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Karen T. Sy de Jesus

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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

Lichterhan (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 Anzaldúa, 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
<i>Ellen</i> – Female, age 38, born and grew up in Vancouver.	<i>“English only”</i>	grief, shame	loss of language and intimate relationship as condition for inclusion	<i>“Becoming more Chinese”</i> – recover loss through language and cultural practices of grandmother by choice
<i>Barbara</i> – Female, age 24, born in Hongkong and moved to Canada when she was one	<i>“empty bamboo”</i>	alienation, shame	Alienation from own family based on cultural adaptation/assimilation	<i>both “Asian” and “Chinese” and “Chinese kind of Asian”</i> - broaden relations through multiplicity and fluidity of Chineseness
<i>Olivia</i> - Female, age 66, born in the Philippines and migrated to Australia in her 30s	<i>“never felt not Chinese” “always outsider because of Chineseness”</i>	pride, anger	Exclusion and imposed inclusion – Too Chinese to be Filipino and presumption of pro-PRC	<i>“my Chineseness”</i> includes “we” (Filipinos), <i>“proud of Chinese civilization, but not PRC”</i> – 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

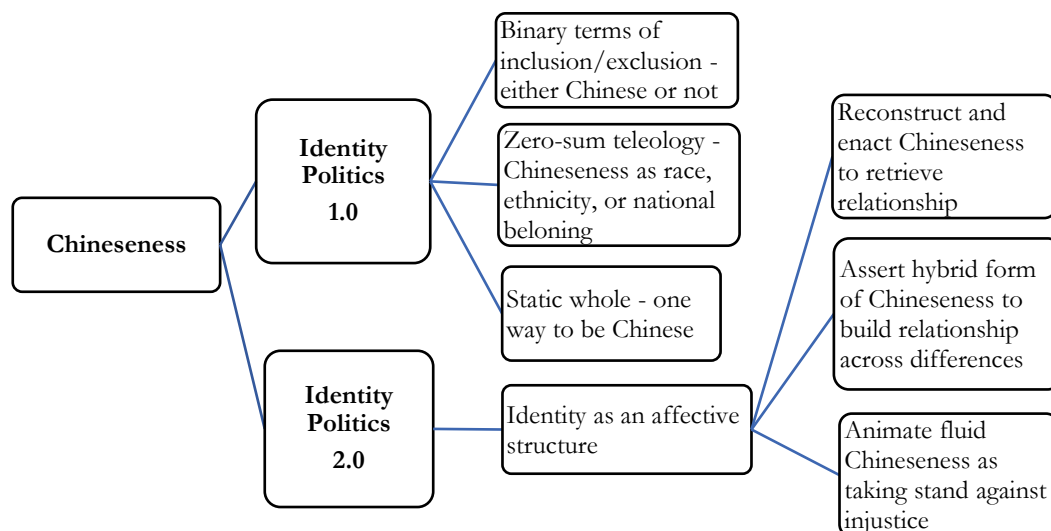


Figure 1 above is a model characterizing the impact of Identity Politics 1.0 and Identity Politics 2.0. In developing an alternative framework from this partial finding, this article offers three propositions where identity generates other forms of political practices: first, identity is an affective 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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Rey Ty

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ABSTRACT

In direct relation to the Ukraine crisis, the world is confronted with an existential **problem** that threatens our human existence, especially with the possibility of an all-out nuclear war. Moreover, mainstream media only show one side of the story and take sides in the conflict. The **purpose** of this research was to show the contending narratives about the Ukraine crisis and its impact on the rest of the world, depict, and provide the recommendations for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The **literature** used consisted of materials not only from mainstream media, but also seldom heard or read alternative media and social media from which divergent and at times contending views were explored. The research **methodology** used in this article was the qualitative case study research design, focusing on the "special military operation" in Ukraine. **Narrative analysis** was employed to present the different perspectives, namely those of Ukraine, NATO, and Russia. The **findings** yielded results that critically portrayed different perspectives, critically identifying and exposing post-truth fake news, and offering recommendations. This paper **recommended** raising critical consciousness that leads to action that advances positive policy alternatives and social transformation for durable justice and peace in Ukraine in particular and its impact to the rest on the world.

Keywords: Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, Special Military Operation, Ukraine crisis, War and peace

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

We live in a dangerous time during which the world is confronted with a **general crisis** involving climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, corporate super profits, climate emergency, food insecurity, war, refugee crisis, and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The Ukraine crisis has aggravated the food crisis, energy crisis, and the possibility of a major regional or global war, which could lead to the nuclear annihilation of the world. Wherever we are in the world, there is a one-sided coverage of the situation in Ukraine. The **problem**, though, consists of most people not thinking critically but only absorbing news that the corporate mainstream media dumps on us. We automatically take one side of the conflict and as a consequence reject the other views.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this paper was to fill the gap in encouraging learning, teaching, research, and education that promotes **critical thinking** as well as knowing, understanding, analyzing, considering, applying, developing alternative perspectives and courses of action. As there is a need to listen to narratives from all sides, this paper tried to reveal all the different major perspectives of the conflict without taking any side.

Research Questions

The **research questions** raised are the following:

- 1) What are the contending narratives about the key issues of the Ukraine crisis?
- 2) From the perspectives of conflict and peace studies, what steps must be undertaken to stop the Ukraine crisis?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research included laying down the different narratives about the Ukraine crisis with a view to provide recommendations to end the war.

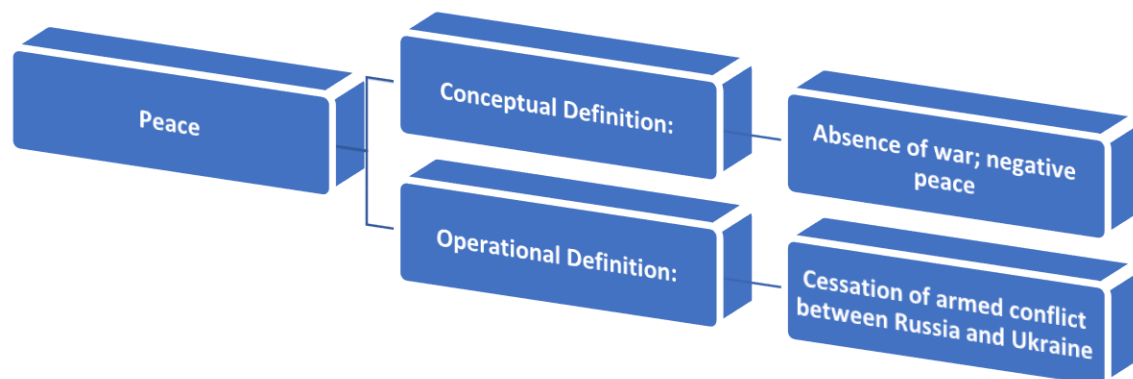
Scope, Limitation, and Delimitation of the Study

The case in point for this academic paper was the conflict in Ukraine, which focused on the parties to the conflict, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Ukraine, and Russia as well as its impact. It was limited to geopolitics, armed conflict, and calls for efforts at peace making, peace keeping, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. The article delimited the area of research not to include other matters not related to the armed hostilities. See Figure below 1:

Figure 1*Scope, Limitation, and Delimitation of the Study***Definition of Terms**

The following key terms were defined in this paper: peace, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and special military operation.

The key term of this article was peace. For the purpose of this study, peace is conceptually defined simply as the absence of physical violence, armed conflict, or war. It is sometimes referred to as negative peace (Galtung, 1996). For this research, peace is operationally defined as the cessation of armed hostilities between Ukraine and Russia as well as other countries that support their armed fighting. See Figure 2 below:

Figure 2*Conceptual and Operational Definition of Peace*

Peacemaking refers to efforts to get the two or more sides of the conflict to meet for a dialogue, which could be directly among the parties to the conflict or through the efforts of a third party. Although the concept of conflict transformation and peacebuilding are closely related, they are however different. On the one hand, conflict transformation refers to “many efforts to create sustainable positive peace” (Askandar, 2021, p. 20) in order to “transform relationships, communication, perceptions, issues, and social organizations (Lederach, 1995, p. 201) for the purpose of the “empowerment of parties” to the conflict (Askandar, 2021, p. 21). On the other hand, peacebuilding refers to “a long term effort to transform conflict through comprehensive plan to change all aspects of the conflict,” including the parties to the conflict, their relationships, as well as “the structure of the conflict itself” (Askandar, 2021, p. 17).

Russia uses the term “special military operation” to describe the military actions it has initiated since February 2022 in Ukraine. Under international humanitarian law (IHL), the so-called special military operation qualifies as armed conflict of an international character (Wilmschurst & Breau, 2007). Basically, it is an act of armed conflict which describe the intentions of Russia, which is clear to the minds of the Russian president and his military but not explicitly expressed to the rest of the world. Though not a *de jure* war, the “special military operation” is nevertheless a *de facto* war, as defined by the Geneva Conventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review offered the frameworks which guided the conduct of this research. The paper as such was situated in the realm of peace studies in general. In particular, it was supplemented with historical approach, critical thinking, hermeneutics, and nomology.

The historical approach was used to examine current history involving the special military operation in Ukraine. Critical thinking was utilized to question warmongering as the only responses of all sides to the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine. Hermeneutics was resorted to in order to interpret the different narratives regarding the armed hostilities in Ukraine. Nomology was employed so as to name the general trends or patterns that emerge in the ongoing situation in Ukraine.

Figure 3*Theories in the Literature that Guided This Research*

METHODOLOGY

The **philosophy** that guided this research was dialectical ontology of actions, words, and attitudes as they change through time. This paper used the **qualitative descriptive research design**. The Ukraine crisis was the **case study** under consideration. Using a powerful non-linear literary narrative device (Twain, 2013), the chronology of the narratives of events was presented in a nonlinear fashion based upon the arguments during the special military operation of Russia and moving backwards to cite different narratives about the provocations of such military actions.

Data collection for this research involved gathering accounts in mainstream media (MSM), alternative media, social media, and citizen journalism. **Data analysis** involved the deconstruction of narratives. Here, **narrative theory** (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015) refers to breaking down or deconstructing and interpreting the types and role of stories as expressed in texts, speeches, policies, and pronouncements that the key actors have constructed as well as match them with their actions in the Ukraine crisis.

The author of this article **deconstructed** and **reconstructed** (Derrida, 2018) the words as well as **interpreted** (Barthes, 1967) the meanings of the texts and speeches of major actors in the major countries involved in the Ukraine conflict. The author matched the theory (or words) with the actions (or practice) of these main participants in the crisis in Ukraine (Derrida, 2019). The author analyzed the narrative discourses

of key actors in the context of current history (White, 1987), the output of which was an inductive grounded theory (Babchuk, 2008) of the Ukraine crisis based on the empirical data from the different media sources.

For data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings, this qualitative research entailed the resort to purposeful convenience sampling of informants with whom the author had conversations, which led to the data collection of open-ended responses, data analysis of texts, and interpretation thereafter. Before the pandemic and Russia's "special military action," the author spent about one month in Ukraine for an ethnographic visit. He traveled throughout the country, from Kiev, to Odessa, Lvov, Dnieper, Chernihiv, and back to Kiev. His homestay in the residences of Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainian friends all over Ukraine provided him with limitless opportunities to interact with them, including engaging in dialogue with them about the situation of its current history in relation to both its eastern and western neighbors. All Ukrainian research collaborators remain anonymous in this article.

Member check was conducted in two stages. The first stage was conducted when the author was in Ukraine during his ethnographic visit. The second stage of member check was conducted after the author left Ukraine. The purpose of member check was to ensure the accuracy of the research findings by sharing back the major findings, the case analysis, specific cultural descriptions as well as the emerging themes back to the Ukrainian contact persons for the latter's confirmation of the accuracy of those statements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this way, the Ukrainian research collaborators served as a check throughout the process of data analysis. Member checking was a validity strategy in this qualitative research with a view to establish the accuracy of the findings. Different views were shared back with Ukrainians both during the ethnographic visit and up to the present time with a view to clarify or validate or both the sensemaking of the author. After leaving Ukraine, member check was accomplished via different social media, including, inter alia, electronic mail, Facebook, Viber, video chat, WhatsApp, and Zoom. As of this writing, the author is still in contact with them, almost all of whom are opposed to the war. Some women and children whom this author knows have left the country and are scattered everywhere, while some women decide to stay put with their husbands. Later on, some women and their children who left Ukraine have returned back to their homes in Ukraine. For a summary of the methodology, see Figure 4 below:

Figure 4*Methodology of the Research*

FINDINGS

The Findings of this research is composed of two parts: the Analysis section and the Discussion section. The Findings responded to the research questions regarding 1) the divergent narratives about the conflict and 2) the call for action in order to achieve conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Analysis

Contending Narratives. This section answered Research Question 1 about the different narratives regarding the Ukraine crisis, of which are three alternative narratives. The sources of data gathered were mainstream media, alternative media, social media, and citizen journalism of people who were or are on the ground in the different parts of Ukraine in general and the conflict zones in particular. Mapping the conflict, NATO flanks Ukraine from the west and Russia flanks Ukraine from the east. See Figure 5 below:

Figure 5*Conflict Mapping*

At the outset, to be clear, Ukraine has the right to self-determination to decide its political, economic, and cultural destiny. Thus, Ukraine can choose to join NATO and the European Union. The dominant narrative asserts that Russia is the villain, from the perspective of NATO. From this narrative, Russia's attack on Ukraine was unprovoked. The second narrative, which is the alternative story, stresses that NATO is the culprit that brought forth this conflict. In this case, NATO provoked Russia to wage its "special military operation" in Ukraine. The third narrative expresses the sentiment according to which all key actors to the conflict are equally culpable and calls for a halt to the armed hostilities. "In the Ukraine crisis, there are no angels" (Sheliazhenko, 2022).

Mainstream news assert that Russia is the aggressor against which the world must work in unison for its defeat. Ukraine is winning the media war, as NATO and most mainstream news agencies endorse news from the perspective of Ukraine. Zelenskyy is omnipresent in mainstream news and social media 24/7. However, in contrast, Russia destroys one city after another. New York Times was quoted as asserting that by June 11, 2022 that "Russian forces did appear to be making slow, methodical and bloody progress toward control of eastern Ukraine" (New York Times, as quoted in Countercurrents Collective, 2022).

Alternative news reveal that Russia has grievances that NATO does not address, including among others, NATO eastward expansion, rabid anti-Russian neo-Nazis playing an active role in Ukraine, biolabs (Hill TV, 2022), and others. Alternative news stress that NATO ignores the inconvenient truth about the existence and role of neo-Nazis in Ukrainian politics and military as early as in the year 2014 (Parry, 2022). Russia claims that the eastward expansion of NATO, especially up to its border by way of Ukraine poses an existential threat to its national security. See Figure 6 below:

Figure 6

Contending Narratives of the Ukraine Crisis

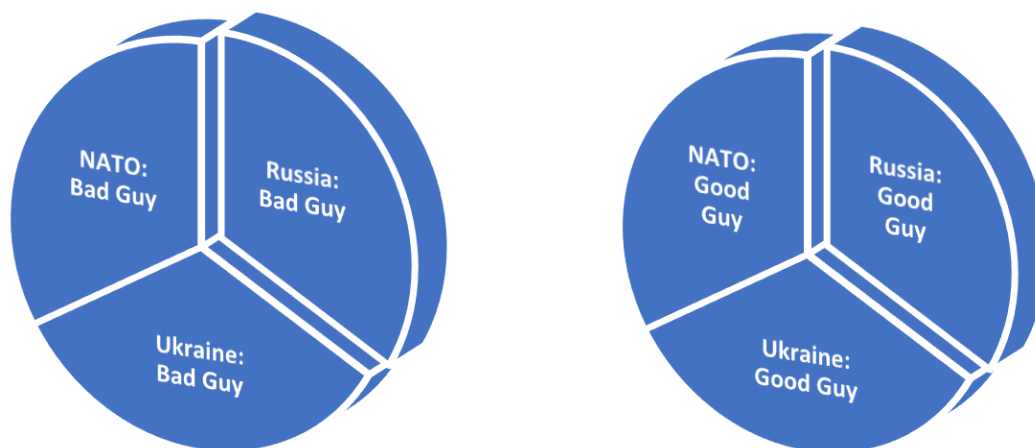


Citizen journalists are people who were or are on the ground in Ukraine who documented their experiences and what they have been seeing as well as posting texts, photos, and videos in social media and all other different types of online accounts, including among others, Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, and other websites. There are many kinds of citizen journalists. One, foreign students and residents who documented the way in which they were treated as they were leaving Ukraine as refugees were citizen journalists who posted evidence of their experiences. Two, foreign volunteers and mercenaries who joined the Ukrainian armed forces likewise documented their testimonies and posted them online. Three, some who have been living in Ukraine started to record day-to-day occurrences and posted them as news widely viewed and read online.

There is name calling on all sides. Each party to the conflict calls itself the good guy. Each party to the conflict calls the other side of the conflict as the bad guys. Demonization of the others is the picture we get in the media. See Figure 7 below:

Figure 7

Three Parallel Narratives of Protagonists and Antagonists in the Ukraine Crisis



Scholars, such as John Mearsheimer, Jeffrey Sachs, and Yuri Sheliazhenko are some academicians who have aptly summarized the contending narratives on all sides to the conflict. For quotations about the clashing narratives on the side of Ukraine, Russia, and NATO, please see Table 1 below:

Table 1*Contending Narratives about the Ukraine Crisis*

NATO Blames Russia	Ukraine Blames Russia	Russia Blames NATO
“Russia's military invasion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, is unjustified and in gross violation of international law. Noam Chomsky ranks the Russian invasion of Ukraine alongside the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland.” (Polychoniou, 2022) “NATO branded Russia "a direct threat" to its members' peace and security.” (Polychoniou, 2022) “West v East (great power struggle, fight for control over Ukraine)” (Sheliazhenko, 2022, p. 8) “West v East (colonialism, cold war, “liberal” hegemony)” (Sheliazhenko, 2022) “instead of trying to calm the waters and repair the disruptions, Biden escalated the U.S. conflicts with both Russia and China.” (Sachs, 2022) “United States: leadership in the international order established by military alliance of Western democracies; support of Ukraine and her Western choice; accountability of Russia for attacks on Ukraine and	“Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Thursday urged his Western partners to deliver Ukraine "the vaccine against Russian tyranny" — more sophisticated weapons, particularly longer-range missiles.” (Lawler & Riedlinger, 2023) “Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky used an address to the Ukraine Defense Contact Group on January 20 to ask for the delivery of long-missiles and tanks.... He asked the audience to be open to sending tanks, F-16s, and long-range missiles to Ukraine. Credit: Department of Defense.” (Yahoo! News, 2023) “In the wake of a deadly missile strike on an apartment block in Dnipro on Saturday, January 14, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on countries to provide more weapons to Ukraine... He said that Russia could only be defeated on the battlefield... Zelensky also welcomed the British government's announcement that it would provide Ukraine with 14 Challenger 2 tanks, making the United Kingdom the first country to send modern Western battle tanks to Ukraine. Credit: President of Ukraine.” (Yahoo! News, 2023)	“For years, the political scientist has claimed that Putin's aggression toward Ukraine is caused by Western intervention.” (Chotiner, 2022) “Yet, no one can overlook the fact that Russian leaders had been warning the west for decades about NATO's expansion eastward. No one can honestly say that the US was not in fact deliberately provoking the Russian bear throughout the post-Cold War era. As John Mearsheimer has pointed out in connection with the current invasion of Ukraine, the trouble actually started at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008. Yet, none of this seems to matter to NATO and U.S. leaders. On the contrary, they are determined to double down on provocation and aggression.” (Polychoniou, 2022) “Russia: multipolarity; security concerns in post-Soviet region; demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, including non-alignment with military alliances, absence of nuclear weapons, recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea and independence of Donetsk and

other challenges to international order.” (Sheliazhenko, 2022, p. 9) “Biden attacked Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy for expressing doubts on another large financial package Ukraine, declaring: “They [House Republicans] said that if they win, they're not likely to fund--to help--continue to fund Ukraine, the Ukrainian war against the Russians. These guys don't get it. It's a lot bigger than Ukraine--it's Eastern Europe. It's NATO. It's real, serious, serious consequential outcomes. They have no sense of American foreign policy.” Similarly, when a group of progressive congressional Democrats urged negotiations to end the Ukraine War, they were excoriated by Democrats following the White House line and forced to recant their call for diplomacy... Biden believes that American credibility depends on NATO expanding to Ukraine, and if necessary, defeating Russia in the Ukraine war to accomplish that. Biden has repeatedly refused to engage in diplomacy with Russia on the NATO enlargement issue. This has been a grave mistake. It stoked a proxy war between the U.S. and Russia in which Ukraine is being devastated, ironically in the name of saving Ukraine.” (Sachs, 2022)	“Russia v Ukraine (fight between archaic nationalism and imperialism)” (Sheliazhenko, 2022, p. 8) “Russia v Ukraine (Kyivan Rus', Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Hetmanate, Ukrainian People's Republic, Soviet Union)” (Sheliazhenko, 2022) “Ukraine: Euro-Atlantic choice of Ukraine, her sovereignty over Donbass and Crimea, cessation of ties with Russia and her following punishment for imperialism and war crimes.” (Sheliazhenko, 2022, p. 9) “Zelensky's Impassioned Appeal for Tanks, Artillery: 'The Kremlin Must Lose'” (Van Brugen, 2023) “Apart from Leopard tanks, Ukraine is getting lots of weapons” (The Economist, 2023) “Making a dramatic, risky wartime visit to Washington on Wednesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky strategized privately with President Biden at the White House and then, to repeated standing ovations, delivered an impassioned plea to Congress for sustained U.S. military aid.” (L. A. Times, 2022)	Luhansk People's Republics, as well as non-discrimination of Russian people and culture in Ukraine and punishment of anti-Russian far-righters.” (Sheliazhenko, 2022, p. 9) “Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned the U.S. repeatedly since 2008 to keep NATO out of Ukraine, a region of vital security interests for Russia. Biden has equally resolutely insisted on NATO enlargement. Putin made one last diplomatic try at the end of 2021 to stop NATO enlargement. Biden completely rebuffed him. This was dangerous foreign policy. As much as many American politicians don't want to hear it, Putin's warning about NATO enlargement was both real and apt. Russia doesn't want a heavily armed NATO military on its border, just as the U.S. would not accept a Chinese-backed heavily armed Mexican military on the U.S.-Mexico border. The last thing the U.S. and Europe need is a long war with Russia. Yet that's just where Biden's insistence on NATO enlargement to Ukraine has brought about.” (Sachs, 2022)
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As of this writing, the response to war of each side to the hostilities is more war. Peace scholars and peace activists do not take sides to the conflict but call for an end to the armed clashes. In fact, they point at both NATO and Russia as having caused the initiation and intensification of the armed conflict in Ukraine. While both NATO and Russia are escalating their war efforts, peace scholars and peace activists call for the cessation of all armed hostilities on all side, for a just settlement of the conflict that ensures the security of all parties, not just of one side or the other. See Figure 8 below.

Figure 8

War Journalism and Peace Journalism

War and Peace in Journalism

1. War Journalism: NATO, Ukraine, Russia
2. Peace Journalism: Peace Scholars, Peace Activists

Peace Making, Peace Keeping, Conflict Transformation and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. The way forward in order to stop the armed fighting, which already caused so much human suffering and death, an immediate ceasefire for a negotiated solution to the armed hostilities in Ukraine through sincere peace talks. Shift resources from waging war to waging peace that benefit the civilian population, especially survivors of the conflict. There needs to be a renewed and vigorous effort to support the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, a universal ban on the use of nuclear weapons, and the prosecution of all war crimes over the years and decades that all parties to all conflicts have perpetrated.

Peace Making and Peace Keeping. Instead of beating the drums of war, we must call for an immediate ceasefire immediately now on all sides, lest we face the existential threat of a nuclear war and holocaust, which will end life as we know it on Earth. High-level representatives of both Ukraine and Russia can meet directly for negotiations to reach a peace settlement. Alternatively, a third party might be necessary for the meeting, such as a high-level representative of good offices or an international governmental organization (IGO), the likes of which include the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) or high-level representatives of another country, such as China, Indonesia, Turkey, or Mexico, all of which offered to be mediators in the conflict. To ensure that all parties to the conflict do not resort to the use of armed attacks, mutually acceptable peace-keeping forces must be put in place.

Conflict Transformation. Conflict transformation involves changes in attitudes, behaviors, and contradictions. Stop war now. Start peace talks now. Instead of confrontation, there needs to be dialogue. Instead of

war, there needs to be diplomacy, not more war as a response to war, as it is happening now. Instead of aggressive war, there needs to be aggressive diplomacy to end the war. Instead of confrontation, there needs to be collaboration. Instead of suspicion of each other, there needs to be trust and confidence-building measures. Instead of hardline, there needs to be compromise as the only way out of this quagmire.

Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. After the armed conflict stops and peace talks will be concluded, several matters must be addressed as components of peacebuilding measures: burning issues, complex context, structures, relationships among the conflicting parties, and actions transforming from negative to positive.

In post-conflict peacebuilding, physical violence or armed hostilities must cease or at least drastically reduce. Parties to the conflict need to reconcile as well as discuss matters related to justice, after which relations must be normalized. Combatants must be disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated into civilian society. The question of financial payments must be addressed. The whole society needs rehabilitation as well as expend resources and energy in development. We can learn lessons from history. See Figure 9 below:

Figure 9

Process for the End and a Just Settlement of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine



DISCUSSION

The first casualty of war is the truth. All sides are engaged in disseminating post-truth fake news and videos. In addition, NATO bans Russian news. Russia bans NATO news. Ukraine bans all political parties and media, except the state-approved ones: so much for democracy.

To begin with, the Ukraine crisis clearly has directly impacted both Ukraine and Russia negatively. On the macro-level, there are in fact two different conflicts: The first is the direct armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine since February 2022. The second is the indirect conflict between NATO and Russia: it is a proxy war between Russia and NATO. See Figure 10 below:

Figure 10*Conflict Analysis*

Ukraine sits in the middle. Two strong forces are engaged in a tug of war to have Ukraine in its sphere of influence, if not control. NATO is on its West. Russia is on its East. Ukraine is veritably situated between a rock and a hard place. See Figure 11 below:

Figure 11*Sandwiched between Great Powers*

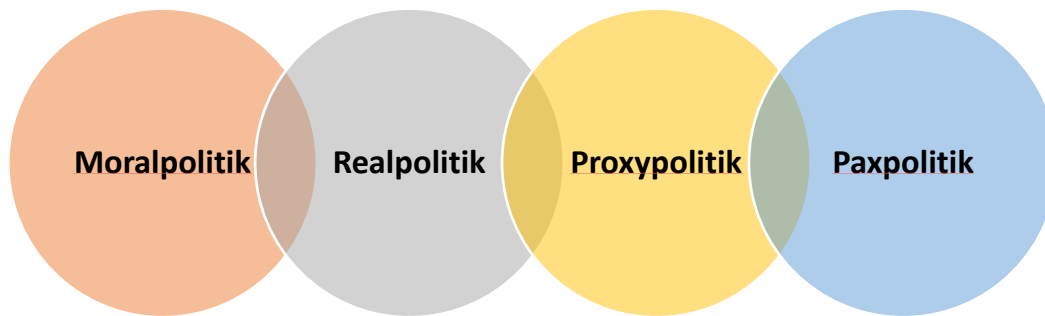
Foreign students and foreign students had to flee Ukraine, leaving their dreams and plans behind, at times facing discrimination and racism on the basis of their color and countries of origin. Ukrainian women and children formed an exodus moving out of Ukraine westward through Poland, Moldova, Romania, and elsewhere. Russian forces have demolished many cities in the east and south of Ukraine to smithereens. Countless Russian and Ukrainian troops and civilians have lost their lives, especially in the Donbass region. Instead of trumpeting the calls to war, we must invigorate efforts to call for peace.

There are competing truths about the Ukraine crisis with different ways by which it could be explained: moralpolitik, realpolitik, proxypolitik, and paxpolitik. From the point of view of moralpolitik, Ukraine has every right in the world for self-determination. Ukraine can decide to join whatever alliance and whatever economic union it wants to. From the perspective of realpolitik, Ukraine should better stay neutral, as it is sandwiched between two great political and military powers, namely NATO and Russia. By being neutral, Ukraine could benefit from having relations with both sides, rather than befriend one side and antagonize the other side, which leads to armed conflict, as in today. Think of Switzerland. From the viewpoint of proxypolitik, Ukraine is in an unfortunate geographic space for which both NATO and Russia are vying for influence or control; thus, it is a territory in which NATO and Russia wage proxy wars. From the standpoint

of paxpolitik, the armed conflict must stop now, as the Ukrainians are the primary victims and survivors of the conflict and as the menace of nuclear annihilation looms large in current history. See Figure 12 below:

Figure 12

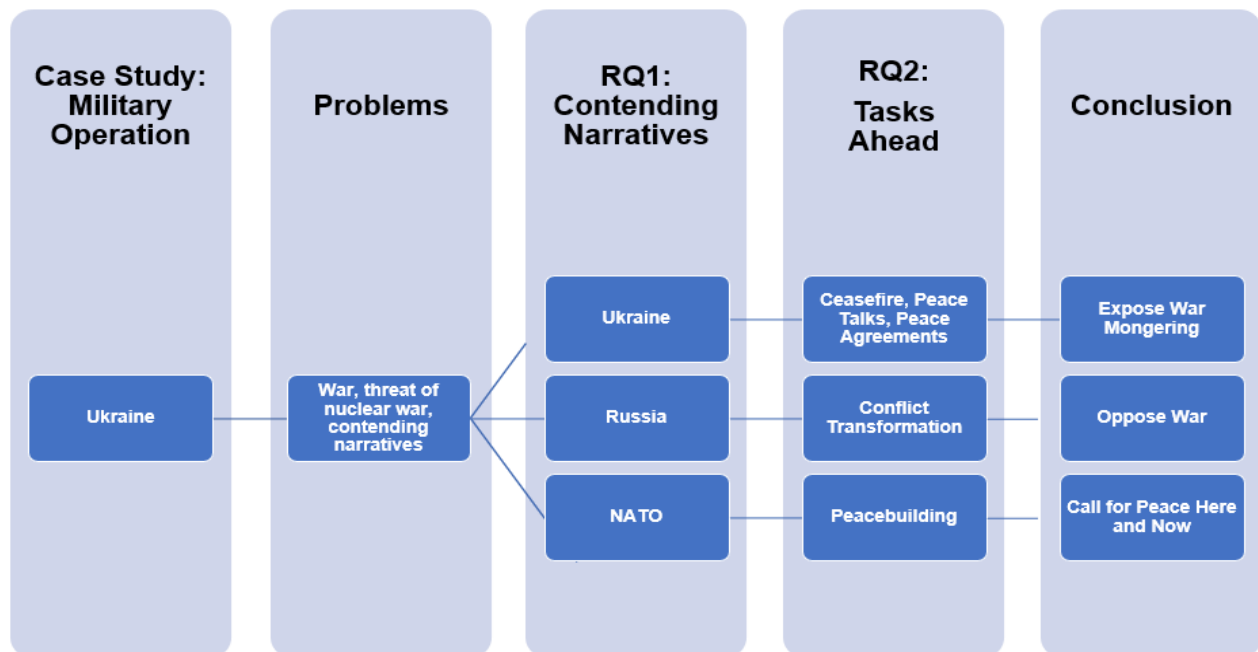
Competing Arguments



Based on the inductively derived research findings, this article yielded a grounded theory of the Ukraine crisis. See Figure 13 below:

Figure 13

Grounded Theory of Conflict, Conflict Transformation, and Peacebuilding of the Ukraine Crisis



CONCLUSION

Summary

Response to Research Question 1. Research question 1 inquired about the divergent narratives regarding the Ukraine conflict. The findings revealed that there are at least three contending narratives. Both Ukraine and NATO consider themselves as the protagonists in the conflict, while they treat Russia as the antagonist which engaged in unprovoked armed hostilities in Ukraine. Russia, on the other hand, considers itself as the protagonist to the conflict, while it considers Ukraine and NATO as the antagonists, as Russia was provoked when NATO moved continually eastward until it reached the borders of Russia in eastern Ukraine with Ukraine consenting to join NATO.

Response to Research Question 2. Research question 2 inquired about the actions needed to stop the war. The response is two-fold. All parties to the conflict must stop the war now by way of peace talks that lead to a peace settlement, engaging hereafter in 1) conflict transformation efforts and 2) post-conflict peace-building thereafter.

We must expose and reject the warmongering narratives being disseminated by politicians, NATO governments, their military establishments, the military-industrial complex, and mainstream media that serve as their mouthpieces, all of whom profit from the sale of weapons. Warmongering is playing with fire and nuclear madness.

Recommendations

From the point of view of peace studies, warmongering as a response to the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine is not a solution to end the war. Warmongering adds fuel to the fire. The carnage continues with warmongering. The people who suffer most are the civilian populations in Ukraine as well as the needless suffering and killing of Ukrainian and Russian troops. An eye-for-an-eye retribution leads to more suffering and death.

Ending the armed hostilities does not mean that there is only one dominant position that must emerge victorious. Rather, when a truce without preconditions is called, which leads to a ceasefire agreement and peace talks, each side can air their grievances as well as put on the table their demands for a just and durable resolution of the root causes and immediate causes of the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

We must not only heed but amplify the calls of peace scholars and peace activists to stop the war. We call on all peace-loving people on Earth to call upon their governments to stop the war and push for a just peace settlement between Ukraine and Russia. People in grassroots community organizations, civil society, and social movements must call on governments in all countries to end further escalating the armed fighting by ceasing all kinds of support for the war efforts on all sides. Citizens could respectfully and practically engage their governments to seek the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Acting as interest groups, pressure groups, or members of civil society, they could do several actions to increase awareness through public opinion (Caramani, 2020). These actions include the following: write letters to their representatives; sign petitions; give oral interventions in the halls of parliament; give talks on television and radio; as well as vote for peace-loving politicians. By doing so, they are engaged in civic participation and political participation which could have a positive impact on both domestic and foreign policy (Patterson, 2021) that promotes the peaceful resolution of the armed rifts between Russia and Ukraine.

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Jeffrey Moore, Wei Zhang & David High

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Abstract

There is wide-spread concern about the ethical behavior of university business students. Research shows that ethical decision making by business students is heavily influenced by self-interest—more so than any other academic major. The moral development of business students is a global conundrum where universities from North America to Asia are searching for ways to increase ethical decision making of their students and decrease unethical behaviors of their graduates. This research elaborates a recent model of how universities influence the moral development of business undergraduates by including a Chinese university study.

This research explores the ethical system and its influencers as perceived by the Chinese business student. These findings corroborate the original model presenting six factors that provide input into the students' ethical decisions, emanating from their *moral code: institutional moral reinforcement, business moral reinforcement, service activities, moral amplifiers, experiential challenges, and moral cultural identity* (Hanson & Moore, 2014). Our findings point to the fact that Chinese students actively are developing a sense of moral cultural identity and internalizing their moral codes. Very effective influencers in the life of the Chinese business students are their teachers, volunteer student clubs, and business supervisors. The Chinese study provides new insights in how each of these factors are lived out in a collective society, notably the collective identity while at the university, the centrality of relational harmony and the importance of workplace experience.

We conclude by recommending that universities develop intentional and programmatic experiential learning bridges with the business community. These efforts would seek to apply ethical core values into the workplace.

Key Words: moral development, business student, China, ethics, qualitative research

Background

Business school research has pointed to the fact that ethics and moral development in business students can not be relegated to an isolated course or segment of a business program. AACSB Business Accreditation sees a school's primary purpose to encourage and support ethical behavior seen it it's first "guiding principle & expectations for accredited schools" which starts with Ethics & Integrity

(AACSB, 2023). Researchers found that a single ethical course is not a significant factor in morally developing students nor decreasing their narcissistic traits (Traiser & Eighmy, 2011; Davis & Welton, 1991). However, this does not mean that a student moral reasoning ability is stagnant. To the contrary we find that a student's moral code is dynamically evolving and maturing based on their university exposure (Hanson et al, 2017). In the Chinese context Yin & Quazi (2018) called for business ethics research to be contextualized using a theoretical framework, which is the focus of this research.

China

The moral development of business students is a global conundrum where universities from North America to Asia are searching for ways to increase ethical decision making of their students and seek to decrease the unethical behaviors of their graduates. This study looks at the Chinese context. Business ethics in China date back to ancient times, advocating fair trade, honesty towards customers not to be deceptive (Nie, 2003). The reforms of 1978 established policies to focus on national economic development based on ethical practices. One of the goals of ethical business education in China is to develop students' own ethical and professional identities (Zhou & Ding, 2006). Chinese researchers started to explore the relation between economic development and business ethics, and curriculum studied in professional ethics education (Nie, 2003). Chinese researchers are calling for a wholistic education system guided by values and developing people through teaching virtue (Eryong & Li, 2021). Some have observed that a key problem of professional ethics education in Chinese business colleges is that it focuses mainly on values and concepts instead of a focus on application. They recommend adopting teaching methods of case study and group discussion (Wong, Kennedy & Yan, 2021; Wu, 2005).

Ethics education in business schools is seen as a very important element of Chinese society and is a compulsory course for all business majors (Ding & Wang, 2010). However, the popularity of business ethics education is low and cheating remains high (Ma, 2013). Only 30% of the 115 sampled Chinese business colleges offer business ethics courses (Wu, 2012). Many business schools argue that the "ideological morals" course in the university already includes business ethics. Truth be told, "ideological morals" courses, pay little attention to ethical business problems (Liu, 2016).

One researcher, WU Hongmei (2010), argues that business students' ethical identity determines their locus of control and behaviors when coping with ethical problems. The research looked at an internal locus of control (idealism) versus an external locus of control (relativism). Her findings of Nanjing university students revealed that there was no correlation between a student with or without siblings and their internal or external locus of control. No differences were found in students displaying an

internal locus of control with regard to their gender, year in school and major. The differences emerged with male and senior students having an external locus of control. As seniors, they focus on avoiding harming others and their instruction reinforces their responsibility to care for others over profits. Accounting, Finance, Management majors have highest degree of student external locus of control. We believe this is due to the regulatory business environment of these disciplines. The researcher suggests that more application oriented ethical training is particularly necessary in these areas. Ecommerce, international business, marketing, agricultural economics have the highest degree of student internal locus of control. Findings point to personal ethical values motivating ethical actions as part of their internal locus of control and ethical identity. These findings support the need and importance for business ethics education in China and the use of case study learning for students with an external locus of control to facilitate the internalization of their ethical identity (Wu & Liu, 2010).

Reviewing business ethical education in China, we see that it has increased in the past decade. In 2010 there were no business ethics courses. Since then, universities have added a professional ethics elective course. Currently all Chinese students take a compulsory Core Values of Socialism course, providing a general ethical framework for the Chinese citizen.

Methodology

We use the qualitative research case study method to elaborate on the student moral development theory previously applied to the North American, Moroccan, Brazilian contexts (Hanson, Moore, Bachleda, Canterbury, Franco, Marion, & Schreiber, 2017). The primary research question which is: “How does the university influence student moral development of ethical decision making?” Supporting questions are:

- What university factors influence the moral development of student ethical decision making?
- How does the university culture and environment (national culture), connect students to ethical outcomes?

Table 1 presents the demographics of the Chinese university student participants compared to students in our previous studies. This Chinese university case study enables us to develop greater generalizability of the theory and branch out into the Asian context (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2003).

Table 1*Chinese Institution compared with previous study*

Cultural Setting	Institutional Type	University Size	Theoretic Sample	Religious Affiliation
China	Public	14,364	35	No
Brazil	Private	600	25	No
North America	Private	1,800	16	Yes
Morocco	Public	1,700	71	No

Setting and Sample

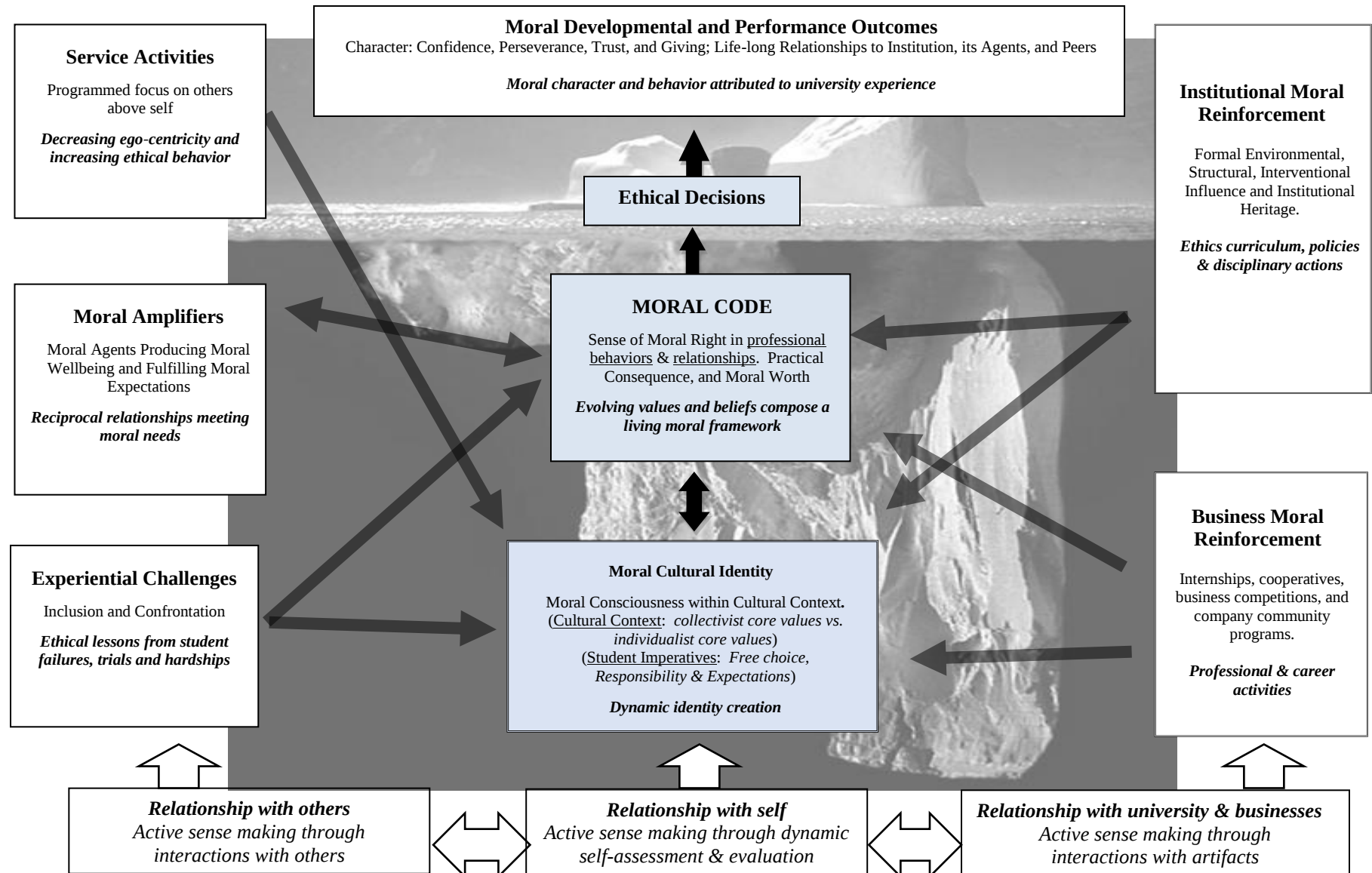
The research was completed at a university in the People's Republic of China in the southern region at a large public institution. Our interviews came from two business classes where a total of 35 students (24 female and 11 male) answered the written questionnaire; thus meeting the standard suggested by Creswell (2003) of between 20 and 30. The key in qualitative sampling is to reach data saturation, at which point meaning between respondents emerge (Charmaz, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Our sample criteria were business students in their last two years of undergraduate studies to select those with the richest experience of university life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The survey instrument was translated into Chinese to gather the richest possible data from students. Responses were translated into English by one of the authors. The authors worked on coding the translated responses.

Coding and Analysis

We used methods outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and used thematic coding of the student responses. This coding was done in three phases. The first was to take the sentence responses and break them into units of meaning. The second was grouping the units of meaning in groups, or themes, with similar properties. Finally, the third was determining relationships between these themes. Once this was completed, we took our preliminary findings back to a group of students to conduct a member check. During this member check, students clarified or corrected the meaning found in their responses. We thus depended on research triangulation methods to show research rigor in the collection, analysis and production of findings.

Findings

Using the Theory of Moral Development of University Students (Hanson & Moore, 2019) as our theoretical framework we compare the responses of university business students in China. Our findings collaborate the theory finding all six of the factors present. The six factors that influence the students' ethical decisions, emanating from their *moral code* are: *institutional moral reinforcement*, *business moral reinforcement*, *service activities*, *moral amplifiers*, *experiential challenges*, and *moral cultural identity* (Moore & Hanson, 2019). These factors, found in figure 1, can be organized in three types of relationships in the life of the student: relationship with self (*moral cultural identity* factor), relationship with others (*Service Activities*, *Moral Amplifiers* and *Experiential Challenges* factors), and relationship with university structure (*Institutional Moral Reinforcement* & *Business Moral Reinforcement* factors). Our findings point to the fact that Chinese business students are actively developing a sense of moral cultural identity and internalizing their moral codes. We elaborate the current model by clarifying the moral cultural identity to include a specific reference to cultural context core values. Our findings show the positive influence of collective core values on developing a collective identity in Chinese business students. Our understanding of collective comes from Hofstede (2005) description of the cultural dimension of individualism vs collectivism. Collectivism according to Hofstede is someone “knows one’s place” in life within a specific social context, while individualism expects individuals to make their own choices and decisions. Furthermore, Bond (2022) suggests that Chinese morality has four dimensions: communal sharing motivated by unity, authority ranking motivated by hierarchy, equality matching is motivated by equality, and market pricing is motivated by proportionality. Our findings can be understood in the collectivist and focus on unity & hierarchy frameworks that Bond & Hofstede outline.

Figure 1*Theory of Moral Development of the Identity of the Business Student*

Note. Adapted model from “Theory of Moral Development of the Identity of the Business Student.” (Moore & Hanson, 2019). Reprinted; permission not required. Photomontage by Kils and Bodo, 2006; permission granted under the terms of GNU Free Documentation License.

Ethical relationship with oneself

The Chinese business student is developing their own moral code through active sense making of the multitude of interactions with people and his/her environment. This internal dynamic in the student starts with the Moral Cultural Identity found within his/her cultural context, which is replete with core values. Students must create meaning from these core values and identify for themselves which are essential to include in their moral code essential to governing their ethical decision making. We look at the moral cultural identity and the core values of the Chinese business students.

Moral Cultural Identity factor

The university is a place where students are undergoing a high level of personal development and maturing. For many this is the first time, away from home and having to live independent. Student responses articulated a moral code as well as a moral cultural identity. Not surprisingly, included in their moral code were traditional Chinese values as well as relational values that bring about relational harmony. Their core values center around honesty, care for others, dedication and obedience. Students articulated values they have learned to avoid or stop. One should avoid selfishness, lying and cheating. One student says: “I picked up a classmate’s dining card. I didn’t listen to my classmate who asked me to use the card. I decided to give it to the academic affairs office.” From a relational perspective they learned the following values at the university: respect of others, importance of relational harmony, and the love of the collective. The relational behaviors they have learned to avoid were don’t lose face, don’t gossip and don’t discriminate. Figure 2 describes the Chinese core and relational values. The traditional Chinese values are bolded: modesty, care for others, obedience, honesty, respect, loving the collective, and safeguarding harmony. These values are positive collectivist characteristics widely honored in Asia.

Figure 2

Top ethical lessons university students have learned

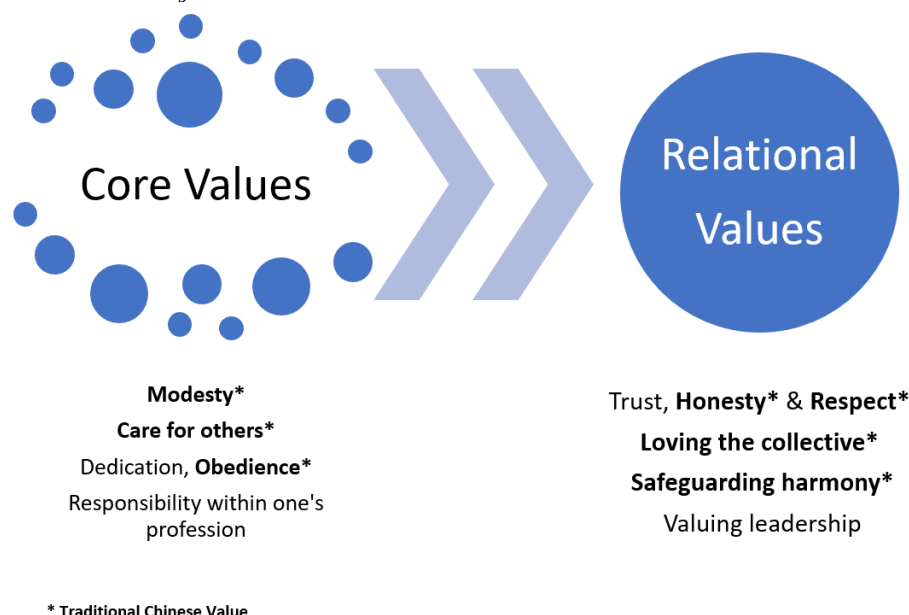


Table 2 provides representative quotes from the Chinese business students. We asked them to define their top ethical values (see Appendix for survey).

Table 2

Student Moral Cultural Identity

Relationship with oneself: Impact of Culture	Representative Quotes
Honesty	I learned honesty and respect from class, for example, it is important to fulfill one's commitment to others and respect others. Telling a lie. I didn't want to go to class so I lied to the teacher. As a result, ... I almost failed in the exam due to the absence
Modest	Learn to be modest but not overdo it, otherwise it become false.
Care for others	Friends care for each other, and classmates help each other Do not talk about people behind their backs. First of all, we have to realize that no one is perfect, and everyone has their own shortcomings, but there are always people who are always talking about it. I also hate it. I swear never to be such a person.

Dedication	Dedication, and this is a more specific question after joining the Party, and it is a pleasant feeling to help others and get happiness from it. Dedication is a way to realize self-value.
Responsibility	Be down-to-earth and law-abiding. Learn to do everything well and get results from it. I learned to be responsible from doing part-time job (family tutor)
Obedience	To comply. there have been several incidents that students were [disciplined] because they went out to have a drink at midnight without complying school rules Bow your head when you should
Relational harmony	What I learned from getting along with roommates is: Mind your [words], even with someone who [is] close to you, don't point out other person's disadvantage face to face.
Love the collective	Love the collective. Since childhood, many of our teachers would tell us that we are a group, and we should love the collective, so I take an active part in every activity in the class, and we get along well with our classmates
Respect	Respect the teachers... The teachers of the university are more concerned with what kind of person we are going to be. To respect teachers. In school, I can see that teachers get on well with students. The head teacher and we are friends, but we also pay attention to some details. After all, he is a mentor.

Chinese students reported having a **collective identity** while at the university. When they talk to others at the same university, all of them refer to the university as their “mother-school”. The collective importance of this means that Chinese students regard the university as a family. This is lived out by senior schoolmates being considered as elder-brothers and elder-sisters to influence their younger siblings. In this family students care for others even if they don't know them. For example, one student mentioned a “stranger” who let them borrow an umbrella. They state: “That day I was stranded by the rain in front of the library, a schoolmate passed by and stopped to ask me whether I needed an umbrella and then lend it to me. Although I don't know him, he influenced me with his kindness.” This example articulates the collective shared values held by the members of the university family towards each other.

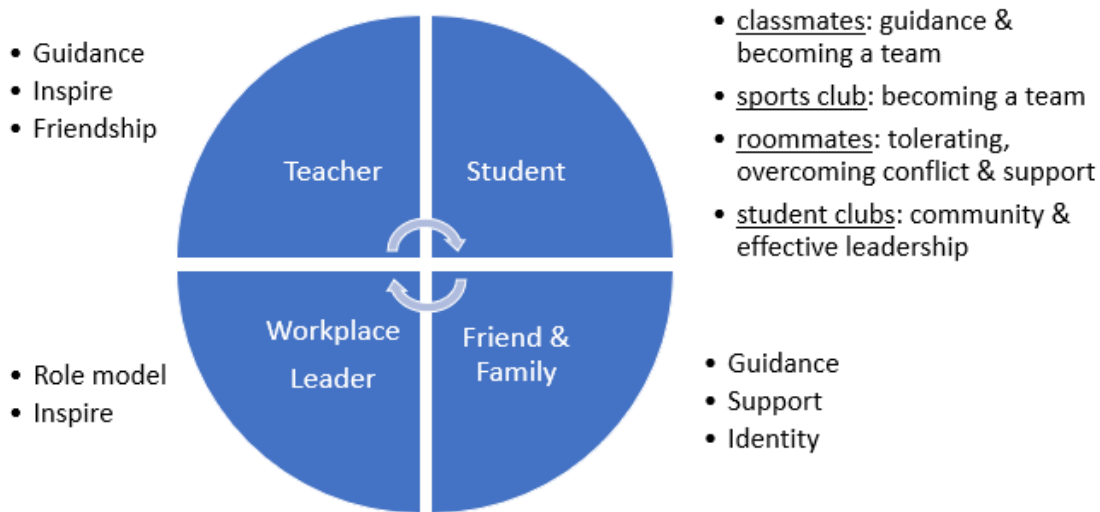
Relationship with others

Moral Amplifiers factor

Inspiration, guidance, help, support, learning, and personal development towards achieving their professional goals is the focus of their relationships. Students pointed to four groups of people while at the university who are the most important relationships they have developed at the university. They are teachers, other students, friends & family, as well as workplace leaders. An important finding is that they are impacted by their interactions with workplace supervisors. Figure 3 describes the four key relationships that impact students morally.

Figure 3

Most important university relationships



First, the relationship between teachers and students remains the primary influencer for university students. Students are very focused on their professional life and transitioning to a career and profession. One student explains: “It is very important to get along with teachers on campus. Teachers can give you guidance and help.” Relationships with teachers is extremely important in a collective society. One student said: “As the saying goes, your teacher for a day, he will be the parent forever. It's always important to learn from teachers.”

Students say that they have been changed by relationships with other students. These relationships have a moral impact even if they are positive or negative. One student says: “In college you can meet all kinds of people who will broaden your horizons. As I relate with others, this interaction has influenced me. Through these experiences I have developed core values that lead me to make right

decisions.” Other students often stand out as moral amplifiers as a student points out: “The saying that people around us will influence us to become like them. There are many people worth learning from in the university. They have many shining qualities worth learning from. If you see these qualities in others’ such as morality and excellence, one is more apt to follow them.”

Experiential Challenges factor

In the collectivist Chinese cultural context, the core values of harmony, care for others and loving the collective are part of the student’s internal moral cultural identity but is enmeshed with relationships. In individualist countries like the United States, we see a clear separation between “I” and “We” (Hofstede, 2005). Experiential challenges are seen in tension with other students “what I learned from getting along with roommates... don’t point out another’s mistakes to their face.” They face institutional conflict as one noted about learning obedience “several students were disciplined because they went out to have a drink a midnight without complying to school rules.” Their challenges also come through university sport activities “we are playing basketball, we won’t have a fight because of a collision, I learned these through mutual understanding and respect between people.” We see that so much of their moral code is developed from the relationships they develop at the university and finding their place “harmony” in the relationship.

Service Activities factor

Students also reported being changed by their personal experiences in service activities while at the university. One student said: “I joined “sanxiang” program in the summer of 2017.” This is a program under which officials, doctors, scientist, and college students go to the countryside to teach in rural areas. Table 3 describes student activities that internalized for them these core values.

Table 3*Core Values Learned through Service Activities*

Relationship with others: Impact of Service Activities	Representative Quotes
<u>Respect</u> the old and cherish the young (Chinese traditional value)	Go to the nursing home to see the elderly. Simple greetings will warm their hearts.
<u>Sympathy</u> to the poor and the weak (Chinese traditional value)	I have donated money to a classmate who was seriously ill. I went to an orphanage to visit orphans. I have participated in "targeted poverty alleviation". I volunteered as a teacher in a summer government service program in the countryside to serve the poor.
Be <u>pleased</u> to help others (Chinese traditional value)	I helped freshman to adapt the university. For example, I helped them enroll and find the dormitory and showed them how to apply for the student's card.
<u>Don't profit</u> at another's expense (Chinese traditional value)	I have helped a stranger. One day when I was downtown, I saw a lady fall from the electric bicycle and I helped her took her to the hospital. I picked up another schoolmate's cellphone and returned it to her. At school, I saw my classmates accidentally drop the money, and the students in the back actively chased him and gave money back to him.
<u>Positive</u> peer pressure (Modern value)	I am inspired by the thank you letters I see posted on the school bulletin board where students have helped each other. I decided to follow their example.

Ethical relationship with university and businesses*Institutional Moral Reinforcement factor*

Table 4 explains the different aspects of how the university structure has influenced the moral code of the business student. It is important to note that the volunteer student leadership positions and membership in sport teams have an important role to play in the life of the student.

Table 4*Institutional Moral Reinforcement Power of Heritage, Heroes and Other Artifacts*

Relationship with University	Representative Quotes
Courses	I think universities are beneficial in promoting our ethical development. We can learn a lot from books in school, which lets us understand what is morally acceptable. Teachers guide us to make moral decisions which strengthen our moral values. I took a business ethics course. Through teacher's explanation and case analysis, I understand the importance of business ethics and its specific requirements
Volunteer Student Clubs	When I completed my student union leadership position I regretted that I had not done a better job with my duties and how I related with others. Department minister of our student union. From getting to know him to getting into the department, he taught me a lot of things and encouraged me to try something good that I hadn't tried.
Sports Teams	I think the university promotes my ethics and moral development, which can help me make moral decisions. When we are playing basketball, we won't have a fight because of a collision, I learned these through mutual understanding and respect between people.
Rules and regulations	When I was in military training for two weeks I learned what it was to be tired and happy. My career outlook also changed. The university is actively hosting open lectures to communicate and teach students moral decision making.
Collective Identity	The university is our "mother-school", which means that students regard the university as a family. Thus, the senior schoolmates are considered as elder-brothers and sisters to influence the juniors (member check).

Students point to amazing experiences that internalize their core values. As we look at their responses, we discover that there does not exist a specific activity that they all share. We find however that various

activities and situations arise where the students choose to be the “hands” of caring – doing the right thing, activating their own moral identity.

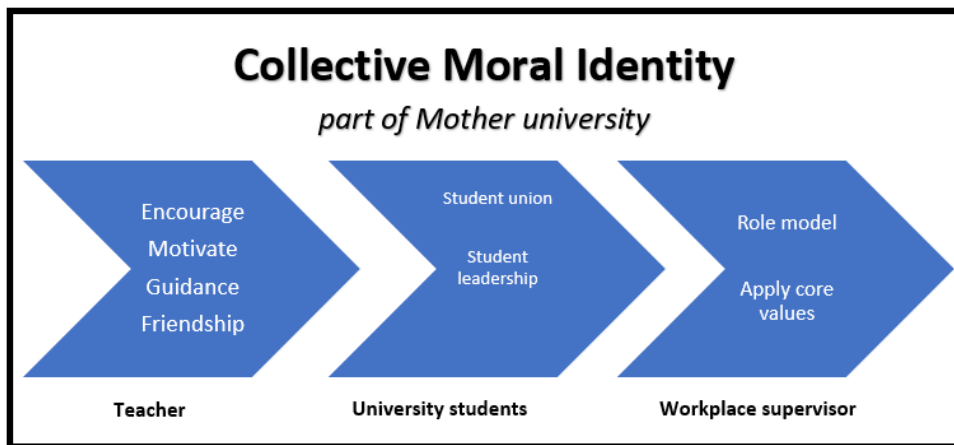
Business Moral Reinforcement factor

Chinese students mentioned they were influenced by their workplace leaders. In fact, they are highly impacted by their ethical example. Once student states: “The relationship between leaders and employees is important. People will take part in the work of society, so it is very important to deal with the leader and learn to be humble. A leader must not lack humanistic care for employees.” By seeing his workplace supervisor’s example, the student realizes how to apply the core value of caring for others in a workplace setting and care for employees. This is captured in a student response: “I learned that I must abide by the business ethics in my work.” Another student is grateful for his boss: “The boss of my part-time job. He is kind, and taught me to be self-reliant, independent, grateful, patient, hardworking, brave and kind.” For instance, one student pointed out that the boss of his part-time job used to be an ordinary college student. Not only did that student become a teacher but he also opened his own shop under his own efforts. He was inspired “What I learned from him is: don't think about who you are now, but rather think about who you want to be through your own effort.”

Our findings support an active adaptation of core values into practical student life where they internalize a moral cultural identity.

Discussion

The role of the university is key to the moral development of business students, our future business leaders. Our findings point to the fact that Chinese students actively are developing a sense of moral cultural identity and internalizing their moral codes. Very effective influencers in the life of the Chinese business students are the role of teachers, volunteer student clubs, and business supervisors. Figure 4 describes the Chinese university student collective moral identity being reinforced by the members of the university. The main actors are the teachers, other students and workplace supervisors. Teachers provide the encouragement, motivation, guidance and sometimes friendship that drives the collective moral identity. University students are the next group that reinforces the collective moral identity through student leadership, student led Communist Party membership and other aspects of daily university life. Finally, the workplace supervisors play an especially key role in contextualizing the moral code and living out the collective moral identity that is expected from the student.

Figure 4*Collective Moral Identity*

We suggest that based on these findings that the university develop intentional and programmatic experiential learning bridges with the business community. University students all over the world are transitioning into full time work. Many Chinese students describe how influential their workplace supervisors are. This intentional programming focus would focus on case study type discussions and applications of core values into the workplace.

Conclusion and Future Research

Business educators across the world ponder how they can be more effective in helping their graduates make more ethical choices. Partnering with a university in Southern China we sought to replicate recent research. Our findings point to the fact that Chinese university students are actively developing their sense of moral identity through the same six factors: *institutional moral reinforcement, business moral reinforcement, service activities, moral amplifiers, experiential challenges, and moral cultural identity*. This study further elaborates the model by discovering in the Moral Cultural Identity the importance of cultural context. This cultural context is essential as collectivist core values stand in sharp contrast to individualist core values. Chinese business students describe collective core values, adopting a collective identity while at the university and point to the centrality of relational harmony. They adopt a positive student collective identity with the “mother university”.

These findings suggest that universities can leverage this theory to increase their effectiveness in morally developing their students. This can be done in two ways. First, using the key relationships of the Chinese student, which are their teachers, student club volunteers and business supervisors. These

relationships can be evaluated to find ways to intentionally incorporate authentic collectivist core values through instruction or during experiential challenges. Second, collectivist core values can be integrated in curriculum or university activities using business ethical case studies and business internships. Using business cases is a practical way to bridge theory to practice, preparing the future graduate for the realities of making ethical decisions in the workplace. These findings resonate with Chinese young adult research in moral development (moral reasoning & moral identity) which posits that moral development increases prosocial behaviors (Ding et al., 2018).

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

1. What are the top 3 ethical lessons you have learned while attending the university (does not have to be learned at school). Describe how each of these lessons was learned either through trial or teaching. *How did you learn these lessons?*
2. Think of the top 3 relationships you have developed while attending the university. *Describe why* these relationships are very important to you and what challenges or experiences made this relationship so strong.
3. Think of 3 people at your university who influence you to be a better person, or make good, ethical choices. *Describe how they influence you.*
4. Since you have been at the university, how has your campus service with people at the university changed? Do you feel that the level of your campus service has increased, stayed the same, or decreased? *Why?*
5. Since you have been at the university, how has your community service with people *outside* the university changed? Do you feel that the level of your community service has increased, stayed the same, or decreased? *Why?*
6. Think of 3 things (other than people) at your university that enable you to make better ethical decisions? *How* did they contribute making good, ethical choices?
7. How do you feel that the university has increased your ethical or moral development, contributing to your making ethical decisions?

**Tony Waters, Wutthichula Khunpatwattana, Benjamaporn
Mekara, Taien Layraman & Thosaphon Bunsiri Vol 2:4 2023**

Introduction

Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, began educating larger numbers of Chinese students in 2016. The Chinese students arrived in Thailand to take advantage of the proximity to southern China, English-language curriculum, and readily procured visas. Programs continued during the COVID lockdowns in Thailand via online platforms like Microsoft Teams, and enrollment resumed on-campus in late 2022, a strategy many Thai universities adopted sought to protect enrolments, and balance budgets. This has caused faculty and administration to evaluate how such international programs might continue post-pandemic. At the same time though, faculty and staff are getting a sense of the opportunities, risks, and difficulties associated with educating larger numbers of Chinese students in a Thai environment.¹

As instructors and advisors in courses for Chinese, each author is aware of what it means to work with Chinese students at a “gut-level” first in our classrooms, and during the pandemic via Teams, and other on-line platforms used to deliver courses. Between the five of us, we had different experiences in traditional classrooms as advisors, and in administration of Payap international programs. We adapted, often incrementally, and through a process of trial-and-error new course designs, advising protocols, and classroom routines. Advice for students was modified to match the expectations and assumptions of both the Chinese universities and the students themselves on an ad hoc basis. Necessarily this was done in the context of Thai regulations for the accreditation, as well as our own pre-existing unwritten Thai expectations for what comprises a university education.

In the process, informally we each became aware that Thai and Chinese ideas about what is different for the Chinese students adapting to the Thai system. This is obvious in terms of regulations, which emphasize the way that credit hours are managed, admissions articulated, schedules made, and advising coordinated. These are the differences that become part of formal

¹ Descriptions of Thai Higher Education are found in Lao 2015, Crocco and Pinyomawul 2022).

advising programs and handbooks. Less obvious are implicit assumptions about the roles of advising, faculty, and students in creating a learning environment.

To begin understanding something about the informal “taken for granted” learning environment in international programs, in 2019, Payap University published a research report “Cultural Integration of International students at Payap University” using data collected in 2017-2018 (Waters 2019). Our conclusion emphasized that administrators should take internationalization of high education as an important goal in and of itself. Chinese and other international students are a rich educational resource. However, the day-to-day demands of running a university, also conclude was that it is often difficult to focus on students and faculty development for their own sake, and not as a driver of revenue and growth strategy.

We also note that Thai universities have an impressive capacity to innovate and establish new majors and international programs quickly, as will be described below. This seems to work well too for Chinese universities who bring assumptions from China, including formal requirements of their accreditors. An example described below was the MBA program at Payap University which was established within a few months for Guangxi University of Foreign Languages (GUFL). Important to the Chinese was that the Thai MBA program articulate with the semester at Guangxi University, so that students would maximize both residential time in Thailand, internet capabilities between China and Thailand, while maintaining their status as employees at GUFL.

Also interesting was the quick recalibration of programming for the Chinese students after a Taiwan program was discontinued in 2017. Out of this discontinuation came the new Thai Communication for Foreigners major. How this happened is briefly described below.

Theoretical Background: Menschenbild

This paper is part of a larger sociological project investigating how both international students and internationalizing institutions wrestle with cross-cultural issues (see e.g. Khunpatwattana et al 2018, Waters 2019, and Waters and Day 2022b). This particular paper is about how host country teachers bring sub-conscious mental pictures of what it means to be a teacher, student, and university (see also Waters 2019; Hofstede et al 2010), and how this interacts with the mental

pictures brought by students from other places, in this case, China (see e.g. Hofstede 2010:7-14, and Low et al 2020).

Menschenbild is a German word meaning literally “picture of a human,” but actually means more. It is the picture a “we” has of itself, and a “bundle of deep convictions” held about what it is to be human. These convictions are typically sub-conscious and “taken-for-granted” as normal. Such “emic” convictions are a filter through which individuals and institutions define personhood, and ultimately membership. These are embodied in everyday life, and in German phenomenological traditions represent a “lifeworld.” (see Zichy 2020:56-60, and Waters and Day 2022a). What is more, they are embodied not just in the lifeworld of the individual but institutionalized in the prescribed habits (*habitus*) of institutions which become a visible “societal map” for those who participate (Zichy 2020:63-64). Notably though, such lifeworlds are often invisible to newcomers, such as international students from China arriving in Thailand who in fact bring with them their own *Menschenbild*.

Thesis

Thai teachers at Payap University became aware of cultural differences for how Thai and Chinese students see the university classroom through the trial-and-error of experience. What was apparent to us before we started writing this conceptual paper, is that Chinese students, and Thai teachers, have different expectations of what is involved in the nature of the higher education, i.e. different “*Menschenbild*.” These are both sub-conscious and taken-for-granted, and partially incompatible. Recognizing that there are different *Menschenbild* with respect to higher education means that there will be misunderstandings and confusions in how teachers and students alike develop in an “international” university.

Our description in this paper includes inherent comparisons. Our many years teaching Thai students in a Thai context means that these often-unspoken assumptions—the *Menschenbild*—we bring to our teaching are Thai in origin. What is more the institution that the students study is Thai in origin, and as with institutions of higher education everywhere, bureaucratize perceptions of what a university student, faculty, and institution are.

Out of the Thai context with which we are familiar, and the Chinese with which we are not, emerged a cultural mosaic. Such “cultural mosaics” describes the way the *Menschenbild* of societies, and groups of people, integrate as a ‘people.’

Chao and Moon (2005: 1129) point to three categories comprising an individual’s “cultural” mosaic which are the (a) demographic, (b) geographic, and (c) associative features of culture. As will be seen, though, what teachers at Payap tend to focus on terms of “what is different” about the Chinese students reflects associative features i.e. the clash of the *Menschenbild* of the receiving institution and faculty (i.e. Thailand); and that of the sending students and institution (i.e. China). The demographic and geographic peculiarities of the students we received are the basis for how the mosaic of the associative features of culture emerge.

Degree Programs for Chinese Students at Payap University

Payap University in 2016 started a Chinese program taught in Chinese by Taiwanese instructors for students from PR China. The Taiwanese instructors left after two semesters, and the students transferred into either existing programs in the International College taught in English, or into programs in Business Management, Accounting, etc., usually taught in Thai, but in practice became a mixture of English and Chinese. Thai instructors in both General Education and major classes improvised to adapt to the new student body. The primary problem of course was language; the Chinese students did not necessarily speak English well, and few if any spoke Thai.

To cope with the influx, in 2017, a new major “Thai Communication for Foreigners” was opened. This program was organized, approved, and accredited quickly by the Board of Governors of Payap University, and the Thai Higher Education Commission in Bangkok. This program was designed for Chinese students (and other foreigners) wanting to major in Thai as a second language, and by 2018, there were approximately 70 students enrolled, most being Chinese. Students included both Chinese students from the discontinued Taiwanese program, and new students recruited in southern China.

In late 2019, Payap University was approached by Guangxi University of Foreign Languages (GUFL) to open an MBA program in English, which would be appropriate for university

instructors needing a master's degree. Forty MBA students were brought to Thailand beginning in January 2020. The students were teachers themselves who taught at the GUFL in Nanning. They needed master's level certification for professional development within the Chinese system. The program was tailored to the schedules and patterns brought by the Chinese students, including block classes, and seven-day per week schedules. The general idea was that a three-unit class of 45 hours would be completed across seven-nine days.

The speed with which programs were established, disestablished, and reconstituted is perhaps surprising for universities in North America. However, the above summary of “what happened,” and “how we did it” administratively is straightforward from a Thai and Chinese perspective. Furthermore, an interesting—and more subtle—are the unseen taken-for-granted associative patterns that Chinese students brought from China, and how they fit in (or not) with what was already well-established Thai associative patterns taken-for-granted by the larger institution. Such associative factors are at the heart of what culture is and reflect underlying values and morals regarding education which the Chinese students would run into (see also Hofstede et al. 2010:4-13).

Conceptual Approach

This is the fourth study of Payap University and how it has internationalized its student body. Previous studies used survey data collected from international, Thai, and Chinese students about how they have adapted to Payap University.

This study focuses specifically on four Thai faculty (and one American) who were confronted with a need to quickly develop and adapt to an influx of Chinese students. We conducted focus groups among ourselves in both formal, and informal ways. Each of us prepared responses to a questionnaire, which we shared among each other. We also each contributed to the manuscript of this article as it was developed through editing, consultation, and more editing. The point of this approach is to provide an emic view of what it was like for Thai faculty to teach students from China who came to live in Chiangmai, and later went on-line during the COVID epidemic. In our preparation, we sought to understand the *Menschenbild* that we brought to our teaching, advising,

and program development, as well as the *Menschenbild* that our Chinese students brought to Payap University.

Findings & Observations

Summarized here are the issues that the authors noticed as they organized their classes for the Chinese students. Admittedly, these observations are idiosyncratic—for more systematic data the student demographics, and views, please see earlier articles (Waters and Day 2002a, and 2002b). The observations are by their nature impressionistic, and reflect the issues that the teachers notice, i.e. those areas where the Thai and Chinese *Menschenbild* clashed.

Value of Education.

We are all impressed that the Chinese students are studious and place a high value on academic achievement. They hold themselves overall to a high standard. There is also a strong belief among our Chinese students that a “foreign” degree is necessary for career advancement in China—and that a Thai degree will impress companies there. The Chinese students never raised objections to our teaching, even when we make mistakes. This makes our job easier on a certain level but we miss the give-and-take we are more likely to get from Thai students. Chinese students are also unlikely to blame the instructor for their inability to learn, or the grading of exams. Challenges to our grading standards are infrequent, unlike with Thai students.

On a certain level, they are similar to how we (WK, BM, TL, and TB) remember Thai students from 15-20 years ago, before university education became a default activity for 18-23 year-olds graduating from secondary schools in Thailand.

Attitudes Toward Teachers

As experienced college instructors in Thailand, what is most notable to us is the deferential respect Chinese students have for teachers. Teachers are deferred to, and students are humble in their approach to teachers in ways that Thai students are not. On the other hand, Chinese students seemed reluctant from our perspective to directly communicate with lecturers about many matters (see also Waters 2019:43-44)

Chinese students bring ideas, i.e. *Menschenbild* about classroom organization from China, which includes choosing a representative from within the class who presents student views of the students to faculty, staff, and administration, even about mundane personal matters. The result is that as individuals, Chinese students seemed to Thai faculty as shy and more diffident than Thai students who are more likely to present concerns directly to the instructor.

Related to the issue of communication between Chinese students, and Thai faculty, was a key person in the International Business Management program who was a Thai advisor who spoke Chinese and became a cultural intermediary. Chinese students would rarely go directly to an instructor regarding views of the class, and instead went to class representative or the advisor who would then approach the instructor. This included individual personal issues. In contrast, Thai students communicated directly to an instructor instead of going through an intermediary.

One of us believes that the Chinese students routinely select one member to be the representative. If that representative speaks enough English they may go directly to the Thai instructor, and if not matters come up to the Chinese-speaking counselor. Concerns and complaints were funneled to the leader, who was responsible for making the concern known to the instructor.

Collaboration Among Students and Group Work

We all observed that Chinese students tend to work alone more so than Thai students. Thai students reflexively form groups and generated a strong sense of group cohesion to assign tasks in a manner perceived as equitable. Free riders are of course possible, but it is not a central concern of the Thai student work group. We believe that facilitating this is the familiarity Thai students have with each other and their “seniors” as a result of the many ceremonies, rituals, and especially the unofficial initiation rituals (see below) which occur during the first weeks after matriculation.

Group cohesion is also perhaps facilitated by the frequency with which Thai students socialize in dining commons areas, and coffee shops. Chinese students seem more likely to socialize in smaller

groups which exclude outsiders. In Waters (2019) Chinese students also indicated a preference for studying alone in their rooms, rather than in groups.

The Thai instructors had different assumptions about how to organize group work, and study groups. One of us observed that when actual groups form, Chinese students seem more hesitant to accept people they do not already know into their groups, fearing that the new person will be a “free rider.”

Chinese students avoid Thai initiation rituals, and ceremonies, to the extent they can. One common excuse is that they fear that there will not be food that they can eat—even students from Szechuan complain that the Thai food has too many chili peppers! The net result of this of course is that the Chinese students socially exist on an island, a situation that is further exacerbated by the fact that they are often on separate Chinese-determined semester schedules, and have separate classes conducted in English where there are only Chinese students.

Punctuality

Chinese students are in class before the assigned hour; a teacher who arrives on time in a Chinese class is likely to be greeted by a full classroom. This situation is unusual in Thailand, where understandings of punctuality are decidedly different. Thai students routinely show up after the appointed time, and there is often an assumption by Thai lecturers that class will start late, and if necessary, continue over time.

Chinese students are very concerned about the date and time that assignments are due. They are much less likely to ask for extensions, or exceptions to due dates. When they do ask, it is with attention to a specific date and time. We are impressed that Chinese students want to know the exact time of day that papers are to be handed in via the Learning Management System. Such a question generally does not occur to Thai students.

Class Leadership and Communication

Thai classrooms typically have a class leader who communicates with the instructor about general class interests and concerns, however this does not preclude individual students initiating contact with the teacher regarding individual issues. The cohesiveness of the groups that do form in a Thai classroom often emerge from the initiation rituals (see section 3.7 below), and group activities that are organized from the time of matriculation. Thai students are highly skilled at getting participation from each member of a group and avoiding “free riders.” It strikes us that Chinese students are less likely to include students they do not know in their groups and are wary of “free riders.”

Leadership among the Chinese students is somewhat opaque to the Thai instructors, although it seems to be present behind the diffidence. In part this seems to be because there is so much deference to the teacher, and presumably to the leader selected from among the students themselves. As is indicated in Waters (2019:43-44) data from the National Survey of Student Engagement conducted at Payap Chinese students are more hesitant about speaking to a teacher about academic or personal issues both inside, or outside class. What communication there is often occurred indirectly via an advisor, particularly if that advisor spoke Chinese.

In general, Chinese students prefer individual work, to group work, citing the problem of “free riders” from among students they do not know well. When group work happens, the Chinese students did say that they deal free riders with through fines, meaning students who do not do work pay to those who do. Such fines are mediated by the student leaders, and do not pass through the instructor—we only heard about this system indirectly.

Our impression is that unlike Thai students, Chinese students are much less likely to share personal and academic problems with their friends, or anyone outside their family. This struck us not so much as a lack of trust; rather it was a reluctance to cause teachers and fellow students disturbance about their personal problems. In Thai this is called “*Kreng Jai*,” and is a quality Thai culture is known for. However, from the experience of Thai instructors in Thai classroom, it seems that Chinese students feel this even stronger than the Thai students we are accustomed to. This could

have been due to a lack of trust, but is expressed as being a hesitance to seem to “bother” us, in other words a strong sense of *Kreng Jai*.

Random Observations about Travel, Bureaucratic Pressures, and Gender

From a Thai perspective, it seemed Chinese students did not easily get annoyed when confronted with bureaucratic obstacles. They are patient with issues of visa renewals, and misplaced passports, more so than Thai students who do not need to deal with such issues. We (WK and BM) experienced that while travelling with Chinese students in Korea. The Chinese students were more independent travelers than were the Thai students. The Chinese students on the Korea trip needed little advice regarding travel, in the way the Thai students did.

Male Chinese students on the Korea trip seemed quite generous, particularly with the Thai female students. The male students insisted on paying for the meals of female students during a field trip to Korea, something that surprised the Thai women. During the trip to Korea, Chinese males also made a point of having full refrigerators in their room, from which all students could take food. One of the male students explained that his mother had instructed him to do this.

Initiations, university rituals, and Uniforms

In Thailand, initiation rituals are organized for first year students by the more senior students within each major. Students arriving from Thai secondary schools anticipate participating in these coming-of-age-rituals with a mixture of excitement and dread. The rituals are not explicitly supported by the universities, but organized by succeeding cohorts of students who pass along songs, chants, and histories specific to the major. These rituals are often abusive (Winichakul 2015), and subject to condemnation by faculty as extreme hazing practices. But the rituals also have the effect that over four years at the university, students are well-aware of who their senior mentors are, and it is on this basis cohesive study groups can form.

Thai initiation rituals for the first-year “freshy” create a sense of hierarchical “seniority” among students in succeeding years of study. The “senior” who starts out as a second year student, is the mentor for the “junior” who is the first year student. This continues throughout the years at the

university, and even beyond into the work force where cliques based in class membership persist, particularly from the more elite universities.

As for the Chinese students, they were confused by the Thai initiation rituals which were of course not part of any official orientation, and they hesitate to participate. We think that the Chinese students express their unease by referring to the food they would be asked to eat during the rituals, rather than by addressing their fears and confusions about a distinctly Thai practice. So the Chinese students said these rituals would put them at risk for eating food which they would not like, so no one would be happy if they went. Presumably this is a way to back out of what they perceived as the confusing, and perhaps abusive, nature of the rituals.

Thai universities also organize official rituals focused on Thai national celebrations, religious rituals, cultural events, and respect for teachers. Thai students are expected to dress in smart uniforms, and participate in such rituals, which are carefully choreographed; Thai students raised in such traditions typically accept participation as routine. Formal credit toward graduation is not given for such participation, which is nevertheless normative.

Chinese students avoided such rituals and were often excused due to their status as foreigners. Lack of participation is exacerbated by the fact that schedules for international classes are different, with classes for Chinese classes adjusted to highlight interaction, with other Chinese students, rather than Thai students; in other words the Chinese programs become “island” programs, in the same way proprietary North American exchange programs study programs often do.

Uniforms are standard in Thai universities for all undergraduates and include a white shirt (with a tie), and black slacks for male students, and a white shirt and black skirt for female students. There are separate dress uniforms for ceremonial days featuring school colors, which for Payap University is light blue and white. There are also specific requirements for hair styles, shoes, etc. Such uniform requirements are not found in Chinese universities.

Oddly the Chinese generally complied without the resistance often found among Thai students who were more likely to have skirts, shoes, shirts, socks, and hairstyles which pressed the limits of university dress regulations.

Managing Language Problems

Language issues were probably underneath much of what we observed in classes (see also Khunpatwattana et al 2018). Chinese students did not always understand the lecturers, and for that matter, the students were often hesitant about expressing themselves. In the General Education classes for “Thai Communication for Foreigners,” the classes were ostensibly in Thai, though in practice moved into carefully spoken English; since the Thai teachers did not speak Chinese, and de facto, the students did not yet speak Thai, and so English was the common language.

Strategies in class generally focused on letting Chinese students assist each other with the language barrier. This meant leaving time for informal translation, and emphasizing activities which involved pictures, computer practice, and other media which went beyond straight lecture in Thai or English. Chinese students fluent in English often had an advantage, even in a Thai class.

Politeness registers for Chinese and Thai are apparently different—even in English. Thus, a Thai instructor must take care to evaluate Chinese students work which often lacked deferential language that Thai student use in English. We are not sure to what extent this is an artefact of Google Translate algorithms for translating Chinese to English, and Thai to English respectively. Or perhaps it reflects different normative registers for expressing politeness. Nevertheless “impolite” language in English is something that Thai instructors often notice when reading English papers submitted by Chinese students.

Exams and Cheating

There are chronic concerns with the Chinese students regarding cheating, and the amount of assistance students are allowed on written work, and exams. We have a sense that Chinese students did get more assistance on writing assignments, particularly during COVID times when much of the university shifted on-line, and it became unclear who was actually did the submitted work.

The fact that students who barely spoke English often delivered well-enunciated presentations on Microsoft Teams also concerned us. Norms for what is “too much” editing purchased from Chinese and Indian editing companies have yet to emerge, too; guidelines for evaluating student work are really still emerging. Notably, English plagiarism detection programs like Turnitin.com are not yet generally used in Thailand.

Differences in norms for academic honesty were murky, in large part we think because understandings of what is legitimate vary between Thailand and China; weak English language skills also made evaluation of the situation difficult. There is an assumption that the academic integrity in norms for test-taking are the same in Thailand and China, but we do not really know if this is the case.

There is some concern that Chinese students would take advantage of language difficulties to skirt norms for academic integrity, using an excuse that they did not understand well the written instructions. The role of “cheat sheets” is one example. One of us (WK) remembers a cheating case that went to student judicial affairs involving such a cheat sheet. The student asserted that this was normative in China, an assertion that the committee was not able to evaluate.

Discussion and Conclusion

Thai universities like Payap demonstrated an impressive capacity to innovate and establish new majors and international programs quickly during the last five years. This seems to work well too for Chinese universities who typically demand particular criteria to address the assumptions of Chinese students, and accreditors there. An example was the MBA program at Payap University which was established within a few months for Guangxi University of Foreign Languages. The recalibration of programming for the Chinese students after the Taiwanese program disappeared was impressive too—out of this came the new Thai Communication for Foreigners major.

Having said that, the development of such programs presents faculty with unusual and difficult cross-cultural conundrums. And there is also a broader question about follow-up. Are the students

in such broad start-ups followed up with providing the services in terms of language and cross-cultural relations? In other words, is there an awareness of the differing *Menschenbild*?

Language issues try our patience the most. All of us experienced difficulties communicating with our Chinese students. Taking cognizance of this in scheduling, pedagogy, curriculum, and hiring decisions is important, even as it is often neglected in an institution dominated by Thai accreditation norms created in past decades to reflect a Thai *Menschenbild*.

Multi-lingual cross-cultural advising is also very important for communication between faculty and students. The bi-lingual Thai Chinese advisor was critical for program success. It is important that advisors and faculty have bilingual experience wherever possible.

While recognizing that with new programs, much is done by faculty “by the seat of the pants.” It is important though that it be recognized in workload assignment. Work with students who are indeed wrestling with language comprehension issues is difficult and inherently time-consuming when done well. Administrators can also both enforce language requirements for matriculating students and provide incentives for faculty and staff to develop their own English and Chinese skills. These things need to be recognized in faculty workload accounting.

A related issue is the role of the formal student leaders that Chinese students bring with them. This structure can be a strength—though only if it articulates with the Thai system. Understanding this taken-for-granted Chinese *Menschenbild* needs to be more systematically understood.

Experience showed us too that coordinating daily, weekly, and semester schedules is also complicated when mixing Thai and Chinese views of the academic world. Chinese students bring different rhythms to their day and semester which need to be dealt with the cross-cultural issue, not simply as compliance. After all, the fact that Chinese students are so much more punctual is hardly annoying to a Thai instructor! But the emphasis of Chinese students on firm due dates, also did not necessarily fit with Thai strengths in flexibility, adaptation, and communication that the Thai students and faculty bring.

A problem is that much of this clash is dealt with by creating separate curriculum and schedules for the Chinese students. But separate curricula also defeats one purpose of having inter-cultural education in the first place. Where the students speak English (or Thai) well-enough, there could plausibly be mixed classes, i.e. the informal mixing of students from China and Thailand. Activities should be structured into the curriculum, so that the cross-cultural experience for all improves. The Thai ceremonies, and rituals would seem to be a prime place to do this. However, the reluctance of Chinese students to participate due to scheduling difficulties, food likes, or other factors need to be acknowledged and dealt with.

Which raises the question of how to effectively integrate Thai and Chinese students together so that both benefit from a cross-cultural environment? It is easy to simply acquiesce to Chinese demands to conduct the program under a Thai schedule. But when this happens, both Thai and Chinese students lose out on the opportunity to interact. Integration of university rituals could also be important, even when students are not awarded academic credit for attendance. To promote integration with Thai students, compromises on scheduling, rituals, and particularly involvement in the rich mosaic of Thai ceremonies, social activities need to be made. Identification of Thai students with their major, and the university is important—it goes beyond the accumulation of credit points, and formal graduation. This too is a “latent function” of a university relevant to Chinese students as well.

As lecturers we appreciate very much the discipline, punctuality, and respect, we receive from our Chinese students. Integrating students more will mean that our Thai students will also systematically be exposed to such values more. As for our Thai students, their ability to form study groups, and collaborate together in a fashion that avoids the “free rider” (without fines) problem is commendable. Perhaps they have something to teach the Chinese students, too.

Our summary point is that we would like to see administrative authorities be more intentional in promoting cross-cultural interaction in such programs. The mixing of Thai and Chinese students is by itself an important part of a higher education—the internationalization of the university is more than simply bolstering enrollment numbers and tuition collection. But doing this effectively

is a cross-cultural challenge with often unforeseen consequences. A key to this is an awareness of the difficult language issues for the education of Chinese students in a country like Thailand. Three languages (Thai, Chinese, English) are inevitably involved, which is complicated in any learning environment. Admission requirements for students, and staff development incentives for faculty and staff can all be directed at this issue.

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