism'". True. Many tensions remain between different groups such as black and white women, heterosexual and homosexual men, as well as Asians and Blacks.

Identity politics does present a paradox. Appiah (2006) points out that the recognition of an identity, whether self-or other-ascribed, erases the heterogeneity within groups and such identification itself becomes oppressive. The hegemonic production of an identity category reductively framed as a threat fosters widespread anxiety and frequently generates legislative and societal responses that often mask the injustice and the actual impact on those ascribed and affecting relations at multiple levels of the society. Historical examples of such wholesale production of identity are the Holocaust and a more recent one like the intense Islamophobia after 9/11. To complicate it further, oppressed groups also contribute to this essentialization and the "ideologies that imprison and define them" (Hall, Morley & Chen, 1996, p. 40) when they embrace their identity positions for self-affirmation and belonging.

Identity politics makes contradictory claims for unity even as it micro-manages differences and regulates inclusion. Since the 1960s, it enabled marginalized groups (as seen in Black Power Movements and Women's liberation) to attain a measure of representation where some progress has been made to alleviate the inequities. But Táíwò (in Tuhus-Dubrow, 2022), as well as other liberal critiques of identity politics pointed out that this mode of "cosmetic" representation leave "structural problems unaddressed". May and Sleeter (2010) argues that without interrogating the structures and relations of power, no transformation takes place; instead, the mechanisms for the reproduction of inequity remain, and may even be reinforced. Critical anti-racist, feminist, and postcolonial literature have revealed the ideological prisms through which essentialized ascriptions, whether by the self or by others, reproduce the structural relations grounded on hegemonic power relations (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Butler, 2004; Stoler, 2011). To reframe identity politics conceptually and empirically in this study, this literature undergirds the postpositivist lens used in this inquiry to disrupt the positivism of Identity Politics 1.0, as this dominant mode of practice is called in this study. A positivist perspective is based primarily on the scientific method, a theory of knowledge and cultural orientation characterized by belief in knowledge as valid, unified, atomistic, and rational and characteristic of positive progress (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

To explore its impact, this study focuses on how Chineseness has been construed through Identity Politics 1.0 across different time and space outside China. Variably ascribed from the 19th century to the 21st century as "inferior and dissolute race" (Mak, 2003, p. 94), "undesirable and unassimilable" (Cui, 2012, p. 126), "yellow peril" (Lee, 2007), "forever foreigner" (Wu, 2002), "model minority" (Lee, 1996), "millionaire migrant" (Ley, 2010), "cash cows" (Robertson, 2011), and "global entrepreneurs" (Collins, 2002), diasporic Chinese-identified individuals face these enduring and emerging stereotypes that short circuit the individual, historical and spatial contexts of how Chineseness was formed. Sinophobia functions through such stereotypes where identity categories are easily deployed in what Edelman (Troyna, 1994) calls the use of symbolic political and condensation symbols where they are easily appropriated by political discourses through the "manipulation of ambiguity" (p.79). This is how identity categories become mutably immutable and get caught in essentialized forms that produce "authoritarian chains of equivalence" (Mercer in Hall, 2017, p. 27) which is evident in everyday stereotyping and racial profiling.

Sinophobia is such an instance of the Chinese identity caught in a hegemony of discourses. Stuart Hall (2017) frames diasporic individuals as trapped in the "fateful triangle" of race, ethnicity, and nation. To apply this triangular perspective, the participants in this study are diasporic Chinese-identified individuals whose Chineseness is framed within the triangle of three particular hegemonic logics: racialization, ethnic chauvinism, and recently, of PRC ethnonationalism (Ngan & Chan, 2012; Wu, 2002). Racialized as "Chinese" and of the "yellow" race (Li, 2008; Wu, 1991) in settler nations such as Australia and Canada, they were subject to historical racist exclusion and social marginality (Anderson, 1990). Being ascribed or self-identified as "Chinese" also traps them in an ethnic chauvinism that denies them heterogeneity through a Sinocentric "passiveness and lineally (pre) determined by blood" (Ang, 2001, p. 49) and "ethnic oneness" (Chow, 1997, p. 24) with their own form of "exclusionary, authenticity discourses" (Wong, 2018, p. 6) among Chinese co-ethnics themselves. With the 21st century rise of China, the PRC builds on an ethnonationalism of "Chineseness=China-ness" as it exerts its "muscular" (Guo, 2004) extra territorial reach to diasporic Chinese-identified individuals. This is Xi Jinping's (2014) "Chinese Dream", which he mentions in his 2014 speech to include all Overseas Chinese in the "common dream of the sons and daughters of China" and the reminder to not "forget that in their body there is Chinese blood" (Suryadinata, 2017, p. 19-20). Thus construed, those ascribed or identified as Chinese become trapped within the discourses on race, ethnicity, and nation which shapes their interactions and relations to everyone around them, both "Chinese" and non-Chinese. Within this fateful triangle of Chineseness, their speeches and actions are always framed from monolithic positions of genotypical Chineseness, of being part of the Chinese ethnic culture, and of belonging to "China". How does one become Chinese yet not trapped within the "closed, unitary, homogeneous, essentialist, and ordinary" (Hall, 2017, p. 157) notion of identity?

Gates (in Hall, 2017) summarizes the paradox of identity politics with the phrase "Hall's dilemma", as the problematization of how the meaning of identities, particularly visible and embodied ones such as race, ethnicity, and gender, might be disentangled from the determinism of biological and superficial differences. To negotiate this paradox with a postpositivist lens, this study applies Hall's (2017) work on racism, where his notion of diasporic identity is not limited to diasporic individuals but is a conceptual move away from the term "diaspora as a discrete sociological object" (Rizvi, 2015, p. 271), often narrowly characterized by three basic criteria: dispersion, "homeland" orientation, and boundary maintenance (Brubaker, 2015, p 122-124). Instead of diasporic identity as an essentialized monolithic whole, it is a thinking of identity in terms of "fluidity, mobility, and hybridity (routes rather than roots)" (Rizvi, 2015, p. 271). Framed as a "sliding and ambivalent signifier" (Hall, 2017, p. 125), a diasporic conceptualization of identity unmoors it from a positivist fixity so they can be "disarticulated and rearticulated" to signify a multiplicity of discursive meanings through the "interplay between the representation of difference, the production of knowledge, and the inscription of power on the body" (p. 47). Building on Hall's work, Rizvi (2015) suggests how diasporic thinking takes into consideration "our shifting situatedness in the world…given our cultural practices … [and] unique positionality in relation to various networks, political institutions, and social relations" (p. 271) beyond national borders. Rizvi (2015) subscribe to Hall's notion of identity as "diasporic thinking" to fully grasp the profound richness of the identity formation process that is "shaped by complex configurations of social, political and economic formation, constantly contested and evolving" (p. 264), which is particularly useful in our real-life and virtually connected and increasingly mobile world.

In using diasporic identity as a heuristic tool, a postpositivist lens becomes possible for apprehending how Chineseness "floats" and becomes a polyvalent site where it can acquire new meanings and can mobilize individuals and groups into developing new political directions. As a "floating signifier" (Hall, 1997), identity generates new meanings and impact not because of the essence of a particular identity but because it is formed through meaning-making practices within particular discursive fields that are constituted by representation of differences, power relations, and the production of knowledge rather than on genetic or biological dispositions. Thus, its representation cannot be untethered from its historical, cultural, and political embeddedness. To challenge it as a fixed and coherent whole, Hall argued that identity must always be understood as in the process of becoming and constituted contingently, giving it a fluid multiplicity that is not an incoherent fragmentation. Instead, identities are thus points of temporary attachment to subject positions constructed by discursive practices (Hall, 1996). In a sense, the locus of control is decentralized and constituted by contingent external and individual factors. When Ang (2001) describes herself as "Chinese sometimes" (p. 36), she illustrates the fluid ambivalence of identity often ignored under Identity Politics 1.0. The participants in this study expressed their Chineseness in similar indeterminate ways, as described below.

Methodology

To conduct this study, primary data was gathered from in-depth one-on-one interviews. The participants chosen were composed of self-identified Chinese individuals in Sydney and Vancouver who responded to the invitation to join the research as well as through snowball referrals. There were 36 individuals evenly distributed between male and female, ages 20 to 80 who have settled in Sydney or Vancouver for at least five years.

Specifically, the narrative interview form examines complex phenomena by conceptualizing cultural/institutional and individual psychological perspectives. Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) posit that the theoretical complexity and the methodological diversity in narrative modes of inquiry are their strengths because they are "flexible and systematic even as they seek complexity" (p. 3) in enabling individuals to make sense of their lives within changing socio-historical context. Narrative inquiry relies on themes rather than discrete data in narrating interpreted lives, and it grasps at the thread of meanings rather than a definitive outcome. In doing so, it reflects the dialogic nature of identity negotiation.

In focusing on the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of Identity Politics 1.0 and how it frames Chineseness as a racialized ethnocultural identity above, this article is a conceptual summary of a bigger study that consists of both theoretical and empirical sections in developing a new framework, referred to as Identity Politics 2.0.

Findings

Chineseness 2.0: Negotiating the Paradox

Drawing from the interviews, this section unpacks the contradictions and the intersections of the identity negotiation process of diasporic Chineseness. On one hand, the supposed recognizability of visible Chineseness renders it easily inscribed by both "Chinese" and non-Chinese people. On the other hand, this visibility does not mean automatic inclusion into "Chineseness." Moreover, it does also not allow for easy withdrawal from Chineseness. As a "prison-house of identity", it functions as both "judge and warden" (Ang, 2001, p. 11). that is characteristic of Identity Politics 1.0. It animates taken-for-granted logics that arbitrate who is and is not "Chinese". It also mobilizes oppressive sets of practices based on this arbitration through exclusion or imposed inclusion. For many diasporic Chinese-identified individuals, Identity Politics 1.0 has impositions on their Chineseness and has complicated relations not just in encounters with non-Chinese but with other Chinese individuals as well. Thus, it is not surprising to note amongst the participants an ambivalence with regards to their Chineseness even as they self-identify as "Chinese". The interview narratives shed light on other ways of practicing identity politics when they reveal how the participants reframe diasporic 21st century Chineseness. They highlight how individuals reconstitute their Chineseness under the hegemony of racialization, ethnic chauvinism, and PRC ethnonationalism. In doing so, they provide insights into how Chineseness can be produced to serve as a groundwork for a political practice where identity is mobile and is mobilizing by animating the fluid multiplicity of identity. The next section discusses how thinking of Chineseness as an affective structure is one way to see identity as a generative site for transforming relationships and for challenging social injustice.

Identity as an affective structure and site for transforming relationships

Beyond an ethnic or cultural signifier, Wong (2018) frames Chineseness as a “morphing affective structure” (p. 6) to circumvent its “fixed, and often exclusionary, authenticity discourses” (p. 6). When emotions are mobilized by affect, the desire and meaning are not necessarily attached to the “centralizing notions of cultural authenticity and centripetal logics of ‘homeland’ discourse” (p. 7). Framed within interpersonal relations, the participants illustrate how Chineseness is shaped by how “kinships adhere to objects of affection and surface at historical junctures” to reorient the configurations of identity” (p. 7). Despite their self-identified “Chineseness”, the participants alternately defy and bolster a unified, monolithic notion of Chineseness. They illustrate that identity negotiation processes are non-linear, mobile, and fraught with tension and contradiction. They also show that Chineseness is indeed, empirically hybrid and belies the persistent “hierarchical centering and a linear rerouting back to the imagined ancestral home” (Ang, 2001, p. 44) which characterizes the brewing resurgence of Sinophobia in the today’s tensions today under various forms of ethnocentrism and ethnonationalism. Diasporic understanding of identity illuminates the complex and contradictory ways the participants can live this paradox “to exclude while including, to reject while accepting, and to struggle while negotiating” (Cantu and Hurtado in Anzaldua, 2012, p. 7) their Chineseness in their daily lives.

Table 1 summarizes the data from three of the participants in this study. Though contradictory, the valorization or disavowal of Chineseness illustrates emancipatory aspirations; it also reveals deeply personal ones beyond race, ethnicity, or nation. To those of Chinese descent, saying no is saying yes to a new way of being/doing Chineseness: it could be learning Cantonese or playing mah-jongg, as exemplified by some of the participants. It is not because these are “Chinese” practices. It is rather, as the participants share the impact of powerful moments in their lives, that these practices carry personal affinitive component. One example is Ellen, who recalled how she “lost” her ability to speak Cantonese when she was told “*English only*” by her teacher at six years old. In her thirties today, she is learning mah-jongg and Cantonese language. “*Becoming more Chinese*” eases her grief when her grandmother passed away because it makes her feel closer to the woman who raised her. There is also Barbara who identifies as both “*Asian*” and “*Chinese*”. She feels sad about her “deficient” Chineseness within her family when she is referred to as an “*empty bamboo*”, the term for Chinese children who have assimilated into the local white culture. Being “Chinese” is her way of asserting her belonging to her family. Being “*Chinese kind of Asian*” is her way to ally herself with other Asian people similarly subjected to the hegemonic logic of racialization in a predominantly white society. And then there is Olivia, whose Chineseness is a complicated dance of multiple pronouns. In referring to her new neighbors who recently migrated from the PRC, she describes them as “those Chinese”. Yet she asserts that she has “*never felt not Chinese*” particularly among the Filipino friends she had growing up in the Philippines. She refers to “*my Chineseness*” that includes Filipino-ness when she used “we” to express her rejection of the PRC as she defends the Philippines in the South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines. She asserts her values for democratic practices by adding that, “*I’m proud of Chinese civilization, but not PRC, it’s a bully”* as she rejects the tyrannical ideology of China today.

Table 1

Participant perceptions of their Chinese identity

Participants (names have been changed to preserve anonymity)		**affective impact**	**Impact of Identity Politics 1.0**	**Identity Politics 2.0**
Ellen – Female, age 38, born and grew up in Vancouver.	“*English only*”	grief, shame	loss of language and intimate relationship as condition for inclusion	“*Becoming more Chinese*” – recover loss through language and cultural practices of grandmother by choice
Barbara – Female, age 24, born in Hongkong and moved to Canada when she was one	“*empty bamboo*”	alienation, shame	Alienation from own family based on cultural adaptation/assimilation	*both* “*Asian*” and “*Chinese*” and “*Chinese kind of Asian*”- broaden relations through multiplicity and fluidity of Chineseness
Olivia- Female, age 66, born in the Philippines and migrated to Australia in her 30s	“*never felt not Chinese*” “*always outsider because of Chineseness*”	pride, anger	Exclusion and imposed inclusion – Too Chinese to be Filipino and presumption of pro-PRC	“*my Chineseness*” includes “we” (Filipinos), *“proud of Chinese civilization, but not PRC”* – specificity of Chineseness and disrupts the Chineseness = China-ness equivalence

These moments shared by Ellen, Barbara, and Olivia reveal powerful affective engagements that are quite particular and personal, thus, making it difficult to reductively characterize Chineseness in terms of places as nation-bound, in terms of people as citizenship-bound or ancestry-bound, or through the temporal terms of their history of migration. These affective entanglements disrupt the assumptions of ethnic chauvinism when one can be deemed not “Chinese enough” like Barbara. Beyond the political articulation or disarticulation of their Chinese identities, it is important to note the poetic aspect to their claim when the relationship to be transformed is of affective interest rather than of an ethical struggle against inequity.

Citing Susan Friedman's work, Ty (2010) points to relationality as a point of reference for one's subjectivity. Although relationalities "construct a multiplicity of fluid identities defined and acting situationally" (Friedman in Ty, 2010, p.17), the participants show that their Chineseness is not defined by "nation, culture, ethnicity …sexuality, gender, class, religion, education, health and age" (p. 130). The intimate aspects of the identity negotiation process are mediated by the affective impact of interpersonal encounters. Beyond transforming unequal power relations, Chineseness is a site of transforming affective entanglements in people's lives, that are not just about race, ethnicity, or nation, but more universal poetic aspirations such as kinship, belonging, and longing.

Conclusion

Figure 1

Impact of Identity Politics 1.0 and Identity Politics 2.0

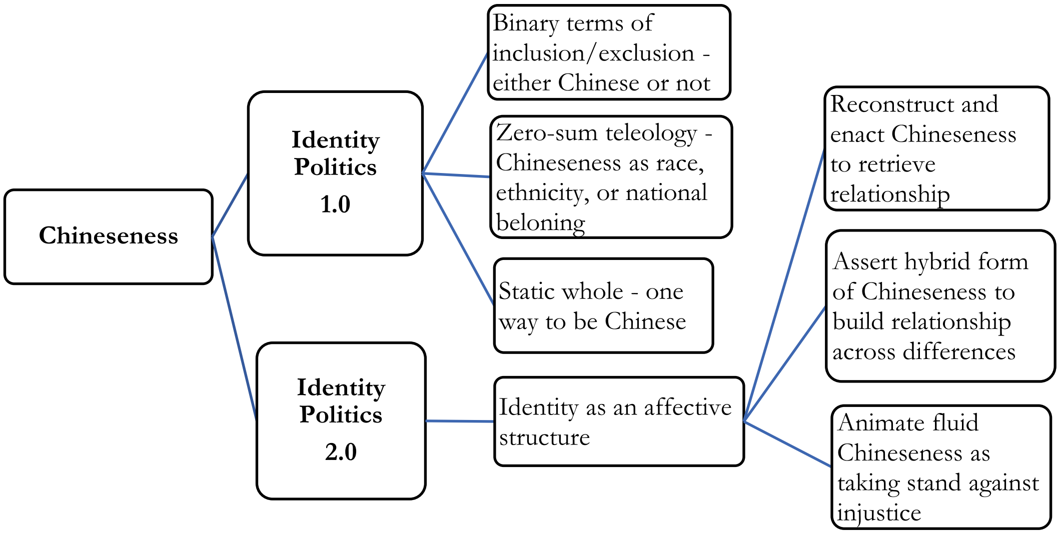
Chineseness
Identity Politics 1.0
Binary terms of inclusion/exclusion - either Chinese or not
Zero-sum teleology - Chineseness as race, ethnicity, or national beloning
Static whole - one way to be Chinese
Identity Politics 2.0
Identity as an affective structure
Reconstruct and enact Chineseness to retrieve relationship
Assert hybrid form of Chineseness to build relationship across differences
Animate fluid Chineseness as taking stand against injustice

Figure 1 above is a model characterizing the impact of Identity Politics 1.0 and Identity Politics 2.0. In developing an alternative framework from this partial finding, this article offers three propositions where identity generates other forms of political practices: first, identity is an affective structure and a site for transforming interpersonal relations; Second, shared experiences become a site for coalition across identity differences; and lastly, identity entails participative action and is a site for cultural production in a democratic society. These are possible only when we understand identity politics is both a process and a practice that reveals how individuals go beyond the hegemonic logics of Chineseness for individuals to exercise their agencies and to transform relations. A nuanced analysis distills how the participants reconfigure and animate their Chineseness and provide a deeper understanding of identity formation process transforms relations not just with alternative political practice, but also beyond politics.

This study reveals specific moments in the participants' lives that takes into consideration their aspirations such as kinship/intimacy, community, and democratic values, which are not exclusively linked to Chineseness, yet constitute their Chineseness. These practices reflect how affective engagements shape their actions and relations when defining themselves as "Chinese" or "not Chinese", a definition that also connects or disconnect them to others who might or might not be "Chinese". As the participants weave through their non-linear experiences of "becoming/doing" and/or "unbecoming/undoing" their Chineseness, the process, paradox and ambiguity involved in identity negotiation become apparent. More importantly, they insert themselves as subjects where they are able to reconfigure their relations to others. Their actions also highlight how identity does not foreclose politics (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993) where ethics (such as desire for justice and protection) are substituted by interests (such as desire for belonging and dignity). Instead, this study shows that Chineseness is not only forged at the nexus of ethics and interests but is also chiseled at the micro dynamic to macrodynamic level of relations, both personal and political.

If Identity Politics 1.0 hinges on the bounded and objectified notion of identity to shape social relations, Identity Politics 2.0 is where "new" subjects emerge to transform relations where "new" refers to the forms of subject that were not in the existing set of relations. Rancière (1999, p 36) posits that subjects are not created ex nihilo, but rather, emerge from particular ways of political practice aimed at transforming relations. In using the relational lens to analyze the process of subject formation, this article focuses on the matrix of entangled political, economic, and social relations as the condition that mobilizes political subjectification. Thus, it teases out the practices of Identity Politics 2.0 within a tableau of relations where the impact of Identity Politics 1.0 reigns. By taking the concept and practice of identity politics beyond current theoretical debates, this article demonstrates how discursive Chineseness meets the materiality of lived Chineseness and how essentialized Chineseness meets the richness of its subjective pluralities. In reframing of identity politics, Identity Politics 2.0 challenges the binary polarity, the zero-sum teleology, and the static monolithic lens of Identity Politics 1.0. Thus, this study supports the argument that identity politics remains an important tool for social justice because it is a site for affirming oneself through affective engagements and to respond to hegemonic ascriptions and overtures, whether imposed by kin, by institution, or by an illiberal state.

Identity politics is indeed, a "slippery term" (Lichterman, 1999, p. 136); therein also lies its possibilities. In using the web-based progression of 1.0 to 2.0, this study acknowledges the limitations and the prospect of other ways of the practice even as it supports its continuous reconceptualization.

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