Anti-Asian racism in France: how the second generation of immigrants mobilizes to change the game?

Chuang Ya-Han (Ined post-doc researcher, Paris)
Hélène Le Bail (CNRS Research fellow, CERI - Sciences Po Paris)

hélène.lebail@sciencespo.fr
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Introduction: Chinese Xin Yimin and their Descendants in France: Claiming Belonging and Challenging the Host Country’s Integration Model
Ya-Han Chuang, Hélène Le Bail and Aurore Merle

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2. Chinese Immigrants Acting as Local Residents: De facto Citizenship in the Banlieues of Paris
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3. From Online Gathering to Collective Action at the Criminal Court: Descendants of Chinese Migrants Organizing Against Ethnoracial Discrimination in France
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4. Chinese Ethnic Media in France: Showcasing Entrepreneurial Success?
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5. Institutional Discrimination and Workplace Racism: A Double Roadblock in the Career Paths of Chinese Graduates in France
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Background of mobilization against violence since 2010 in Paris
From migrants to their descendants:

Table and photos illustrate how the second generation progressively took a more active role in the street protests and (re)framed the demonstrators’ claims to emphasize the structural racism that lies behind the violence targeting their communities.

The 2016 big street protest can be seen as a pivotal point for Chinese’s descendants mobilization, but can’t be understand without going back to a decade of online spaces where individual experiences were transformed into collective experiences and collective representations.
Methodology and research questions

Methodology:
• Long-term ethnography mixed with participant observation, interviews and virtual ethnography.

Research questions:
1. How to explain the change of framing of «Chinese/Asian» mobilization from ‘insecurity’ to ‘racism’?

2. What are the determining factors of the recent descendants’ mobilisation and the répertoire of action.
Outlines

2. Descendants, « cultural activism », and collective representations challenging everyday racism (Xiaoping Li 2007)
3. Descendants, « legal activism », and collective action for the recognition of racist offenses. (McCann 2006)
When Facebook started to be popular, many mainland Chinese subscribed to different groups; there were different groups discussing identity. New groups would diffuse messages such as “If you are Wenzhou…” or other key words that led you to identify with and connect with the group. It was easy to manage a Facebook forum like a discussion forum. For instance, someone would create a group called “What do you think about the tontine?” or “Don't you think that French people insult us too often?”, etc.; it started to develop in 2006. There were many such groups; personally I participated in a group called “Wen [Wenzhou] in France. “I did not know anyone but after a certain time of discussion we finally met and organized a first meeting… At one point I also got in contact with another group called “Nouvelle Génération de Chinois en France” [New Generation of Chinese in France], and we merged our resources […] Then, there came a catalyst moment: the Beijing Olympic Games. It was a time when China and the Chinese endured suspicion, attacks; we were asked to take a position. Such bad experiences feed a feeling to belong to a group because we endure the same attacks. […] **Because of such experiences we started to think about doing something together**

(interview with a founding member of the AJCF, Young Chinese French Association, 2018).

1. **Background : descendants, social networks and collective experience of everyday racism**

Creating online chatting groups and exchanging their experiences of everyday racism or microaggressions as young Chinese or Asians in France

>> **From individual experience to collective experience**
1. Background: descendants, social networks and collective experience of everyday racism

Such online platforms are increasing since 2016 and more clearly address the issue of racism

>> From individual experience to collective experience
“The anti-Asian racism is what is often called ordinary [everyday] racism based on stereotypes and clichés. For a long time Asian, and French Asians had difficulty to grasp the notion of racism, it’s not easy to understand what it is, it’s so much part of everyday life that we do nothing anymore! There was a real gap between ordinary racism experienced by Asians [and racism experienced by other minorities], so just mockery, just petty mockeries […] But the death of Zhang Chaolin has changed the situation, for the first time the media spoke about the fact that stereotypes can kill. Stereotypes have killed many people before but for the first time it was in the media. This tragedy has been an opportunity for us to gather. It was very important because it helped us to gather the pieces of the puzzle. It enables us to connect stereotypes, and racism, and the death.”

(Interview, activist, woman, about 30, Chinese-Cambodian origins, 2018).

1. Background : descendants, social networks and collective experience of everyday racism

The 2016 street protest was a catalyst for the emerging discourse, as well as a time for conscious awareness

>> From individual experience to collective experience
2. Descendants, « cultural activism », and collective representations challenging everyday racism

After the 2016 demonstrations, blooming of « cultural activism »: Initiatives by young journalists, bloggers and artists of the second generation

2. Descendants, « cultural activism », and collective representations challenging everyday racism

Cultural initiatives as places where to deconstruct and reconstruct representations.

>> cultural activism as an attempt to « undermine existing unjust relations and power structures » and « engage in the production of new consciousness » through cultural practices (Li 2007)
3. Descendants, « legal activism », and collective action for the recognition of racist offenses.

- first lawsuit targeting French media in 2012
- the Magazine is sentenced for “public defamation towards a group of the population based on their origins or nationality”, i.e. defamation of racist nature

The 5 commandments of Chinese entrepreneurs:
- You shall work 80 hours per week.
- You shall sleep in your shop or in your restaurant
- You shall not pay the social contributions and thus do not receive any social aides.
- You shall not pay taxes
- You shall not remunerate your employees because they are your family members
- In the end, you shall earn 10000 euros per month and will possess a limousine car and be wealthy when getting retired.
3. Descendants, "legal activism", and collective action for the recognition of racist offenses.

>> A collective of French-Chinese/Asian collecting all the events of violence and discrimination targeting Asians in France

>> Cooperation with the police and local authorities to have the phenomenon recognized.
3. Descendants, « legal activism », and collective action for the recognition of racist offenses.

>> following law suits and claiming for aggravating circumstances due to racist prejudices as criminal motivations.

>> Zhang Chaolin lawsuit: first case of recognition of “aggravating circumstances due to racist prejudices”, June 2018
Conclusion:
- The mobilization of the second generation since 2016 has been the key factor to understand the change in framing mobilization from ‘insecurity’ to ‘racism’.
- They use both online social networks (self-definition), cultural tools and legal tools (official definition) as a repertory of action to propose a renewed conception of racist discrimination.