

Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship: The New Chinese Immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area

Bernard Wong
San Francisco State University

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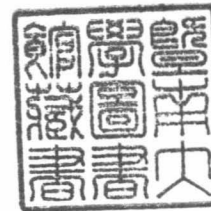
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Foreword to the Series

The United States is now experiencing the largest wave of immigration in the country's history. The 1990s, it is predicted, will see more new immigrants enter the United States than in any decade in American history. New immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are changing the American ethnic landscape.

Until recently, immigration was associated in the minds of many Americans with the massive influx of southern and eastern Europeans at the turn of the century. Since the late 1960s, America has again become a country of large-scale immigration, this time attracting newcomers from developing societies of the world. The number of foreign-born is at an all-time high: nearly 20 million foreign-born persons were counted in the 1990 census. Although immigrants are a smaller share of the nation's population than they were earlier in the century—8 percent in 1990 compared to about 15 percent in 1910—recent immigrants are having an especially dramatic impact because their geographic concentration is greater today. About half of all immigrants entering the United States during the 1980s moved to eight urban areas: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Anaheim, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Houston, and San Francisco. America's major urban centers are, increasingly, immigrant cities with new ethnic mixes.

Who are the new immigrants? What are their lives like here? How are they redefining themselves and their cultures? And how are they contributing to a new and changing America? The *New Immigrants Series* provides a set of case studies that explores these themes among a variety of new immigrant groups. Each book in the series is written by a recognized expert who has done exten-

sive in-depth ethnographic research on one of the immigrant groups. The groups represent a broad range of today's arrivals, coming from a variety of countries and cultures. The studies, based on research done in different parts of the country, cover a wide geographical range from New York to California.

Most of the books in the series are written by anthropologists. All draw on qualitative research that shows what it means to be an immigrant in America today. As part of each study, individual immigrants tell their stories, which will help give a sense of the experiences and problems of the newcomers. Through the case studies, a dynamic picture emerges of the way immigrants are carving out new lives for themselves at the same time as they are creating a new and more diverse America.

The ethnographic case study, long the anthropologist's trademark, provides a depth often lacking in research on immigrants in the United States. Moreover, many anthropologists, like a number of authors in the *New Immigrants Series*, have done research in the sending society as well as in the United States. Having field experience at both ends of the migration chain makes anthropologists particularly sensitive to the role of transnational ties that link immigrants to their home societies. With firsthand experience of immigrants in their home culture, anthropologists are also well-positioned to appreciate continuities as well as changes in the immigrant setting.

As the United States faces a growing backlash against immigration, and many Americans express ambivalence and sometimes hostility toward the latest arrivals, it becomes more important than ever to learn about the new immigrants and to hear their voices. The case studies in the *New Immigrants Series* will help readers understand the cultures and lives of the newest Americans and bring out the complex ways the newcomers are coming to terms with and creatively adapting to life in a new land.

NANCY FONER
Series Editor

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POLITICS AND THE NEW IMMIGRANTS
ESTABLISHING ROOTS AND IDENTITIES IN AMERICA
CONCLUSIONS: ECONOMIC ADAPTATION AND ETHNICITY

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Chinese immigration to the United States started 140 years ago. The old Chinese immigrants, however, differ greatly from the new arrivals. Although the adaptive patterns of the new immigrants have been of considerable interest, detailed ethnographic studies of the new immigrants are still in short supply. I was pleased that Allyn & Bacon, under the editorship of Nancy Foner and Sylvia Shepard, initiated this much needed series on immigration which includes the new Chinese. I would like to thank Nancy and Sylvia for their insightful comments and their editorial assistance. Both are wonderful people to work with and are professionals who are highly efficient, supportive, persevering, and productive. I am thankful also to my editorial assistant, Ms. Jennifer Green, who efficiently did the word processing, coding, and copy editing.

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BERNARD WONG
San Francisco

Introduction

The Chinese population in the United States, according to the census of 1990, is 1,645,472. In 1960 it was 237,292. In a period of 30 years, the increase has been eight-fold. The most important factor accounting for the enormous growth has been immigration. Many of the Chinese are new immigrants who have arrived since 1965. The places which have attracted these new immigrants are major metropolitan areas, especially New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Ethnography on the new Chinese immigrants has been scant. Although there are now 315,345 Chinese in the San Francisco Bay Area (U.S. Census of 1990), and more than half are new immigrants, there has been little discussion of the adaptive patterns of the new Chinese immigrants in the Bay Area. By comparison to the New York area, which has 261,722 people of Chinese ancestry (U.S. Census of 1990), the San Francisco Bay Area has emerged as the largest population center for Chinese in the United States.

The new Chinese immigrants come from different social and economic backgrounds and possess different social and economic resources. The focus of this book is on how the new Chinese immigrants use their ethnic and personal resources to make economic adaptations in their new country. Instead of viewing the immigrants as victims of circumstances, I follow an actor-oriented approach, which sees them as problem solvers and decision makers who attempt to shape their own destinies.

Three sets of theories guide this work. The first deals with ethnic entrepreneurship (Waldinger 1989; Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward 1990; Wong 1987a, 1988; Light 1984; Greenfield, Strickon and Aubey 1979). As suggested by these authors, I will examine the opportunity structure available to Chinese immigrants in the U.S. Second are theories of adaptive activities and social transaction

(Barth 1966; Benedict 1979; Wong, McReynolds and Wong 1992). I will focus my attention on how Chinese immigrants use their non-economic resources such as family, kinship ties, community and cultural values to interact with the economic environment. Third is the set of theories that deals with the world economy, e.g., transnationalism and world systems theories (Wallerstein 1974, 1979; Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994; Rosaldo 1993; Kearney 1991; Fong 1994). The enlargement of economic activities from narrowly confined spaces such as national states or regions into a wider geographical arena has affected many minorities, including the ethnic Chinese in the United States. Hence, it is necessary to examine how the world economy has influenced the social and economic life of the Chinese immigrants.

ETHNICITY AND ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

Ethnic culture is an important resource for the economic activities of the immigrants. In traditional social science literature, an immigrant's traditional culture was deemed to be baggage and a liability impeding economic mobility and full adaptation to American life. Recently, the tide has turned. Writers like Alejandro Portes (1990), Roger Waldinger, Howard Aldrich and Robin Ward (1990) and Ivan Light (1984) claim that ethnicity is a resource that is instrumental in many immigrant economic activities. The new Chinese immigrants use not only their ethnic resources, but also other personal resources such as education, special skills and social networks.

This book is about how the new Chinese immigrants use their ethnic resources (such as ethnic expertise, values, traditions, and social organization, the ethnic press, and access to ethnic consumers), class and economic resources (such as education, money, property, special knowledge) and personal resources (such as family connections and personal contacts) to respond creatively to the opportunity structure of the United States and the changing economy of the world (Fong 1994). Inevitably, this focus requires a look at the entrepreneurial activities of Chinese immigrants. As Chinese entrepreneurs interact with their economic environment they do not go blindly to just any job or any place to make a living. They have to assess what they can do and what is available; they have to make decisions about what comforts to give up and what talents or abilities to cultivate. Needless to say, these

decisions are made within the context of the resource structure of the larger society.

The case of Mr. Chan illustrates these processes and also introduces themes about immigrant entrepreneurship and success that will come up in later chapters. (All the names used in this book are pseudonyms, except those belonging to public figures and well-known individuals in the community.) Mr. Chan was born in China but left in 1958 for Hong Kong, where he was able to get a job with Air France because he knew French. In the 1960s, Mr. Chan was hired to teach Chinese to the Chinese community of Madagascar, a job he held for about ten years. In 1970 he was sponsored by his sister in California to come to the United States, although he settled in New York's Chinatown. He got his first job as a bookkeeper for a business organization because he had earned a college degree in accounting in China many years before. Mrs. Chan got a job in a sewing factory.

With two wage earners, the Chans were able to support four children, ages five, seven, nine and eleven, and they rented a substandard two bedroom apartment. All four children went to a Chinatown public school and a day-care center every day while their parents worked. Mrs. Chan was determined to find a way to make a better life for her family in America. Originally a school teacher, she had also worked in a Chinese school in Madagascar, but she had never learned English formally. Knowing that in America the ability to speak English is crucial, Mrs. Chan enrolled in an evening English program. To save time in caring for her children she did major cooking three times a week—on Saturday, Sunday and one weekday—and then froze the foods for use the rest of the week. When the children came home from school, the oldest would warm the food for the rest of the children.

To maximize the family's income, Mr. Chan got a second job in a liquor store through an old friend in Chinatown. Since he did not drink and was a hard worker, his boss was very pleased with his performance. Mr. Chan continued to hold two jobs for a number of years. At the same time, he went to real estate school to get a realtor's license. Eventually he was able to quit his job as a bookkeeper and purchase a liquor store with family savings. In 1980, he sold the store and started a sewing supply company, which he thought would be a good investment given the proliferation of garment factories in Chinatown in the 1970s, and the lack of sewing suppliers in the area. In fact, Mr. Chan opened the only

sewing supply store in New York's Chinatown. Business was brisk and soon he was able to open a second store, which his wife managed after quitting her factory sewing job. Mr. Chan hired kinsmen to staff his stores.

On the side, he also sold houses as an agent for a real estate company. This job gave him the opportunity to learn about the real estate world, knowledge he put to good use in speculations in the strong 1980s real estate market. He bought commercial property with friends at low prices and sold at high prices. Meanwhile, he kept both sewing supply stores running so he would have another business to fall back on in case the real estate market collapsed. In fact, Mr. Chan's foresight saved him when the real estate business was doing badly in the early 1990s. His two supply stores continue to do a brisk business, and in the past twenty years the Chans have been able to support all four children through college. One of the Chan daughters earned a Master's degree in accounting and is now running the main sewing supply store for her father. Mrs. Chan remains manager of the second store, assisted by relatives. The older son graduated from Yale Law School; the younger son graduated from Cornell with an engineering degree. Both daughters attended St. John University. Meanwhile, the Chans have purchased a large house in an exclusive area of Long Island with seven bedrooms, five bathrooms and a swimming pool. Theirs is truly a Cinderella story.

Recalling their arrival in New York's Chinatown, Mr. Chan told me that life was hard. The amount of savings the family had was small. They told themselves that they could only succeed, that they could not fail. They believed two things would help them solve their economic problems: hard work and good health. Mr. Chan chose work that he was trained for and Mrs. Chan did what she could do, sewing. Both of them learned from their jobs. They were keen observers of the economy and the demands of the opportunity structure whether in sewing supplies or real estate. Their success also had a lot to do with support from friends and family. Mr. Chan's sister gave some initial financial assistance to the family; his old friends in Chinatown got him his two early jobs, the bookkeeping position and the sales job at the liquor store. All of his partners in the real estate business were either old classmates or old friends from China.

When I asked Mr. Chan to tell me what led to his success in America, he explained:

Hard work and willing to put up with adversity is important. You have to understand what is needed in the economy and the opportunity available. One must have a vision. I was also fortunate to have my old friends in Chinatown who supported us. There was a saying in China that when you are at home, you depend on your family. When you are abroad, you depend on your friends. My friends got me jobs, loaned me money and gave me emotional support. My wife and my children assisted me all the way in the family business. They are the ones that you can trust. They also save me a lot of money. Trusted and inexpensive labor cost is very important to all Chinese ethnic businesses. I also came at the right time and the right place. The sewing supplies stores and the real estate business were in their peak in the 1980s when we started. We saw the opportunity and seized it.

I saw Mr. Chan again recently in San Francisco. He had been thinking of opening a garment factory supply store in San Francisco, but after much deliberation, decided against it because he has no other family members who can assist him in running the store. His two sons are now in law and computer science and are no longer interested in the family's enterprises. Mr. Chan felt that a supply store did not make sense when so many garment makers have moved their production plants to Third World countries. Finally, the overall economy has not been strong in recent years. Mr. Chan said that he is contemplating retirement in the next several years. He is grateful to this country, his community and his friends. Recently, he made a large cash contribution to a fund raising event which was designed to help needy children undergoing liver transplants in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mr. Chan is also active in the Chan Family Association. He is a financial backer of the association and supports its many worthwhile social projects, such as assisting immigrants to obtain employment and to locate schools for their children.

Not all new Chinese immigrants are as successful as Mr. Chan. Some have to toil without much financial return and with limited rewards. Others fail at business altogether. In general, however, the new Chinese immigrants are able to achieve economic independence, and very few are on welfare.

The new Chinese immigrants present an interesting case for study because they depend heavily on ethnic enterprises through

which they create employment for themselves and others. Even many in professional fields want to set up their own businesses. Some come up against the glass ceiling in white establishments, feeling that they are not paid according to their capabilities and contributions. They perceive that as Chinese immigrant professionals they are handicapped in mainstream firms and they look forward to becoming their own bosses.

My exploration of how the different groups of Chinese use their ethnic, class, and personal resources in making a living and achieving economic success focuses on the San Francisco Bay Area. This is an area with varied economic opportunity where tourism, entertainment, garment manufacturing, high-tech industries, banking and insurance are the mainstays of the economy. Tourists come to San Francisco from around the world; Santa Clara, dubbed Silicon Valley, produces world-class computers and other high-tech products; and San Francisco, together with Los Angeles and New York City, is also an important fashion center in the United States. Chinese immigrants are attracted to the San Francisco region for a number of reasons. Not only does it border the Pacific Rim region; San Francisco has a moderate climate which is attractive to Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southern China. San Francisco also has one of the oldest Chinese communities in North America. The region's economy offers opportunity for employment. Many are drawn to San Francisco because they have relatives and friends in the area. And, finally, San Francisco has many Chinese restaurants, grocery stores and Chinese-speaking residents, and thus offers a wide range of amenities and conveniences to the new Chinese immigrants.

The purpose of this book is manifold. First, it will show how the new Chinese immigrants have made their living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Second, in showing how they make a living and achieve economic success, the book tries to demonstrate the secret of ethnic entrepreneurship, which is a topic of great interest among social scientists (Waldinger 1989; Portes 1980; Light 1984). Third it aims to show how, in adapting to the American environment, Chinese immigrants have to make many sacrifices, both socially and economically. Through this book, I hope to dispel some of the stereotypes about immigrants in general and the Chinese new immigrants in particular. The new Chinese immigrants are not refuse from their homeland, as often depicted, nor are they a burden on the United States economy. They are not para-

sites of the larger society. Using their ingenuity, they have helped themselves and the larger society in a number of ways. Immigrants in general, and the new Chinese immigrants in particular, have made and continue to make tremendous contributions to American society.

The data on which this book is based have been obtained principally from fieldwork activities. Since 1986, I have collected data on the new Chinese immigrants by visiting their homes and their work places, participating in social activities and community functions, and observing the operation of grocery stores, Chinese restaurants, and garment factories. I have interviewed business managers, owners, and workers of Chinese business establishments both formally and informally. I have been involved and have worked in collaboration with community organizations. Some researchers complain that it is difficult to conduct fieldwork in the Chinese community because there are certain prerequisites to be met in working among the new immigrants. A researcher must have connections, such as through friendships, kinship and other networks, as well as the ability to speak the major Chinese dialects. I am fortunate in having both of these qualifications. As a member of an immigrant family with a large circle of relatives in the region, I have been able to gain inroads to the community. In addition, I speak both Cantonese and Mandarin, as well as a number of other dialects that enabled me to interview and communicate with the new immigrants from different regions of China. Kinship and friendship connections and dialect similarities create a certain warmth and ease in communication. Further, I have been able to add to the life history materials of my informants by keeping abreast of community activities, through participation and through the Chinese media.

In exploring the experiences of the new Chinese immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area, I begin in Chapter 2 with a discussion of the history of Chinese immigration and the setting of this study. Chapter 3 looks at the reasons for the recent Chinese immigration; Chapter 4 considers the opportunity structures which are available to the Chinese and the various kinds of ethnic businesses such as Chinese restaurants, garment factories, and grocery stores. In Chapter 5 I examine how the Chinese use ethnic and personal resources to achieve economic success in their ethnic businesses. Chapter 6 demonstrates how the new Chinese immigrants use personal, cultural and class resources to function in the

professional sector in the United States economy and to conduct international business around the world. It also addresses the role that the new Chinese immigrants play in the global economy. Finally, Chapter 7 looks at majority-minority relations and the ethnic identity of the Chinese.

2

From China to San Francisco

Southern China has been the principal source of both the old and new immigrants. Most come from the vicinity of the city of Guangzhou, in Guangdong Province. Stories of the immigrants, their failures and successes, get circulated in the home communities and encourage many come to America. The U.S. immigration law of 1965, which emphasized family reunification, has also favored the home communities of immigrants already in America. Many new immigrants initiated their first move from Guangdong through family connections in the United States.

The story of Meilee, a woman in her early forties, is a typical one for immigrants from mainland China. Meilee had been waiting since 1985 to get her immigration visa after she had been sponsored to come to the United States by an older brother in San Francisco. When her entry visa was finally approved in October of 1988 she immediately had to apply to her work unit in the city of Guangzhou for permission to leave China. Meilee was a graduate of a teaching training college and worked in an elementary school for many years. Her departure from the school had to be approved by her *Danwei* (work unit). She also had to be interviewed by the United States Consulate there. Her twenty-year-old daughter was allowed to travel with her, but her son was not because he was over the age of twenty-one. He had to stay behind in Guangzhou to continue to work, waiting for his mother to apply for an immigration visa for him once she arrived in the United States. The father, an architectural engineer, decided to wait with his son in China.

Thus both the father and son remained in China while mother and daughter made the trip to the United States, the Beautiful Country (*Mei Kuo*), to start a new life. What they had hoped for was not just a new economic life, but also a life of political

freedom. Many new Chinese immigrants long to leave their totalitarian country, where families suffer from political purges and various political movements. Meilee and her husband were both considered "stinking intellectuals" and had been sentenced to hard labor during the Cultural Revolution. They had been accused of being counter-revolutionaries and were vilified because of their connections with the outside world—their relatives in the United States. During the Cultural Revolution, such connections earned people negative reputations, such as running dogs of the imperialists, spies, and counter-revolutionaries. Now that they were allowed to leave China, Meilee and her daughter were joyous because they no longer had to worry about such political instability and impositions. Yet Meilee and her daughter felt a great deal of sadness at having to leave behind half of their family. Departure became a sweet sorrow; they hoped that they would find a better life in America. They packed only minimally and departed for the United States via Hong Kong where Meilee's sister lived. Her sister loaned them money for their airplane tickets (\$1,500 for two one-way tickets). Meilee and her daughter arrived in the United States in February of 1989 and they were met by relatives in San Francisco. After one week, both mother and daughter had found jobs: one as a temporary worker in a Chinese restaurant, the other in a garment factory.

Unlike the illiterate villagers of a previous era who came to work for mining companies or to build railroads, many new immigrants from mainland China, like Meilee, come to America with educational credentials and skills. The new immigrants often have kinship connections to the established ethnic community in the country. In fact, some immigrants have relatives who have been in the United States for many generations.

"Where Do You Come From?" "How Long Have You Been Here?" Chinese Americans are often asked these questions in the United States, the assumption being that the Chinese presence is new in this country. In fact, not all Chinese Americans are recent immigrants and their ancestors have been in this country for as long as the ancestors of many white ethnic groups.

THE HISTORY OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION

When did the Chinese first come to America? Some claim that they were here in the 4th century A.D., long before Christopher

Columbus (Fang 1980; Steiner 1979). Others claim that the Chinese arrived a thousand years ago (de Guignes 1761). However, according to reliable historical records, the first large influx of Chinese immigrants to the United States dates from the 1850s (Wong 1982). The number of immigrants steadily increased over the years, and peaked in 1890 with a population of 107,488. Discriminatory legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the anti-Chinese Scott Act of 1888, and the Geary Act of 1892 were designed to prohibit the entry or reentry of Chinese immigrants who were laborers, thus putting an end to the influx of Chinese immigration. By 1920 there were only 61,639 Chinese in the country. Racism and fear of economic competition from the Chinese were the principal factors contributing to discriminatory legislation. It was not until after World War II that Chinese immigration recommenced, although significant influxes did not become apparent until the passage of 1965 immigration legislation.

Initially, in the 1850s, the Chinese settled on the West Coast, where they found jobs as railroad workers, miners, farmers and domestics. They have been a presence in the state of California ever since. Upon completion of the Central Pacific Railway in 1869 and the closing of many mining companies, Chinese and white laborers alike had to leave the railroads and mines to look for other forms of employment in California (Sandmeyer 1973; Wu 1958).

Economic competition with Whites led to various anti-Chinese campaigns in California and the passage of discriminatory legislation. One example was the Sidewalk Ordinance of 1870 which outlawed the Chinese pole method of peddling vegetables and carrying laundry in San Francisco. Traditionally, the Chinese carried heavy loads balanced on a pole which rested upon their shoulders. The pole functioned as a fulcrum. The Sidewalk Ordinance was directed specifically against the Chinese since non-Chinese people used wagons or carts to peddle their goods. There were ordinances against the use of firecrackers and Chinese ceremonial gongs, which were important symbols of luck and necessary implements for Chinese festivities. In 1871 the Cubic Air Ordinance was enacted in San Francisco, requiring each adult to have at least 500 cubic feet of living space. The law was specifically directed against the Chinese who were living in cramped quarters in extended family living situations. The Queue Ordinance, passed in 1873 in San Francisco, was another example of

legislation specifically targeting Chinese. Under Manchu law, Chinese men were required to comb their hair into long braids, or pigtailed, called queues. Cutting off their queues was a serious violation of Chinese law. After the passage of the Anti-Queue law, gangs of roughnecks began to attack Chinese people with long hair, cutting off their braids and wearing them as trophies on their belts and caps.

There were numerous laws prohibiting the Chinese from working in federal, state, county or city governments. The Chinese were barred from the fishing industry in California. There were laws prohibiting the education of Chinese children in the public schools in San Francisco and using Chinese people as witnesses against white defendants in court. Chinese were barred from purchasing property outside of Chinatown in San Francisco. In addition to these federal and state laws, in 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the country (Wong 1982).

The Chinese responded to these legislative acts and discrimination by entering businesses such as Chinese restaurants and laundries which were not directly competitive with white enterprises. They organized self-help, community and protective societies. Many moved to the major metropolitan areas of the United States such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City where they could attract a large clientele for their ethnic businesses. As a result of this movement, Chinese enclaves known as Chinatowns were developed. By 1940, there were twenty-eight Chinatowns in the United States (Lee 1947, 1960). From the 1880s to 1965, the Chinese depended almost entirely on ethnic businesses for their survival. In Chinatown they developed an ethnic economy which catered to both Chinese and non-Chinese customers. Their protective societies and associations were based on kinship, friendship, locality of origin, trade and dialect. Through these associations the Chinese mediated their own disputes, promoted their own economic interests and socialized among themselves. Although the establishment of Chinatowns proved to be a successful adaptive strategy, their creation was a direct result of racism. Discrimination, nonacceptance, and exclusion of the Chinese by the larger society compelled them to engage in limited economic activities within the confines of Chinatown.

As discrimination against the Chinese diminished and they became more accepted by the larger society, the Chinese were

able to move out of the Chinatowns and to pursue other economic activities. By 1955, there were only sixteen Chinatowns in the United States (Lee 1960). With the influx of new immigrants after 1965, some Chinatowns expanded. The already existing Chinatowns of San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York all got a boost to their populations as new arrivals tended to move into preexisting Chinatowns. Chalsa M. Loo (1991) has noted that 81 percent of the Chinese living in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1990 were foreign-born. Among them were large numbers who had arrived after 1965.

Before 1965 the Chinese in the United States were a rather homogenous group in terms of their occupational, linguistic, social and economic backgrounds. Most of the Chinese immigrants came from the rural area of the Guangdong Province in southern China, particularly the Sze Yap and the Sam Yap districts. The lingua franca used in the Chinese community was the Taishan dialect. The kinds of structural principles used to organize the community were those common to rural China: kinship, locality of origin, regionalism, and dialect similarities. During the pre-1965 era, many immigrants were sojourners who had no intention of staying in America permanently. They reasoned that after they had made enough money in America they would return to China to become entrepreneurs or they would lead blissful lives of retirement. It was primarily economic factors which propelled Chinese immigration to America.

Initially, the Chinese worked mostly as laborers. After 1884 Chinese financial survival was entirely dependent on ethnic niche businesses such as Chinese restaurants, laundries, grocery stores and gift shops. In general, the early immigrants were less educated than post-1965 immigrants and mostly came from rural areas of southern China. They were predominantly men who had left their families in China. Various pre-1945 immigration laws had prevented the entry of Chinese women into the United States. After 1945 however, the War Bride Act and the G. I. Fiancées Act enabled Chinese women to enter the United States. Still, only Chinese G. I.s benefitted from these new legal provisions. As a result, in the pre-1965 era, the sex ratio between males and females was highly uneven, with males dramatically outnumbering females. The Chinese community was labeled a bachelor community. The lack of family life and children was a principal reason that juvenile delinquency was not a problem.

THE NEW AND OLD IMMIGRANTS: A CONTRAST

Since 1965 the Chinese community in the United States has changed dramatically. Of major importance was the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 which abolished national origins quotas and established a system of preferences whereby immediate relatives, skilled and unskilled workers, refugees, scientists, and technical personnel were listed under different categories of preference. For the first time Chinese immigrants were treated equally with other nationalities by United States immigration law, thus ending some eighty-five years of bias against the Chinese.

What has been the impact of the 1965 law on Chinese immigrants? First, any Chinese citizen who has certain family connections in America can be sponsored for migration by relatives in the United States. New immigrants can now come with their spouses and children who are under the age of twenty one. This scenario is significantly different from the one that existed in the past. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century most immigrants arrived individually as laborers, as their spouses were prohibited entry. After 1965 the new immigrants came with their families. Hence, the sex ratio between males and females evened out.

The new immigration law has also encouraged highly skilled immigrants trained in science, technology, the arts, and other professions. They applied for immigration visas under the Third Preference. At present, new Chinese immigrants are, as a group, relatively well-educated and many are from urban areas of China: Taiwan, Hong Kong or Macao. These immigrants differ significantly from earlier ones who came primarily from rural areas and were relatively uneducated.

In contrast to the early immigrants who mainly came from Guangdong Province, the new immigrants include larger numbers from different parts of China: Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other provinces of mainland China. However, Guangdong Province in mainland China is still the main source of new immigrants to the United States. Most of the new immigrants who are urban in origin use the standard Cantonese dialect of Hong Kong, or Mandarin, rather than the Taishan dialect used by the old immigrants in the past. Now, the Chinese television stations in San Francisco use both Cantonese and Mandarin. In the evenings, there is an hour-long Chinese News broadcast in Cantonese and another fifteen minutes in Mandarin.

While the old immigrants were mostly sojourners, the new immigrants are interested in making America their permanent home. The new immigrants' attitudes toward the United States are reflected in the phrase, *Lo Di Sheng Gen* (after reaching the land, grow roots). As soon as they are eligible, many apply for U.S. citizenship. In fact, 48 percent of the Chinese in the Bay Area are U.S. citizens. These immigrants wish to establish roots and commit themselves to their new country and they come relatively prepared to do so. The majority of the Chinese from Hong Kong belong to the middle class, and some arrive with significant savings or capital. Rather than leaving China to escape poverty, like the old immigrants, the recent immigration is, in large part, fueled by political instability. The new immigrants admire the freedom and democracy of the United States and they intend to establish their roots in this country.

Given their resources, many of the new immigrants have avoided the traditional paths to employment through ethnic businesses like restaurants, groceries or gift shops. Some own or are employed in garment factories. Some are employed in Caucasian establishments. Others have branched out to areas of manufacturing, transportation, construction, wholesaling, finance, insurance and agricultural services. Thus there is more diversity in the economic pursuits of the new immigrants as compared to their predecessors. Although there are economically disadvantaged immigrants, especially from mainland China, the traditional images of Chinese coolies and penniless immigrants do not apply to the majority of recent Chinese arrivals.

THE CHINESE IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

The San Francisco Bay Area has been home for Chinese immigrants for more than 140 years. This area contains the largest Chinese population in the country. In actuality, there are two Chinatowns in the San Francisco Bay Area. One is located in San Francisco and the other in Oakland. The Chinatown in San Francisco is the oldest and by far the most famous in the United States. The San Francisco Bay Area has been important for the Chinese for a number of reasons. First, its location on the Pacific Rim provides a convenient entry port as well as a mild climate, appealing to immigrants from a similar climate across the Pacific. Secondly, the Bay Area offers a wide diversity of employment opportunities

ranging from jobs in the thriving ethnic economy to those in the high-tech and computer industries. This ready availability of jobs in different sectors of the economy attracts a diverse group of Chinese immigrants.

Consider a few examples. Mr. L came from Hong Kong with the intention of opening a restaurant in the Bay Area. In Hong Kong he had been the manager of a well known restaurant. As he told me, he did not have the training and good enough English to obtain lucrative employment in a white establishment. He saw his future in the ethnic niche, which he entered when he arrived. "To work with something that is familiar rather than not familiar" was his justification for going into the Chinese restaurant business in San Francisco. His first job was working as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant; two years later he opened up a small restaurant of his own. Another immigrant from Taiwan, told me that she liked the climate in San Francisco and the availability of employment in her field of biochemistry. She had been looking for jobs in the San Francisco Bay Area for quite some time. Finally, a position opened up in her field at a pharmaceutical company in the South Bay, and she has worked there since 1989. Another immigrant from Hong Kong first got a job working in the Midwest. After many years of job searching in the Bay Area, he finally found a position in a computer company in the Silicon Valley. He was pleased to have a job in the Bay Area because he said that this region has so much to offer to a Chinese immigrant.

For most immigrants, what is crucial is the existence of a long-standing Chinese community in the San Francisco Bay Area and a thriving ethnic economy. There is a large concentration of Chinese people, businesses and services that cater to Chinese consumers and provide convenience and a familiar culture. There are many Chinese restaurants, grocery stores, movie houses, schools, community, and professional organizations. Immigrants often have relatives in San Francisco who can help them find a place to live and a job. Along with informal support systems of kin and friends who have settled in the area, there are specific services designed to help newcomers. For example, San Francisco's Chinatown provides a manpower training center that is available to new immigrants who wish to become chefs, waiters, bartenders, seamstresses, and restaurant managers. Many Chinese immigrants first come to Chinatown, learn English and gain skills, and then move out to other localities within and outside of the Bay

Area. Apart from this, the Bay Area is host to a wide range of ethnic groups and is relatively tolerant of new immigrants.

RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS

The residential patterns of Chinese immigrants today are more complex than they used to be. In the old days, Chinatown was the place that Chinese lived in San Francisco. Today, the Chinese are scattered throughout the Bay Area. The city and county of San Francisco has, by far, the largest Chinese population among the five counties of the Bay Area. According to the 1990 census, the Chinese population in San Francisco itself was 127,140. Less than half live in Chinatown and its vicinity; the rest are distributed throughout different neighborhoods according to their social and economic status. In general, Chinatown houses most of the pre-1965 old immigrants and new immigrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) who together constitute almost half of the immigrant population in the city.

San Francisco's Chinatown is the oldest and most important Chinatown the United States. Historians believe that the Chinese started settling in the area near present day Sacramento Street around 1848 to 1849. By 1850s, 789 Chinese were living in San Francisco (Chin, Him and Choy 1975; Kwang 1987; Davis 1929) and a year later there were thirty-three Chinese general stores, fifteen apothecaries, five restaurants, five butchers, five barbers, three tailors, three boarding house, three wood yards, two bakers and five herb doctors in the Sacramento and Dupont area, known then as Little Canton or Little China (Kwang 1987). Beginning in 1850 Chinese district associations were created to serve the immigrants. By 1869, The Chinese Six Companies: (now known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association) was organized (Hoy 1942). Throughout the years, prejudice and laws that forced the Chinese to live in Chinatown structured the growth of ethnic businesses, while at the same time creating a segregated community.

After World War II, restrictive ordinances in San Francisco were lifted due to the China-U.S. wartime alliance. Chinatown still maintained its strong ethnic identity, but Chinese movement to other neighborhoods began.

Significant changes in the residential patterns of the Chinese came about more completely after 1965. With the influx of new immigrants from Hong Kong and China, more Chinese moved

into the Richmond district which is about a dozen miles west of the old Chinatown. Often called the New Chinatown, this area has a population of 30,000 and boasts many Hong Kong restaurants and stores catering to the new immigrants. In fact, 50 percent of homeowners in the Richmond district are Chinese. In the past ten years, concentrations of Chinese stores and Chinese residents developed in the Sunset district, south of the Richmond district. In these new areas, there are many Chinese restaurants, specializing in Chinese regional cuisines, as well as Chinese supermarkets, video shops, hair salons, bakeries, book shops, and grocery stores. The ethnic economy of the Chinese has moved beyond the boundaries of the Old Chinatown on Grant Avenue. Today more than half of the city's Chinese residents in San Francisco no longer live in downtown Chinatown. Many have moved out of San Francisco altogether, into Santa Clara, San Mateo, Contra Costa and Alameda counties. In fact, of the approximately 320,000 Chinese in the Bay Area about 60 percent live outside of San Francisco. Nevertheless, San Francisco's Chinatown remains a capital and symbolic center for all the Chinese in the Bay area.

CHINATOWN: THE SYMBOLIC AND CULTURAL CENTER

San Francisco's Chinatown is a neighborhood, a work place, a social center and a community which helps immigrants adjust to a new land. As an entry port for newcomers to the New World, it is continually replenished with the traditional culture of the homeland. Newly arrived immigrants to the community get their first experiences with the United States there and learn how to obtain employment, a social security card, and open a bank account, to speak English and understand their rights and obligations as members of American society. San Francisco's Chinatown is, in short, an acculturation agent for the new immigrants. The community has bilingual social service agencies, translation services, Chinese stores, familiar food supplies, Chinese mass media, and information networks, all of which cater to the needs of the new immigrants. Newcomers can visit traditional herbal medicine stores, temples and churches, which provide tremendous security to new Chinese immigrants, especially those who do not speak English.

San Francisco's Chinatown is also a symbolic center of Chinese culture in the United States. Entering from the main entrance of Grant Avenue, one immediately sees a Chinese style gate which has an inscription from Dr. Sun Yat-sen: "All under heaven is for the good of people." The golden characters, which are inscribed on a blue plaque, may simply seem exotic to tourist, but to recent Chinese immigrants they offer consolation and comfort. Chinese immigrants are proud that Chinese culture exists in America. Seeing the sign for the first time, the newcomers feel that there are other Chinese who live and work here. As they see storefronts carrying Chinese signs, they tell themselves that "I don't have to be afraid, I can manage here; I know where to shop and to get around."

Chinatown is a convenient place for immigrants who do not speak English. They can find employment in the ethnic enterprises in the enclave and shop in many of the Chinese grocery stores. Food and Chinese produce are relatively cheap in Chinatown due to the concentration of restaurants and grocery stores which compete with each other. The immigrants who speak only Cantonese also find Chinatown a safe haven where they do not have to deal with unfamiliar language and customs. People are addressed by kinship terms, and human interaction seems to follow the Old World pattern. Almost all of the stores in Chinatown have Chinese employees who speak the language of the new immigrants. There are Chinese bookstores, Chinese newspapers, and recreational centers catering to the new immigrants.

The Richmond and Sunset districts are well connected to Chinatown through the downtown area by the city's transit system. The Chinese residents of the two districts often do their shopping in Chinatown. Some wealthy Chinese immigrants choose not to live in any Chinese neighborhoods but prefer exclusive areas like St. Francis Wood, Sea Cliff, Nob Hill and the Marina. These new immigrants consider their expensive homes to be their best long term investment and believe that houses in good neighborhoods will appreciate in value.

Many middle class immigrant Chinese also live outside of the new or old Chinatowns in places like San Mateo, Burlingame, Millbrae, and Foster City which are situated in the south of the city of San Francisco and belong to the county of San Mateo. The 1990 census indicated that 32,487 Chinese lived in San Mateo county where there are now a number of Hong Kong style restaurants,

shops, and grocery stores. Chinese people who live in San Mateo tend to speak English and drive automobiles. Many who work in San Francisco have to drive to work, about a 15–30 minute trip to reach San Francisco. San Mateo has a wealthy neighborhood called Hillsborough where the average home is sold for one million dollars. The very affluent new immigrants prefer to live in Hillsborough where the climate is moderate throughout the year, the schools are said to be good and many first class Chinese restaurants are close by. Both the international airport and the city itself are within comfortable driving distance. Hong Kong businessmen who sell their expensive homes in Hong Kong can afford to live in this area.

Santa Clara County in the south of San Francisco is home to another 65,027 Chinese (U.S. Census 1990). As Chinese immigrants move up economically, they tend to move northward geographically, starting from San Jose and ending in the Palo Alto/Menlo Park areas. Most of the Chinese who live in Santa Clara are connected with engineering, computer, and high-tech businesses. Some are professionals working in banking, accounting, insurance, law and financial establishments. They are the professionals or technical people: many have Ph.Ds or other advanced degrees.

In San Francisco's East Bay, in Alameda county, there are 68,585 Chinese according to the 1990 census. Many new Chinese immigrants live in the Chinatown area of Oakland. The Chinatown there is much smaller than San Francisco and has fewer Chinese restaurants and stores. The affluent Chinese immigrants in the East Bay prefer living in the Oakland Hills and Piedmont areas. These are desirable neighborhoods because houses are bigger and have more amenities and the schools are said to be better, too. Some Chinese also live in Berkeley. In Contra Costa County the 22,106 Chinese immigrants live in the cities of Concord, Richmond, El Cerrito, Hercules, San Ramon, Orinda, Lafayette and Walnut Creek. In general, the farther away from San Francisco, the cheaper the houses are. Although many new immigrants in Contra Costa County are middle class, others work at menial jobs in places like Chinese restaurants. Finally, Marin County in the North Bay is an expensive bedroom community for people who work in San Francisco and is home to Chinese professionals and business people who work in San Francisco. They speak English, drive automobiles and are comfortable living in a white suburban environment.

CHINESE ASSOCIATIONS

Chinatown's associational structure was organized according to principles which are familiar to the immigrants. There are regional and district hometown associations as well as trade, kinship, and dialect associations. There are also modern associations such as alumni associations, labor union, social agencies, and political parties.

Traditional Chinese associations in San Francisco at one time numbered more than a hundred, and formed themselves into an associational structure. At the top of this structure is the Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association, known as the Chinese Six Companies. The associations played an important role in the past. Composed of Chinese from the six major district associations—the Ning Yung, Kong Chow, Young Wo, Shiu Hing, Hop Wo, and Yan Wo—the Six Companies served as spokesmen and official representatives for the Chinese in San Francisco. Before the establishment of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in 1910, the Six Companies also regulated Chinese business activities, mediating business disputes and arbitrating conflicts between various family and district associations. The Six Companies arranged the shipment of bones of deceased immigrants back to China for re-burial. They also issued clearance for immigrants to return to China, making sure that all returnees first paid their debts in America. The Chinese Six Companies ran the General Chinese Hospital and Chinese schools; they also organized the celebration of the Chinese New Year and various fund raising activities for the community. Although many of their functions are no longer needed, the Chinese Six Companies remain the highest authority, at least symbolically, of the community.

The Chinese Six Companies adopted an anti-Communist stance and were strong supporters of Nationalist China. This is perhaps because the Chinese Six Companies are controlled by the older Chinese who either suffered under Communism or embraced an anti-Communist ideology. In the past, the Six Companies assisted the Kuomintang in their overthrow of the Manchurian government in China.

In recent years the Chinese Six Companies have come under attack from radical students and community workers for being too slow to adapt and meet the needs of the new immigrants. What these critics often overlook, however, is that most of the traditional

associations and in particular the Chinese Six Companies were established before 1965 to serve the needs of adult, male Chinese old-time immigrants and they are not prepared to tackle contemporary social problems such as housing, Medicare, and juvenile delinquency (Wong 1979).

The various family or clan associations in San Francisco's Chinatown recruit members on the basis of common surname. The largest family associations are the Lee, Chan and Wong associations. Within the family name associations are the *fongs* which group people according to both common surname and common village or origin. In China, the family name or surname group was an exogamous (or out-marrying) group, and members addressed each other as clan brothers (Tien 1953; Wong 1979). The surname group was thus a clan group whose members were assumed to have descended from a common ancestor. In China, the *fongs* were localized lineage groups and membership was based on patrilineal descent (through men in the male line) from a common ancestor associated with a village.

Family name associations have assumed important functions in San Francisco. Many family name associations here maintain temporary lodging quarters for their members. These common lodging rooms are called "common Fong." Thus the word Fong has two meanings. One refers to common kinship origin in China, the other to the living quarters in the family name associations. What is significant is that kinship has been used as a principle of social organization to address the needs and problems of the Chinese community. Within the family name associations, there were once informal credit clubs called *hui* that operated on a voluntary basis. Members of the club made contributions to a fund that was given to a person who needed the money and was willing to pay back the amount each member put in along with interest. The way a *hui* worked was that a number of people, ten for instance, would agree to contribute \$1,000 to form a total pool of \$10,000. The member entering the highest bid (i.e., who bid to pay back the amount with the highest interest) would get the entire amount of \$10,000. In return, he had to pay \$1,000 to each member plus interest. After repayment to all of the members, say in ten months, the *hui* would be dissolved. This kind of informal credit arrangement is no longer practiced by the family name associations for it is rather risky and is not enforceable by law. Credit unions and banks are now the institutions new immigrants use for loans. One

association, the Lee Family Association, has its own credit union for members.

In San Francisco there are now some multifamily name associations. One of the most important is the Four Brothers Association, which was organized by the Liu, Kwan, Chang and Chao families because their forebears swore brotherhood by the Peace Garden Oath two thousand years ago for the purpose of saving the Han Dynasty. Another multifamily name association is the G. How Oak Tin Association which is composed of the Chan, Hu, Yuan, and Wang families, all of whom claim descent from the Shun Emperor. The Chee Tuck Sam Tuck Association is composed of the Wu, Tsai, and Chow families who were once neighbors in China. Similarly, the historical friendships among neighbors in China have led to other associations: Loui, Fong, and Kwong families united to form the Soo Yuen Association; the Gon, Lai and Ho families became the Sam Yick Association. Perhaps the most interesting of all is the Chew Lun Association, which united the Tam, Tan, Hsu and Hsieh families based on a similarity (a common radical) in the Chinese characters used to spell their names.

In single family name as well as multifamily associations, kinship ideology has been deliberately embraced, and kinship terms are used by members to address one another. The family name associations still exist today, attracting mostly older immigrants; they provide recreational facilities such as reading rooms and mahjong tables, perform limited welfare services, and organize scholarship funds and ancestor worship.

Regional associations, which are composed of members from a certain county or region in China are another level of organization. Like family associations, they are basically mutual aid societies rendering welfare and employment assistance; the larger associations generally offer temporary lodging facilities. Some even provide aid for burial service. The Vietnam Chinese Association has an informal insurance company which collects fees from members to form a fund to help families pay for funeral services.

Business and trade associations form another cluster of associations in the social structure of Chinatown. The Chinese Art Goods Association, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Chinese Apparel Contractors Association, Chinese Laundry Association, and Golden Gate Neighborhood Grocers' Association are some examples. These associations often negotiate with the larger society on matters of concern to Chinese businesses. As information centers,