Is There a Chinese Diaspora?

Does it really matter?
Goals for the Presentation

I. Describe the concept of “diaspora” as currently used in social science today

II. Explore the history and patterns of Chinese migrations in the framework of diaspora

III. Introduce “diaspora” as an explanatory paradigm for understanding social and cultural phenomena
The classic diasporas

- Jews
- Armenians
- Greeks
- Africans
- Basques
What are the central elements of a classic diaspora?

1. “A people”
2. Shared culture
3. Homeland
4. Exiled
5. Return
Do *these* groups meet the definition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Iranians</th>
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**Elements of a Diaspora**

- “A People”
- Shared Culture
- Exiled
- Homeland
- “Return”
What about a Chinese Diaspora?

Does it fit a pattern?

1. “A People”
2. Shared Culture
3. Homeland
4. Exiled
5. “Return”
Is there evidence in history of a Chinese diaspora?
Chinese Overseas Migration Before 1800

Three Groups

Merchants
Official Emissaries
Adventurers
Why was overseas travelers limited before 1800’s?

• No urge to go overseas
• Confucian Values
• Laws prevented Chinese from leaving
• Traditional enemies were land-based
What events in 1800’s opened up Chinese to overseas migration?

1. Weak Chinese government
2. Japan resisted western trade
3. Dutch and Spaniards at war
4. Chinese government realized it could learn from West
5. Expansion in world trade
What events in 1800’s opened up Chinese to overseas migration?

1. War, famine, social unrest in southern China
2. End of slavery
3. 1842 Treaty of Nanking opened Hong Kong as a gateway
4. 1848-1852 California Gold Rush (24,000 by 1852)
5. 1862-1869 U.S. Transcontinental Railroad (12,000 by 1867)
Hong Kong in the 19th Century

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Treaty_of_Nanking
Early Destinations

“Nan Yang” or “Southern Ocean”
Main receiving countries
  Malaysia
  Singapore
  Indonesia
  Thailand
Other countries
  Philippines
  Cambodia
Latin America
  Peru 1849-1874
  Cuba 1847
United States
  California Gold Rush, 1848-1852
  Transcontinental Railroad, 1862-1869
Were Chinese exiled?
Pattern of Early Chinese Emigration

- Men emigrated as workers for plantations and mines
- Became merchants and craftsmen
- Traded with China
- Attracted new family members
- Men returned to China for marriage.
- Families sent sons to China to bring back wives.
- Communities grew as middlemen for colonial powers
### Overseas Chinese Population

**Countries with the Highest Concentrations**

**Estimate: 40,000,000**

From: Overseas Compatriot Affairs Division, R.O.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>7,153,240</td>
<td>Myanmar (Burma)</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>United States</td>
<td>3,376,031</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
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<td>Peru</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1,263,570</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>230,515</td>
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<td>7,153,240</td>
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What about a homeland?

Chinese population movements in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century largely originated from countries outside of China—Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.
Super Saturday: The City's Taiwanese Head Home to Vote
By FLORA LEE
Sunday, March 7, 2004

For some residents of Flushing, Queens, the most riveting race for president isn't in the United States, it's in Taiwan.

On Saturday, March 20, President Chen Shui-bian faces off against Lien Chan in what is expected to be a close election. So close, in fact, that Taiwanese voters who live in America are being encouraged to go home and vote; …

…One person who plans to go back is Tony H. Chang, leader of the New York branch of Mr. Lien's Nationalist Party….

…he switched to Mandarin Chinese when he revealed the true secret of the voter drive. "We are going back," he said, "because we love our country."
Are Chinese “a people?”

Three Symbolic Universes (Tu 1994):

1. China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.
2. Chinese in other parts of the world
3. Intellectual China.

Chinese symbolizes a “guardian of moral order.”
Do overseas Chinese community consider themselves as a diaspora?

After the revolution in 1911, the new Republic of China assigned the term “hua qiao” 华侨 for all “overseas” Chinese. 

“By giving the phenomenon an elegant and respectable name, it gave sojourning a definite direction and a new purposefulness, and made it into a powerful political force in the 20th Century.” (Wang, G 2000:54)
Who are the 华侨 (Hua Qiao)?

1949, the Republic of China (ROC) left the mainland.

The ROC refers to itself as the true China.

The ROC does not refer to those living in Taiwan as 华侨 (hua qiao) but use the term for all other overseas Chinese.

The Chinese of Hong Kong and Macao also referred to themselves as 华侨 (hua qiao).
Who are the 华侨 (Hua Qiao)?

- In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to People’s Republic of China (PRC)
- The Chinese in Hong Kong wanted to retain 华侨 (hua qiao).
- P.R.C. refers to them as 同胞 (tong bao) or compatriot.
Do overseas Chinese meet the elements of a diaspora?

1. A people
2. Shared culture
3. Homeland
4. Exiled
5. Return
Is there a working definition of “diaspora?”

- No consensus
- Can refer to any social grouping
- Replaces “minority” discourse
- Metaphor
If there is no true definition of a diaspora, why does it matter?

• Diaspora as a descriptive term
• Diaspora as a paradigm
• Diaspora as an explanatory model for social phenomena
Do diaspora populations have to meet all of the elements?

“(M)etaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities…” (Safran 1991:83).

Replaces or “…at least supplementing minority discourse” (Clifford 1994:311).
Need for new terminology

Colonial and Cold War categories are obsolete-
• East and West
• Socialists and Democratic, and Non-aligned
• First, Second and Third World
• Developed, Developing and Underdeveloped Nations
• North – South
• Regional “Systems:” North Atlantic, Pacific Rim
So why is the term “diaspora” commonly used today?

- Reduced importance of nation-state borders
- Increase awareness of indigenous populations
- Wider monitoring of world population movements
- Expanded responses to refugees
- Greater impact of migrant laborers
- Growing role of ethnic and social networks on national and multi-national politics
- Broader concern for oppressed groups
- More frequent expressions of ethnic pride
Diaspora is a Useful Paradigm

• Provides a sense of history
• Links population through time (history) and space (location)
• Brings to light political climate of minority populations within larger (host) populations
Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

• Explains political processes and social movements

• Populations will adopt the diaspora label to increase group solidarity and perceptions of political power.
Kurdistan

This image is a work of a Central Intelligence Agency employee, taken or made during the course of the person's official duties. As a Work of the United States Government, all images created or made by the CIA are in the public domain, with the exception of classified information.
Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

- The strength and weakness of a diasporic community will fluctuate in response to political, cultural and economic pressures from the host and homeland societies and governments.
Diaspora as an Explanatory Model

- Explains external social and political pressures on minority groups

- Host populations may attach the label to minority groups when seeking scapegoats.
Paradigm Misused

“…What was the government's motive in insisting on your being jailed pretrial under extraordinarily onerous conditions of confinement until today, when the Executive Branch agrees that you may be set free essentially unrestricted? This makes no sense to me.”

- Federal Judge James Parker
Bibliography


“Diaspora” describes populations in the post-modern era

Globalization
Transnationalism
Investment in Social Capital

A circulating network of people, trade goods and capital
  – Strong ties to the home village and kin
  – Continual rejuvenation of culture and social organization
  – Fostered solidarity in the immigrant community

Investment strategy that was based on social organization
Zheng He
(Cheng Ho)
1371-1433
Zheng He’s treasure ship (four hundred feet) and Columbus’s St. Maria (eighty-five feet).
(Illustration by Jan Adkins, 1993.)
Do these groups meet all of our criteria?

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<td>Africans</td>
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<td>Basques</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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Elements of a Diaspora

1. “A People”
2. Shared Culture
3. Exiled
4. Homeland
5. “Return”
Diaspora is an Approach

- Historically based
- Comparative
- Cultural
- Geopolitical
- Community based
Limitations of the Paradigm

- Not dynamic
- Does not examine differences within groups.
- Concept is too sweeping and broad
Do these groups meet the criteria for diaspora?

Muslims     Iranians
South Asians British
Sikhs        Mexicans
Hispanics    Filipinos
On Theory

- Sociology and organization theory By John Hassard, Edition: 3, Published by Cambridge University Press, 1995
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Shared Ancestry</th>
<th>Homeland</th>
<th>Exile</th>
<th>Dispersion</th>
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Diaspora as a political concept for group solidarity and political power.

• “…at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities—obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections—in their host countries and transnationally” (James Clifford 1994:306)
Which groups do you think of when you hear the term “diaspora?”
Are you a member of a diaspora?

Given what you know about the term, do you personally identify as a member of a diaspora?
MING CHINA 1368 - 1644

1368 Ming dynasty est. at Nanking
1421 Capital moved to Peking
1522 Mongol incursions and to Japanese sea pirate attacks
1566

- China 1400
- China 1644

Cheng-ho's naval expeditions 1405-33

www.semarang.nl
Early reports of Chinese communities

210 BC  Chinese traders in Tigris – Euphrates Delta

1296  Chinese sailors settled in Cambodia

1297  10th Cent. Arab trader saw Chinese farmers in Sumatra
Merriam-Webster

**Etymology:** Greek, dispersion, from *diaspeirein* to scatter, from *dia-* + *speirein* to sow

1) **capitalized a:** the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile **b:** the area outside Palestine settled by Jews **c:** the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel

2) **a:** the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland <the black diaspora to northern cities> **b:** people settled far from their ancestral homelands <African diaspora> **c:** the place where these people live

*Adjective: “Diasporic”*