

Reimagining Model Minority: An Inquiry into the Post-1965 Chinese Immigration in the

United States

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Digital Art History/Computational Media in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This purpose of this thesis is to investigate the most significant issues and concerns confronting the Chinese immigrant community in the U.S. through a quantitative analysis of the current states of Chinese America and a qualitative inquiry with Chinese immigrants themselves. Data for this thesis were mainly collected from U.S. Census Bureau and the Immigration Naturalization Services, which served as part of a broad overview of the current states of Chinese society in the U.S. To answer questions that the data alone cannot elaborate on, I inquired into the everyday experience and struggles of immigrant Chinese by conducting oral history interviews.

Based on a careful examination of government records and oral histories, this thesis has recognized that Chinese immigrants' affluence, high education and cultural identity have positioned the Chinese as a "model minority." However complimentary that term may sound, it represents a stereotype that homogenizes the Chinese community as a successful community and further obscures issues facing the community such as glass ceiling and assimilation. This thesis further examines a complex relationship between Chinese immigrant perceptions regarding model minority as a myth and their expectation to live up to it in the next generation.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Shichao Xie and Xiufang Ke; to my grandmother Yuyuan Li. Thank you all for helping to give me the life I love today.

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1. Introduction

Chinese American Author, journalist and activist Helen Zia raises an interesting question in her popular work *Asian American Dream: The Emergence of an American People*, “what does it take to become American?”¹ Helen Zia, offers her personal experience and observations of how Asians struggle to fit into the mainstream of American society. In her own words, “What we’ve really been wanting to know is how to become accepted as Americans. For if baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet were enough for us to gain acceptance as Americans, then there would be no periodic refrain about alien Asian spies, no persistent bewilderment towards us as ‘strange’ and ‘exotic’ characters, no cries of foul play by Asian Americans, and no need for this book.”² Helen Zia’s struggle with her Asian identity resonates with many Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

Inspired by the question that Helen Zia raises, I chose modern Chinese immigrants in America as my research subject. My instinct has told me there were stories to be told behind immigrants’ experience and struggles. I focused the time period of my study on the post-1965 immigration reform time as a series of historical events and circumstances introduced a significant flow of Chinese immigrants. Most of the Chinese immigrants came over to America after the 1965 immigration reform, and by

¹ Helen Zia. “Introduction” In *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), ix.

² Zia. “Introduction” In *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*, ix.

way of the family reunification program, family-sponsored visas or employment-based visas. Some immigrants came over to the U.S. as students first, and eventually adjusted their status to permanent residents.

As the Civil Rights Movement ended with the promises of equal rights in the late 1960s, Chinese immigrants have enjoyed more rights and a large portion have been incorporated economically into society. However, many find themselves not assimilated or integrated into the mainstream of American society.³ In the meanwhile, a new challenge occurred to the Chinese community in America. Model minority became a popular concept within the discourse on Chinese American to describe Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans in the late 1960s as the achievement of Asian Americans caught the attention of mass media. However, the implication of the model minority seemingly simplifies Asian as an ethnicity group that stood out from the rest of the minorities, and thus reinforced racial discrimination towards African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanic. A predominant criticism of the model minority idea has suggested that the model minority was originated to showcase the success of Asian Americans and suppress Civil Rights Movements.

To understand Chinese immigrant experiences and struggles, in the summer of 2018, through personal connections, I was able to interview fifty-six Chinese immigrants

³ Benson Tong, *The Chinese Americans* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 137.

about their memories of their homelands and their experiences in the U.S. This thesis is built upon the existing scholarships, with a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches for an in-depth analysis of contemporary Chinese immigration. The quantitative research utilizes government documents, including US census, immigration statistics, surveys, reports, academic journals, and media articles to examine the scale of Chinese immigrant society and the size of Chinese immigration. By leveraging multiple data sources, the first part of the thesis offers an overview of the historical and current situations of the Chinese in America regarding critical issues such as the model minority, glass ceiling and assimilation. However, the data alone do not answer the questions about what the experience of a Chinese immigrant in the U.S is. Therefore, qualitative research comes in as equally important as quantitative research. It humanizes the research by having the Chinese immigrants speak for themselves regarding their experiences and struggles in America.

Combing quantitative research and qualitative research allows this study to see behind the numbers and comprehend the experience of Chinese immigrants in a more nuanced way. This study sees quantitative research and qualitative research equivalently significant to each other. Both methods are integrally joined, and complementary to each other. Therefore, this study has drawn equal attention to both methods. Bringing the qualitative and quantitative research methods together also allows this study to inquire into the everyday life experience and struggles of Chinese

immigrants in a more humanizing way and have the data available for a statistical inquiry into the contemporary Chinese immigration.

1.1 History of Chinese in the United States

Researching on the history and community of Chinese American by academic scholars gained popularity following the civil right movement.⁴ The civil right movement has spurred interest in the study of minority groups in America, including Chinese Americans. Scholars like Him Mark Lai, who pioneered in the field of Chinese American studies, began to research on Chinese American in the 1960s. Starting as an engineer at the Bechtel Corporation from 1953 as the first generation of Chinese Americans that worked outside Chinatown in professional occupations,⁵ Him Mark Lai work has anticipated many trends in scholarships today in the field of Chinese American studies though he never had any full-time position in academe.

Him Mark Lai suggested that the history of Chinese in American can be seen in five stages: Early Arrival (1785-1848), Unrestricted immigration (1848-1882), Exclusion (1882-1943), Restricted immigration (1943-1965) and Immigration on an equal basis (1965

⁴ Him Mark Lai, "Chinese American Studies: A Historical Survey," *Chinese America: History and Perspective* (1988): 2.

⁵ Madeline Y. Hsu, "Foreword: The Life and Times of Him Mark Lai" in *Becoming Chinese American* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004), xiv.

– present).⁶ By as early as 1820, the entry of Chinese immigrants was documented.⁷ The first significant presence of Chinese in the U.S. appeared during the California Gold Rush. Following the discovery of gold by James Marshall on the South Fork of the American River,⁸ men from Canton, a southern province of China, sailed their ships from Canton for California seeking for their “Gold Mountain.”⁹ The Gold Rush attracted thousands of Chinese men who were longed for wealth and prosperity to step their feet on the land. Between 1848 to 1951, Chinese started to arrive in San Francisco, then headed for Sutter’s Mill.¹⁰ By the end of the 1850s, more than 30,000 Chinese came to America.¹¹ The Chinese men soon realized the “Gold Mountain” was just a myth. Only a few Chinese were able to make fortunes out of the Gold Rush. Most Chinese ended up entering other sectors of the economy, such as railroad construction, farming and fishing.¹² After slavery’s abolition in 1865, the Burlingame Treaty ensured a steady flow of low-cost Chinese immigrant labor for U.S. firms. These Chinese were referred to by

⁶ Him Mark Lai, “History of the Chinese American Community,” Him Mark Lai digital archive, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://himmarklai.org/roots-program-lecture-notes/20-chinese-american-history/>.

⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2017), <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016%20Yearbook%20of%20Immigration%20Statistics.pdf>.

⁸ Andrew C. Isenberg, *The California Gold Rush: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018), 1.

⁹ Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 34.

¹¹ U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Services, 1997* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999), 24.

¹² Judy Yang, Gordon H. Chang and Him Mark Lai, *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (California: University of California Press, 2006), 3.

the racist term “coolies,” a phrase used to describe workers from China and South Asian origin that were imported for work in countries including Cuba, Peru and the United States. The Chinese coolies were referred to as the “maizhuzai,” namely pigs for sale. The promise of wealth obscured the cruelty of coolie traders. The coolie traders, Chinese middlemen would use various methods to attract men for labors, ideally those in debt, in prison and those who were eager for a promising future. The Chinese youth were lured with the promise of fortune overseas and deceived into signing labor contracts with coolie traders.¹³ Marcus Lam, fifty-seven, remembered that his great-great-grandfather and great father used to work as coolies in Sacramento. “They were told they were going for the gold rush but ended up doing the filthy work: farming, laundry and gambling house,” he said.¹⁴ Chinese coolies became another form of slavery in the name of “free labor.” In *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe argues that introduction of Chinese laborers in the late 19th century at the center of slavery abolition, fulfilled “a need for a nominally ‘free’ labor force, one that would not substitute for the slaves, but would perform different labors and would be distinguished racially and socially from both the white European colonial planters and the Black slaves.”¹⁵ The introduction of Chinese coolies obscured the boundary between enslavement and free

¹³ Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 30.

¹⁴ Marcus Lam, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

¹⁵ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 31.

labor and transferred the capitalist economy from relying on primitive slavery to “free labor” that fills in an structure need for labors after the slavery abolition in 1865.

In the meantime, the last imperial dynasty of China, the Qing Dynasty, had ruled China for about 200 years by the end of the 19th century. The Qing Empire had reached its most glamorous age in the 18th century when efficient administration, social stability, and steady land expansion were achieved by the empire’s three emperors: Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong.¹⁶ When the emperor Qianlong abdicated his throne in 1799, the power of Qing had passed its peak.¹⁷

The early Chinese coolies were Cantonese coming from the Pearl River Delta in Canton, an area that is fertile and hilly. Fed by an abundance of lakes, rivers and streams, with numerous valleys and hills, the lands in the Pearl created a substantial income for the local peasants.¹⁸ Between 1787 and 1850, Canton’s population growth rate (79.5%) was almost equal to twice the national population growth rate(47%).¹⁹ The enormous growth of population in Canton had caused economic disparity in the rural area.²⁰ Famine, poverty and war had driven Cantonese to leave their hometown. Though Chinese coolies were proclaimed as the “free labor” by the Anglo Americans, Chinese

¹⁶ Daniel McMahon, *Rethinking the Decline of China’s Qing Dynasty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 2-3.

¹⁷ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 15.

¹⁸ Tong, *the Chinese Americans*, 5.

¹⁹ Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368 – 1953*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 281-283.

²⁰ Chang, *the Chinese in America*, 20.

coolies were often regarded as the substitute for black slavery and were still inherently different from the Anglo Americans.²¹ A book published in 1885, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad: Condition of the Chinese Quarter and the Chinese in San Francisco*, depicted the Chinese as a race unfit for in the American society, that were “the seeds of immorality, vice and disease among our (American) people, and plunges al large mass of the laboring classes into poverty and misery”²² to prove they were the inferior to the Anglo Americans. When the white labor began to organize for higher wages, the American capitalists turned to the Chinese workers to fill the need for labors. Henry Kittredge Norton, an American educator, journalist and businessman, noted in his book *The Story of California From the Earliest Days to the Present* that “the most conspicuous characteristic of the Chinese is their passion for work. The Chinaman seemingly must work. If he cannot secure work at a high wage he will take it at a low wage.”²³ Chinese workers were praised for their efficiency and used by owners of factories to end union strike aroused by white employees. The notion that the Chinese worked hard without complaint put Chinese on the opposite side of the unions, which turned Chinese as a threat to the white labors.²⁴

²¹ Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 8.

²² Willard Brigham Farwell, *The Chinese at Home and Abroad: Condition of the Chinese Quarter and the Chinese in San Francisco* (R and E Research Associates, 1885), 5, <https://archive.org/details/chinesehomeabroad00farw/page/n3>.

²³ Henry K. Norton, *The Story of California From the Earliest Days to the Present* (Chicago: AC McClurg & Company, 1913), 283, <https://archive.org/details/storycalifornia05nortgoog/page/n10>.

²⁴ Yang, Chang and Lai, *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, 4.

Under the riot of anti-Chinese sentiment, the Chinese Exclusion Act was approved on May 6, 1882, which banned the entry of Chinese laborers for ten years except for diplomats, students, teachers, merchants and visitors.²⁵ The Act also forbade the naturalization of Chinese persons.²⁶

The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943 when China and the United States were allies.²⁷ Racial discrimination towards Chinese American continued to escalate in the early 20th century. Solely aimed at Chinese Americans in the beginning, the Chinese exclusion further extended to Asian Americans by the 1990s. By 1924, all Asian immigrants were excluded and ineligible for citizenship.²⁸ As a result, persons of Chinese ancestry born outside of the United States could not become American citizens until 1943.²⁹ The Chinese Exclusion Act had led to a dramatic shrink in the Chinese population in the US: from a total of 105,465 in 1880 to a low of 61639 in 1920.³⁰

A notable argument on the Chinese Exclusion Act reveals that the racial philosophy embedded in the Chinese Exclusion segregated the Chinese community

²⁵ "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)," Our Documents - Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), accessed June 13, 2018, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=47>.

²⁶ Martin B. Gold, *Forbidden Citizens, Chinese Exclusion and the U.S. Congress: A Legislative History* (Alexandria, VA: TheCapital.Net, 2012), 194.

²⁷ "Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts, Milestones: 1866 – 1898," Office of the Historian, accessed November 2, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>.

²⁸ Him Mark Lai, "The Chinese Exclusion Act: Observations of a Centennial," *Amerasia Journal* vol. 9, no. 1(1982).

²⁹ Gold, *Forbidden Citizens, Chinese Exclusion and the U.S. Congress: A Legislative History*, 194

³⁰ "Table Aa145-184 -population, by sex and race: 1790-1990," Historical Statistics of the United State, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/toc/tableToc.do?id=Aa145-184>.

from the mainstream American society and shaped the cultural identity of Chinese immigrants. Him Mark Lai argued that the Chinese Exclusion Act had limited Asian American ability to participate in mainstream American society.³¹ Benson Tong argues that “ethnic solidarity in workplaces,” as a reaction to Chinese exclusion, has “contributed to shaping the ethnic consciousness of the immigrant Chinese in North America.”³² During the exclusion era, the Chinese were unable to break into most sectors of the economy and clustered in the enclave economy for survival. Many Chinese Americans, as Him Mark Lai pointed out, were limited to working in laundries, restaurants and domestic services, occupations that became predominantly associated with Chinese.³³ Ever since the late 19th century, social dynamics like racial discrimination and government policies turned Chinese society in America into an ethnic enclave society where Chinese were highly concentrated in a geographic area, the Chinatown.

The ethnic enclave became available for immigrants to survive and cope with external challenges. Initially resulted from marginalization and segregation by the dominant American society,³⁴ an ethnic enclave in the late 19th century was undesirably a result from Chinese exclusion. But it also became a place for immigrants to seek help and assistance.

³¹ Lai, “The Chinese Exclusion Act: Observations of a Centennial.”

³² Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 64.

³³ Lai, “The Chinese Exclusion Act: Observations of a Centennial.”

³⁴ Min Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 61.

1.2 Immigration Control

Adam McKeown's *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* argues that the roots of Modern border control and international identity documentation can be found in the Asian Migration Control beginning in the late nineteenth century.³⁵ The basic principles of border control and techniques for individual identification, including photographs, personal documents and fingerprints, were developed from the 1880s to 1990s through excluding Asians from the European settler nations.³⁶ Intermediary organizations, for example, the Chinese coolie traders were excluded from the process so that the border control only concerned two party: the individual and the state³⁷

At the height of Chinese Exclusion, Angel Island was introduced in 1910 as the detention center for strictly medical and immigration inspections on newcomers, especially the Chinese and other Asians.³⁸ The Angel Island was operated to practice Chinese exclusion laws and control Asian migration, in particular, the Chinese migration. Paperwork would be carefully examined upon their arrival on the island. Further medical inspections and an individual interview would be done on the island.³⁹

³⁵ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

³⁶ Ibid, 2.

³⁷ Ibid, 11.

³⁸ Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2014), 2.

³⁹ Lai, Lim and Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*.

The Angel Island was a definitive experiment on border control. When the Angel Island was enforced, Daniel Keefe the executive that promoted the idea of Angel Island argued that the new procedure was “made as broad and liberal as possible under the law, and have been reduced to simpler terms than any rules heretofore issued.”⁴⁰ Immigration control was reduced to a formalized procedure on Angel Island. Lawyers and tricksters were excluded from the process.⁴¹ The legacy of migration control on Asians goes beyond the Chinese exclusion in the late 19th century. First, Angel Island opened the opportunities for “paper sons.” Though the initial purpose of Angel Island was to exclude Asian migrations through a formalized procedure to exclude corruption and Chinese smugglers, it allowed immigrants to enter the country if they had passed paperwork examination and harsh interpersonal interrogation. Based on the case *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* in 1898, the Supreme Court declared that a child of Chinese origins born in the United States – whose parents at the time he was born, are of Chinese origins but obtained permanent residence in the United States; are owning business in the United States and are not employed by the Emperor of China – is a citizen of the United States.⁴² A Chinese immigrant who convinced the American government that he was a citizen can claim citizenship for his children born in China. This rule allowed the

⁴⁰ Mckeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*, 251.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, K. Scott Wong and Jason Oliver Chang, *Asian America: A Primary Source Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 55-59.

Chinese to get away with the Chinese Exclusion laws by claiming that they were the children of U.S. citizens. Chinese men living in the U.S. could sell fake birth certificate in their home villages in China and brought young Chinese men to America. This loophole in the rule allowed the Chinese to enter America during the exclusion era, which benefitted the Chinese communities.

Secondly, the implementation of Angel Island brought a structure shift to the migration control in the U.S. Daniel Keefe the executive who promoted the construction of Angel island, justified the use of Angel Island by claiming that the techniques designed to control and marginalize Asians became the template for the practice of immigration laws in the European settler nations and further expanded to the whole world that is equally applicable to every applicant. The legacy of controlling Asian immigration, created a new order, a “melancholy order” that, according to Mckeown, formalizes the global migration control as a procedure between individual migrant and the state.⁴³ Influenced by Asian migration control, modern border control became a set of formalized procedure that can be followed and operated between the state and the individual. Since the 1965 Immigration Reform, immigrants from any national region can apply for immigration visa on an equal basis as long as they follow proper immigration procedure. The sufferings that early Chinese immigrants went through

⁴³ Mckeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*.

have now benefitted modern Chinese immigrants. New problems occurred as the system opens up more immigrant visa slots. For instance, an increase in the number of immigrant visa applicants resulted in a longer waitlist for visa approval. Kenneth Lau recalled that his sister filed the immigration application for him when he was eighteen years old. But it was not until he was thirty-five that he obtained his permanent residency.⁴⁴

1.3 Immigration Policy in the United States

To understand the present, one must contemplate the past. In retrospective the legislative history of Immigration and Naturalization in the United States, the laws had explicitly favored immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Prior to 1870, only the Whites could become naturalized citizens. The Naturalization Act of 1790 limited the acquisition of citizenship to only “free white persons”, which excluded all other races.⁴⁵

In 1870, The Naturalization Act allowed the naturalization to persons of African descent,⁴⁶ but Congress rejected the proposal to open naturalization to all, and thus Asian remained ineligible for naturalization.⁴⁷ The Immigration Act of 1924 regulated

⁴⁴ Kenneth Lau, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

⁴⁵ “The Naturalization Act of 1790 [An Act to Establish an Uniform Rule of Naturalization]. Chap. 3; 1 Stat 103.26 Mar. 1790.]” as quoted in *Asia America: A Primary Source Reader*, 21.

⁴⁶ “Nationalization Act of 1870,” Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/41st-congress/session-2/c41s2ch254.pdf>

⁴⁷ Gold, *Forbidden Citizens, Chinese Exclusion and the U.S. Congress: A Legislative History*, 32

the immigration process based on race and nationality.⁴⁸ The national origins quota system was introduced to limit migration from Eastern Hemisphere. Under this system, a quota of 2 percent of the one nation's population in 1890 in the U.S. was given to each nation.⁴⁹ Through military service in World War II, The Chinese Americans managed to alter their reputation in America.⁵⁰ Hostility towards Chinese Americans declined when Chinese Americans fought in the fields as hard as their fellows. The ban against the entry of Chinese was removed during World War II. On December 17, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the legislation enacting Public Law and officially ended the Chinese Exclusion.⁵¹ However, immigration to America remained restricted. An annual quota of 105 was given to Chinese.⁵² Generated by the Allies' victory over the Axis powers, the 1945 War Brides Act allowed spouses and children of U.S. citizens in the military to gain a nonquota visa during the next three years.⁵³ The new influx of female immigration in the 1940s helped raised the total Chinese population in America from around 77,000 in 1940 to more than 117,000 in 1950.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ It should be noted that in 1924, Congress granted a non-quota category for the Eastern Hemisphere, which meant that immediate citizens of U.S. citizens, wives and children, were exempted from the quota system

⁴⁹ Office of the Historian, "The Immigration Act of 1924, Milestones: 1921 – 1936."

⁵⁰ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 105

⁵¹ Fred W. Riggs, *Pressures on Congress, A Study of the Repeal of Chinese Exclusion* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), 38.

⁵² Lai, *Becoming Chinese Americans*, 32.

⁵³ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 08-109

⁵⁴ Historical Statistics of the United State, "Table Aa145-184 -population, by sex and race: 1790-1990."

1.4 1965 Immigration Reform

It was not until the 1960s, which generated a reform on immigration policies that Asian American communities attempted to stand out and fight for their rights. The Asian American Studies Scholar Yen Le Espiritu argues that although Asian Americans have long engaged with political action and empowerment of Asian Americans, it was not until the 1960s that their efforts drew public attention.⁵⁵ A series of historical events such as the Vietnam War, the rising number of Asian students in universities and the Civil Rights Movement, pushed Asian communities in the U.S. to ask for justice. The Civil Rights movements in the 1960s brought attention to racial discrimination and inequality in the immigration policies of the United States. The Civil Rights Movement is often seen as a movement with the goal of enforcing the constitutional and civil rights of African Americans by ending racial segregation, disenfranchisement, and discrimination in the State. However, the Civil Rights Movement also had an important implication for the immigration policy reform in the 1960s. For minority groups, the Civil Rights Movements had for the first time brought attention to racial discrimination and inequality.

⁵⁵ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992)

On January 8th, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union Address, in which he called for an end to racial discrimination and released a commitment to “lifting by legislation the bars of discrimination against those who seek entry into our country, particularly those who have much-needed skills and those joining their families.”⁵⁶ The speech addressed by President Johnson had given a positive message to the immigrant society, in which he stated, “in establishing preferences, a nation that was built by the immigrants of all lands can ask those who now seek admission: ‘what can you do for our country?’ But we should not be asking: ‘In what country were you born.’”⁵⁷ In six months after this address, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.⁵⁸ One year later, President Johnson’s message was written down in laws. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Acts ends the quota limitations based on nations and sets an annual limit of 170,000 immigration visas for aliens from the

⁵⁶ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-to-the-congress-the-state-the-union-25>.

⁵⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.”

⁵⁸ “Transcript of Civil Rights Act (1964),” Ourdocuments.gov, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=97>.

Eastern Hemisphere, excluding immediate relatives of U.S. citizens.⁵⁹ A maximum quota of 20,000 may be used by any single country per year.⁶⁰

Stephanie Hinnershitz has found that a connection between the civil rights movement and immigrant rights has strengthened the relationship between foreign-born Asian and American-born Asian and united the communities to speak out on racial issues. Hinnershitz argues that foreign-born Asian students used Christianity to reach agreement with American-born students and connect immigrant rights with racial equality in the United States, “highlighting the interracial, interethnic, multicultural, and ideological roots of American civil rights movements.”⁶¹

Inspired by Civil Rights Movements, the passage of 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act reminded the Asian American communities that the admissions of immigrants should be based neither on national origin nor the person’s ethnicity, but on an equal-based immigration system legitimated by laws. A series of historical events and circumstances, such as the Civil Rights Movement

⁵⁹ U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, *Annual Report of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1970* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Stephanie Hinnershitz, *Race, Religion and Civil Rights: Asian Students on the West Coast, 1900-1968* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 212.

and the reform on immigration policies, introduced more Chinese immigrants to come over to America. These Chinese immigrants, for the first time could enjoy the right to vote, enter desegregated schools, workplaces and public accommodations.

2. Demographic Trends and Characteristics of Contemporary Chinese Immigration

My research on the history of Chinese immigration in the U.S. and its significance to the contemporary Chinese immigration speaks to the question of how the legacy of early Chinese immigration has continued to affect the current states of Chinese America. As I discussed in the Introduction and would discuss further in the next chapter, I argue that Chinese exclusion inevitably created racial stereotype against Chinese immigrants for generations and that stereotype has generated new challenges for Chinese immigrants in the modern age, such as glass ceiling in the workplace and the model minority concept.

When data become available, statistical analysis could help this study to fill the gap between secondary scholarships on the Chinese immigrant experience and the oral history interviews. The statistical analysis on Chinese immigrants allows this study to have a broader picture of the contemporary Chinese immigration to the U.S. and a critical engagement with the secondary scholarships and primary source materials from a quantitative perspective. In the post-1965 immigration reform era, the image of Chinese in America has transformed from the “Yellow peril” to the “Model minority.” Chinese are regarded as one of the most successful minorities groups in America – high educated and affluent. The legacies of Chinese immigration history bring contemporary Chinese America with both opportunities and challenges. It worries me that issues

concerned the Chinese population in the U.S. are obscured by the backlash from the model minority concept.

In this study, I collected immigration data and records from Immigration and Naturalization Services and US Census Bureau. The data speak to the questions of immigration policies' effect on Chinese immigration, the geographic patterns for Chinese immigrants, the demographic trends of Chinese immigration and the size of Chinese immigrant society in the post-1965 era.

2.1 Data and Methodology

Data for this study were derived from several sources. But mainly the data were collected from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and the U.S. Census Bureau. The data from INS informed information on a cohort of foreign nationals who were granted lawful permanent residence, were admitted into the United States with temporary visas or applied for asylee or refugee status, or were naturalized.⁶²

On the other hand, the data from the U.S. Census Bureau informed information about a larger cohort. When this paper refers to the data from the U.S. Census Bureau, it suggests every resident in the U.S. with an address is considered in the data sets. The Immigration data for Chinese were compiled from key datasets and resources published by the Immigration and Naturalization Services, the annual yearbooks, profiles on

⁶² U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *2016 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 1.

Lawful Permanent Residents and annual flow reports on refugees and asylees. The annual yearbooks also provide information in respect to foreign nationals' demographic profiles, such as sex, ages, marital status, occupation, region of birth, last residency, class of admission and their intended state of residency. Profiles on Lawful Permanent residences and annual flow Reports on refugees and asylees provided number and characteristics of persons who became lawful permanent residents and refugees/asylees during a given fiscal year.

U.S. Census Bureau's data reports on Chinese population, provide important information that helps this thesis define the demographic characteristics of the Chinese population in the U.S and the residential patterns for the Chinese population. The American Community Survey (ACS), is also a definitive source of the demographic profiles and socio-economic status for the Chinese population in the current state. To examine the occupational and employment structure of the Chinese in America, this study relies on statistical reports carried out by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and reports on Asian American professional performance based on the EEOC workplace data sets carried out by non-profit organizations.

This study generally focuses on data on Chinese immigration and the Chinese population in the U.S. between 1965 and 2016. My methodology comprises of three parts: data entry, data analysis and data visualization. For the data entry, I mainly worked with spreadsheets to enter data extracted from several data sources and compile

the original data sets into organized data sets that speak to different demographic characteristics of Chinese immigrants. Since most of the data sets I worked with are not digitized, for example, the Annual Reports of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services between 1965 and 1977, I have spent most of the time going through hard copies and manually typing information into spreadsheets. A challenge from this process is the tendency to make typing mistakes. Manual data entry are not always reliable and perfect, as human behaviors cannot process information as fast and accurate as a computer. An alternative approach is to use Optical Character Recognition tools, but these tools are also not reliable. Another challenge is the inconsistencies in the data sets. There are many missing values from the immigration records this study uses. For example, from the year of 2002 and beyond, data on the major occupation groups of immigrants admitted to the U.S. did not provide information on immigrants' country of origin. Noticeable "holes" in the data sets disable this study from producing complete and sequential data sets. Last but not least, the biggest challenge for me is to rationalize the use of data from both the INS and the U.S. Census Bureau. As seemingly distinctive as the two data sources are, I need to justify the need to use both data sources and to avoid making confusion when using data from both sources together. In that case, I refer to the INS data as data on Chinese immigrants, which include Mainland Chinese, Hong

Kong Chinese and Taiwanese Chinese.⁶³ I refer to the Census data as data on the Chinese in America or the Chinese population in America.

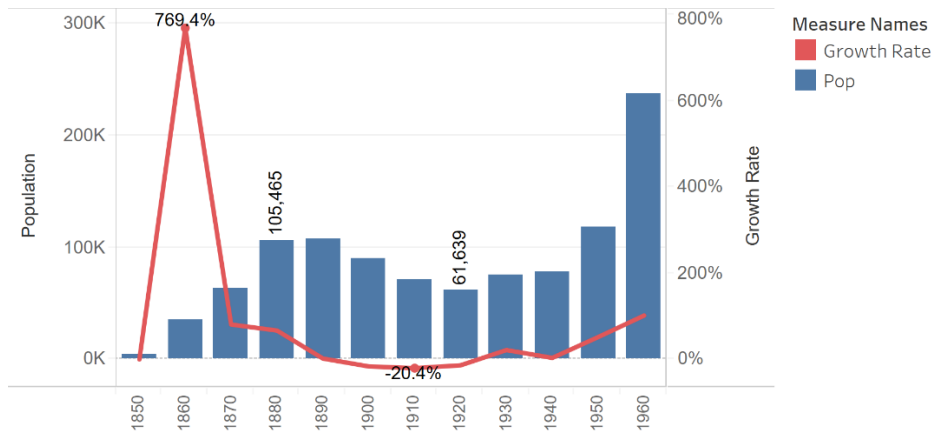
2.2 Chinese Immigration in the U.S.

Historically, Chinese immigrants were the earliest Asian immigrants to the U.S. by as early as the 1820s; official immigration documents have recorded the arrival of immigrants from China. The official recorded entries of three immigrants from China between 1820 and 1829.⁶⁴ During the Chinese Exclusion time, Chinese still came over to the U.S., since the Chinese Exclusion Act did not exclude everyone. Diplomats, students, teachers, merchants and visitors were exempted from the laws.⁶⁵ However, A major drop in the population of Chinese happened between 1880 and 1920 (see figure 1), when the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted. The Chinese population dropped from 105k in 1880 to 62k in 1920.

⁶³ Taiwan and Mainland China are not considered as one country in the immigration records since 1982 for political reason. This study considers Taiwanese Chinese and Chinese as two categories regarding immigration data from 1982 to 2016.

⁶⁴ Office of Immigration Statistics, *2016 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*,5.

⁶⁵ Our Documents – Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)."



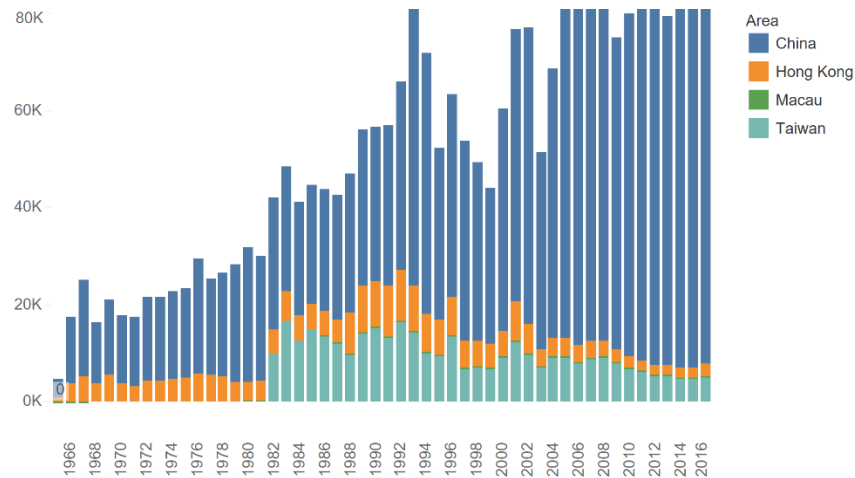
Source: Historical Statistics of the United State, Table Aa145-184 -population, by sex and race: 1790-1990.

Figure 1: Chinese Population between 1880 and 1940

The 1965 Immigration Reform has accounted for most of the growth of Chinese population in the U.S. Ever since the 1965 immigration reform, between 1965 and 2016, more than 2.7 million Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau were admitted to the U.S., almost 7 times the total Chinese immigrants admitted to the U.S. between 1850 and 1959.⁶⁶ Figure 2 reflects the rapid flow of Chinese immigrants into America since the 1965 immigration reform. These number also reflects changes in the diplomatic relations between China and the U.S, the normalizations of U.S.-China relations in 1978, which resulted in an unceasing flow of Chinese immigrants from the Mainland China and a separate immigrant quota for Taiwan since 1982. Prior to 1982, the “China” category could represent either immigrant from mainland China or

⁶⁶ Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1977; Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1978-2001; Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2016.

Taiwan. However, in considering Mainland China’s emigration policy prior to China’s open-up and U.S.-China relations before 1978, it’s legitimate to say most of the immigrants under the “China” category between 1965 and 1978 were mostly Taiwanese immigrants.



Source: Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1977; Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1978-2001; Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2016.

Figure 2: Persons obtaining legal permanent resident status by region and selected country of birth, between 1965 and 2016

The contemporary Chinese community in the U.S. is still considered as a predominantly immigrant society as 70 % of the Chinese population in the U.S. are foreign-born nowadays. 80% of the Chinese in the U.S. speak languages other than English at home.⁶⁷ In comparison, 13.7% of the total population are foreign-born, while 8.6% of the white population are foreign-born.⁶⁸ Family-based immigration and

⁶⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; generated by Shiqi Xie; using American FactFinder;< <http://factfinder.census.gov>>; (20 October 2018).

⁶⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

employment-based immigration have accounted for two major channels through which immigrants enter the U.S. since the 1965 immigration reform. Immigrants admitted as family members of U.S. citizens continued to account for the largest population for immigrants accepted each year. In Fiscal Year 2016, family-based immigrants comprised 66% of all new legal permanent residents in the U.S.⁶⁹ However; more immigrants start to come under employment-based immigration in recent years.

There is notable debate on whether United State should be in favor of family immigration or employment immigration. Supporters of employment-base immigration claim that the U.S. immigration policy should admit immigrants on a merit-based system that benefits the economic system of the country. The proponents of family immigration argue that family unification plays an important role in determining immigrant's decision to the U.S.

2.2.1 Professional Immigration

Professional advancement often affects one's decision to migrate. For those who determine to come over to America but without family networks and kinships in the State, employment-based immigration has been their major avenue for immigration. The 1965 Immigration Reform released a positive message for professional immigrants as the immigrant allotments for professional and skilled workers increased from 58,000 to

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *2016 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.

140,000 per year.⁷⁰ Many Chinese have seized career opportunities to ensure their stays in the U.S. Figure 3 reveals that professional immigrants were the second largest group of immigrants from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since the end of World War II, a graduate manufacturing movement from Nations like the United States to developing countries in Asian and Latin America declined a need for low-cost labors in the U.S. labor markets.⁷¹ Professional and skilled workers became the new workforce in demands.⁷² Visas for the third category of preference (members of the professions or those with exceptional ability in sciences and the arts) and the sixth preference (skilled and unskilled workers who are in short supply) have offered educated and skilled nonimmigrants the windows to adjust their status.⁷³ Between 1985 and 2000, the National Science Foundation reported that students from China, Taiwan, India and South Korea earned more than 50% of the science and engineer doctoral degrees granted to foreign students in the U.S.⁷⁴

Admittedly, professional immigration is not the majority. Figure 3 shows that between one-fourth and one-third of the Chinese immigrants admitted to the U.S. filed their applications under the employment-based preference. One explanation is that a

⁷⁰ Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 30.

⁷¹ Ibid, 31.

⁷² The provisions of the Immigration Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-649) allows increases in immigration for certain types of aliens, such as highly skilled workers and family members of recent legalized aliens. The Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992, allowed 26, 915 Chinese who had been living continuously in the State since April 1990 to adjust to permanent resident status in wake of the Tiananmen Square incidents. Under the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992, Chinese nationals can adjust to permanent resident under the employment third preference.

⁷³ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 144.

⁷⁴ Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 31.

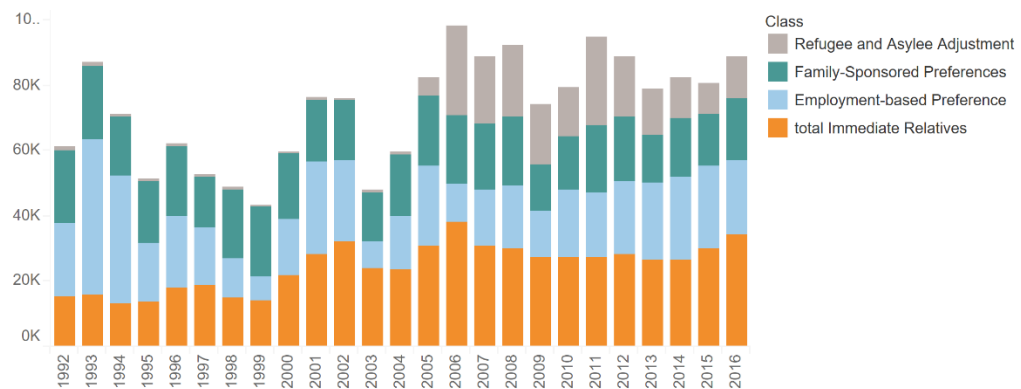
1976 law required all professionals to secure a job offer from an employer before coming over to the U.S.⁷⁵ Alternatively, some Chinese immigrants first entered in the U.S. on an F-1 (Student) visa, and then adjusted their legal status to permanent residency through employment or investment in America after graduation. Ruth Chan, born in Taiwan, went to America to study Special Education at the University of Cincinnati in 1971. Encouraged by her family, she decided to stay in the U.S. After graduation. She went to Mississippi where she served as a special education teacher for two years and eventually adjusted her legal status to permanent residency.⁷⁶ Due to the economic development gap between Asia and the U.S., few of them were willing to come back to China even though they were offered better opportunities in China. In 2005, A prestigious research institutes in Beijing offered an executive position Qingmei Jia, a research fellow at UCLA at that time. After careful consideration, she turned down the offer and decided to stay in the U.S. "I've only been in the U.S. for four or five years... I have just fulfilled my American dream so I don't want to go back. Plus, my husband has a job here and my son was in high school," she said. *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* describes the educated and high-skilled immigrant as part of the "brain drain" migration flow emerged in the 1960s. These Immigrants "managed to escape from laundry and restaurant work to enter white-collar and professional employment"

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ruth Chan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

and “did not experience this mythologized ascent through ethnic immigrant struggle.”⁷⁷

They eventually incorporate economically into the main society through educational achievement and success. The professionals later petition for their spouses, parents, children and siblings to come over through the family categories,⁷⁸ which explains why the family categories remain the largest categories.



Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1992-2001; Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2016.

Figure 3: Persons obtaining legal permanent residency by selected class of admission, between 1992 and 2016

⁷⁷ Madeline Y. Hsu, *The good immigrants: How the yellow peril became the model minority* (Princeton University Press: 2017), 198, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁷⁸ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy 1850-1990* (Stanford University Press, 1993), 81.

2.2.2 Family Immigration

Although professional immigration has played an increasingly important role in the Chinese immigrant society, family immigration is still the main avenue for Chinese immigration demonstrated by immigration records. Before the 1940s, Chinese society remained as a bachelor society, where the bachelors, were males that came over to the U.S. while leaving their wives and children at home. Various factors have accounted for the absence of women in early Chinese society. Benson Tong states that patriarchal cultural values in Confucian ideology confined women to their domestic role and prohibited women from traveling by themselves.⁷⁹ Another reason for leaving women behind is practical—bringing families abroad was too costly. The gender ratio imbalance continued until the post-World War II when the family reunification program was introduced.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Benson Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 32.

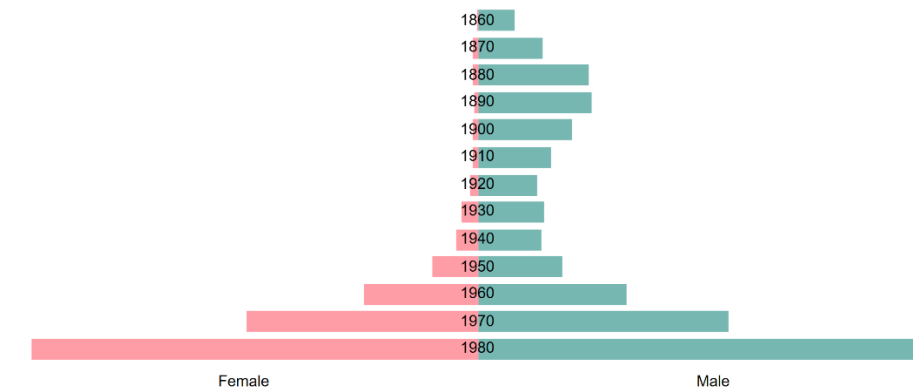


Figure 4: Gender ratio between 1860 and 1980

Following the 1965 Immigration Reform, immigrants started to come on a family basis. Anthony Lee, set his mind to bring his family over to America after studying in America under a technical training program organized between the KMT government and the U.S. government in the 1940s. After the abolition of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, America became a new destination for immigrants from China. Anthony Lee was among the top 100 Chinese students who were able to study in America before the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed. After finishing his technical training in U.S., he asked two professors he knew to sponsor him to the U.S. In 1959. He managed to immigrate to the U.S. first with his wife and four children under the refugee status. Before he left Hong Kong, he adopted his two nephews so that they could come to

America as his children. In five years, he managed to bring his two nephews and later eight siblings to America.⁸¹

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a U.S. citizen may petition for certain family members to receive permanent residency, known as the Green Card.⁸² U.S. citizens, may petition for his/her “immediate family members”, which could be his/her unmarried and under 21-year-old children, spouse or parents to obtain permanent residency.⁸³ A research done by the Migration Policy Institutes(MPI) suggested that family reunification is the largest of four major avenues through which immigrant visa applicants obtain lawful permanent residence in the U.S.⁸⁴ Figure 5 suggests that between 1983 and 2001, more than half of the Chinese immigrants admitted to the U.S. each year claimed their occupations as “housewives, children or no other occupation.” By the mid-1970s, 80 to 90 percent of Asian immigrants came over to the U.S. either through the family-sponsored preference or the “immediate U.S. relatives of U.S. citizens” channel.⁸⁵

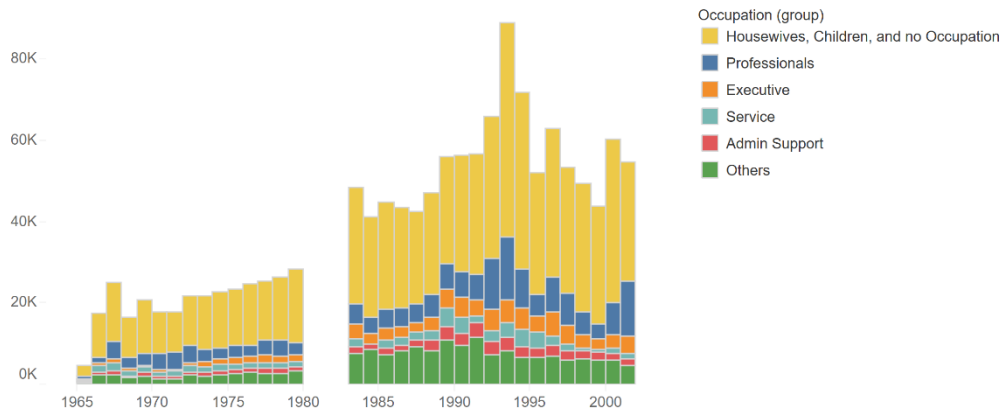
⁸¹ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

⁸² “Family of U.S. Citizens,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last modified March 23, 2018, <https://www.uscis.gov/family/family-us-citizens>.

⁸³ “US Family Reunification,” the UN Refugee Agency, accessed November 17, 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/us-family-reunification.html>.

⁸⁴ Ramah McKay, “Family Reunification,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed November 18, 2018, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/family-reunification>

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.



Source: Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1965-1977; Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1978-2001.

Figure 5: Persons obtaining legal permanent resident status by major occupation groups, between 1983 and 2001

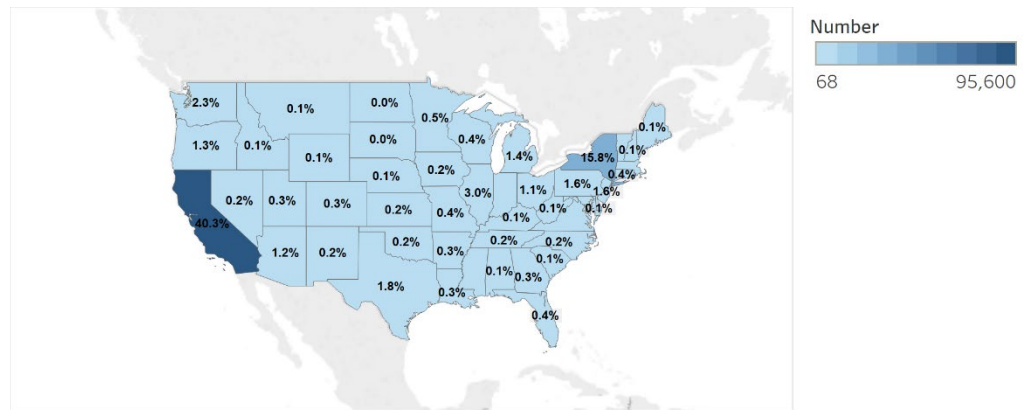
Following the 1965 immigration reform act, study has shown that most post-1965 Asian Immigrants tend to arrive in the U.S. in family units and further research has demonstrated that post-1965 Asian immigrants tend to be middle class, educated and urbanized who came in family units,⁸⁶ which could speak to the idea of model minority that this study focuses on.

2.3 Geographic Distribution and Residential Patterns for Chinese immigrants

Geographically, Chinese immigrants tend to reside in Western states disproportionately. California has the most Chinese population, followed by the New

⁸⁶ Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 29.

Asian American marginalization and segregation from the dominant society. Studies of Chinatown in America have argued Chinatown as a result of anti-Chinese sentiment.⁹¹



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1960, prepared by Social Explorer.

Figure 7: Geographical distribution of the Chinese population in the U.S. in 1960

The 1965 immigration reform witnesses the emergence of Chinese immigrants forming new communities in various urban areas across the nation. Traditionally, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York had the most Chinese population. Table 1 shows that based on the 1980 census, New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles had the most Chinese population in 1980.⁹²

Since the 1965 immigration reform, Chinese immigrants tend to spread out into other metropolitan areas and suburban areas. In 1990, two suburban cities surrounding Los Angeles, Monterey Park and Alhambra became the 9th and the 10th cities with the

⁹¹ Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, 6.

⁹² U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1960, prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed October 27 13:58:03 EST 2010).

largest Chinese population in the U.S.⁹³ In 2000, the city of Fremont had the 8th largest Chinese American population. Coming to the 21st century, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles continue to be the preferred urbanized destinations for Chinese American, but suburban areas surrounding the urban areas grow into favorable residential areas for Chinese Americans, such as Monterey Park and Alhambra. (see table 1) Though the census data have witnessed diversities in the geographic distribution of Chinese Americans since the 1965 immigration reform, scholarly works still hold the idea that Chinese America has remained highly urbanized.⁹⁴ Benson Tong argues that new Chinese immigrants, especially those with working-class backgrounds, limited education, job experience and English proficiency favor urban areas like New York and San Francisco, where the ethnic economy could promise them more job opportunities while immigrants with better education and capital, like Taiwanese immigrants, are willing to settle in suburban communities. The concentration of population into urban areas, however, in Tong’s word, “are tied not simply to higher socioeconomic status but also to factors associated with bonds of family and kinship and the economic enclave.”⁹⁵

Table 1: Top ten cities with most Chinese Population in the U.S.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
1	New York	New York	New York	New York
2	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco	San Francisco
3	Los Angeles	Los Angeles	Los Angeles	Los Angeles

⁹³ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed October 27 13:58:03 EST 2010).

⁹⁴ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 142.

⁹⁵ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 142-143.

4	Honolulu CDP	Honolulu CDP	San Jose	San Jose
5	Oakland	San Jose	Honolulu CDP	Chicago
6	Chicago	Oakland	Oakland	Urban Honolulu
7	Boston city	Chicago	Chicago	Oakland
8	Sacramento	Monterey Park	Fremont	Fremont
9	San Jose	Alhambra	Alhambra	San Diego
10	Seattle city	Sacramento	Monterey Park	Philadelphia

Suburbanization of Chinese Americans since the 1980s has become a notable change in Chinese immigrant society and caught the attention of the academic world. Fong suggests it as a “movement of Asian American communities away from traditional urban centers into middle-class suburban settings.”⁹⁶ Suburban areas near Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York new communities for Asian immigrants who are relatively wealthy and high-educated.⁹⁷ Monterey Park, regarded as the first suburban Chinatown, is a rapidly growing suburban community with a high proportion of Asian American population. 2010 U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 66.9% of the city’s population are Asians and the Chinese make up 47.9% of the population.⁹⁸ The Chinese immigrants have arrived in Monterey Park city since the late 1970s, many of whom were relatively well-educated and affluent, with little in common with their fellow Chinese immigrants who resided in old Chinatown in San Francisco or New York doing low-

⁹⁶ Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010; generated by Shiqi Xie; using American Factfinder; <<http://factfinder.census.gov>>;(20 October 2018)

skilled labor works.⁹⁹ According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 77.9% of the Chinese population in Monterey Park are foreign-born. 74.8% of the Chinese population hold a high school degree or higher while 34.7% of the Chinese population have a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁰⁰ The first wave of Chinese immigration in Monterey Park started by Chinese professionals who eagerly wanted to move out of Los Angeles Chinatown and assimilate into the suburban communities.¹⁰¹

The influx of new Chinese immigrants into suburbs not only happened in Monterey Park but also became a trend in suburban areas near Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York like San Gabriel Valley, Walnut Grove, Diamond Bars, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, San Jose and Flushing. In San Gabriel Valley, Chinese is the biggest ethnic group in the city (42.2%), followed by Hispanic (25.7%) and White (25.4%).¹⁰² 78.1% of the Chinese population are foreign-born.¹⁰³ The similar demographic pattern is happening in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mountain View, a rapidly growing community of 74,000 residents near the Silicon Valley, had a 10.8% of Chinese population according to the 2010 Census, compared to 7.9% in 2000.¹⁰⁴ With its

⁹⁹ Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remarking of Monterey Park, California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 26.

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; generated by Shiqi Xie; using American FactFinder;< <http://factfinder.census.gov>>; (20 October 2018)

¹⁰¹ Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remarking of Monterey Park, California*, 25.

¹⁰² U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010.

¹⁰³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010.

proximity to Silicon Valley, the Chinese population in Mountain View are generally well-educated and well-paid. 81.8% of the Chinese population in the city have a bachelor's degree or higher. 86.6% of the Chinese are working in management, business, science and art occupations. The median household income for the Chinese population in the city is 127,097 dollars, compared to 69,689 dollars for the total Chinese population in the U.S. according to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey.¹⁰⁵

A wide range of scholarly works have held the idea that residential patterns have correlated with kinship and family networks. But along with kinship and family networks, the new residential patterns for Chinese immigrants in the U.S. have correlated with factors like high-tech industry's increasing employment opportunities and the growing foreign Chinese students' enrollments in the U.S. universities and colleges. The booming of the hi-tech industry in Silicon Valley has attracted plenty of Chinese people and other Asians to join in hi-tech companies and reside in the nearby cities. The proportion of Asian American high-tech industry employees in Silicon Valley has grown from 38% in 2000 to more than 50% in 2010.¹⁰⁶ Cities nearby Silicon Valley like Palo Alto, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino and Menlo Park have witnessed

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

¹⁰⁶ Buck Gee, Vish Mishra and Denise Peck, "Glass Ceiling: Asian Americans still underrepresented in Silicon Valley Leadership," *The Mercury News*, April 24, 2013, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2013/04/24/glass-ceiling-asian-americans-still-under-represented-in-silicon-valley-leadership/>.

an increase in the Chinese population.¹⁰⁷ Concentrated with top higher education institutions like Stanford University and UC Berkeley, Chinese are attracted to residing in the Silicon Valley areas. Several immigrants from the Bay Area informed that they chose to live in the Bay Area for job opportunities and higher education.

For immigrants with a science or engineering degree, their degrees ensure their stay in the U.S. Study has shown that foreign students with a science or engineering degree have high stay rates in the United States. Between 1988 and 1996, a large majority of Chinese doctoral recipients (85.5%) indicated their tendency of staying in the U.S. for employment or further study.¹⁰⁸ Just as importantly, real estate investment opportunities become another factor accounting for the recent influx of Chinese immigrants and Chinese capital in the bay area.¹⁰⁹

2.4 A “Model Minority” Community

In recent decades, Chinese American society has been widely referred to a model minority community by mass media. Success stories of Chinese American, Nobel Prize winners in physics, Yang Chen Ning and Lee Tsung Dao, impress the dominant American society and the census reports of the Chinese educational and professional

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

¹⁰⁸ Jean M. Johnson, “Statistical Profiles of Foreign Doctoral Recipients in Science and Engineering: Plan to Stay in the United States.” Division of Science Resources Studies, Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences, National Science Foundation Vol. 99, no. 304 (1998).

¹⁰⁹ Matt Sheehan, “How Chinese Real Estate Money is Transforming the San Francisco Bay Area,” Macro Polo: Decoding China’s Economic Arrival, last modified August 22, 2017, <https://macropolo.org/chinese-real-estate-money-transforming-san-francisco-bay-area/>.

achievement, further reinforce the model minority concept. In retrospect, the model minority concept was an evolving myth that has shaped the western perception of Asian American communities since the last century. During World War II, an IQ testing that Japanese American youth participated in contributed to the image of the intelligent Japanese American.¹¹⁰ This intelligence test result later became part of the demonstration for a myth that stereotypes Asian American: the model minority myth. The model minority concept became a stereotype to describe Asian Americans, in particular Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans in the late 1960s. For example, in 1966, *US News and World Report* published an article to openly praise the success of Chinese Americans and frame the group as a better-performed group than African Americans,¹¹¹ which at the same time distanced Asian Americans with other minorities. Statistics on Chinese population further reinforced the model minority stereotype. The 1970 census subject report on Chinese population for the first time presents statistics on Chinese Americans' economic and educational performance in the U.S. The general public was surprised to see Chinese outstanding educational performance and their well-standing economic characteristics.¹¹² For the total Chinese population twenty-five years old and over, around 26% had enrolled in college for one and three years, compared to 10.6% for

¹¹⁰ David K. Yoo, "Testing Assumptions: IQ, Japanese Americans, and the Model Minority Myth in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Remapping Asian American History* (Rowman Altamira, 2003), 69.

¹¹¹ Stacy J. Lee, *Unraveling the "Model Minority: Listening to Asian American Youth" Stereotype* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), 6.

¹¹² Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown* (New York: Hill and Wang New York, 1996), 57.

the total population, followed by 8% for the Hispanic population and 6% for the African American population. 11.0% of the Chinese population had enrolled in college for four years or more, compared to 6.0% for the Hispanic population and 4.4% for the African American population. Around 21.5% of the Chinese family in 1970 had reached an income between \$15,000 and \$24,999, compared to 16.0% for the total population, 16.9% for the White families, 9.3% for the Hispanic family and 6.9% for the African American families.

During the 1980s, the notion that Asian Americans achieved educational and professional success gained more attentions from the American public discourse and was covered in major news publications such as *Newsweek* and *The New Republic*.¹¹³ More recent statistics on the Chinese population’s social and economic behaviors still reveal that Chinese Americans have higher education attainment and median household incomes than the general U.S. population.¹¹⁴ (see table 2 and table 3)

Table 2: 2017 American Community Survey: Education Attainment

%	Total Population	White Population	Chinese	Taiwanese	Black/African
Less than high school diploma	12.0%	10.1%	17.1%	4.2%	14.1%
High school graduate or higher	88.0%	89.9%	82.9%	95.8%	85.9%
bachelor’s degree or higher	32.0%	33.4%	54.3%	77.7%	21.4%

¹¹³ Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 375.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Table 3: 2017 American Community Survey: Income in the past 12 months

\$	Total Population	White Population	Chinese	Taiwanese	Black/African
Median household income	60,336	63,704	76,177	99,257	40,232
Median family income	73,891	78,941	92,435	122,085	49,549
Individual per capita income	32,397	35,514	39,458	52,813	22,175

Popular claims on the model minority myth have considered certain demographic and economic characteristics of the Chinese population in the census reports and community surveys as their primary evidence to demonstrate model minority as a reality. Nevertheless, Chinese American studies scholars have argued that the model minority myth has misrepresented Asian Americans and marginalized other minorities. Peter Kwong argued that “to identify the Chinese as a model minority is to ignore the complex diversity of Chinese communities. To project the Chinese as a model is also a disservice to other minorities and misrepresents the facts.”¹¹⁵

The complexity of Chinese communities in the U.S. can be read from a statistical analysis of Chinese immigrants. Limited English proficiency is a major struggle for Chinese Americans as the community is predominantly an immigrant society. Nearly half of the Chinese population in the U.S. still struggle with language. 45.0% of the

¹¹⁵ Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 58.

Chinese Americans and 38.4% of the Taiwanese Americans speak English less than “very well,” compared to 8.5% for the general population.¹¹⁶ By looking at cities with a significant Chinese population, the statistics get even higher than the number for the total Chinese population. In Monterey Park city, 62.9% of the Chinese cannot speak English “very well,” and in San Gabriel city, the number goes up to 64.2%.¹¹⁷ Although Chinese Americans have a lower unemployment rate, they also have a slightly lower representation in the labor force. 60.8% of the Chinese Americans report they are in the labor force, compared to 63.2% for the total population.¹¹⁸

Table 4: 2017 American Community Survey: Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English

	Total	White	Chinese	Taiwanese	Black/African
English only	78.2%	84.3%	20.0%	17.6%	90.4%
Language other than English	21.8%	15.7%	80.0%	82.4%	9.6%
Speak English less than “very well”	8.5%	5.8%	45.0%	38.4%	3.2%

Data for the education attainment for the Chinese population, confirms that Chinese Americans are a community of contrasts. Though Chinese Americans have a higher level of college or graduate school enrollment than the general U.S. population, at the same time Chinese Americans have a higher level of not receiving high school diploma than the U.S. general population. 17.1% of the Chinese population in the U.S.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

have less than a high school diploma, compared to 4.2% for the Taiwanese population, 12.0% for the total population and 14.1% for the African American population. (see table 2)

Another example is the bipolar occupational structures of foreign-born Chinese. Tong suggests that foreign-born Chinese, occupy a bipolar occupational structure, with workers clustered either in professional/managerial occupations or in low-paying service sector jobs, with relatively few in between.¹¹⁹ Statistically, the Chinese have been successfully integrated into the economy of the society by serving as professionals, managers and technicians in various sectors of the economy. Half of the Chinese employed population serve in industries including finance and insurance, real estate, professional, scientific and management services, educational services, health care, and art and entertainment. More than 70% of the Taiwanese employed population serve in the same industries. However, if we look closely into the statistics, the other half of the population, are employed in low-wages service sectors including construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation and private services.¹²⁰

Table 5: 2017 American Community Survey: Occupation

Civilian employed population 16 years and over (%)	Total Population	White Population	Chinese	Taiwanese	Black/African
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¹¹⁹ Tong, *The Chinese Americans*, 144.

¹²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Management, business, science, and arts	38.2%	40.1%	55.5%	73.3%	29.5%
Service	17.9%	16.0%	17.3%	6.6%	24.7%
Sales and office	22.9%	23.1%	18.1%	1.1%	24.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	8.9%	9.4%	2.6%	2.6%	5.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving	12.2%	11.4%	6.5%	2.6%	16.4%

This bipolarity in the employment structure and the education attainment of the Chinese community indicate a paradox of reality: the Chinese society in the U.S. is highly heterogeneous. Peter Kwong's work in the 1990s, *The New Chinatown*, challenges the model minority myth by addressing the distinction between Downtown and Uptown Chinese in New York City. The Downtown Chinese, in that context, referred to people who resided in New York's Chinatown, had much lower median household incomes, lived under poverty, and had a high percentage of not receiving high school diplomas.¹²¹ 2017 ACS shows that 10.1% of the Chinese families are living under poverty.¹²² The Uptown Chinese, on the contrary, enjoyed an affluent life—they are well educated, well-paid and professionally trained immigrants.¹²³ As they settled down in the U.S., they have taken multiple advantages (education, language familiarity and

¹²¹ Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 58.

¹²² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

¹²³ Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 59.

economic resource) in adapting into American society than their fellows in New York's Chinatown. They are proficient in verbal and oral English conversation and specialized in fields needed in the American labor market. The gap between Downtown Chinese and Uptown Chinese, again reminds us of the heterogeneity of Chinese society in the U.S. To some extents, a group of Chinese in the U.S. have reached the life standard in a model minority setting just as the Uptown Chinese in New York City. But even for those who are living in a model minority setting, they still experience bias, stereotyped perception and discrimination at the workplace. According to a 1980 United States Commission on Civil Rights report, the Uptown Chinese earned less than whites with comparable education levels and professional positions,¹²⁴ and qualified Chinese were less likely to be considered for management positions.¹²⁵

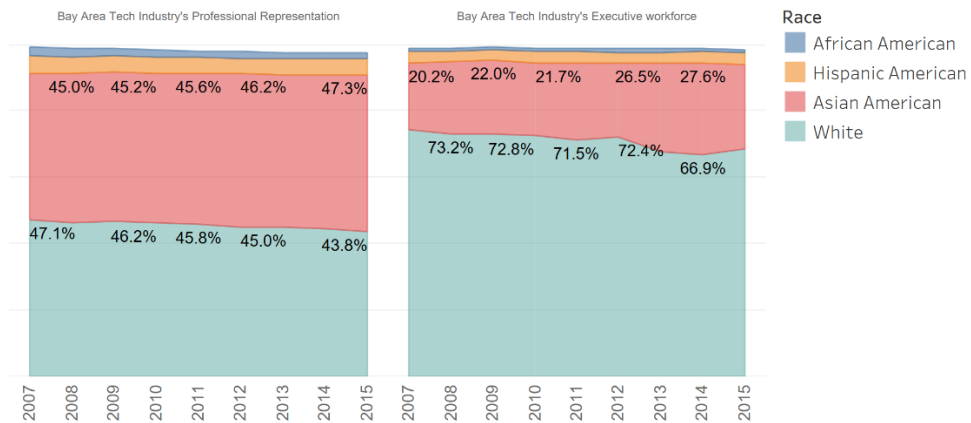
A larger cohort has experienced similar issues according to an analysis of national Equal Employment Opportunity Commission workplace data on Asian American done by Buck Gee and Denise Peck. Their research shows that Asian American white-collar professionals in San Francisco Bay Area are the least likely group to be promoted from entry-level professionals to managers and executives than any other races, including African Americans and Hispanics.¹²⁶ The study also finds out that

¹²⁴ *Success of Asian Americans: Fact or Fiction?*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1980), <https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr11064.pdf>.

¹²⁵ Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 60.

¹²⁶ Buck Gee and Denise Peck, "The Illusion of Asian Success: Scant Progress for Minorities in Cracking the Glass Ceiling," accessed October 1, 2018,

in the Bay Area tech industry, although Asian Americans have become the largest racial group of professionals and filled out more managers and executives positions in the companies, the representation of Asian as managers or executives had not improved.¹²⁷ Asians were twice less likely as White men and women to become executives.¹²⁸



Source: Buck Gee and Denise Peck, "The Illusion of Asian Success: Scant Progress for Minorities in Cracking the Glass Ceiling."

Figure 8: Bay area tech industry's profession representation vs. executive workforce by race

Similar situations have happened in the legal field. A study done by Yale Law School and National Asian Pacific American Bar Association finds out that Asian Americans are well represented in the law school but less represented in legal professions at top levels, especially in legal partners position. Although Asian Americans comprised 10.3% of graduates of top-30 law schools in 2015, they constituted

<https://c.yimcdn.com/sites/www.ascendleadership.org/resource/resmgr/research/TheIllusionofAsianSuccess.pdf>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid

6.5% of all federal judicial law clerks. For the past 20 years, Asian Americans have become the largest minority group in major law firms, but they also have the lowest ratio of partners to associates among all other ethnic groups.¹²⁹ Many Asian American attorneys describe that the lack of access to mentors and contacts and the implicit bias and stereotype have become their barriers to career advancement.¹³⁰ EEOC workplace data present similar results. Based on the Goldman Sachs 2017 EEO-1 (Equal Employment Opportunity) report, while Asians make up for 24.1% of the U.S. professional workforce, they only accounted for 11.4% of the executives, senior officials and managers positions.¹³¹ Multiple interviewees in this study suggest that they have experienced a glass ceiling at their workplaces due to their immigrant and racial background. One Interviewee Chris Cheung, a civil engineer originally from Taiwan, believed that he had reached a glass ceiling in his company due to implicit stereotyped perception on his English accent. As a senior engineer in his company, he lost his promotion opportunity to a White employee in his company from a lower level. He recalled that his supervisor once said to him, "if you have better English, a manager position would be yours now."¹³²

¹²⁹ Eric Chung et al., "A Portrait of Asian Americans in the Law," Yale Law School and National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://www.apaportraitproject.org/>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "2017 Environment, Social and Government Report," Golden Sachs, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/esg-reporting/esg-content/esg-report-2017.pdf?reportdownload=top>.

¹³² Chris Cheung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July, 2018.

Concern about the glass ceiling effect has been raised among the Asian American communities for years. A 1991 survey of Asian professionals in the Silicon Valley region revealed that two third of the Asian professionals working in the private sector believed that their career advancement to management positions was limited by their race.¹³³ By as early as the 1970s, complaints on glass ceiling were filed by Asian Americans.¹³⁴ However, public discourse has seldom mentioned this workplace issue confronted by Asian Americans, partly because of the model minority stereotype, which places Asian Americans as a successful minority group. Not to mention that Asian American community is indeed a heterogeneous community. Some Asian immigrant groups tend to struggle, notably Hmong, Laotians and Bangladeshis, but on average Indians, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese tend to perform better.¹³⁵ Chinese have inevitably suffered from this issue too. Nevertheless, the issue is obscured by the attention drawn on how well the Chinese in America have achieved economically and in education than other minorities. The glass ceiling, along with other issues that are hidden under the statistical figures, show that model minority is not a definitive account on the Chinese

¹³³ Buck Gee and Denise Peck, "The Illusion of Asian Success: Scant Progress for Minorities in Cracking the Glass Ceiling."

¹³⁴ Patricia, S. Parker, "Toward an Inclusive Framework for Envisioning Race, Gender, and Leadership," in *Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace: Issues and Challenges for Today's Organization* (Praeger Publishers, 2006), 31-52.

¹³⁵ "The Rise of Asian Americans," Pew Research Center, last modified April 4, 2013, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>

and other Asians in the U.S., but an unproductive illusion of Asian American success built on the general figures.

Another issue in considering the heterogenous nature of the Chinese community in the U.S. is the refugee/asylee problem. When delving into information from Immigration and Naturalization Services, information on refugee and asylee status has caught the attention of this study. As this study mainly covers stories of immigrant Chinese and their daily experience and struggles, this study finds it necessary to include the voices of Chinese immigrants as inclusively as possible. However, due to the limitation of time and place when I conducted primary research on Chinese immigrants, this study was unable to cover the voices of every group within the Chinese immigrant community. The refugee/asylee group is one of the groups left out in this study on the oral history side. As the number of Chinese refugees and asylees has increased rapidly recently, I find an in-depth reading into the statistics about refugee/asylee necessary.

The Refugee Act of 1980, built upon the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, redefined the definition of “refugee” and raised the annual quota of regular refugee admissions from 17,400 to 50,000 each year.¹³⁶ A significant change has happened to the contemporary immigration flows in the U.S. since then. Andrew Lee, one of the interview participants in this study, recalled that his Chinese massage lady immigrated

¹³⁶ Thien-Huong Ninh. "Refugee Act (1980)" In *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, edited by Carlos E. Cortés (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013).

to the U.S. through the refugee program. She claimed that she was the victim of China's One Child Policy and gained permanent residency to the U.S. Unfortunately, this lady was unwilling to be interviewed in this study. The Refugees program has become a channel for intended immigrants who are reluctant to reside in their own countries to come over to the U.S.

Since then, many Chinese have utilized this channel to come over to the U.S. under the Refugee Act of 1980. Starting from 1992 till the most recent fiscal year 2017, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services have kept records of immigrants admitted based on selected class of admission. Four major classes of admission documented after 1992, include: Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, Employment-based Preference, Family-sponsored Preference and Refugee/Asylee. 2005 saw a dramatic increase in the number of immigrant admitted as refugee/asylee from the Mainland China region. The number of immigrants admitted as refugee/asylee (Mainland China only) reach 5,335 in 2005, almost seven times as the number for previous fiscal year (809). The number reached its highest in 2006. 27,454 immigrants from Mainland China region were accepted as refugees/asylees, which accounted for 28% of the total number for Mainland China immigrants admitted. In the fiscal year 2006, more immigrants from Mainland China were accepted as refugees/asylees (28%) than immigrants admitted under employment-based (19%) or family-sponsored preference (23%). This trend continued for a few more years but did not last long: between 2006 and 2009,

immigrants admitted as refugees/asylees outnumbered employment-based immigrants and between 2011 and 2015, the number for accepted refugee/asylee dropped significantly. In the fiscal year 2012, employment-based immigrants outnumbered refugees/asylees. These figures have raised questions in respect to the Chinese refugees/asylees in the U.S. Why did the number of refugee/asylee drop dramatically after 2011? A news article published by New York Time in 2014, *Asylum Fraud in Chinatown: An Industry of Lies* may suggest some answers. This piece covered the story of Asylum Fraud in New York City Chinatown, where Mainland Chinese newcomers in New York purchased fake stories of religious or political persecution in China from Chinatown lawyers to file asylum cases.¹³⁷ A series of indictments appear in 2012, seemingly have temporarily stopped the fraudulent asylum applications from Chinese immigrants. According to the press release from the FBI New York Field Office, 26 individuals, were charged in Manhattan Federal Court for participating in immigration fraud schemes.¹³⁸ The defendants, included lawyers working at law firms and a church employee. They falsely submitted fraudulent asylum applications on behalf of their

¹³⁷ Kirk Semple et al., "Asylum Fraud in Chinatown: An Industry of Lies," *New York Times*, February 22, 2014.

¹³⁸ U.S. Attorney's Office, "Twenty-Six Individuals, Including Six Lawyers, Charged in Manhattan Federal Court with Participating in Immigration Fraud Schemes Involving Hundreds of Fraudulent Asylum Application," accessed December 18, 2012, <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/newyork/press-releases/2012/twenty-six-individuals-including-six-lawyers-charged-in-manhattan-federal-court-with-participating-in-immigration-fraud-schemes-involving-hundreds-of-fraudulent-asylum-applications>.

Chinese clients and instructed their Chinese clients to pass the interviews based on false stories of persecutions such as forced abortions and religious persecution.¹³⁹

This news story resonates with many studies of contemporary Chinese immigrant situations. Many scholarly works on contemporary Chinese immigrant society uncover the secrets of asylum applications filed by Chinese immigrants, which were at least partly false. Statistical evidence has shown that more Mainland Chinese immigrants apply for asylum than any other immigrant group in the U.S.¹⁴⁰ Xiaojian Zhao suggests that requesting political asylum became the main avenue for undocumented Chinese immigrants in the U.S. to gain their legal residency after 1990.¹⁴¹ From the immigration record alone, between 1992 and 2000, the percentage of immigrants admitted as refugee and asylee never outnumbered 2%.¹⁴² In 2006, the number jumped to 27.96% and bypassed the portion of immigrants admitted under family-sponsored preference and employment-based preference for the first time.

Although the Immigration and Naturalization Services has tightened controls over the refugee/asylee application, the asylum channel is still a major avenue for non-

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Xiaojian Zhao, *The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 34.

¹⁴¹ Ibid,36.

¹⁴² U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.

resourceful immigrants who were unwilling to stay in their country of origin despite criticism on the system.

2.5 Conclusion

The 1965 Immigration reform has produced a heterogeneous Chinese immigrant population made up of people with diverse characteristics: place of birth, occupations, language proficiency, educational level and socioeconomic status. On one hand, family immigration plays a large part in shaping the Chinese immigrant society by bonding immigrants with family and kinship networks. On the other hand, professional immigration allows immigrants without relatives in the U.S. to seek their place through employment in the U.S. Though the Chinese in America have seemingly gained educational and professional success in the American society statistically, asylum frauds happening in New York's China still grab headlines in the newspapers. Indeed, Chinese society in the U.S. is still very heterogeneous in many aspects. It is problematic to neglect the difference within this group and simplify Chinese as a model minority. Identifying the Chinese in America as a model minority discourse obscures difficulties the community is facing: language barriers, undocumented immigrants, glass ceiling, implicit bias, and stereotyped perception from the workplace. It produces social consequences that discourage the group. Second, the model minority myth discourages other minorities groups by claiming that minorities groups could achieve socio-

economic improvement with dedication and diligence, ignoring systematic discrimination imposed on other minorities groups.

As the analysis of the national EEOC workplace data points out, Asian Americans are less likely to be promoted from associates to manager and executive positions than any other race. But since Asian American are generally highly-educated and well-paid, they are seldom considered as an underrepresented minority and Asian-related programs in many companies are oriented towards cultural inclusion, not eliminating the glass ceiling.¹⁴³ The glass ceiling is an issue that has been underestimated by non-Asian groups. Both the quantitative research and my interviews with Chinese immigrants speak to this issue. As this study progressed, I also discovered new connections between quantitative research and qualitative research. Many immigrants I spoke with, have spoken to issues I identified from my quantitative research: the imbalanced gender ratio, glass ceiling and etc. In the next chapter, I will present a qualitative analysis of the day-to-day experience and struggles of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. based on the oral history interviews. I will discuss challenges for Chinese immigrants in schools and workplaces and how immigrants feel about the idea of the model minority. I will also discuss theoretical and practical issues relevant to the

¹⁴³ Buck Gee and Denise Peck, "Asian Americans Are the Least Likely Group in the U.S. to Be Promoted to Management," *Harvard Business Review*, May 31, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/05/asian-americans-are-the-least-likely-group-in-the-u-s-to-be-promoted-to-management>

experience of immigrant Chinese and whether they have reflected themselves as a model minority.

3. Understanding Chinese Immigration through Oral History

This thesis tells the story of immigrant Chinese coming over to the U.S. after the 1965 immigration reform, and their daily experience and struggles to adapt to the American society. In the preceding chapter, I utilized a large amount of information from Immigration and Naturalization Services, US Census Bureau and research institutes to bring up topics on Chinese immigration from a quantitative perspective. By leveraging data from multiple sources, the previous chapter offers an overview of the historical and current situations of Chinese in America. However, the statistical data alone don't speak to the everyday experience and struggles of the Chinese immigrants. From a statistical perspective, the data themselves did not answer the question of what the day-to-day experience and struggles for Chinese immigrants look like. To answer the question in this chapter, I inquire into the everyday experience and struggles of immigrant Chinese in American society by conducting oral history interviews. This chapter examines how participants in the oral history interviews describe their experience, explores meaning behind the participants' narratives, and develops themes exclusive to the participants.

There is a tendency in academia to generalize the factors accounted for Chinese immigration and produce a simplified narrative. The previous chapter has broken down narratives around Chinese immigrants through a quantitative analysis of Chinese

immigration. However, even after this analysis, there are still questions left. Do the Chinese immigrants reflect themselves as part of the big wave of Asian immigration in post-1965? What are the common discourses within the Chinese immigrant society itself? To what degree, are Chinese immigrants assimilated into American life? To what extent do Chinese immigrants agree with the model minority concept? With these questions in mind, I found it necessary to present different voices from Chinese immigrants themselves to construct a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the modern Chinese immigrants. In recent years, oral history has been acknowledged by historians not only for enriching public understanding around historical matters but its ability to humanize and complicate issues further in a good way. I conducted oral history interviews with a selective group of Chinese immigrants residing in California with these goals in mind. The interviews not only enrich the conclusion I draw base on the in-depth analysis of statistical data and secondary scholarship in Chapter One, but also invite a reevaluation of a popular concept within the discourse on Chinese American, the model minority.

3.1 Brief Review of Oral History

Oral history is a record of the past based on spoken accounts.¹⁴⁴ Oral history did not come into its own as a form of interviewing until it appeared in an article in the *New*

¹⁴⁴ Robert Cochran, "Oral History and Oral Culture" in *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, Ryan, Michael, Gregory Castle, Robert Eaglestone and M. Keith Booker, eds. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

Yorker in 1942, when a villager claimed to be compiling an “Oral History of Our Time” and interviewed people from all walks of life because “what people say is history.”¹⁴⁵ However, in the 1950s, skeptics questioned the credibility of oral history as evidence and dismissed eyewitness testimony as biased and unreliable.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the news media gave oral history more credits as it relied on interviewing and recording.¹⁴⁷ The skepticism about oral history led to more discussion on the oral history and eventually formalized and legitimated oral history. In 1978, Paul Thompson’s *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* gave credit to oral history interview as it revealed the “hidden histories.”¹⁴⁸ Valerie J. Janesick in *Oral History as a Social Justice Project: Issues for the Qualitative Researcher* suggests that oral history is a social justice project that people categorized as “the others” like women and the minorities could have their voices documented and heard.¹⁴⁹

Oral historians also debate the “top-down” approach vs. the “bottom-up” approach in conducting oral history interviews. Further discussion focuses on the “elite” or the “non-elite” interviewees, but many oral historians came to agree that both

¹⁴⁵ Donald A Ritchie, "Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History." in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford University Press, 2010), <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195339550.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195339550-e-1>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁹ Valerie J. Janesick, “Oral History as a Social Justice Project: Issues for the Qualitative Researcher,” *The Qualitative Report* 12(1) (2007): 111-121.

approaches work.¹⁵⁰ My interest in oral history has compelled me to examine the everyday narratives from a wide scope of Chinese immigrants across various class and background.

3.2 Methodology

The oral history interviews were conducted by me during the summer of 2018 in California. The narrators are Chinese immigrants living in three major hubs in California, the Los Angeles Area, the Sacramento Area, and the San Francisco Bay Area. I interviewed fifty-six Chinese immigrants in total: thirty-one males and twenty-five females respectively.

All the participants came to the US after the 1965 Immigration reform or slightly ahead of the time. Six of the participants came in the 1960s; Nineteen in the 1970s; fourteen in the 1980s; ten in the 1990s and seven in the 2000s. Among them, twenty-six participants indicated their last residency as Hong Kong; sixteen as Mainland China; four as Taiwan; four as Japan; two as Canada; two as the UK, one as Africa and one as Philippine. Thirty-six of the participants were born in Mainland China; seventeen were born in Hong Kong; two were born in Taiwan, and one was born in Philippine. This study intends to select participants across various backgrounds: year of entry, place of birth, last residency, educational level, occupation and religion. Most of the interview

¹⁵⁰ Donald A Ritchie, "Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History."

participants were founded through mutual connections, visiting community leaders, visiting senior centers, attending community events and church services. The interviews consist of three parts: backgrounds, immigration experience and contemporary issues. The first part helps me understand the interviewee's background, educational level, occupations, language usage and his/her memories of the homelands. The second part focuses on participant's immigration experience and the last part raises questions of issues confronting the Chinese community in the U.S., such as identity crisis, stereotype and relations between U.S. and China.

Chinese immigrants combine a heterogeneous society in the U.S. Stories about Chinese billionaires' investments in real estate make the headlines while low-class Chinese immigrants are clustered in low-skilled industries in Chinatown in exchange for better life in the U.S. This thesis, however, mainly focuses on the Chinese immigrants whose financial conditions fairly stand in between the Chinese millionaire immigrants and the low-class/undocumented immigrants. However, this study also realizes that to do a comprehensive research on Modern Chinese immigration, it cannot neglect the high-come groups and the low-class Chinese immigrants. I am aware of the limitation of the empirical study and using anecdotal evidence. From the bottom line, this chapter is mainly built upon anecdotal evidence provided by the interviewees, who may or may not guarantee what they have said is accurate and credible. However, giving Chinese immigrants the power to speak for themselves is equivalently important to this study as

doing a statistical analysis of the size and scale of Chinese immigration. To compensate the limitation of using anecdotal evidence, this chapter brings in secondary scholarship to leverage their understandings of contemporary Chinese immigration. Through studying Chinese immigration through two different research approaches, I gain a better understanding of the historical and current situations of Chinese immigrant society.

3.3 Purpose of Immigration

The Push-Pull theory has been a widely used framework in evaluating the purpose of migration. Push factors are the factors that explain why people move from a place, such as unemployment, lack of safety, poverty, war, political unrest and natural disaster. Pull factors are the factors that contribute to a person's decision to migrate to a place, which could be potential for employment, friends and family and political security. There are multiple reasons accounted for modern Chinese migration to America. The various reasons could be divided into the push and pull factors. In the 19th century, the push factors included the decline of the Qing Dynasty, over-population in the late 19th century¹⁵¹ and poverty. The pull factors were the lack of free labors and the American capitalists' need for production expansion after the slavery abolishment in the U.S. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, the Burlingame Treaty ensured a steady flow of low-cost Chinese immigrant labor for U.S. firms. When the white labor began to

¹⁵¹ Bingdi He and Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368 – 1953* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 281-283.

organize for higher wages, the American capitalists turned to the Chinese workers to fill the need for labors.¹⁵² Lisa Lowe has argued that such demand for Chinese labors during the late 19th century was a result of an obscure “boundary between enslavement and freedom, and to normalize both.”¹⁵³ Moving to the modern era, thanks to the formation of modern migration control in the early 20th century, formalized immigration procedure to obtain immigrant visa become available for immigrants. Need for immigrants is laid out in formalized immigration order and law. For example, following the passage of 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, skilled workers and professionals are eligible for the third preference category of Employment-Based Immigration. A national need for high skilled labors opens opportunities for foreign high skilled workers to stay permanently in America. Driven by such trend, many Chinese from the post-1965 era were attracted by the immigration policy of America and intended to come to U.S. Modern Chinese immigration are driven by more complicated factors partly because of changes in political regimes in their homelands. Through conversations with Chinese immigrants, this study has discovered significant patterns that motivate modern Chinese immigration.

¹⁵² Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 25.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

3.3.1 Changes in Political Regimes in China

Immigration patterns often change over time and space. I identify distinctive flows of immigration from Mainland China and remigration from Taiwan and Hong Kong after the 1949 communist revolution in Mainland China. Changes in Political Regimes in China have played important parts in influencing migration from China and remigration from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Following the communist revolution in China in 1949, some Chinese with different political affiliations realized that their future was not in Mainland China. Chinese fled to Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Eastern Asia for political security and economic stability. Between 1949 and 1953, Taiwan historian Tung-Fa Lin estimated that around 1.2 million immigrants left the Mainland for Taiwan.¹⁵⁴ Vicki Beaton was born in a large family of seven in Tianjin, China and raised in Taiwan. When Tianjin surrendered in 1949, her family lost their properties in mainland China and decided to leave for Taiwan. Some Chinese fled to Hong Kong.¹⁵⁵ Andrew Lee was born in Maoming, China in 1949 and in 1950 he was brought to Hong Kong by his family to escape from communism.¹⁵⁶ During the 1950s, Refugees from China rushed into Hong Kong to seek for shelter.¹⁵⁷ Clarence Chu, born in 1952, recalled

¹⁵⁴ Lin Tung-fa, *1949 Evacuation* (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Vicki Beaton, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

¹⁵⁷ Laura Madokoro, "Unwanted Refugees: Chinese Migration and the Making of a Global Humanitarian Agenda, 1949-1989," PHD diss., (University of British Columbia, 2012).

that he was brought to Hong Kong during the 1950s refugee flow at the age of four.¹⁵⁸

Some Chinese even reached out to smugglers for help. Mingying Liang, immigrated to the U.S. in the 1970s for marriage recalled that she ran over to Hong Kong with the help of smugglers as a teenager girl.¹⁵⁹

During the communist revolution days, some Chinese ended up in Taiwan while others ended up in Hong Kong. Their initiatives were the same: to leave China. However, many of those Chinese regarded Hong Kong or Taiwan as their temporary resting place, an en route to their next destination. Beginning from the 1960s, Chinese immigrants started to remigrate from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and few came directly from mainland China due to Mainland China's restrictive emigration policy.¹⁶⁰ The 1960s economy boom in Taiwan inspired well educated Chinese to pursue higher education in science and technology.¹⁶¹ With financial aids from the U.S., Taiwan has achieved industrialization, land reform, and educational system reform.¹⁶² Yet the fear of political havocs still haunted the Taiwanese, especially those ex-mainlanders. Following the 1949 communist revolution in China, the KMT government fled from Mainland China and established its political regime the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan.

¹⁵⁸ Clarence Chu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

¹⁵⁹ Mingying Liang, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

¹⁶⁰ Him Mark Lai, "Expressing Their Commonality: Chinese Locality and Dialect Group Associations," in *Becoming Chinese American* (AltaMira Press, 2004), 218.

¹⁶¹ Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 292.

¹⁶² Min Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Transformation*, 34.

Although ROC claim to be the legitimate government of China, its seat in the United Nations was replaced by PRC in 1971. Fearing that Taiwan could one day become a communist regime, top Chinese students from Taiwan sought for an advanced degree in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Chris Cheung went to America for graduate study in 1977. As the child of ex-mainlanders, Chris Cheung had long realized that his future was not in Taiwan. His father was sentenced to prison for ten years because the KMT government accused him as “bandit spy,” meaning spies for Chinese communist. Tired of the suppression of political dissidents in Taiwan, Cheung applied for the civil engineering Ph.D. program at Arizona State University in 1977.¹⁶³ Most Taiwanese students at that time would seek for science and technology education in America. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) majors have attracted many international students as it potentially promises future career prosperity and does not necessarily require proficient English fluency.

The 1967 Hong Kong leftist riot made some Hong Kong Chinese realize their future could never be under communism. Fear of communism spread in Hong Kong, Marcus Shiu’s family immigrated to the U.S. as political refugees in 1964.¹⁶⁴ Though Hong Kong was governed as a colony and British Dependent Territory of the United Kingdom before 1997, fear of Hong Kong handover in 1997 had driven Hong Kong

¹⁶³ Chris Cheung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

¹⁶⁴ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

Chinese to resettle down in North America, in particular, Canada and The United States since the 1980s.¹⁶⁵ In response to that, the United States has increased Hong Kong's quota to 10,000 in the 1990s. In three years before 1997, 25,600 Hong Kong immigrants were admitted.¹⁶⁶

During the Mao era, the political agenda set in Mainland China had led to several small migration flows from Mainland China to Hong Kong. In 1957, PRC's chairman Mao Zedong proposed that China should exceed Britain's industrial output in the next 15 years.¹⁶⁷ Mao Zedong's proposal had led to the "Great Leap Forward" Movement between 1958 and 1960, which overwhelmingly created enthusiasm in China's industrial production. Scholars have believed that the "Great Leap Forward" movement had caused widespread Famine in China, known as the "Great Famine" between 1958 and 1962, which resulted in the death of 15 to 30 million people.¹⁶⁸ Refugee fled to Hong Kong for food and shelter. Marine Shiu from Hong Kong recalled that full carloads of refugees from Mainland China rushed into Hong Kong because of the Great Famine. "All of a sudden, the Mainland China government opened the gate and let

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Fournel, "The identity of modern Chinese migrants from Hong Kong to Vancouver, Canada," *Ekistics* (2003): 71-78.

¹⁶⁶ *U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2005), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rpt/44543.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Wen Zhao, "A Brief Analysis of the Social Psychology in the Process of Initiating and Forming the Great Leap Forward Movement," *Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition)* 23 (2012): 5.

¹⁶⁸ Leslie Holmes, *Communism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 32, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=299061&site=ehost-live>.

people just crossed into Hong Kong. Overnight we got half a million people crossing.” He still remembered that were “crazily skinny and pale.” He and his father used to help the Chinese refugees by giving them food and clothes.¹⁶⁹ The “Great Leap Forward” movement ended with failure. Mao’s failure resulted in a temporary decline of his power in the party. In 1966, Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution that was meant to lead Mao back to the senior position in the party. At the peak of the Cultural Revolution, people would be in trouble if they listened to the “wrong” type of music or read the “wrong” type of literature.¹⁷⁰ Educated elites were accused of living “bourgeois” lifestyle because of their educational level and would be sent to the countryside for re-education.¹⁷¹ Groups of young revolutionists, the “Red Guards,” were the major supporters of Mao during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Soo Lee used to be a Red Guard when she was sixteen. She described her memories of destructing old historical sites in the name of Mao to abandon the “Four Olds,” meaning old customs, culture, habits and ideas. She traveled around the country with other red guards exchanging “revolutionary experiences.” Lee stopped participating in the Red Guard activities when verbal criticism among the groups became physical violence. “When different groups of Red Guards confronted and points their guns at each other, I stopped going there and

¹⁶⁹ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 41.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

stayed at home all the time,” Lee said.¹⁷² Ben Qiu was too young to become a Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, but he reckoned the memory of witnessing his seven-year-old friend’s accidental death on the street.¹⁷³ The country stopped running during the Cultural Revolution. Due to the “Up to the Mountain and Down to the Countryside” movement, schools were dismissed, the college entrance exam were suspended, and students were sent to the countryside for farming education. Cliff Li, who came to the U.S. in 1990, was sent to the countryside for farming and did not have his college entrance exam until the year after the Cultural Revolution officially ended. Hong Tan, remembered that his parents disobeyed the order to send him to the countryside for farming education and kept him stay with the family. Although the family was sent to the countryside eventually due to their “bourgeois” background, Tan was able to study medicine with a local doctor and attend college entrance exam right after the Cultural Revolution ended.

Cultural Revolution crashed China with ten years of turmoil, violence and stagnation. Many mainlanders have grown fears of continuous political movements and havocs in China. Among those who chose to leave China are the intellectuals who suffered most from political upheavals personally. Alice Cheung was brought up in a military family in China. Her father was a former general from the Kuomintang and

¹⁷² Soo Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

¹⁷³ Ben Qiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Francisco, California, July 2018.

converted to the communist party after the 1949 revolution. Because of his KMT background, he suffered from every political movement that denounced his former affiliation with the KMT. The word to describe political movement in Chinese is “yundong,” as “sport” in English. “My dad was an ‘athlete.’ He participated in almost every political movement.” Cheung said. To protect his daughter from the suffering, Cheung’s father decided to send Alice Cheung to America. Under her father’s consideration, luckily Alice Cheung did not have to go through what his father had experienced: long-lasting interrogation on his alliance to the communism.¹⁷⁴

Communism had left tremendous traumas to many Chinese, and a few turned their fear of communism to resentment on China. Andrew Lee recalled that his father, Anthony Lee, who immigrated to the U.S. under the refugee status in the 1950s, was a victim of communist China. Witnessing his father’s death during the communist revolution, Anthony Lee set his mind to bring his whole family to the U.S. He was very anti-communist to the point that he was almost anti-Chinese as she represented communism. The Lee family were not allowed to mention their home village, or anything related to China because of Anthony Lee’s resentment on China.¹⁷⁵

Fear of political upheavals had become a significant push factor for Mainlanders who were born and raised during the Mao’s era. During the Mao’s era, political

¹⁷⁴ Alice Cheung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, Sacramento, California, July 2018.

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

movements had thrust China into years of turmoil, hunger and stagnation until the 1978 China's open up. However, it was not until the 1978 China's opening up that Mainlanders were able to leave the country. Beginning in the 1980s, the number of immigrants directly from mainland China started to increase.¹⁷⁶ Alice Cheung was among the first five international students from Mainland China at her university. Students from Taiwan were thrilled to see her walking on the campus because none of them had met a Mainlander before. Since 1978, more Chinese students from Mainland China began to arrive in America with a shared ambition: to live the American Dream.

3.3.2 “Study Abroad Fever”

A “study abroad fever” generated in Mainland China in the 1980s became a major push factor for Chinese immigrants from Mainland China. A typical day of a top Chinese university student in the 1980s, started with attending English conversation club, listening to English radio while riding his bike, and going to the library to prepare for the American graduate school application. Ben Qiu, born in Guangzhou in 1959, attended South China University of Technology and later transferred to the University of Hawaii in 1985. He described his college life in China “the best time of his life.” He was introduced to western culture by listening to Voice of America (VOA), playing soccer with employees from the American consul in Guangzhou and discussing

¹⁷⁶ Lai, “Expressing Their Commonality: Chinese Locality and Dialect Group Associations,” 218.

freedom, human rights and democracy at the college conversation club. “1980s was the best and happiest time for me. We can talk about anything. It was the greatest time in China ever,” he said.¹⁷⁷ After years of political upheavals in China, in the 1980s, politics was set aside for economic development as the new Chairman Deng Xiaoping promised a new future for Chinese people. China’s college campus for the first time encouraged discussion on western culture and gave rise to a tendency among students to learn English and study abroad.

The “study abroad fever” encouraged individual to pursue professional and economic advancement in the U.S. The social and economic reform in China in 1978, along with welcoming U.S. immigration policy and the normalization of U.S.-China diplomatic relations, created an encouraging environment for Chinese students to pursue higher education in the foreign country.¹⁷⁸ A 52 visiting scholars’ arrivals in the U.S. in 1978 marked the end of restrictive study abroad policy in Mainland China. Since then, a “study abroad fever” quickly spread across the nation. Hong Tan recalled that only elite students from the top universities in China with government scholarship could study abroad.¹⁷⁹ In 1981, the Chinese Education Department eased the restriction on study abroad policy and allowed students to study abroad at their expenses if they

¹⁷⁷ Ben Qiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

¹⁷⁸ Tingting Yue, “Research on China’s Studying Abroad Education since Reform and Opening up,” PHD diss., (Nankai University: 2015).

¹⁷⁹ Hong Tan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Los Angeles, California, June 2018.

met certain criteria.¹⁸⁰ In 1993, the State Education Commission of the PRC announced Notice of Self-supported Study Abroad and officially abolished restriction on self-supported study broad.¹⁸¹

Hong Tan and his wife Jingzhen Yuan came to the U.S. for graduate school under the “study abroad fever” in the 1980s.¹⁸² Hong Tan and Jingzhen Yuan were both respected doctors who graduated and worked in the most elite medical school and hospital in Nanjing. After graduating and working for Nanking Medical School and its hospital for four years, in 1986, Hong became the first doctor in his hospital to study in Japan as a visiting scholar. The trip to Japan made him realize the economic and social development gaps between China and other countries, which later drove him to pursue higher education U.S. following his wife. “You cannot image how poor and undeveloped China was in the 1980s. We can never compare with western countries.” Thanks to the loosen-up of self-supported study abroad policy, Tan’s wife, Jingzhen Yuan was able to come to America first as a Ph.D. candidate at Mississippi State University in 1991. Tan brought their daughter to the State later, applied for a different Ph.D. program at MSU and transferred to a Master program for financial reason.¹⁸³ Hong and Yuan were among the first generation of Mainland Chinese students to self-

¹⁸⁰ Yanping Zhen, “The evolution of China's study abroad policy since the reform and opening up,” PHD diss., (Dalian University of Technology: 2007), 15.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 16.

¹⁸² Hong Tan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

¹⁸³ Jingzhen Yuan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Los Angeles, California, June 2018.

support themselves through graduate study in America. The most important things for them was to get support from the University. Their sponsor in the U.S. can only make sure they can enter the States. But they need to afford their living expenses by themselves. Their saving was just enough for Yuan to pay for the Ph.D. tuition for the first semester, approximately 2000 dollars. They considered themselves as the elite class back in China, but they still cannot afford the tuition of American school. They put themselves through their studies by applying for research fellowship and doing part-time jobs.

Yuan got fellowship during the second semester, 750 dollars a month and she waived her tuition. To obtain the fellowship, Yuan worked hard to remain A grades. "There were a few times that I didn't do well. I cried at the cafeteria, wondering whether I was able to get my fellowship. I had to do my best to fight and crave for survival here." she said.

Their efforts were paid off as their decision to the U.S. has improved their economic status and their professional performances. High educated professionals as them in China did not get paid well in China in the 1980s. Their monthly incomes were less than 200 RMB (less than 30 dollars) in total. Their housing and commute conditions were not satisfactory. When they first came to America, they were shocked to see cars and highways, not to mention any other electronic appliances that they never had in China. "Immigrating to the US is the right choice for us. Our life path is on the right

track.” Yuan said. In July 1995, Hong found a job in the University of South California. Yuan found a post-doc position in UCLA the next year.

Jianping Wei and Qingmei Jia, couples from Culver City described their immigration to the U.S. as an education advancement.¹⁸⁴ “Everyone is long for studying in the State because the educational system in China was not as good as America. That’s why I decided to come to the State.” Jia said. Both of them studied abroad in Japan under the government-sponsor program before coming to the U.S. Jianping Wei, went for undergraduate study in Japan in 1980. His wife Jia finished her Ph.D. program at Tokyo University in 1996. In 2000, she was invited to be a Post-Doc at UCLA. Government-sponsored students at that time had fewer financial pressures on their shoulders. “We were fortunate. We didn’t have to do part-time jobs as other foreign students to pay for our tuition and living expense. As government-sponsored students, we were very respected.” Jia said.

Other personal character motivations, such as potential job opportunities and investment opportunities also created the incentives to immigrate to the U.S. In some cases; interviewees made more than one decision. Jin, originally from Hong Kong immigrated to Japan at a young age with his parents. While studying and working in Japan for 13 years, he always felt unfit and left out in Japanese society. Unsatisfied with

¹⁸⁴ Qingmei Jia, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Los Angeles, California, June 2018.

his life in Japan, he went to America for work in 1989.¹⁸⁵ Silas Hung, an immigrant from Hong Kong is a retired professor from UC Davis.¹⁸⁶ He studied in Taiwan for four years and went to Montreal, Quebec for higher education. UC Davis Agricultural school recruited him and sponsored him to work in the U.S. As a well-respected scholar in his field, his expertise and publication impressed UC Davis. "Once you reach a certain educational level, you follow the job," He said.

China's social and economic reform in 1978 has encouraged a study abroad wave in the 1980s and 1990s. Most of the students decided to stay in the U.S. after their study. According to the statistic provided the by the Ministry of Education of the PRC, between the year of 1978 and the year 2005, only 25% of the students come back to China after their studies.¹⁸⁷ In response to the brain drain situation due to the "study abroad fever," the Chinese government took several approaches to cope with the talent loss situations at the beginning. Chinese students would only be granted J1 Visa at that time, which ensured their return after school ended.

Nevertheless, Chinese students still got away from this situation. John Wu, a graduate from the medical school of Fudan University, first came to America as a visiting scholar in 1998 under a government-sponsored exchange program.¹⁸⁸ He

¹⁸⁵ Jin, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

¹⁸⁶ Silas Hung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

¹⁸⁷ Yanping Zhen, "The evolution of China's study abroad policy since the reform and opening up," 23.

¹⁸⁸ John Wu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

decided to stay in the US after the exchange program ended. He changed his visa from J-1 to H-1 with the help from his school, which allowed him to extend his stay and work in the State. He stayed in the university and continued to work on his research.

3.4 Model Minority: Myth or Reality

One key research question for this thesis is to understand a popular concept within the Chinese community in the U.S., model minority, through both an analysis of its externalization and its perception by Chinese immigrants themselves. Scholars have been long opposite against the over-simplification of the Asian American as a model minority. Timothy Fong argues that the model minority is a deceptive overstatement for Asian American groups even though the general statistics of Asian American group show high rates of education, high family income and better job opportunities. For example, despite similar education background, Asian Americans generally earn less than the Non-Hispanic White.¹⁸⁹ Through studying statistical data on Chinese immigration and a larger cohort of Chinese in America, I argue that model minority is an over-simplified myth to describe the whole community based on the academic and professional achievement of Chinese Americans that overlook the polarized nature of Chinese population in the U.S.

¹⁸⁹ Timothy Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience, Beyond the Model Minority*, 72.

Prior to World War II, Chinese did not enjoy a good reputation in the U.S. due to racial discrimination and stereotypes such as “the sneaky Oriental,” “the Yellow Peril,” “the Perpetual Foreigner,” and “the Indispensable Enemy.” The past stereotypes about Chinese in America could be broadly regraded as how the early American society viewed Asian as a whole. Ironically, during World War II, American started to perceive Asian differently. An IQ testing that Japanese American youth participated in showed that Japanese youth had excelled other races in their IQ performance.¹⁹⁰ By the mid-1960s, the image of Chinese American started to change. The model minority concept was originated from a 1966 *U.S. News & World Report* article praised Chinese and Japanese in America as “model minority” capable of “winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work.”¹⁹¹ The achievement of Asian Americans has caught the attention of mass media in the late 1960s. The 1970 US census finds out that Chinese family median income was \$1,000 higher than the U.S. average.¹⁹² During the 1980s, the model minority concept evolved with an emphasis on Asian Americans’ academic performance.¹⁹³ In 1984, Newsweek reported that Asian Americans outscored any other racial groups on the math section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).¹⁹⁴ Based on the

¹⁹⁰ David K. Yoo, “Testing Assumptions: IQ, Japanese Americans, and the Model Minority Myth in the 1920s and 1930s.”

¹⁹¹ Peter Kwong and Dusanka Miscevic, *Chinese America, the Untold Story of America’s Oldest New Community* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 233, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁹² Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 168.

¹⁹³ Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 374.

¹⁹⁴ Dennis Williams, “A Formula for Success,” *Newsweek*, April 23, 1984.

fact that Asian Americans seem to excel academically, sarcastic references to schools are associated with the overrepresentation of Asian American at the college level during the 1980s. MIT became “Made in Taiwan” while UCLA was nicknamed “University of Caucasians Lost Among Asians.”¹⁹⁵ Recent statistics has shown that Asian Americans have a higher educational level, better jobs and higher family income.¹⁹⁶

In retrospect the history of Chinese immigration, the progress that Chinese immigrants made in society has manifested a common value that many Chinese believe in, the spirit of chi ku, namely enduring hardships in English. Long before the Chinese in America was recognized as a model minority, their participation in the construction of the transcontinental railroad, the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR), demonstrated their endurance, diligence and the ability to bear hardships. In early 1865, when fewer white Americans answered the labor need for railroad construction because of its hazardous nature, a large portion of laborers for the construction of CPRR were Chinese workers, who were willing to accept fewer wages and longer working hours than their white counterparts.¹⁹⁷

“吃苦” (chi ku), literally eat pains, is a commonly used word in Chinese to describe enduring hardships. One can hardly find similar words with this meaning in

¹⁹⁵ Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 329.

¹⁹⁶ TFong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience, Beyond the Model Minority*, 62.

¹⁹⁷ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Chinese Labor Migrants to the Americas in Nineteenth Century: An Inquiry into Who They Were and the World They Left Behind”, in *Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019).

other languages, as it represents a unique and deeply-rooted principle that Chinese people follow – to be hard-working and endure extreme hardships. Mencius, a Chinese philosopher and Confucianism practitioner who lived around the 4th century BC, regarded “enduring hardships” as an important Confucian value. In his word, “thus, when Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his minds, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies.” This Confucian value has deeply rooted in the Chinese immigrant society in America ever since Chinese helped built the CPRR. As time goes by, this Confucian value did not fade away but instead reinforces a model minority concept within the contemporary Chinese American society thanks to Chinese American academic and professional success. By virtue of the “enduring hardships” value, Chinese Americans seem to be more tolerant with hardships and struggles in life, and thus a large portion of them have excelled academically and professionally. This notion, however, also contributes to the imagination of Chinese as a model minority.

3.4.1 Challenges within Immigrant Families

Following the 1965 immigration reform act, a study has shown that most post-1965 Asian Immigrants tend to arrive in the U.S. in family units.¹⁹⁸ Immigrants claimed as Children, housewives or no other occupation accounted for the largest group of immigrants since 1965.¹⁹⁹ Obedience to the family stands out as a challenge of children from immigrant families. Chinese Children grown up in a traditional Chinese family are often required to follow filial piety, “xiaodao,” which means obedience and respect for their parents. This Chinese cultural value plays an important part in determining a person’s role in his/her family. Obedience to the family, especially when you are away from the homeland, is unarguable. Rebecca Yue had spent most of her life in Hong Kong before the age of seventeen.²⁰⁰ She was satisfied with her life in Hong Kong but her mother, however, insisted that she should come over to the America to join the rest of the family. Yue described herself as “being American by no chance.” If she had a chance, she would never consider moving to America. Maggy Cheung, also shared the same feeling as Yue.²⁰¹ Moving to San Jose with her family at the age of eleven, she struggled with assimilating in her school and was picked by classmates for not being as physically strong as other kinds and unable to speak fluent English. She felt she was a “second

¹⁹⁸ Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.

²⁰⁰ Rebecca Yue, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

²⁰¹ Maggy Cheung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

citizen.” “Even till now, I still don’t know whether I have adapted to the life here. When I see Caucasian people, I still feel the same frustration I had when I was a teenager, when I felt inferior.” She said. Grown up in a traditional Chinese family that seldom shared feelings, she felt frustrated and unable to describe her struggle with her family. Her parents, who were busy with their own business, were unable to support their daughter but used guilt and shame to keep their children’s strong obligation to the family. Fortunately, she was able to get advice from school and pushed herself through high school. With the help from her high school, she was able to apply for grants and scholarship for college.

In addition to the waves of family immigration, 1965 immigration reform also witnessed a massive influx of female immigrants. In general, female immigrants in total outnumber male immigrants every year and they are more likely to immigrate through the family channel. A study done by American Immigration Council, *Immigrant Women in the United States*, noted that immigrant women have lower representation in the labor force compared to the native-born women.²⁰² Many female interviewees, especially those who came over to the U.S. for the husbands, described their memories of not being able to work. Min Yang, who came over to America to support her husband and gave up her

²⁰² American Immigration Council, “Immigrant Women in the United States: A Portrait of Demographic Diversity,” accessed December 1, 2018, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrant_women_in_the_united_states.pdf.

job in China as a vice-principal of a public school, recalled that her mother was extremely against her decision to the U.S. because she was not allowed to work until her husband obtained his legal permanent residence.²⁰³ As a math teacher in China, Yang was passionate about continuing her teaching career in America. However, in addition to the legal reason, her limited English proficiency impeded her from pursuing a career in teaching.

3.4.2 Linguistic Struggle

For many Chinese immigrants, their hardships often begin with the language. Immigrants came as teenagers often need to participate in an English as Second Language Program. For adult immigrants, they often went to adult school. Andrew Lee, immigrated to the U.S. at the age of fifteen, was placed into an English as Second Language program in high school.²⁰⁴ He was very frustrated with English, but the ESL program frustrated him the most. “When I look at the ESL class, I realized that everyone there was having a speech problem.” Furious at the fact that the school mistakenly regarded him as a student with a speech problem, he determined to learn English on his own and mastered school exams at the end of the semester.

²⁰³ Min Yang, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Los Angeles, California, June 2018.

²⁰⁴ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

Statistical evidence shows that 80% of the Chinese and 82% of the Taiwanese Chinese in the U.S. speak languages other than English at home.²⁰⁵ In areas with a majority of Chinese population like Monterey Park, the number goes as high as 90%.²⁰⁶ As I observed during the oral history interviews, some first-generation Chinese immigrants merely spoke English at home, while others tended to use both Chinese and English at home when their children are present. There is a common misunderstanding that linguistic disadvantage only happens to immigrants who seldom practice that language. However, immigrants who often use English in a professional setting also see language as their handicap. Silas Hung, a former professor from UC Davis, considered language the main problem for him at work.²⁰⁷ His students, complaint about his English accent and used it as an excuse not to attend his class.

3.4.3 Glass Ceiling

Language is also a primary obstacle for Chinese immigrants who sought for career advancement at their workplace. Marcus Shiu recalled that when he was in the state of government, he struggled with communicating with colleagues due to the language problem.²⁰⁸ He believed that his thinking process was slower than others because he had to take extra time to articulate what he thought in English. Chris Leung,

²⁰⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

²⁰⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

²⁰⁷ Silas Hung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁰⁸ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie

a civil engineer from Taiwan, believed that his language skill impeded his career advancement.²⁰⁹ As a senior engineer for years, Caucasian co-workers with less experience were promoted before Cheung while Cheung never reached manager level at his company.

Some immigrants viewed language as a handicap not only because it imposed difficulties in communicating with colleagues at work, but cultural displacement that distanced themselves with their American co-workers and impeded them from adapting to the working culture in the U.S. Keibun, originally from Hong Kong, immigrated to the U.S. via Japan in 1989 in her 30s. She identified cultural difference as a challenge at work.²¹⁰ Keibun noted that adapting to the American work culture, characterized by her as “being the person who presents the best of yourself at work and tells others what you can do” is particularly challenging for her. Born and raised in Hong Kong, she was unfamiliar with “showing off” herself at work as her culture taught her to be modest. For this reason, she noted that she had never been able to integrate into American society.

“Asian Americans are the forgotten minority in the glass ceiling,” stated Buck Gee and Denise Peck, in a report on their research on Asian American professional performance in Silicon Valley. In the report, Buck Gee and Denise find out that though

²⁰⁹ Chris Cheung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²¹⁰ Keibun, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

Asian Americans have become the largest racial group of professionals in Silicon Valley, Asian Americans are the least likely group to be promoted into management roles than any other races.²¹¹ The problem, as Buck Gee and Denise view, partly results from the image of Asian American as a model minority. As the model minority, Asian Americans are thought to be exempt from the glass ceiling and therefore not considered as an underrepresented group at the workplace. They are also given little priority in diversity programs that helps Asian Americans' career advancement, as the research suggests. As a matter of fact, many immigrants, still suffer from linguistic disadvantage and cultural displacement that fundamentally create a glass ceiling in their workplaces.

Some interviewees felt that glass ceiling in the workplace gave them no sense of accomplishment and responsibility. Kenneth Lau, a former senior supervisor in Cathy Pacific HK, immigrated to San Jose in 1988 at that age of 35. With no studying and working experience in the U.S., he had to work as an entry-level engineer for his first job in the U.S.²¹² He got the lowest pay among all other entry-level engineers. "I told my employer how much I earned in Hong Kong and he paid me that exact amount. I was happy at first but soon realized my salary was the lowest in the company." Lau said. During the years working in the U.S., he felt he was never adapted to the American culture. As the only Chinese employee in the company, he felt distanced with Caucasian

²¹¹ Buck Gee and Denise Peck, "The Illusion of Asian Success: Scant Progress for Minorities in Cracking the Glass Ceiling."

²¹² Kenneth Lau, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

co-workers. He focused most of his time on family instead of work as he saw there was no chance for him to reach the managerial level working in the U.S. He missed the time in Hong Kong when he felt responsible for his company. When his last company laid him off in 2013, he decided to retire. Other interviewees suggest that the problem of glass ceiling has gone better over time, but fundamentally it was a problem of assimilation.

Andrew Lee immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 15 in 1965. As an early Chinese immigrant after the 1965 immigration reform, Lee was brought up in a house where English was the only allowed language to use due to his father's resentment for communist China.²¹³ Compared to his fellow Chinese, Lee felt more comfortable speaking in English. He noted that the glass ceiling situation has gone better since his generation because of the affirmative action program. He believed that many of his Chinese fellows became mid-levels managers and even promoted to director level. However, he struggled with communication with Caucasian co-workers as he believed he cannot earn respect from them effectively like native-born Americans due to his Asian ethnicity. His Caucasian co-workers did not respect his authority when he oversaw the toll bridges program in the Bay Area because of what he believed his physical characteristics. In general, many immigrants believed that the reasons for the

²¹³ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

glass ceiling are mostly stereotypes, language problems, lack of self-confidence and the passive nature of Asians. The glass ceiling issue raises a more important question: assimilation. Is Lee assimilated? He answered this question as no. Though Lee has spent his life in California since he was fifteen, he still considered America still sees Chinese as “perpetual foreigner.”

3.4.4 Assimilation

Chinese American author, journalist and activist Helen Zia, has raised a question in her popular work *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*, “what does it take to become American?”²¹⁴ The question Helen Zia asks reflects a struggle of assimilation that is deeply rooted in everyday life of Asian Americans like her.

Assimilation and integration in American society challenge many Chinese immigrants for generations. Min Zhou suggests that, as immigrants improve their language proficiency, gradually learn to accept or tolerate the cultural values of the predominant society, the immigrants are more likely to be accepted by the dominant group.²¹⁵

However, that being said, similar to Lee, some immigrants did not see themselves assimilated in America though they have spent a long time in America. Jin and Keibun immigrated to the U.S. as a couple in 1989 via Japan. Originated from Hong Kong, they enjoyed socializing with other Hong Kong Chinese from their church but found it hard

²¹⁴ Helen Zia, “Introduction” In *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*, ix.

²¹⁵ Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, 225.

to mingle with people from different races.²¹⁶ They considered themselves not assimilated given the fact that they were still bonded with their Chinese heritage more than American culture.

Nevertheless, some immigrants noted that assimilation was not necessarily the only way out for them to build up their lives in America. Many immigrants felt that assimilation was an alternative, but not a necessity. David Ng, a former engineer in the Silicon Valley and now an active pastor of a Chinese ethnic church in Sunnyvale, CA noted that having lived within the Bay Area with a large Chinese community, he felt that the ethnic enclave had fulfilled his social need.²¹⁷ Similarly, Xiangdong Kong noted that he normally hanged out with Chinese immigrants like him.²¹⁸ He believed it was not necessary to mingle with people from different ethnic groups since there is a large Chinese population in L.A. "Almost everyone walking on the street is an immigrant in L.A. I found it easier to hang out with Chinese like us. We know we would not get along with people from different ethnic groups (because of language and cultural difference), but we respect their lifestyles, values and religions." Xiangdong Kong's wife, Min Yang added.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Jin, interviewed by Shiqi Xie; Keibun, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²¹⁷ David Ng, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

²¹⁸ Xiangdong Kong, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Los Angeles, California, June 2018.

²¹⁹ Min Yang, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

On the other hand, there are also several immigrants who see assimilation positively. Ruth Chan viewed assimilation as an essential part of her American life.²²⁰ As a churchgoer, she enjoyed her Christian life in the U.S. and met her “American parents” who treated her as she was their real daughter through the church. She married an American-born Chinese, and thus she mainly speaks English at home. How immigrants perceived assimilation raises questions about what the nature of assimilation in American life is. Generally speaking, the process through which people become assimilated in American life has two models: the melting pot model and the multiculturalism model.²²¹ The melting pot model, conveys the idea that America is a melting pot comprising different cultures and people into one single blend of races, ethnicities and cultures.²²² However, few scholars now consider the melting pot adequate and accurate enough to describe the heterogeneity of the American immigrant society given the complexity of current state of America and the concepts of assimilation, acculturation, multiculturalism and pluralism.²²³ Salad bowl has become an emerging term to describe the current state of America, which addresses that

²²⁰ Ruth Chan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²²¹ Shahrzad Yousefinejad and David Frederick. "Americanization," In *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, ed. Carlos E. Cortés (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications: 2013), 218-223.

²²² Ruth Y. Hsu. "Melting Pot." In *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, ed. Carlos E. Cortés (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications: 2013), 1435-1436..

²²³ Ibid.

immigrants from different cultures combine like a salad, but do not form into a homogenous group.

In interviews with churchgoers, I noticed that for those who regularly go to Chinese ethnic church, the church is not only a center for them to share their religious belief but a center to maintain their Chinese heritage and mingle with other Chinese. Multiple interviewees agreed that the Chinese church had fulfilled their social need in the U.S. In 2010, 1679 Chinese ethnic churches are listed in the Chinese Christian Churches and Organizations Directory.²²⁴ Currently, this online directory shows that 2069 Chinese churches are listed.²²⁵ The number of Chinese churches has grown rapidly in recent years. Fenggang Yang argues that the Chinese church helps its member to selectively preserve certain aspects of Chinese culture with transformative reinterpretation such as the preservation of Chinese languages.²²⁶ Many Chinese churches in America, as I am aware of, initiated with the purpose to serve Chinese immigrants who recently arrive mainly from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The services are usually done in multiple languages. Pastor Fong, recalled that he used to worship in Cantonese and his wife Esther Fong, would translate Cantonese into

²²⁴ D. J. Chuang, "How many Chinese Churches Are in the USA?," July 31, 2014, accessed December 19, 2018, <https://djchuang.com/2014/many-chinese-churches-usa/>

²²⁵ "Chinese Christian Churches and Organizations Directory," accessed January 10, 2019, <https://church.oursweb.net/>.

²²⁶ Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities* (Penn State Press: 2010), 133..

Mandarin at the backstage.²²⁷ Many Chinese churches also provided community services such as citizenship test tutoring for recent Chinese immigrant to help them adapt to American life. Many immigrants also told me that they often developed new friendships with other members of the church because they shared many in common. Packey Ng, David Ng's wife recalled that she and her husband made friends with many Chinese couples in her church because they all shared similar backgrounds: born and raised in Hong Kong; came over to the U.S. as students; worked at the Silicon Valley.²²⁸ Classical assimilation theory in America regarded assimilation as a necessary part of immigrants' upward mobility.²²⁹ Some scholars argue that the classic assimilation cannon does not apply to current Asian and Latin American immigrants, as the classic assimilation theory was built upon the experience of earlier European immigrants.²³⁰ Assimilation theory has become less favorable in discussions on ethnic relations recently. Richard Alba and Victor Nee argue in their work that rejection of the old assimilation cannon is not only a reaction from students and young generation, but an "ideologically laden residue of worn-out notions" noted by sociologists.²³¹ The classic assimilation cannon is

²²⁷ Pastor Fong, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

²²⁸ Packey Ng, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

²²⁹ W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (Yale University Press: 1960).

²³⁰ Herbert J. Gans, "Second-Generation Decline: Scenarios for the Economic and Ethnic Futures of the post-1965 American Immigrants," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15(2) (1992): 173-192.

²³¹ Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Harvard University Press: 2009), 1.

now condemned for its expectation for immigrants to blend themselves in the American mainstream, the Anglo-American culture, and abandon their own culture. Therefore, the Chinese church case becomes significantly important for this study as it demonstrates that ethnic church, could serve as an alternative for immigrants to connect with their home culture and meet their social needs.

Nevertheless, many immigrants also realized they have disconnected with their homelands and home culture as time goes by. Andrew Lee never went back to his home until his father passed away in 2009. Due to his father's resentment on communist China, Lee barely read or watch anything in Chinese. Disconnection with homelands and home cultures became a major issue for some Chinese immigrants.²³² A Chinese poetry, "Crossing the Han River" written by Li Pin in Song dynasty, well resonates with the immigrants' disconnection with home. It goes, "separated by mountain ranges, I was deprived of words from home. Winder pass and spring came, over and again. As I cross the Han River, the impending homecoming unnerves me so. So much so I shy away from asking about my homeland of the locals." In rethinking the interviewees, I find evidence supporting that assimilation is taking place, albeit unevenly. Many interviewees have demonstrated their ability to integrate into the American mainstream economically. In addition, a number of interviewees came to appreciate values that the

²³² Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

American mainstream embrace, such as freedom and respect for the individual. they believed that they could have the best of both (culture). Ben Qiu is a bilingual teacher in a San Francisco public school and an immigrant himself. As a bilingual teacher in San Francisco, he appreciated both Chinese and American culture and brought his appreciation to his class. At the beginning of every semester, he would always teach his students what it is like to be an American.²³³

3.5 Conclusion

Generally speaking, many Chinese dislike the model minority because of racial stereotyping. Eileen Leung, the former president of Sacramento Chinese Culture Foundation, states that model minority is a myth based on the fact that Asian Americans seem to excel academically. But in her word, “by Asian Americans, I am speaking of Chinese mostly, including offspring from parents who immigrated from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam. Not all Asian American students and young people excel; some struggle with poverty, family problems, drugs and gangs.”²³⁴ Talking with immigrants from various backgrounds gives me different impressions on how the Chinese immigrants view model minority. John Wu, a biomedical lab researcher at day and an amateur film festival organizer at night has actively participated in Chinese community service in Sacramento. He felt a strong obligation for building up the cultural

²³³ Ben Qiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²³⁴ Eileen Leung, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

communication between the U.S. and China. He viewed that model minority is a wrong definition to describe the Chinese/Asian in the U.S. "It's a misleading description on Chinese and other Asian as it suggests that Chinese or Asian are hardworking and not interested in political participation."²³⁵ John Wu considered the criteria that project Chinese as a model minority showed how little participation Chinese had in community services and politics. In considering the contribution to communities that Asian Americans made, John Wu noted that Chinese and other Asian Americans were far from the model minority standard. On the other hand, Andrew Lee did not see model minority is as something bad for him personally. Aware of the fact that many Chinese disliked the myth, he argued that model minority was a positive portrayal of Chinese especially in light of the current social and political environment between China and the U.S. The tense relations between China and U.S., has caused Chinese immigrants like Andrew Lee to have complex feelings for both sides. "If they still think we are model citizens, that is a good thing," said Andrew Lee at the end of our conversation about model minority.²³⁶ Question of loyalties is nothing new for some Chinese immigrants and native-born Chinese. Iris Chang, the author of *Chinese in America*, recalled in her book that when she was in school, her classmate had offensively asked her, if China and U.S. were at war, which side she would stand by. Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwanese American

²³⁵ John Wu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²³⁶ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

scientist worked for the University of California at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, was charged of stealing secrets about the U.S. nuclear arsenal for the People's Republic of China in December 1999.²³⁷ However, federal investigators were unable to prove the initial accusation and in 2006, Lee received more than \$1.6 million settlement from the federal government and five media organization.²³⁸ In Lee's memoir *My Country Versus Me: The First-hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who Was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy*, he addresses that his Asian ethnicity was a primary factor behind his prosecution by the government.²³⁹ Wen Ho Lee's story resonates with many interviewees, especially those who worked for the government and those who handled sensitive works. Marcus Shiu recalled that he overheard his department had a meeting on whether he was suitable for a manager position given his Asian ethnicity.²⁴⁰ Andrew Lee believed that Chinese Americans' loyalties continued to be questioned under the current political environment.²⁴¹ Lao Li, the chair of the Chinese Engineer Association in Sacramento noted bias towards government employees with foreign backgrounds still existed.²⁴² He recalled filing a complaint with his Chinese colleague in question of a

²³⁷²³⁷ *United States of America, Plaintiff, vs. Wen Ho Lee, Defendant* (1999),

https://fas.org/irp/ops/ci/docs/lee_indict.html

²³⁸ Paul Farhi, "U.S., Media Settle with Wen Ho Lee," *Washington Post*, June 3, 2006,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/02/AR2006060201060.html>

²³⁹ Wen Ho Lee and Helen Zia, *My Country Versus Me: The First-hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy* (New York: Hyperion: 2001).

²⁴⁰ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁴¹ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁴² Cliff Li, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

promotion to managerial level given to a Caucasian co-worker. He and his colleagues held that their female co-worker from Mainland Chinese should have been promoted to that manager position given her communication skills, working ability and better education background. Nevertheless, his supervisors did not respond to the complaint.

Along with questions of fidelity placed upon foreign Chinese and Chinese Americans, some immigrants perceived negative stereotypes and discrimination as part of their experience in the U.S. A number of immigrants have shared their memories of being treated differently in restaurants and public spaces. Ruth Chan recalled an incident when she was applying for her legal permanent residency. The judge responsible for her case claimed that Chan was not eligible for legal permanent residence because she stole a job from the American people.²⁴³ The recent incident of Chinese speaking at Duke adds an extra layer on the discussion here. An email sent by a Duke professor asked Duke international Chinese students to “commit to using English 100% of the time” and implied that the failure to do so could result in barriers to future internship and research opportunities within the department.²⁴⁴ As this incident later became criticism on the lack of diversity, inclusion and equality at Duke, it also raised concern over Xenophobia, a kind of discrimination that is not necessarily of race, but that of “foreignness.”

²⁴³ Ruth Chan, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁴⁴ Amy B Wang, “Duke Professor Apologize for telling Chinese Students to Speak English on Campus”, *the Washington Post*, January 28, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/01/27/duke-professor-warns-chinese-students-speak-english-campus-or-face-unintended-consequences/?utm_term=.2893b7ad1578.

Interviewee Andree Lee later sent me his comment on this incident, in which he noted that the incident of Chinese speaking at Duke reinforced the stereotype of the Chinese in America (either foreign Chinese or Chinese American) as the “perpetual strangers.”

4. Digital Project

The emergence of digital technology in humanities fields has provided new tools for researchers to expand the scope of their researches digitally. These new tools, ranging from dynamic diagrams, interactive web to virtual reality platforms, allow visual perception to amplify and enhance the current understanding of research. David M. Berry notes that digital technology is fundamentally changing the way in which we engage in the research process, as it is increasingly being mediated through digital technology.²⁴⁵ Some researchers have embraced this trend—so-called digital humanities. Schnapp and Presner, cited by Berry, call the current wave of digital humanities as “Digital Humanities 2.0”, which “harnesses digital toolkits in the service of the Humanities.”²⁴⁶

Responding the wave of digital humanities in the academic field, the previous scholarship in this thesis has undertaken both qualitative research and quantitative research methods, with a focus on contemporary Chinese immigration in the U.S. Yet to tell the story of Chinese immigrants, by taking digital humanities methodology, I am able to enhance the discussion. In my thesis, I use WordPress not only as the underlying structure to present visualizations, maps and other representations of information, but also as a navigable link between my qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis of

²⁴⁵ David M, Berry, "The Computational Turn: Thinking about the Digital humanities." *Culture Machine* 12 (2011).

²⁴⁶ "Digital Humanities 2.0" cited in "The Computational Turn: Thinking about the Digital Humanities."

Chinese immigration in the U.S. The WordPress site I have created, visualizingchineseimmigration.com, is the culminating product of my research, which brings together multiple digital creations, including texts, images, timeline, interactive maps and data visualizations. In this chapter, I mainly focus on the process of creating digital visualizations and how it reflects and enhances current issues further. The chapter begins with a brief review of the current application of digital visualization in the digital humanities field and how it impacts my decision on creating an interactive website to visualize my research.

4.1 Brief Review of Digital Visualization

Martyn Jessop noted that two features of a digital visualization—interactivity and allowance for manipulation of both the graphical representation and the data it is derived from -- have distinguished a digital visualization from a printed illustration.²⁴⁷ She further argues that the use of visualization in the humanities can be examined by the type of data that is being visualized, such as space, quantitative data, text, time and 3D visualization.²⁴⁸ For example, for space, Geographical Information System (GIS) software has shaped the study of spatial relationships in humanities.

²⁴⁷ Martyn Jessop, "Digital visualization as a scholarly activity," *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, Volume 23, Issue 3, 1 (2008): 281–293, <https://doi.org/10.1093/lc/fqn016>.

²⁴⁸ Jessop, 283-285.

Quantitative data analysis and visualization is another common visualization practice in digital humanities. As Elijah Meeks states, “even a spreadsheet is a form of information visualization.”²⁴⁹ A spreadsheet can display and explore information in large, abstract and multidimensional data sets. It also provides a structured, intuitive and robust interface for information visualizations.²⁵⁰

Building the bridge between humanity’s cultural heritages and the rapidly growing digital world has been seen as an important mission for digital humanities. As technological progress in the past century has rapidly influenced the way in which we gain knowledge, digital humanities bring historical materials online and accessible to the general public.

Several digital humanities projects have incorporated different digital platforms to explore the history of Chinese in America. I will consider these examples and explain how my project relates to them.

The Chinese Immigration Virtual Museum project,²⁵¹ produced by Karalee Nakatsuka and her students, creates a 360/VR Chinese immigration virtual museum based on the story of a Chinese immigrant in the U.S. The Chinese immigration virtual

²⁴⁹ Elijah Meeks, “Spreadsheets are Information Visualization,” Stanford Digital Humanities, last modified April 28, 2014, <https://digitalhumanities.stanford.edu/spreadsheets-are-information-visualization>.

²⁵⁰ Ed Huai-hsin Chi, John Riedl, Phillip Barry, and Joseph Konstan. "Principles for information visualization spreadsheets." *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications* 4 (1998): 30-38.

²⁵¹ Certificated Educator, “History Comes to Life with Thinglink 360/VR Immigrant Museum,” last modified October 27, 2017, <http://thinglinkblog.com/2017/10/27/history-comes-to-life-with-thinglink-360vr-immigrant-museum/>.

museum visualizes the living and history of Chinese immigration by facilitating an interactive online tool, ThingLink, that pairs virtual reality with real-life materials such as audio narration, images and videos.

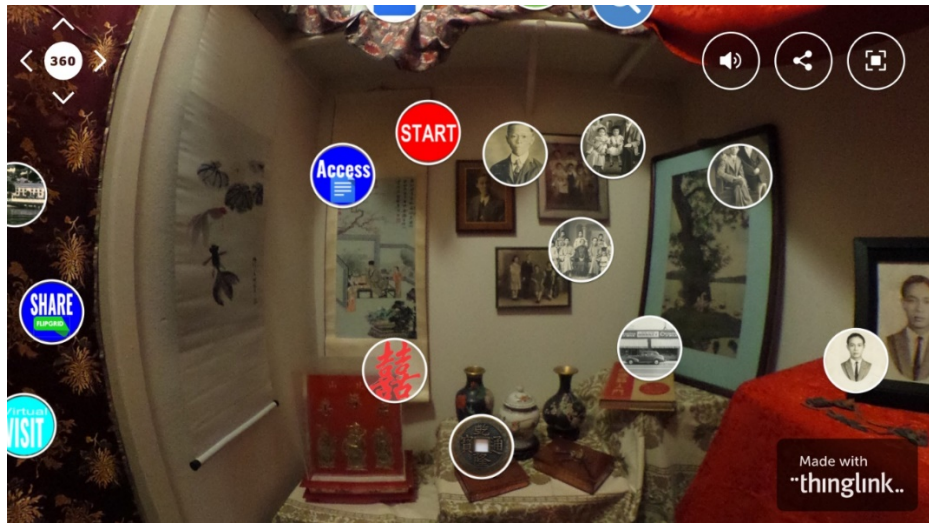
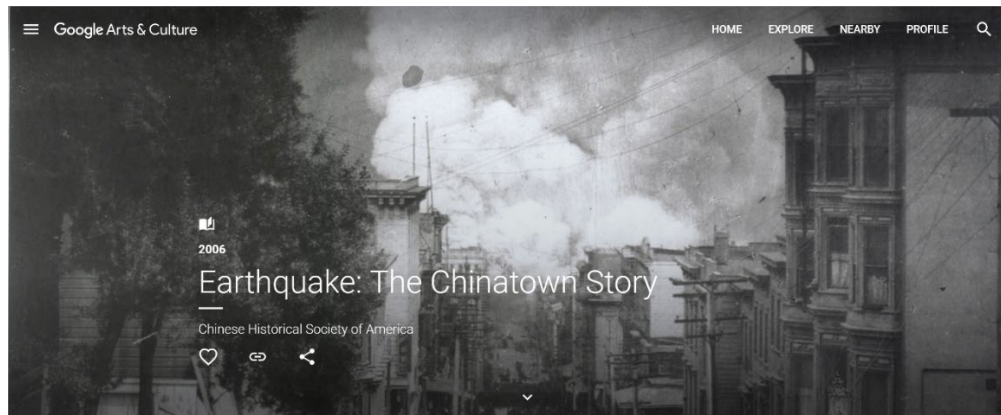


Figure 9: Chinese immigration virtual museum project

The “Earthquake: The Chinatown Story”²⁵² created by Chinese Historical Society of America on Google Arts & Culture shows the possibility for scholars to use the “story” feature under the Google Arts & Culture to publish digital story online. The story that the Chinese Historical Society of America published, allows users to zoom in any image displayed in the story to read details or keep scrolling down the page to engage with different media.

²⁵² “Earthquake: The Chinatown Story,” Chinese Historical Society of America, Google Arts & Culture, <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/gOr-sWsc>.



The Rebirth of San Francisco Chinatown 1906-2006

Figure 10: Earthquake: The Chinatown story

The projects above provide a wide range of possible platforms, plug-ins, and interactive tools that might be of use for enhancing my project. Thinglink and Google Arts & Culture platforms are useful for individual and institutions who are interested in creating digital archive or gallery to display high-resolution images, and enable users to virtually tour and explore physical and contextual information about objects. However, these tools have limited capacity for digital storytelling, which is my primary focus.

Two projects in particular were critical to the methodology of my project. The “Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project”²⁵³ at Stanford University is an interdisciplinary project that showcases Chinese immigrant workers on the Transcontinental Railroad in the mid-19th century in both print the digital formats. For

²⁵³ “Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project,” Stanford University, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/>.

example, from the sub-project, “Geography of Chinese Workers Building the Transcontinental Railroad, A virtual reconstruction of the key historical sites”, we see a virtual visualization of the Central Pacific Railroad line projected along the geographical contours of the Sierra Nevada, with an emphasis on what the Chinese workers encountered and what they achieved. The digital visualization presentation strategy is an interactive single-page website with an overview map indicates essential historical sites in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad.



Figure 11: Chinese railroad workers in North America project

The second project critical to my methodology was the UN Migration Agency’s platform “I am a migrant.”²⁵⁴ “i am a migrant” is a digital archive of immigrant stories with so far 1,200 profiles published. Users can browse the stories by three filters: country of origin; current country and hashtag. The project has documented the diverse

²⁵⁴ “i am a migrant,” UN Migration Agency, <https://iamamigrant.org/about>.

experiences of immigrants all over the world, and has made immigrants voices heard by sharing their stories with a global audience. Thanks to technological advancement, such humanities projects are now more accessible and available for the general public beyond the scholarly community. Both projects are critical to the methodology of my project as they both inspired me to take advantage of digital tools to create contents available for a larger group of readers.

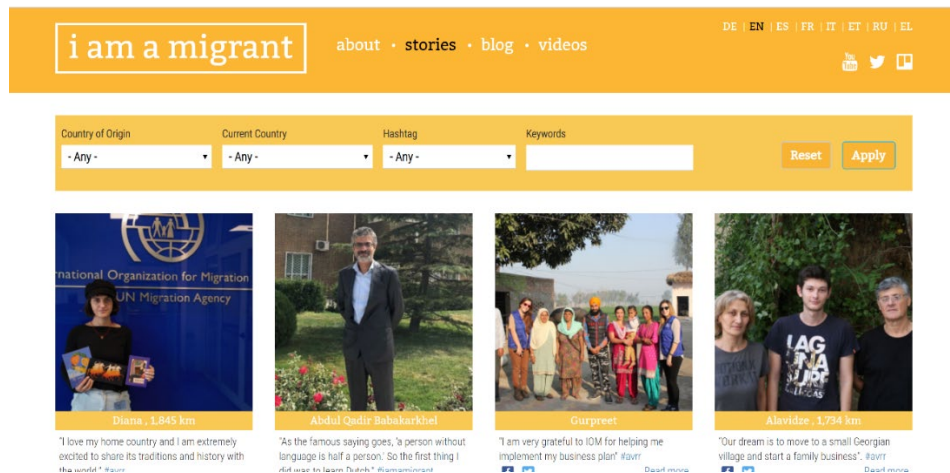


Figure 12: i am a migrant project

4.2 Visualizing Chinese Immigration

Inspired by these pioneering digital visualization projects, my project, “Visualizing Chinese Immigration” seeks to document the living history of Chinese immigrants who came over to the U.S after the 1965 immigration reform. “Visualizing Chinese Immigration,” is a multimedia website built on WordPress with a combination of text, images, video, maps and data visualizations. The intention of “Visualizing Chinese Immigration” is to offer a better understanding of contemporary Chinese

immigration in the U.S. through personal account and my analysis of the current situation of Chinese America. This project also seeks to present contemporary Chinese immigrant stories through digital storytelling and preserve them on the internet. Through sharing individual immigrant stories online, this project hopes to connect people online with the human stories of immigration and help one understand what words such as “integration,” “assimilation” and “diversity” truly mean.

The website is divided into four primary sections: in the historical overview section, one can explore the history of Chinese immigration adapted from the thesis; in the data analysis section, one would find data visualizations for the current state of Chinese America based on the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) data sets and the U.S. Census Bureau data sets; in the people section, one would explore the voices of Chinese immigrants with an insight into their backgrounds and their migratory journeys; finally the theme section allows users to explore topics that are constantly brought up by Chinese immigrants and the stories behind why each topic is important to the immigrants.

4.2.1 Content and Functionality

After deciding the major objective of this project is to offer a better insight into the contemporary Chinese immigration situation in the U.S., the next step was to decide what contents and functionalities the website would offer to the users. Previous scholarship has discussed the history of Chinese immigration and the current situation

of Chinese immigrants based on research and primary interviews. To elaborate on the ideas that I developed in the previous chapters with more visual elements, I decided to digitize the main ideas in the thesis. There are two specialized contents within the site: timeline and data visualizations.

The timeline elaborates on the history of Chinese immigration in the U.S. since 1820. There are many kinds of timeline tools available for use, such as Timeline JS and Tiki-Toki. However, these timeline tools do not allow the user to change the visual style of the timeline easily. Therefore, I made the timeline in WordPress using page builder because it allowed me to modify the timeline to fit my exact needs. The page builder enabled me to design the timeline on the front-end and have live previews, which helped me adjust the timeline's text, color, sizing and styling accordingly.

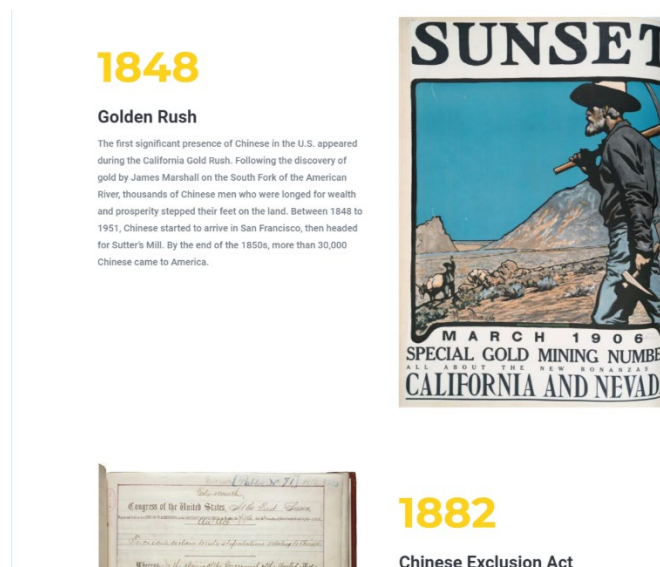


Figure 13: Timeline created by WordPress Divi builder

The second functionality of the website is to present the data visualizations. The data visualization process generally occurred in three phases: data collection, data cleaning and data visualization. In Chapter 2, I have noted the main data sources and how I gathered the data. After gathering the data, I exported the data sets into .CSV files and used Open Refine, a data cleaning tool, to make the data sets clean and more compatible for data visualization in Tableau. Data cleaning is essential for the project as the formatting of the original data sets is inconsistent. Using Open Refine allowed me to resolve inconsistencies in a data set and save a set of data cleaning steps to replay on multiple files.

After data cleaning, I imported the cleaned data sets into Tableau for data analysis and data visualization. To visualize the geographical distribution and residential patterns of Chinese Americans over time, initially, I chose to use ArcGIS to visualize the geographical information in my data sets. (See figure 13) However, ArcGIS did not allow me to make significant changes to the visual style of the map or the shape layers to adapt to the “look and feel” of the final website. What ArcGIS is good at, is the ability to enable the user to create complex maps or do geospatial querying and data manipulation. The functionalities of ArcGIS did not necessarily fit my need in this case. Therefore, I turned to Tableau for the data visualization as it allows me to show data in maps and graphs in simple steps and make better presentations. (see figure 14) Tableau also enabled me to manipulate data via quick table calculation such as running total,

percentage of total and percentage of difference, which fulfills my need for some simple data manipulation.

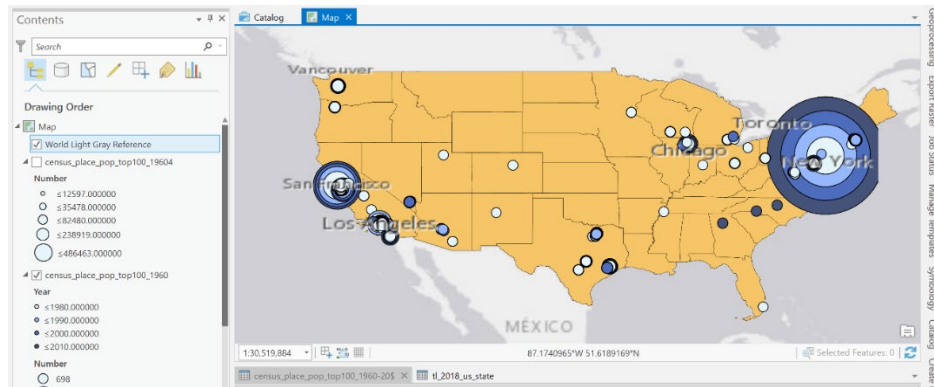


Figure 14: Data visualization using ArcGIS

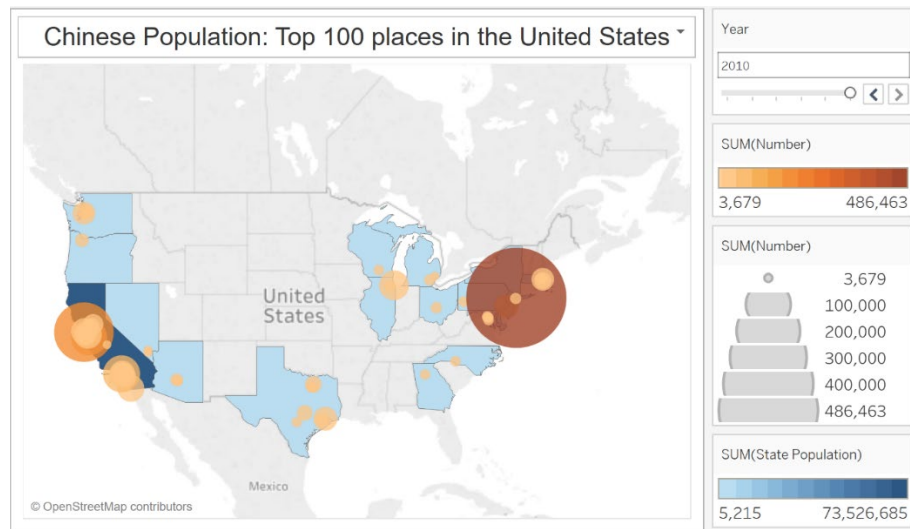


Figure 15: Data visualization using Tableau

Another important step in data visualization is to embed the data visualizations in WordPress through `<iframe>`.²⁵⁵ This highlights the fact that my WordPress site is a

²⁵⁵ The `<iframe>` tag is used to embed a web page within another web page

container where I am able to combine various content elements coming from different specialized tools. <iframe> also makes adding and updating additional information to my WordPress site easier, which is hardly possible to achieve in a printed research document. And theoretically, it allows me to include other authors in the project in the future.

4.2.2 Set up a WordPress Site

The next phrase of the web design process is to set up a WordPress website. WordPress is better known as a blogging platform, but it also serves as a Content Management System (CMS). WordPress offers the flexibility to create and publish content including text and embedded graphics, photos, maps and other digital visualizations on the web. I used a WordPress custom theme Divi to set up my WordPress website. Divi offers a wide range of customizations and features to include in the website. By utilizing the Divi builder, a front-end page builder, I was able to define the visual style of the website on my own.

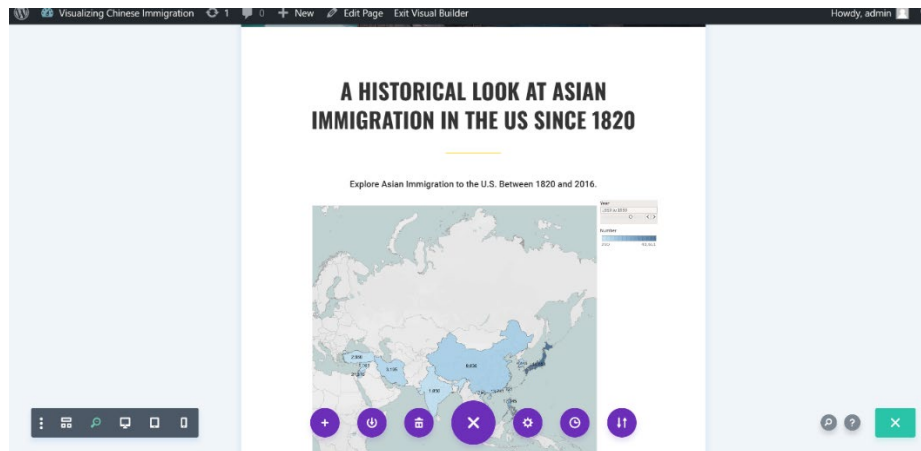


Figure 16: Modify website layout using Divi visual builder

4.2.3 Information Architecture

After setting up the WordPress website, I had a picture of the initial look of the final product. However, it did not yet show how my content elements were going to fit together to form a cohesive whole. The second phrase of my project is to manage what contents should be appeared on the web.

Since the project is a digital visualization of Chinese immigration in America, I found it necessary to provide as much information on that topic as possible and allow users to interact with the website contents efficiently and effectively. I wanted to be sure a user visiting my website had the necessary information to understand what they were seeing. Jess James Garrett noted in *The Elements of User Experience* that information architecture is concerned with creating organizational and navigational schemes that

allow users to move through site content efficiently and effectively.²⁵⁶ To enable users to find information easily, I designed the information architecture of the website as noted here. (See figure 16) I decided to organize the contents in a hierarchical structure—boxes shown in the diagram have parent/child relationships with other related boxes. Child boxes represent narrower concepts within the broader category represented by the parent boxes.²⁵⁷ The primary level of the website contains four categories: overview, data visualization, people and theme. In the second level, the users can reach to narrower concepts within the broader category. For example, under the category “overview,” the user can obtain information about the Asian immigration map and a timeline in the second level.

²⁵⁶ Jess James Garrett, *Element of User Experience: the User-centered Design for the Web and Beyond* (Pearson Education, 2010), 89.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

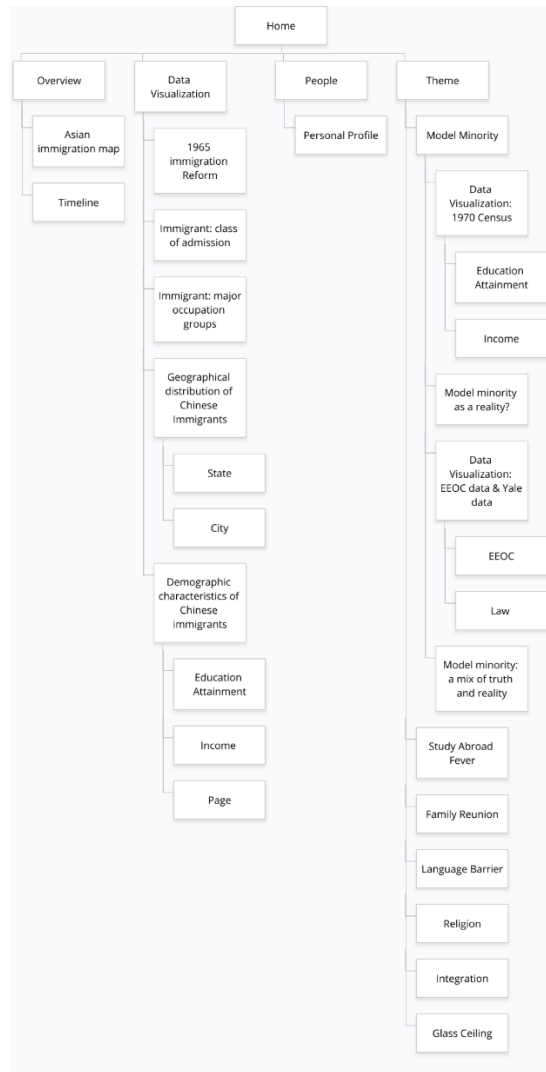


Figure 17: Information architecture of my WordPress site

4.2.4 Interface Design

In the next step, I focused on interface design. To define the “look and feel” of the final product, I created a moodboard to help me with the interface design, as shown below. This design strategy offers me a concrete visual direction for the website. After defining the direction of the website, the next step was to visually organize the contents

into an interface that follow interface conventions. Thanks to the WordPress custom theme, the page builder built within the theme has allowed me as the user to customize the interface with a set of standard controls, which constrains the user to follow interface conventions built into the template.

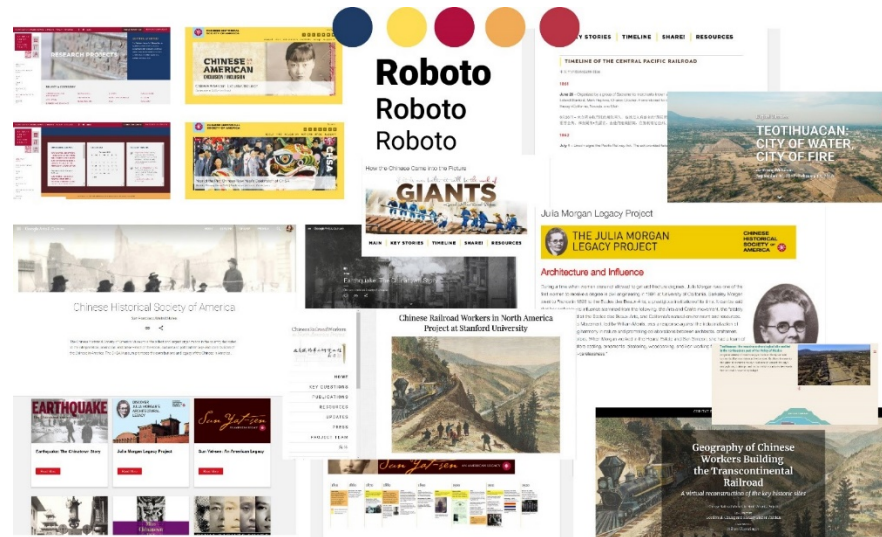


Figure 18: Moodboard

User-Family interfaces are those in which users immediately notice important contents. On the other hand, less important contents, should not disturb users. To achieve this goal, I used color contrast, white space and typography in different sizes and weights to emphasize the difference in significance with items.

4.2.5 Navigation Design

Digital humanities is a rapidly emerging field. A project we considered advanced ten years ago could be dated nowadays. The navigation design of an out-of-date project website is probably geared towards a linear and vertical experience, in which the users

take several steps before reaching to an original material. And yet when we look at today's web design convention, it's common to create a flexible and horizontal experience for users. When the user is navigating through a site, he expects to navigate with ease and have a clear idea of where he is, where he has been and what the next step is. Because of that, in the navigation design process, I hope to create a website for users to get from one point to another effectively and efficiently, taking into consideration the various kinds of devices they might be using as well as their possible reasons for visiting the website. The homepage of the website is a one-page site with a navigation bar that allows the user to get from a point to another point with ease. The navigation bar is fixed at the top of the screen as the user scrolls down to explore content, which enables the user to navigate the site from anywhere on the page. This makes the site friendly for both mobile devices and desktops and allows the user to navigate whichever way they choose.



Home Overview People Theme 

Figure 19: Navigation bar

I also used dot navigation to help the users to locate which section they are current at. The dot navigation is a series of circular icons located on the right side of the screen. Each of these dots indicates a different section of the site.

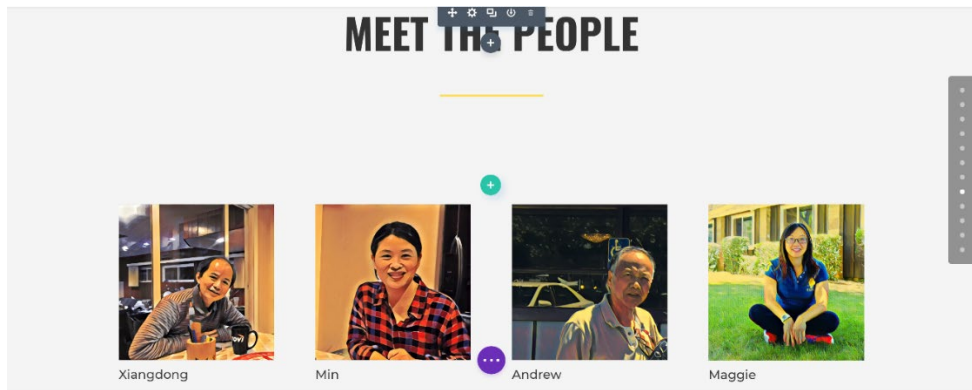


Figure 20: Navigation dot

Under each section of the website, the users are able to click on different links that direct them to other sites for more information. For example, under the “data visualization” section, the users can click on the “Tableau Public” button and go to another website for more information about the data visualization.

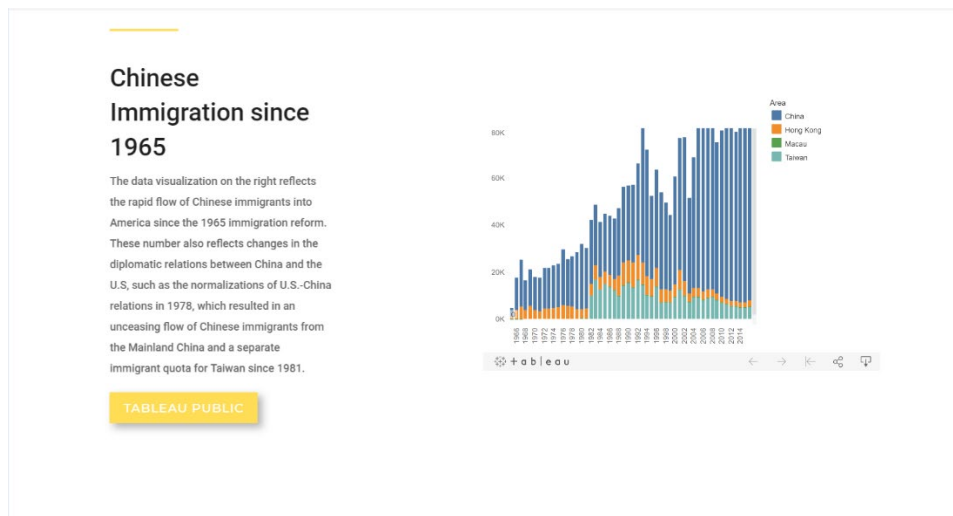


Figure 21: "Tableau Public" button at the bottom left

4.3 Conclusion

Current technological breakthroughs have made it easier and more affordable for either individual or institution to illustrate their discoveries. By facilitating different kind of digital tools, individuals and institutions are able to share their knowledge with a much broader public and distribute their research findings to a larger scope. Moreover, they are capable of amplifying and enhance their understanding of issues they care about.

My digital project, an interactive website “Visualizing Chinese Immigration” seeks to preserve the living and history of Chinese immigration through a digital platform. Through adaptation from previous scholarship, this website visually elaborates on the main ideas in my thesis. This website allows anyone who is interested in modern Chinese immigration to gain a better insight into the current state of Chinese America and stories of Chinese immigrants without having access to the thesis itself. The website also allows my study to be more accessible to the public and offer a different perspective for evaluating the thesis.

5. Conclusion

Oral history has been celebrated by its practitioners for its ability to not only provide a nuanced understanding of historical matter, but to humanize the subject matters and complicate issues further. My interest in oral history leads me to conduct oral history interviews with Chinese immigrants. The interviewees I chose were situated socially and economically in between those uptown wealthy Chinese and those “under-class” Chinese. I intended to conduct an inquiry about issues confronting Chinese immigrant society with those middle-class people, who have been paid less attention than the “crazy rich Asians” on one hand and undocumented Chinese immigrants who made headlines news on the other. The interviewees who came over to the U.S. in the 1960s and the 1970s tended to see themselves as those who broke racial stereotypes and earned respect through self-made and self-reliance. Andrew Lee believed that he earned his promotion in Caltrans based on his own merits even though he was only promoted to a low-level managerial position.²⁵⁸ Marcus Shiu has witnessed many changes happening in the state government since the day he joined it. When he first joined the state government in the 1970s, there were only two Asians in the department. But when he retired, around 20% of the employees were Asian. “People start to accept us and we did well,” Shiu remarked.²⁵⁹ But still, they believed that they were not assimilated and

²⁵⁸ Andrew Lee, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁵⁹ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

lived with the consequences, such as facing a glass ceiling in the workplace.

Interviewees immigrated to the U.S. in post-1980s, tended to experience fewer hardships and racial stereotyping America. What they have been through in their homelands such as economic difficulties, limited professional advancement and political uncertainty, became major push factors for immigration. New immigrants tended to describe their experience in the U.S. as “satisfying”, “contenting” and “lucky” as most of them believed it was the right choice to come over to the U.S. Even though they’ve also encountered many challenges in assimilation, they tend to speak less of their struggles but more of their achievements.

The contemporary Chinese community in the U.S. is an immigrant-dominant society with more than 70% of the immigrant population.²⁶⁰ The socioeconomic profile of Chinese in America seems to suggest that Chinese in America have achieved academic and professional success equal to that of white Americans, and proved themselves as a model minority. However, as this study has shown, these characteristics distract public attention from issues that Chinese can suffer from – such as lacking interpersonal skills, having limited social and leadership skills, being overly humble, serving as a silent complainer, and not speaking up in a corporate meeting. These tendencies lead other Americans to believe that Chinese are not capable of leading in a corporate setting, and

²⁶⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

contributes to the glass ceilings for Chinese. This interpretation informed by multiple interviewees suggests that some educated Chinese immigrants can successfully advance in the technical world but fail to climb the management ladder even though they may have equal or higher academic performance, and are more capable than their co-workers in skills. Ever since the 1960s, Asian Americans, in this case, I am speaking of Chinese mostly, have been portrayed as a model minority, yet the image of “perpetual stranger” still affects their assimilation into mainstream America. Historical stereotypes of Asian in America, such as the “yellow peril” and “Fu Manchu” that portrayed Chinese as the “forever strangers” seem to find its way to the modern world. While European immigrants are easily accepted as authentic Americans soon after they arrived in America, 3rd, 4th and even 5th generation Asian Americans still encounter a situation when non-Asian Americans raise questions regarding their origins. Stacy J. Lee argues in her work, *Unravelling the ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype* that this seemingly innocent question suggests that “Asianess” and “Americanness” are mutually exclusive.²⁶¹ Considering the case of Wen Ho Lee, a nuclear scientist at UCLA suspected of spying for PRC in the mid-1990s but later found not guilty. Given the recent tense U.S.-China relations, questions of Chinese Americans’ loyalties to the U.S. still concern many Chinese immigrants.

²⁶¹ Stacy J, Lee, *Unraveling the “Model Minority” Stereotype* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2009),5.

In this summer, I have met several outstanding Chinese immigrants in California that could well represent the model minority label. Aida Hui immigrated to the U.S. with her family, a profoundly rich family that did import and export business in Hong Kong and Africa.²⁶² She is well educated, hard-working, and wealthy. As a mother of two children, she was not satisfied with being stay home mum and started her business in real estate in Sacramento. Now she is one of the best real estate agents in Sacramento area. I also encountered many middle-class immigrants who did relatively well in their fields, but still struggled with issues like the glass ceiling and assimilation. I noted that most of the immigrants believed they earned what they have today based on their own merits and self-reliance. But their stories also speak to the problems that model minority stereotype could cause. First, the model minority stereotype externally and internally holds Chinese immigrants to a higher standard than average Americans, expects them to enter certain avenues of success, such as science and engineering, and confines them to staying in designated fields.²⁶³ A number of immigrants indicated in their interviews that they had held a science and engineering degree either before coming over to the U.S. or after. A few interviewees decided to change their majors from liberal arts to science and engineering with the hope to stay in the U.S. permanently through employment. One interviewee, Esther Shiu, noted that she believed science and

²⁶² Aida Hui, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, Sacramento, California, June 2018.

²⁶³ Min Zhou, *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, 12.

engineering is the only way for her to find her place in America given her immigrant background.²⁶⁴ Second, the model minority stereotype presumably states that the Chinese and other Asian groups have collectively excelled beyond other minority groups based on their own merits. It blames the underachievement of other minority groups on their own faults, without considering systematic discrimination. This notion could pit minorities against each other, the same effort that was used to distinguish Chinese workers from African Americans and Native Americans during the late 19th century and legitimate Chinese exclusion. Third, the model minority stereotype has created an illusion for the non-Asian Americans to believe that there is no need for social improvement for Asian Americans since they've already done very well in many fields. This notion could diminish the voices of Asian Americans in addressing social issues further like Asian underrepresentation. It also loses sight of the value that individuals like undocumented immigrants and refugees could bring to shaping American culture for the better.

Many immigrants came to realize that although in their generation, they hardly assimilated into society, they still paved the way for the next generation. Marcus Shiu never considered that he was assimilated during his time in California state government. "You can say he (which means himself in the context) doesn't mingle. You can say he is

²⁶⁴ Esther Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie, San Jose, California, July 2018.

not one of us. I don't care. When they (his colleagues) went to happy hour, I worked for the budget."²⁶⁵ As the first-generation immigrant, he regarded himself as the one who paved the way for the next generation, in part by working harder than his peers. Considering the next generation, immigrants believed that their hardships in the U.S. are indeed ultimately blessings. What they have suffered from when immigrating to the U.S., such as financial burdens, cultural displacement and adaptation issues are paid back when their children excel academically and professionally. Many immigrants have focused their expectations onto their children, with the hope that their children could be more assimilated into American society and succeed in their careers. A number of immigrants in my interviews and elsewhere have even noted that they decided to stay in the U.S. for their children, even though they were unhappy with their lives. In 2011, Amy Chua's memoir, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, raised debates over the strict Asian parenting. In Amy Chua's word, her immigrant parents' tough and demanding parenting style has had a strong impact on her parenting practice. As a child, Amy Chua recalled that her parents' high expectations and strict love for her made her a high-achieving person.²⁶⁶ *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* reminds us how Chinese American parenting has still emphasized the value of enduring hardships to their children. Amy Chua, for example, demanded her daughters to be high-achievers. She asked her

²⁶⁵ Marcus Shiu, interviewed by Shiqi Xie.

²⁶⁶ Amy Chua, "From Author Amy Chua," accessed February 2, 2019, <http://battlehymnofthetigermother.com/>

daughters to practice piano or violin for two to three hours per day and be the #1 student in every subject except gym and drama.²⁶⁷ The emphasis on education within Chinese society can be traced back to the passages of Confucianism. The central piece that addresses education in Confucianism, states in the opening passage of *Xueji* that “if a ruler desires to transform the people [and] perfect [their] customs, [the ruler] can only do so through education.”²⁶⁸ In Amy Chua’s remark on her work *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother, Why Chinese Mother are Superior*, she further addresses the difference between Chinese immigrant mothers and Westerner mothers regarding their involvement in children’s education. She noted that based on numerous quantifiable studies, Chinese immigrant mothers believed their children could be the “best” students and “that academic achievement reflects successful parenting.”²⁶⁹ However, these kinds of expectations have reinforced the image of the model minority on the Asian youth, and become a collective reimagination of model minority as a reality of the second-generation Asian Americans. Even though the first-generation Chinese immigrants may fail to assimilate in mainstream society, their expectations on their children give them

²⁶⁷ Amy Chua, “Excerpt Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother”, *The New York Times*, Jan 19, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/19/books/excerpt-battle-hymn-of-the-tiger-mother.html?action=click&contentCollection=Books&module=RelatedCoverage®ion=EndOfArticle&pgtype=article>.

²⁶⁸ Charlene Tan, “Confucianism and Education,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, accessed 22 February, 2019, <http://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-226>.

²⁶⁹ Amy Chua, “Why Chinese mothers are superior,” *Wall Street Journal*, Jan 8, 2011, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704111504576059713528698754>.

another chance to fulfill their goals. The negatives of that cannot be neglected. A study done in 2013 discovered that Asian American children worry significantly more about school and family expectations than their white counterparts.²⁷⁰ The “enduring hardships” value that many Chinese immigrants embrace now transforms into an over-emphasis on education in some Chinese families at the expense of stress at home and school.

Nevertheless, an over-emphasis on education in Chinese family could be a potential explanation for the success that many Chinese American students have achieved. The 2017 American Community Survey has shown that 54% of the Chinese population and 78% of the Taiwanese Chinese population have had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 33% for the white population.²⁷¹ Here, the academic success of some Chinese Americans can be used to support the idea that Chinese Americans do not face racial barriers and can be successful without external help. It also indicates that the “enduring hardship” principle has continued on the next generations of Chinese immigrants through the values of education and achievement, though it is associated with negativity. In this sense, the success of Chinese American education suggests that

²⁷⁰ Anne Saw, Howard Berenbaum, and Sumie Okazaki. "Influences of personal standards and perceived parental expectations on worry for Asian American and White American college students," *Anxiety, Stress & Coping* 26, no. 2 (2013): 187-202.

²⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

model minority could be more than a myth, but a reality that people are trying to live up to in the next generation

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