
Chinese Americans: Immigration, Settlement, and Social Geography

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It has been estimated that as of 1990 there were 37 million Chinese living outside the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan (Poston et al., 1994). The vast majority, 32.3 million, lived in Asia. Of the Chinese in non-Asia countries, more than one-third were in the U.S., making it home to the largest Chinese community outside of Asia. Yet systematic studies of Chinese Americans, despite their increasing size and stature in the U.S. as well as internationally, are relatively scant. A recent book on "overseas Chinese" (Sinn, 1998), for example, has chapters on Chinese in France, the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Australia, Britain, Malaysia, and South Africa, but no separate analyses of Chinese in the U.S. This chapter aims at documenting the salient processes that have shaped the experiences of Chinese Americans, focusing on their history of immigration, growth and composition, spatial distribution and migration, socioeconomic statuses, and identities and ties. I employ an integrative approach that emphasizes the geography of and interactions among the above aspects, highlights the complexities and heterogeneity of the experiences of Chinese Americans, and focuses on the connections between their experiences and the larger structural, political, and economic contexts in the U.S. and internationally.

In this chapter, the term "Chinese Americans" is used to describe the population who reside in the U.S. and who consider Chinese as their race, ancestry and/or heritage, and is used interchangeably with the term "Chinese in the U.S." It includes Chinese immigrants and their descendants living in the U.S., regardless of where they were born and whether they are citizens. Here, Chinese Americans is preferred to the term "overseas Chinese," in order to emphasize the shared yet heterogeneous experiences of the Chinese in the U.S., as well as the specific contexts in the U.S. that have been so central to their

experiences.¹ Since "China" has been commonly used to refer to the PRC, this chapter uses these two terms interchangeably. Similarly, "Taiwan" is used to refer to the Republic of China (ROC).

As much as possible, in this chapter I shall use the most up-to-date information available, including data from the 2000 Census of the U.S. At the time of writing, however, only summary files from that census are available. Therefore, data from past censuses will also be used to provide a more complete picture of Chinese in the U.S. Several points need to be clarified in regards to U.S. census data. First, for the sake of convenience, I use the terms "Asians" and "Asian Americans" to include Pacific Islanders. Second, I shall aggregate Taiwanese with non-Taiwanese Chinese, though they are treated as two separate categories in the census. Third, wherever possible I shall separate out the race categories from the Hispanic/non-Hispanic ethnicity category, so that White refers to non-Hispanic White, Black refers to non-Hispanic Black, etc. Nevertheless, data so far available from the 2000 Census do not permit distinguishing detailed Asian races from the ethnicity category, so that most of the data for Chinese Americans from that census overlap with Hispanics. However, that overlap is expected to be very small, as less than 2% of Asian Americans reported Hispanic ethnicity. Fourth, for the first time in U.S. history, the 2000 Census permitted the selection of more than one race. Two or more races accounted for 2.4% of U.S. population and 15.5% of all those who selected Chinese as one of their races. There is insufficient information on what other races were selected by those who reported more than one race. Therefore, in this chapter, unless otherwise specified, I shall focus specifically on the population that selected one race only. This approach underestimates the population and hence interpretation of the 2000 Census data should be done with special caution.

HISTORY OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION

The majority of Chinese Americans are foreign born. Specifically, the foreign born accounted for respectively 76.6% and 70.7% of Chinese in the U.S. in 1980 and 1990. Among the foreign-born Chinese in 1990, the majority were recent immigrants who entered the country since 1980 (table 11.1). Though the number of native-born Chinese has increased over time, immigration continues to be a determining factor of the growth of Chinese Americans. To understand the experiences of Chinese Americans, one must first understand the history of Chinese immigration, which has been a direct function of changes in the American economy, U.S. immigration legislation, geopolitics in East Asia and U.S.-China relations.

Table 11.1. Growth and Composition of Major Ethnic Groups and Asians in the United States, 1980-2000

	1990		1980		1980-1990		1990	
	Composition (%)	Foreign Born	Population	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Annual Average Growth Rate
Total U.S. population**	226,546	248,710	188,128	79.7	180,603	79.7	226,546	1.2
Non-Hispanic White	180,603	188,128	75.6	96.1	96.1	96.1	281,422	0.9
Non-Hispanic Black	26,092	29,216	11.7	95.3	2.3	2.5	194,553	0.4
Hispanic	14,604	22,354	9.0	57.3	22.0	20.7	33,948	1.1
Non-Hispanic Asian	3,551	6,968	2.8	32.5	28.8	38.7	10,477	4.7
Asian***	3,551	6,968	32.5	28.8	38.7	10,477	3.7	7.0
Chinese	812	1,645	23.6	29.3	38.7	10,642	2,433	4.3
Filipino	782	1,407	20.2	30.6	40.1	2,433	22.9	7.3
Japanese	716	848	12.2	64.5	17.1	18.4	1,850	6.0
Asian Indian	387	815	11.7	31.7	45.6	797	15.8	7.5
Korean	357	799	11.5	35.0	47.6	1,077	10.1	8.4
Vietnamese	245	615	8.8	31.9	50.2	1,123	10.6	9.6
Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian	69	1.9	5.6	23.2	13.9	62.9	510	4.8

Sources: Lee (1998); U.S. Department of Commerce (1983; 1992; 1993; 2002).

**Data for detailed Asian categories include only those who reported one race.

**Percentages do not add to 100 because American Indians and Alaska Natives are not included.

***Data include other Asian ethnic groups and Pacific Islanders not shown in this table.

The first Chinese immigrants to the U.S. came to work as miners during the California gold rush in the 1850s. Between 1850 and 1860 the number of Chinese in the U.S. increased from less than 1,000 to approximately 35,000 (Brown and Pannell, 1985). They were followed by a second wave between the 1860s and 1880s as workers for the transcontinental railroads, as well as farmers and laborers. The demand for labor in the U.S. precipitated the contracting and transportation of "coolies" from China. As a result, the peak of Chinese immigration to the U.S. in the nineteenth century was reached in 1871–1880, when more than 120,000 Chinese were admitted (figure 11.1).

Most of the early Chinese immigrants were from rural villages in the Pearl River Delta and spoke the Cantonese dialect (Pan, 1998: 261). The vast majority were men. As sojourners, they worked hard and led a thrifty lifestyle, hoping to accumulate as much fortune as they could before returning to their homelands. But many eventually stayed. Yet to the American public the Chinese were brought to the U.S. only to meet the demand for labor. Their increasing number was greeted with prejudice and discrimination, which grew even more severe during economic recessions in the 1870s and 1880s. Anti-

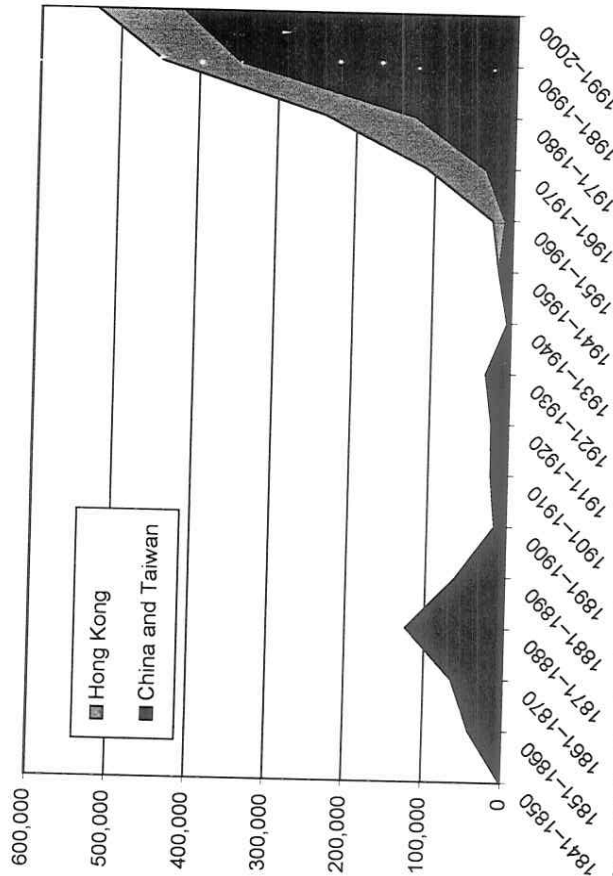


Figure 11.1. Immigration from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong to the U.S., 1841–2000 (Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service [1997; 2002].) Note: Immigration by country of last residence. Data for China and Taiwan were not reported separately since 1957 and were therefore aggregated. Data for Hong Kong were not reported separately until 1952.

Chinese sentiment culminated into the first nationality-based immigration law in the U.S., namely, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which suspended immigration of Chinese laborers and barred those already in the U.S. from becoming citizens. Until after the Second World War, an assimilationist philosophy dominated U.S. immigration legislation, which aimed at excluding individuals deemed "unassimilable" into the American society. The 1924 Immigration Act established a national origins quota system, and effectively banned all immigrants from Asia, except for a small number of diplomats and students. After the 1880s, therefore, the number of Chinese immigrants dropped drastically (see figure 11.1), and the size of the Chinese population in the U.S. decreased and hovered around 60,000 to 90,000 until after the Second World War (Brown and Pannell, 1985).

After the founding of the PRC in 1949, an increasing number of Chinese immigrants were admitted, including refugees and students from Taiwan and Hong Kong. But it was not until the 1960s civil rights movement that legal discrimination against Asian immigration was eliminated. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments, which abolished the national origins quota system and eliminated national origin, race, or ancestry as bases for immigration to the U.S., was a watershed legislation. It established a preference system for granting immigrant visas based on family unification and special occupational skills criteria, and effectively opened the gate for new waves of immigrants from Asia and Latin America. Improvement in U.S.-China relations since Nixon's 1972 visit to China further motivated many Chinese, including students, to go to the U.S. Meanwhile, concerns over the PRC's increasing power, and the U.S.'s recognition of its legitimacy, prompted many Taiwanese to emigrate. The number of immigrants from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong increased from 109,771 in 1961–1970 to 237,793 in 1971–1980, 444,962 in 1981–1990, and 528,893 in 1991–2000 (see figure 11.1). As a result, the number of Chinese in the U.S. increased by 1.8 times from about 237,000 in 1960 to 435,000 in 1970, another 1.8 times to 812,000 in 1980, and more than doubled to 1.65 million in 1990 (Brown and Pannell, 1985; see table 11.1). By the year 2000, the number of (one race) Chinese Americans reached 2.43 million.

Two other immigration laws have had direct, though smaller, effects on Chinese immigration. The first was the Immigration Act of 1990, which increased the total number of immigrants to the U.S., and granted permanent residency to immigrants on investment bases. Then, the 1992 Chinese Student Protection Act, in response to the 1989 Tiananmen incident, provided permanent resident status to China nationals who were in the U.S. between June 4, 1989, and July 11, 1990.

In addition to changes in immigration laws, two relatively new channels have affected Chinese immigration to the U.S. The first is adoption of Chinese

orphans by U.S. residents. Since the 1990s, the American media has widely publicized the notion that China's one-child policy had left many girl babies unwanted and accelerated female infanticide. With the aid of adoption agencies, China has since the mid-1990s replaced Korea and the former Soviet Union as the largest source of immigrant-orphans adopted by U.S. citizens. Second, smuggling of laborers from China has been rampant since the early 1990s, resulting in several large waves of illegal immigration to the U.S. Many illegal immigrants were brought from villages in Fujian, to work as laborers in sweatshops, restaurants, and farms in New York, New Jersey, and other parts of the U.S. (Pan, 1998: 268). They are heavily controlled by "snakeheads"—persons in charge of the smuggling operations—to whom they may owe several years of wages as fees for smuggling. Unlike most Chinese immigrants who are relatively free to pursue social mobility, these illegal immigrants' social, economic, and political isolations have rendered them among the most entrapped in the U.S. society and economy.

China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are the leading places of birth of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. In 2000, a total of 60,111 immigrants born in these three places were admitted, accounting for 7.1% of all immigrants to the U.S. that year (see table 11.2). Three-quarters of Chinese immigrants were born in China, which has become the second-largest country of birth of immigrants, after Mexico, to the U.S. Not surprisingly, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong were also the leading places of birth for foreign-born Chinese Americans, according to the 1990 Census. The importance of Taiwan and Hong Kong as sources of Chinese immigrants has increased since the 1960s. For example, according to the 1990 Census, the proportion of Chinese Americans identifying with Taiwanese ancestry had increased from 4.0% among pre-1965 immigrants to 15.9% among 1980–1990 immigrants. This trend is attributable to both economic and geopolitical factors. As two of the "four little dragons" in East Asia, they have emerged as thriving Newly Industrializing Economies (NIEs). Increasing wealth has not only made it possible for emigration to take place, but has also enabled more parents to send their children to the U.S. for education. This has led to a popular perception that recent immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong are mostly from affluent backgrounds. Second, persistent concerns over China as a potential threat to the well-being of residents in Taiwan and Hong Kong have motivated some to emigrate. Worries over Communist influence and the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 triggered waves of emigration from Hong Kong to Western countries, especially to Canada, Australia and the U.S., as early as the 1960s (see figure 11.1). Therefore, despite its relatively small size, Hong Kong was the birth place of almost 10% of Chinese immigrants who entered during the 1980s, according to the 1990 Census. Other prominent places of birth of foreign born Chinese Americans are primarily Southeast Asian countries, especially Vietnam.

Table 11.2. Characteristics of Immigrants to the United States Born in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, 2000

	China	Taiwan	Hong Kong
Total Admission	45,652	9,040	5,419
Sex ratio	67.0	75.6	—
Class of Admission (%)			
Family unification			
Family-sponsored	27.6	45.7	64.3
Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens	41.0	23.3	16.6
Employment-based	30.2	30.6	15.6
Refugee and asylee	1.1	0.0	0.7
Orphans Adopted			
% female	4,943	24	14
	97.2	58.3	35.7
Selected States of Intended Residence (%)			
California	29.0	49.7	—
New York	19.6	6.6	—
Texas	5.0	6.6	—
New Jersey	4.1	6.3	—
Selected Urban Areas of Intended Residence^a (%)			
California			
Los Angeles	8.7	19.8	—
San Francisco	7.1	3.1	—
Oakland	4.2	6.0	—
San Jose	3.1	8.4	—
Orange County	1.1	5.3	—
New York			
New York	16.9	4.7	—
Texas			
Houston	2.0	2.5	—
New Jersey			
Suburban New Jersey	3.0	5.0	—
Other			
Boston	3.2	1.3	—
Washington, D.C.	3.0	3.8	—
Occupation^b (%)			
Professional, technical	37.6	50.0	30.1
Executive, administrative, managerial	13.2	22.4	30.6
Sales	2.5	8.8	7.2
Administrative support	6.9	11.9	13.6
Service	0.8	0.5	2.0
Precision production, craft, repair	12.1	0.9	5.6
Operator, fabricator, laborer	20.6	0.5	0.1
Farming, forestry, fishing	6.2	4.9	10.7

Source: U.S. INS (2002).

^a Individual Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), except Suburban New Jersey which consists of five different MSAs in New Jersey (Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon; Newark; Bergen-Passaic; Monmouth-Ocean; and Jersey City).

^b Excludes homemakers, students, unemployed or retired persons, and others not reporting or with an unknown occupation.

As expected, the proportion of Chinese who speak at least one non-English language at home was the lowest among the native born (41.7%) and the highest among post-1980 immigrants (95.5%), according to the 1990 Census. The vast majority of the foreign-born Chinese speak Chinese at home, which in the census definition includes Cantonese, Yueh, and Min dialects that are widely spoken in the southern Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian, as well as Hong Kong. Formosan, which includes southern Min and is commonly spoken in Fujian and Taiwan, and Mandarin, the popular dialect among most mainland Chinese and Taiwanese, represent respectively the distant second and third non-English languages spoken by foreign-born Chinese at home. Since the census definitions of the three languages are neither exact nor mutually exclusive, it may be that many Chinese Americans selected the "Chinese" category regardless of the specific dialects they spoke. Nevertheless, the proportion of foreign born selecting Formosan and Mandarin increased with recency of arrival, which hints at increasing proportions of immigrants from northern China and Taiwan over time.

GROWTH AND COMPOSITION

Chinese are the largest Asian group in the U.S., accounting for 22.9% of all Asian Americans in 2000 (see table 11.1). Though Asian Americans constitute a relatively small proportion of the U.S. population (3.7%), they were the fastest growing ethnic group in the 1980s and were outpaced only by Hispanics in the 1990s. The average annual growth rate of Chinese was near average for all Asians. Its decline from 7.3% in the 1980s to 4.0% in the 1990s reflect the low fertility rates among Chinese Americans. In 1990, the total fertility rate for Chinese Americans was 1.4 children per woman, significantly lower than the fertility level of the U.S. population as a whole (2.1) and that of all Asian Americans (2.0) (Lee, 1998).

Except Japanese and Pacific Islanders, the majority of Asian Americans are foreign born. The dominance of the foreign born who entered since 1980 is especially marked for Vietnamese, Cambodians, Hmong and Laotians (see table 11.1). According to the 1990 Census, among the 1.65 million Chinese in the U.S., 29.3% were native born, 7.0% entered before 1965, 23.7% entered between 1965 and 1979, and 40.1% entered since 1980. These groups differ in many ways, including age and sex structures. Though as a whole the mean age of Chinese Americans (33.1) was close to that of the U.S. population (34.8), the native born were significantly younger (20.8), those who entered before 1965 were the oldest (57.1), and those who entered during 1965–1979 and 1980–1990 were somewhat older (41.4 and 33.2 respectively). The modal age

groups were consistent with the above differences, and the foreign born corresponded to the young adult ages (approximately 25–34) during the time of immigration, reflecting the age-selectivity of that process.

In 1990, foreign-born Chinese who entered before 1965 had the highest sex ratio (111.5), indicating that men were more highly represented among early immigrants. A sex ratio favoring men among the native born (104.9) is indicative of their young age structure, which is usually associated with higher sex ratios. But the sex ratios of post-1965 immigrants favored women, a direct result of immigration based on family unification, which involved large numbers of female family members. In 2000, the sex ratio of immigrants born in China and Taiwan was respectively 67.0 and 75.6 (see table 11.2). A large proportion of "immediate relatives of U.S. citizens" immigrants (41.0%) also explained the extremely low sex ratio among immigrants born in China. While "immediate relatives" included spouses, children, and parents, the spouses were more likely wives than husbands, and the children consisted of a large number of adopted orphans, predominantly girls. In 2000, 4,943 adopted orphans from China, 97.2% girls, were admitted, accounting for 27.3% of all adopted orphans admitted to the U.S. that year.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND MIGRATION

Since the 1850s the largest Chinese communities in the U.S. have settled in the West, especially California. According to the 2000 Census, the proportion of Chinese in the West, Northeast, South and Midwest was respectively 48.8%, 28.4%, 14.1%, and 8.7%. California and New York had the largest Chinese populations, with 40.3% and 17.5% respectively (see table 11.3). None of the other states accounted for more than 5% of Chinese in the U.S. Note that the apparent decline of the number of Chinese in Hawaii from 1990 to 2000, and consequently the state's drop in rank from third to eighth, are artifacts of the large proportions of two-or-more-races population in that state. Specifically, 21.4% of Hawaii's population reported more than one race, compared to 2.4% for the U.S.; and 66.9% of Hawaii's Chinese population (of any number of races) reported more than one race, compared to 15.5% for the nation. Detailed examination of the 1990 Census data shows that the regional distribution of Chinese did not vary significantly between the native born and foreign born, nor among the foreign born that entered in different periods of time. In 2000, California was the largest state of residence for all major ethnic groups, except Blacks, in the U.S. The relative concentration of Chinese in that state, however, was higher than any other major ethnic group, and was surpassed only by Filipinos (49.7%), Cambodians (40.9%), and Indonesians (44.7%).

Like most other Asian groups in the U.S., Chinese Americans are highly urbanized. In 2000, 97.7% of them resided in urban areas. Figure 11.2 shows the metropolitan areas that had at least 5,000 Chinese in 2000. New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, the three traditional and most popular ports of entry for Chinese immigrants, are the main reasons for the large concentrations of Chinese in the states of New York and California, and for their persistent bi-coastal settlement pattern. Though the number of Chinese in San Francisco, the oldest major Chinese settlement in the U.S., has been surpassed by that in New York and Los Angeles, the former continued to have the highest percentage of Chinese—11.9%—compared with respectively 4.0% and 3.5% in New York and Los Angeles. Adjacent to these three traditional centers are newer and less densely populated metropolitan areas that have attracted significant numbers of Chinese immigrants and internal migrants, including San Jose, suburban New Jersey, and Orange County. Their growth suggests that Chinese are attracted to newer settlements, but proximity to traditional large Chinese communities and an urban setting continue to be important locational determinants. The only exception is Seattle, which is not among or near traditional ports of entry but has become one of the larger Chinese settlements in the nation. Seattle's West Coast location and concentration of high-technology employment (e.g., Microsoft and Boeing) are two main attributes that appeal to Chinese Americans.

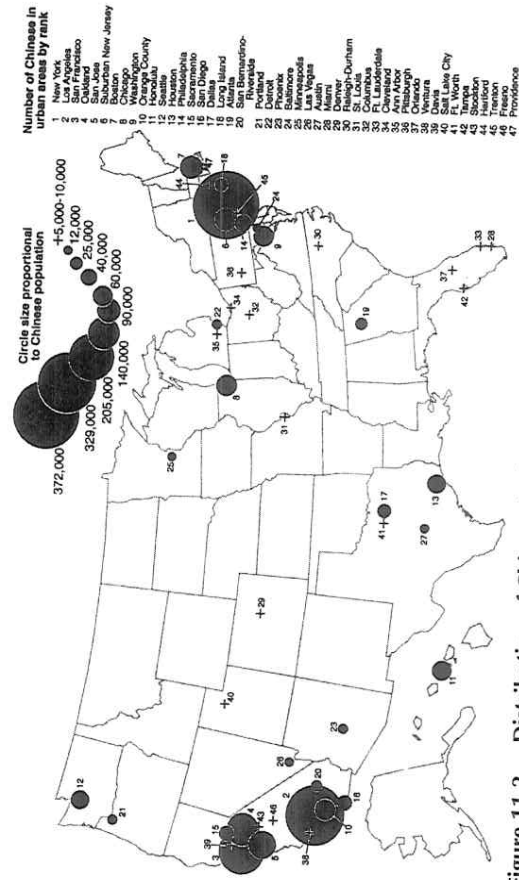


Figure 11.2. Distribution of Chinese in the United States by Metropolitan Areas, 2000 (Source: Calculated from the U.S. Department of Commerce [2002]). Note: Only Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with more than 5,000 Chinese are shown. Data for Suburban New Jersey represent the sum of five MSAs (see Table 11.2.).

Table 11.3. States with the Highest Numbers of Chinese Americans, 1990 and 2000

State	1990		2000		Migration 1985-1990	
	Number of Chinese	Percent of Total	Number of Chinese	Percent of Total	Number	Rate ^a
California	706,090	43.3	980,642	40.3	119,990	17.0
New York	282,132	17.3	424,774	17.5	54,191	19.2
Hawaii	66,007	4.1	56,600	8.8	4,755	7.2
Texas	62,166	3.8	105,829	3.3	12,889	20.7
New Jersey	57,670	3.5	100,355	4.1	8,696	15.1
Massachusetts	53,621	3.3	84,392	3.5	11,112	20.7
Illinois	48,243	3.0	76,725	3.2	9,681	20.1
Washington	33,963	2.1	59,914	2.5	6,690	19.7
Maryland	29,732	1.8	49,400	2.0	5,832	19.6
Pennsylvania	29,636	1.8	50,650	2.1	6,640	22.4
Other States	10	1.8	50,650	2.1	8	16

^aPercent of 1990 population. Sources: Calculated from U.S. Department of Commerce (1993, 2002).

Chinese communities in other parts of entry, such as Chicago, Houston, and Honolulu, remain large but have not grown as much as those in California and New York. Large metropolitan areas such as Boston, Washington, D.C., and Dallas continue to have sizable Chinese settlements. On the other hand, Chinese communities are considerably smaller in much of the Midwest, South and the Great Plains areas, with typically not more than a few thousand in major urban areas.

Immigration is an important factor of the geographical distribution of Chinese in the U.S. Table 11.3 shows that with the exception of Hawaii, the 10 states with the largest number of Chinese in 1990 and 2000 were also among the 10 states with the largest number of Chinese migrants from abroad between 1985 and 1990. Migration from abroad accounted for between 15.1% and 22.4% of Chinese in these states in 1990. Not only were California and New York the leading states of Chinese Americans, they were also leading states of Chinese migrants from abroad. The impact of immigration is even more profound when one examines the proportions of the foreign born who entered since 1980 (not included in table 11.3), who accounted for on average 38.0% of Chinese in these 10 states in 1990.

In 2000, California and New York continued to be the most popular states, and Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco the most popular metropolitan areas, for new immigrants from China and Taiwan (see table 11.2). Compared with immigrants from China, those from Taiwan had a stronger preference for California (especially Los Angeles) than New York, and they were also more interested in newer metropolitan areas adjacent to traditional urban centers, such as Orange County, San Jose, and suburban New Jersey.

In addition to immigration, internal migration of Chinese further contributed to their uneven regional distribution. Among the 1.33 million Chinese who resided in the U.S. in 1985, 45.1% moved to another house by 1990, and about 21.5% (129,000) of the movers migrated to another state. These ratios were comparable to those of the U.S. population as a whole, but the proportion of interstate movers that migrated to another census region was significantly higher among Chinese Americans (59.4%) than the general U.S. population (51.8%). This is likely related to the former's bi-coastal settlement pattern and their propensity to move to Western states. The West was the biggest gainer of internal migration of Chinese Americans, with a total of 14,605 net in-migration between 1985 and 1990. All other census regions were net losers, and the biggest loser was the Midwest whose net migration was -7,560. The westward movement of Chinese was more prominent than that of the U.S. population as a whole. While the westward movement of the U.S. population has continued since the 1970s, it was the South that was the biggest net gainer between 1985 and 1990. The net flow to the West accounted for 13.4% of all interregional net flows among the U.S. population, but as high as

42.8% of the interregional net flows among Chinese Americans, further underscoring the dominance of the West as the latter's most popular destination.

Within the West, California was the most popular destination of Chinese internal migrants, registering 18,666 net in-migration between 1985 and 1990 (see table 11.3). Though interstate migration was a less important factor of population growth than migration from abroad, the former highlights important spatial dynamics within the U.S. The 10 states with the largest Chinese population were also among the states with the largest (most positive) net migration (California, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington) or those with the smallest (most negative) net migration (New York, Texas, Illinois, Hawaii). This indicates that internal redistribution of Chinese Americans occurred across the largest Chinese settlements. Three patterns seemed to have emerged. The first is the aforementioned movement from the Northeast, Midwest and South to the West. Another is the movement from older settlements, namely New York, Texas, Illinois, and Hawaii, to newer settlements along the eastern or western coast, namely New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington. A third pattern relates to the migration from older metropolitan areas to newer but adjacent metropolitan areas. The positive net migration in New Jersey, in conjunction with the net loss in New York, is the most prominent example of this trend.

Within metropolitan areas, Chinese settlements have also experienced changes. The oldest Chinese settlements are typically near central cities and in large metropolitan areas centering around Chinatowns. Chinatowns serve multiple functions, including first depots for new Chinese immigrants seeking information and employment, locations for firms oriented to a Chinese clientele, and commercial and cultural centers for Chinese communities across the city. But the newer waves of immigration since 1965 have accelerated the growth of new Chinese settlements in "ethnoburbs," a term coined by Li (1998; 1999) in her study of the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles. Li argues that the Chinese ethnic suburbs are brought about by new immigrants' desire for suburban living and have taken on a new "global economy outpost" function, by serving the residential and services needs of new immigrants whose economic and social networks are more international in scope than older immigrants. From a different perspective, Zhou's (1998) work shows that Chinese producer service firms that do not aim at an ethnic market, such as computer firms, are not necessarily located in Chinatowns or Chinese ethnic suburbs.

Figures 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5 respectively show the percentages of Chinese by census tract in Los Angeles for 1980, 1990 and 2000. They highlight first of all the tremendous growth of Chinese in Los Angeles County, from 93,747 in 1980 to 244,907 in 1990 and 329,352 (one race) in 2000. Second, Chinese settlements have expanded from Chinatown to more suburban locations. In 1980, Monterey Park and adjacent neighborhoods already emerged as important Chinese settlements, but the relative concentration there was still much smaller than that of

Chinatown. Specifically, in 1980, the proportion of Chinese in the three census tracts that constitute Chinatown (197100, 197700, 207100) ranged from 41.9% to 63.9%, but the proportion of Chinese in two of the most central tracts in Monterey Park (482101, 4822) was only 19.0% and 12.6% respectively. By 1990 and especially 2000, however, Monterey Park and adjacent neighborhoods have replaced Chinatown as the largest Chinese settlement in Los Angeles. This was signified by the splitting of census tracts (due to rapid population growth) in Monterey Park and the rising proportions of Chinese in these tracts. For example, the proportion of Chinese in census tract 482101 increased to 42.4% in 1990 and 48.9% in 2000, and the proportions in 482201 and 482202 (formerly parts of 4822) increased respectively to 42.4% and 44.1% in 1990 and 49.6% and 49.2% in 2000. These proportions are still lower than those of 207100, the most central Chinatown tract—72.4% in 1990 and 68.8% in 2000. Declining proportions of Chinese in Chinatown and adjacent tracts, however, further signify the suburbanization trend. In particular, the increasing spatial extent of Chinese settlements extending northward and eastward from Monterey Park—generally referred to as San Gabriel Valley—represents a relatively new and more popular suburban type of settlement with lower population density and less defined spatial boundaries. Meanwhile, the shares of Chinese-Vietnamese, and of poorer and less educated individuals, in Chinatown have increased (Allen and Turner, 1997: 121). Monterey Park (and its adjacent communities), on the other hand, has been transformed into a city accommodating large numbers of recent immigrants from Taiwan, so much so that it has been nicknamed “Little Taipei.”

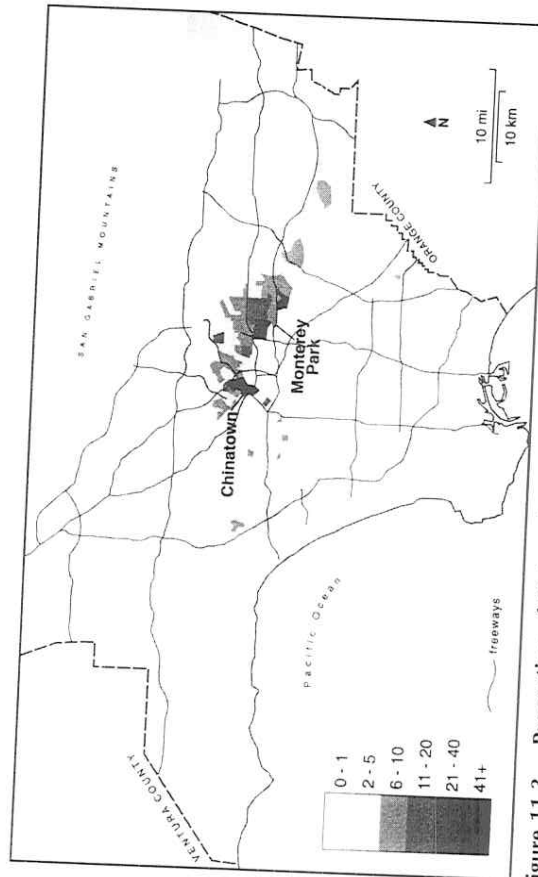


Figure 11.3. Proportion of Chinese in Southern Los Angeles County by Census Tract, 1980 (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce [1982].)

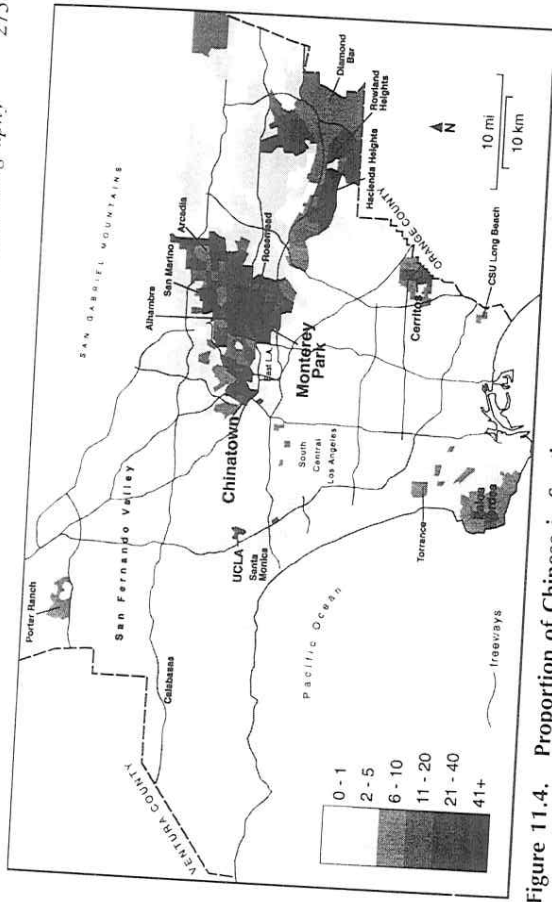


Figure 11.4. Proportion of Chinese in Southern Los Angeles County by Census Tract, 1990 (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce [1991].)

The spatial evolution of suburban Chinese communities in Los Angeles is by design and not by accident. The arrival of large numbers of new immigrants since 1980 fueled the demand for housing beyond the supply in Chinatown and Monterey Park. The higher population density, older housing stock, and central-city setting of Chinatown were considered less desirable by the new

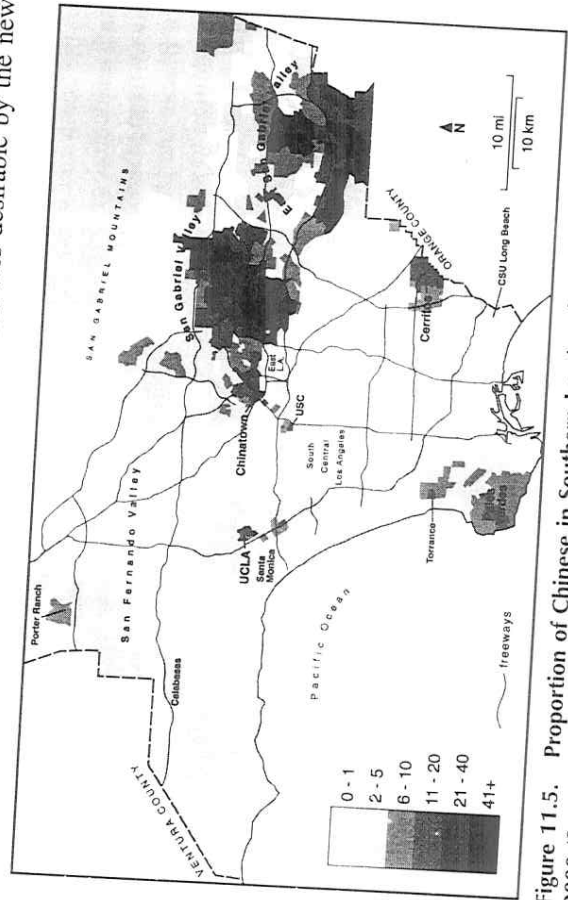


Figure 11.5. Proportion of Chinese in Southern Los Angeles County by Census Tract, 2000 (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce [2002].)

immigrants (Li, 1998). From Monterey Park, Chinese communities expanded into adjacent suburban cities such as Alhambra and Rosemead. Then, further to the north the well-known school district and affluent hilly neighborhoods of and near San Marino, still within reasonable reach to commercial and cultural establishments in Monterey Park, became attractive to them. Developers also began to focus on cities further east, namely, Walnut, Hacienda Heights, Rowland Heights and Diamond Bar in East San Gabriel Valley, where population density was relatively low and new tracts were available for building large and new residential and shopping complexes and amenities specifically serving new Chinese immigrants. Hacienda Heights, in particular, is well known as the site of Hsi Lai Temple—the biggest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere. These cities have become the newest suburban Chinese settlements in Los Angeles that are no longer dependent on the commercial and cultural amenities in Chinatown or Monterey Park and adjacent communities. Figure 11.5 shows that by 2000 East Gabriel Valley has become a full-fledged ethnic suburb for the Chinese, perhaps even rivaling Monterey Park. Not only has the proportion of Chinese in Walnut, Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights increased, but as a result of population growth many tracts in these communities had to be split and new tracts created. For example, the proportion of Chinese in tract 408701 in Rowland Heights was 12.3% in 1990, and by 2000 the tract was further subdivided and the proportion in one of the split tracts—408703—had increased to 55.2%. Such rapid growth reflects the attractiveness of new suburban housing development and suggests that the eastward suburbanization of Chinese in Los Angeles continues unabated.

The expansion of Chinese communities to the east and to the north, but not to the south and west, of Monterey Park, is attributable to ethnic geography and residential preferences. New Chinese settlements have generally been away from inner-city areas with high population density and high proportions of Blacks and Hispanics. Research has found that preferences and avoidance, in addition to socioeconomic factors such as income differences, are important determinants of residential segregation (Allen, 1997; Clark, 1992; Darden, 1985–86). East Los Angeles and South Central, for example, are neighborhoods with high proportions of Hispanics and Blacks, and where the number of Chinese in many tracts is zero or close to zero.

Other pockets in Los Angeles where the proportions of Chinese are more marked fall under four categories. The first consists of neighborhoods along the coast that are largely White with more expensive and older housing stock, such as Santa Monica and Torrance. The second category includes Porter Ranch and West San Fernando Valley that are also mostly White but where newer housing is available. Palos Verdes, Cerritos and Calabases are examples of the third category of neighborhoods, characterized by well-known

school districts. Finally, census tracts with colleges that enroll large numbers of Chinese students, such as University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), University of Southern California (USC), and California State University (CSU)-Long Beach, constitute the fourth category.

The settlement pattern described above suggests a high level of residential segregation among Chinese in Los Angeles. To ascertain this observation, the similarity index (*S*) and the modified exposure index (*E'*)² are applied to census tract-level data for 1980, 1990, and 2000. The similarity indices, which range from 0 which indicates complete segregation to 1 which denotes no segregation, depict that the level of segregation of Chinese was most severe with Blacks, followed by Hispanics and Whites, and least severe with other Asians (see table 11.4). From 1980 to 2000, the similarity indices declined for all ethnic groups, indicating increases in residential segregation of Chinese. Positive values for the modified exposure indices denote that exposure to members of an ethnic group is higher than the citywide level, and negative values signify exposure levels less than the citywide level. Modified exposure indices between Chinese and other Asians were positive, but were near zero for Whites, negative for Blacks, and near zero or negative for Hispanics, again indicating that Chinese in Los Angeles were most segregated from Blacks, somewhat segregated from Whites and Hispanics, and least segregated from other Asians. These statistics further confirm that between 1980 and 2000 the level of residential segregation of Chinese increased, as signified by declining exposure indices with Blacks, Hispanics, and other Asians. This trend reflects the persistence of old ethnic enclaves and suggests that Chinese ethnic suburbs in San Gabriel Valley and East San Gabriel Valley

Table 11.4. Similarity and Modified Exposure Indices: Chinese and Other Ethnic Groups in Los Angeles County, 1980-2000

Similarity index (<i>S</i>)	1980			1990			2000		
	White								
Black	0.47			0.40			0.33		
Hispanic	0.19			0.20			0.18		
Other Asian	0.42			0.35			0.28		
	0.60			0.52			0.47		
Modified exposure index (<i>E'</i>)									
White									
Black	-0.13			-0.11			-0.12		
Hispanic	-0.57			-0.67			-0.70		
Other Asian	0.05			-0.15			-0.34		
	1.13			0.63			0.82		

Sources: Calculated from U.S. Department of Commerce (1982; 1991; 2002).

enabled higher levels of occupational attainment. Many Chinese immigrants, on the other hand, are disadvantaged because of inadequate English ability and lack of knowledge of the labor market. The high level of occupational attainment among Asian Indians is largely due to the very high level of educational attainment among the foreign born—64.3% of them had college education or above.

Table 11.5 shows in more detail the occupational attainment of Chinese Americans. The native born had the highest levels of occupational attainment, as evidenced by their very high proportions in managerial/professional occupations and very low proportions in service occupations and as operators, fabricators, and laborers. This is a direct function of their high level of educational attainment, as well as their more advantaged positions as native born in the labor market. Among the foreign born, the earlier the date of entry, the higher the proportions in managerial/professional occupations, and the lower the proportions in less prestigious occupations such as operators, fabricators, and laborers. Since educational attainment did not differ significantly among the foreign born, the occupational differences are attributable to other reasons. First, occupational attainment is a function of age. Second, the foreign born who entered before 1965 had more time and opportunities to move into managerial and more prestigious positions. Their longer duration of stay has helped them gain greater acceptance in a White-dominated society. Recent immigrants, on the other hand, must first overcome difficulties in entering the mainstream white-collar labor market, including relevant U.S. credentials and English ability. These difficulties have rendered them more highly represented than earlier immigrants in less prestigious occupations such as operators, fabricators, and laborers. Another alternative is to engage in service occupations, such as restaurant and motel sectors, where U.S. credentials and English ability are relatively less important.

A more detailed breakdown of the occupational categories shows the niches of Chinese in the U.S. labor market (see table 11.6). I define the niche index as the ratio between the proportion of Chinese Americans engaged in a specific occupation to the proportion of the U.S. population engaged in that occupation. For example, the niche index of cooks is 3.3 since respectively 6.1% of Chinese Americans and 1.9% of the U.S. population were cooks. An occupational niche is defined as an occupation whose niche index is at least 3, that is, the proportion of Chinese Americans engaged in the occupation is at least three times the proportion of the U.S. population in that occupation. Table 11.6 lists for 1990 the top 10 occupations for Chinese Americans aged 16 and over, as well as other occupations with more than 4,000 Chinese Americans employed and with niche indices bigger than 3. The occupational niches support an earlier observation of a bimodal occupational structure—on

the one hand, Chinese Americans are highly represented in professional, mostly technical, occupations such as engineers, physicians, computer scientists, and postsecondary teachers; on the other hand, they are also highly represented in restaurant services and menial work such as textile machine operators and dressmakers. A closer scrutiny of the 1990 Census shows that occupational niches in restaurant services and of menial nature were highly represented by recent immigrants.

A bimodal occupational structure also characterizes recent immigrants from China and Taiwan to the U.S. (see table 11.2). In addition to family unification, employment-based admission is indeed an important channel for the

Table 11.6. Occupational Niches of Chinese Americans Aged 16 and above, 1990

	Number	Rank	%	Niche index
Cooks	61,047	1	6.1	3.3
Managers and administrators, not elsewhere classified	39,804	2	3.9	1.0
Textile sewing machine operators	39,173	3	3.9	5.6
Waiters and waitresses	32,697	4	3.2	2.4
Cashiers	30,507	5	3.0	1.1
Accountants and auditors	29,605	6	2.9	2.5
Supervisors and proprietors, sales occupation	27,207	7	2.7	1.0
Managers, food serving and lodging establishments	25,247	8	2.5	3.2
Computer programmers	23,994	9	2.4	4.9
Postsecondary teachers, subject not specified	23,966	10	2.4	5.0
Technicians, not elsewhere classified	17,000	11	1.7	4.2
Computer systems analysts and scientists	15,498	16	1.5	4.6
Electrical and electronic engineers	14,279	17	1.4	4.1
Physicians	12,979	18	1.3	3.0
Engineers, not elsewhere classified	9,943	22	1.0	3.8
Civil engineers	6,796	29	0.7	3.6
Pharmacists	5,216	45	0.5	3.8
Chemists, except biochemists	4,848	49	0.5	4.6
Dressmakers	4,189	53	0.4	4.6
Aerospace engineers	4,106	56	0.4	3.8

Source: Calculated from U.S. Department of Commerce (1993).

Note: This table shows the top 10 occupations for Chinese Americans, as well as the occupations with more than 4,000 Chinese and whose niche indices are at least three.

immigration of Chinese, accounting for respectively 30.2% and 30.6% of those from China and Taiwan in 2000. As expected, Chinese immigrants are highly represented in professional and technical occupations, which in 2000 accounted for respectively 37.6% and 50.0% of immigrants born in China and Taiwan. They, together with those in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations, suggest that Chinese immigrants as a whole are a highly selected group. On the other hand, significant proportions of them worked in less prestigious occupations, such as operators, fabricators, and laborers. This bimodal distribution reflects the two-track immigration processes, whereby employment-based admission brought in high-skilled immigrants and family unification brought in immigrants with a range of occupational skills.

Income and Poverty

It is widely known that Asians have the highest median household incomes among all major ethnic groups in the U.S. But this generalization hides two important observations. The first is that Asian households are larger in size and have more workers (Cheng and Yang, 1996). Personal income is therefore a better measure. According to the 1990 Census, the mean personal income of Asians aged 15 and over in 1989 was \$17,488, which was higher than that of Blacks (\$12,026) and Hispanics (\$11,782) but lower than that of Whites (\$19,368). Second, Asians are a very heterogeneous group. The mean personal incomes of Japanese (\$22,352) and Asian Indians (\$22,393) were significantly higher than that of other groups. On the other hand, the mean personal incomes of Laotians (\$9,149), Cambodians (\$9,095) and Hmong (\$6,130) were extremely low, and their levels of poverty were many times higher than the U.S. average. In 1989, the mean personal income of Chinese Americans was \$17,984, which was slightly higher than the average for Asian Americans as a whole but lower than that of Whites.

What is more interesting is the differences between native-born and foreign-born Chinese, and among immigrants of different dates of entry. Table 11.5 shows that Chinese immigrants who entered before 1965 had the highest mean personal income and lowest level of poverty, which was partly due to their older ages. Among the foreign born, there was clearly a positive correlation between income and duration of stay, and a negative correlation between level of poverty and duration of stay. While age may partially explain these correlations, differences in their levels of occupational attainment, described earlier, are perhaps a more determining factor. Income differences were the highest among the 1980–1990 immigrants, whose coefficient of variation was 1.56, compared with 1.20 for the native born, 1.18 for immigrants who entered before 1965, and 1.24 for 1965–1970 immigrants. A sig-

nificant proportion (22.4%) of the 1980–1990 immigrants were below the poverty line. These statistics highlight the internal stratification of recent Chinese immigrants, and question the widely held perception that they are predominantly affluent individuals.

IDENTITIES AND TIES

The experiences of Chinese Americans, including the evolution of their identities and ties with their homelands, are intricately related to the changing contexts of race relations in the U.S. For example, the prejudice and discrimination experienced by early Chinese immigrants have made social and nationality-based organizations such as *huiquan* an indispensable part of their lives. These organizations, most highly represented in San Francisco and New York since the nineteenth century, provided early sojourners shelter, protection, resources, and means for maintaining ties not only with China but also with specific social groups based on lineage and/or native place.

Since the 1960s, both the larger structural contexts and the composition of immigrants have changed, which have in turn transformed the means by which identity is formed and social ties are maintained. First of all, the civil rights movement refocused Americans' attention on race relations, and on the structural discrimination and historical legacies that had impeded upward mobility of minorities. Two of the outcomes of that movement were Affirmative Action programs, which aimed at widening the opportunities for minorities to attain higher education and to work in occupations where they were underrepresented, and the elimination of exclusionary immigration legislation. The movement also precipitated a reexamination of the dominant American social order based on the assimilationist paradigm, and motivated research that employed a pluralist perspective. The latter emphasizes multiculturalism, including immigrants' roots and connections with the home countries, rather than the extent to which they are assimilable (Cheng and Katz, 1998).

The term "Asian Americans" (and "Chinese Americans," etc.), which foregrounds identity as Americans, also has its origins in the 1960s civil rights movement. It offered a drastic alternative to prevailing notions of Asians as foreigners and outsiders. "Chinese Americans" has become a distinct identity that emphasizes the processes of racialization and race formation, rather than a hybrid halfway between Chinese and Americans. It describes more appropriately the experience of descendants of Chinese immigrants who left their homelands a long time ago, for whom the concepts of "diaspora" and "homeland" may have lost their meanings (Leong, 1989). Increases in intermarriage with other Asians and non-Asians, especially among the native born and

younger Chinese Americans, have further strengthened the identities rooted in nationality rather than ancestry.

A common membership to Asian Americans highlights the similar historical experiences shared by many Asian groups in the U.S., such as exclusionary immigration laws and labor market segregation. It also compels politicians to recognize the importance of looking at race relations beyond the Black-White dichotomy. Joining forces with other Asians has enabled larger blocs of constituencies and empowered Asian Americans as a whole. Scholarly and institutional foci on ethnic studies, and artistic and literary expressions of ethnic themes, have also been key processes in the formation of an Asian American identity. Classes and programs in Asian American Studies began in the late 1960s in selected universities, including University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, and San Francisco State University. Many more U.S. colleges, including private universities such as Stanford and Cornell, have since developed Asian American Studies programs. Chinese American experiences is a central component of these programs, which have greatly facilitated the documentation and systematic analyses of the experiences of Asian Americans, including individual and collective identities, struggles, aspirations, and voices. In addition, Chinese Americans are increasingly exploring themes of ethnic identity, including intergenerational conflicts, in creative ways. Amy Tan's "Joy Luck Club," Ang Lee's "The Wedding Banquet," and Wayne Wang's "Dim Sum," are among the most well-known examples.

Chinese Americans have increasingly excelled in traditional as well as non-traditional fields. Among early immigrants, the most well-known individuals are mostly in scientific fields, including Nobel laureate C. N. Yang. Many Chinese Americans continue to show great achievements in sciences and related fields, including David Ho in AIDS research, but more recently they have also gained national and international recognition in sports (e.g., Michael Chang, Michele Kwan), architecture (e.g., Maya Lin, I. M. Pei), journalism (e.g., Connie Chung), and education (e.g., Chang-Lin Tien). In politics, Gary Locke was elected governor of the state of Washington in 1996 and is the first Chinese American to head a governor's office. In 2001, Elaine Chao was confirmed as Secretary of Labor and became the first Chinese American to be appointed as a cabinet member. With Norman Mineta, the Secretary of Transportation also confirmed under the George W. Bush administration, they represent two historic Asian American appointments in the cabinet.

Despite achievements by the above individuals, in general Chinese Americans have only a small presence in top-level management and in federal politics. The difficulties Chinese Americans have experienced in U.S. politics may be attributable to two factors. The first factor is a lack of political cohesion that is critical for establishing an influential constituency. In response, a group of

prominent Chinese Americans are developing strategies to enable greater representation of Chinese in politics, including an organization called "The 80-20 Initiative" founded in order to cultivate Asian American political clout and to make Asian American voters a crucial factor in the year 2000 presidential election. Second, Chinese Americans are subject to two types of racial domination (Wang, 1995). The first is domestic, and has to do with the long-standing exclusion and repression U.S. minorities experienced and are still experiencing. The second type of domination is extraterritorial, and refers to the implications of international relations for Chinese Americans. The ups and downs of U.S.-China relations since the late 1970s, in particular, have complicated the experiences of Chinese Americans. Many have become investors, or liaisons for American investors, in China since it opened its doors to the world. But the 1989 Tiananmen incident, charges of human rights violations, controversies over U.S. presidential campaign funds, accusations of Chinese American scientists stealing U.S. nuclear technology, and the reportedly accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, have culminated into very tense relations between the two nations. In the U.S. media, China has been portrayed as an enemy rather than a friend ("Special Report: Friend or Foe?" 1996; "The Next Cold War?" 1999). Regardless of how "American" Chinese Americans have become, these external developments continue to constrain their opportunities in politics, technology, management and other fields.

Many examples illustrate the enduring perception and labeling of Chinese Americans as foreigners. Wen Ho Lee, a first generation immigrant originally from Taiwan and a Chinese American scientist, was falsely accused of stealing American nuclear technology for China in 1999, dismissed from his job arbitrarily by the University of California and the Department of Energy, and subjected to nine months of solitary confinement with neither a trial nor a conviction. In September 2000, he was found guilty of only one minor charge of "mishandling classified data," but for over a year and a half "politicians and media incited mass hysteria and engaged in a national witch-hunt, rendering Asian American synonymous with treason and espionage" (Wang, 2002). In February 2002, figure skating veteran Michelle Kwan, a second generation Chinese American, lost the Winter Olympics gold medal to Sarah Hughes, a White American. The MSNBC network and Seattle Times respectively headlined "American Beats out Michelle Kwan" and "American Outshines Kwan," despite the fact that Kwan was born and raised in the U.S. In April 2002, Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F), an upscale retailer, put out a new line of T-shirts with derogatory portrayals of Asians. One of the designs shows Asians in laundry services, referring to a popular livelihood of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century, again illustrating the stereotyping, racialization, and social construction of Asian Americans and Chinese Americans as permanent foreigners.

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