ASIAN AMERICAN
SOCIOECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT
The Strength of the Family Bond

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The analysis emphasizes the need to examine structural and cultural factors in the sending and receiving countries over a historical process to understand how immigrants are incorporated in American society. The article argues that Chinese were slower to make the transition from sojourner to immigrant due to structural characteristics of Chinese village society; whereas Japanese immigrants were not tied by strong family bonds to Japan and made a more rapid transition. The differential timing of family formation and family-run businesses in America account for the more rapid assimilation of Japanese Americans. Changing labor markets after World War II provided new opportunity structures favorable to the socioeconomic mobility of native-born Chinese and Japanese Americans.

Asian American socioeconomic achievement has stimulated increased attention for its implication in understanding the dynamics of ethnic inequality in America. New interest in Asian Americans stems from the perception that Asians as a nonwhite minority group have achieved parity with whites, despite a history of discrimination (Sowell, 1981). If minority status has been typically associated with socioeconomic dis-

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advantage due to racial discrimination, why have Asians been
the exception? Whereas social scientists have reached consid-
erable agreement in explaining differential attainments of white
ethnics and blacks (Lieberson, 1980), there has been consider-
ably less consensus in explanations of Asian American socio-
economic achievement.

There is widespread agreement that in the post World War II
period Asian Americans have made significant socioeconomic
gains (Nee and Sanders, 1985; Petersen, 1971; Sung, 1967). The
occupational profile of Japanese Americans roughly
approximated that of whites by 1970, while Chinese Americans
were disproportionately represented in professional occupa-
tions (Wong, 1982). Hirschman and Wong (1984) argue that
in general, Asian Americans approach socioeconomic parity
with whites due to overachievement in educational attainment.
Indeed, the fact that Japanese households have the second
highest income next to Jews has made Japanese Americans
part of the American folklore of successful ethnic groups
(Sowell, 1981). The picture for Chinese Americans has been
complicated by large-scale immigration beginning in the 1960s,
which resulted in more than 60% foreign-born among Chinese
Americans. The large influx of new immigrants has had the
effect of lowering the overall socioeconomic profile of Chinese,
compared to Japanese, a predominately native-born popula-
tion. The fact that native-born Chinese and Japanese share
similar socioeconomic profiles, however, suggests that status
attainment processes for the native-born of these two ethnic
groups were closely parallel.

Various theoretical formulations have been suggested to
explain Asian American socioeconomic attainment that can be
roughly conceptualized as cultural versus structural. The
cultural argument emphasizes attributes of Asian Americans,
whereas structural arguments examine the occupational struc-
ture of the host society. Here we will argue that such ahistorical
formulations fail to capture the dynamic nature of immigrant
groups as they respond to historical situations and changing
economic structures.
CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS

The most popular and recurrent explanations for Asian American socioeconomic attainment have been cultural. Japanese American success, for example, has been attributed to Japanese values that are compatible, if not similar, to those of middle-class Americans. As Kitano (1969: 3) wrote: “Japanese-American values, skills, attitudes, and behavior apparently do not differ markedly from those of the average American. ‘Scratch a Japanese American and find a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant’ is a generally accurate statement.”

The problem with such cultural explanations, as Lieberson (1980: 8) pointed out, is that they rely on a subtle form of circular reasoning: “The argument then frequently involves using the behavioral attribute one is trying to explain as the indicator of the normative or value difference one is trying to use as the explanation.”

The cultural argument, in order to break away from the circular reasoning, must start at the point of departure, viewing immigrants as a special group of people who decided to leave their homeland to improve their living standard. The immigrants’ willingness to endure hardship for economic gains, together with the socioeconomic background at the time of immigration, set the stage for possible upward mobility not only for themselves, but also for the second and third generations (Chiswick, 1977).

Thus a more rigorous cultural argument must begin by examining historical context of immigration as a “background variable” with two components. The first component reflects the cultural characteristics that enable the immigrant group to cope with host hostility and compete more effectively once its members arrive in America. These cultural characteristics reflect not the essence of white Protestant ethic, as suggested by Petersen (1971) and Kitano (1969), but the influence of neo-Confucianism, which was dominant in the East Asian cultural sphere from which the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indo-Chinese immigrants came. Neo-Confucianism stressed
the legitimacy of status attainment through education and membership and obligation to an interdependent family and kinship unit.

The second component concerns the socioeconomic background of the immigrant group in the creation of opportunities for upward mobility. Later, we will demonstrate that attributes of Chinese and Japanese immigrants differ cross-sectionally between places of origin and across historical periods. The socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the different immigrant groups affected their timing of family formations and the availability of resources, which had important consequences for status attainment and experience of discrimination. In short, an adequate cultural argument must account not only for the ideological component of the immigrant group but also for the availability of resources in combating discrimination in the host society.

It may be useful at this point to introduce a metaphor from economics, placing the cultural attributes of immigrant/minority groups in a broader context—supply side of the labor market. A cultural explanation is a supply side argument because of its emphasis on what the immigrant groups brought with them for competition in the American labor market. It is linked to a human capital perspective in which status attainment is seen as a result of the actors' ability to generate resources. For the Asian Americans, the process of differential family formation between Chinese and Japanese immigrants played a critical role in the timing of socioeconomic attainment of these groups in American society. From the supply side argument, the family unit not only provides socialization and support, but also serves to generate "physical" capital through household production.

**STRUCTURAL FACTORS**

From the structural perspective, the role of immigrant labor has historically served to fill the need for low-wage labor at the bottom rung of the occupational structure and to disrupt labor union activities of domestic workers by maintaining a reserve
supply of low wage labor (Bonacich, 1972; Castles and Kosack, 1973; Rosenblum, 1973; Buraway, 1976). Prior to World War II, the structure of demand in California was for cheap labor to fill positions required to build the transportation, agricultural, and industrial infrastructure of the Western states (Cheng and Bonacich, 1984). These jobs could not be sufficiently filled by white labor. The use of low-wage labor rendered the cheaper labor force structurally vulnerable to a "split-labor" market ethnic antagonism (Bonacich, 1972). The split-labor market hypothesis suggests that ethnic antagonism first developed in a labor market split along ethnic lines. Because split labor markets exist when there are at least two groups of workers whose price of labor for the same work differs, the introduction of cheap labor along ethnic lines threatened local workers' security and income. In many instances, the threat to security is sufficient to generate hostility, and local workers organize politically to limit the opportunities for immigrant groups (Li, 1977).

However, the structure of demand changes in different historical periods, resulting in changes in the composition of immigrant groups and therefore the relationship between the immigrant group and local workers. For example, after World War II, the difference in purpose served by the "brain drain" immigration in augmenting the skilled labor force is reflected in the differential experience of immigrants who were incorporated into the primary labor market, including jobs with relatively high wages, good working conditions, chances of advancement, and above all employment stability. Available studies of professional and technical immigrant workers have not produced evidence of systematic discrimination in salaries and work conditions. Immigrants in these conditions frequently do as well or better than domestic workers (Portes, 1981), in which case, for the latter immigrant group, there is no split labor market and, therefore, less ethnic antagonism. Skilled workers recruited into the primary labor force to fill professional and technical positions, whether immigrants or minorities, generally settle outside of segregated enclaves and are more assimilated than immigrants or minorities locked in the secondary labor market.
Whereas the supply side focuses on the attributes of immigrant groups, the structural argument examines the market condition of the host society. The structural argument examines the discriminatory practices of the host society and its impact on immigrant groups' status attainment process. Like the supply side argument, the structural argument is often ahistorical, failing to deal with the changing economic condition of the expanding market economy in North America. We will introduce another economic metaphor—the demand side of the labor market—and will argue that labor market demand needs to be examined from a historical perspective. Rather than conceptually separating cultural explanations from structural explanations, we will argue that the status attainment of Asian Americans is a result of the historical interplay between the supply and demand of labor.

There is a third category of theoretical formulation pointing to the interplay between the supply and demand side of the labor market and its impact on status attainment for immigrant groups. The Wilson and Portes (1980) study of the Cuban enclave in Miami has identified a third "enclave" sector that shares characteristics of both the primary and secondary labor market. Like work in the secondary labor market, the jobs in the enclave economy are low-paying and low in prestige; yet like the primary sector, enclave jobs provide a more favorable return on human capital investment and internal mechanisms for socioeconomic mobility. However, from the supply side, both human and physical capital are needed for an enclave economy to survive. As both Light (1972) and Wilson and Portes (1980) pointed out, the key to the development of ethnic enclaves depends on the ethnic minorities' ability to generate capital, utilize cheap labor supply, utilize cultural specific institutions such as rotating credit association, and develop ethnically sympathetic sources of supply and consumer outlet.

The existence of a thriving enclave economy creates an ethnically controlled demand structure that encourages the immigration of entrepreneurial talent in addition to unskilled and skilled labor necessary to fill the more complex division of labor developed in an enclave economy. The concentration of
family-run small businesses in the enclave economy also provides an economic basis for stable family life, and resources to support the high educational attainment associated with children of Asian American immigrant/minority groups. On the other hand, the enclave economy perpetuates a segregated residential pattern, which studies have shown is associated with cultural isolation and lower income (Duncan and Lieberson, 1959; Nee and Sanders, 1985). The close proximity of work and residence and the social interdependence fostered by enclave economies provide the structural basis that perpetuates ethnicity (Yancey et al., 1976).

In order to understand the socioeconomic mobility of Chinese and Japanese Americans, it is necessary to view the changing mix of supply-side and demand-side factors over a historical process. Unlike the ahistorical explanations for socioeconomic achievement (Rosen, 1959; Caudill and DeVos, 1965; Petersen, 1966), we maintain that there is continuous change and transformation of both cultural attributes and labor market conditions that has bearing on the socioeconomic attainment of immigrant and ethnic groups. An analysis that views cultural attributes as unchanging, or that does not account for the changing labor market demands, cannot explain the differential socioeconomic achievement of Chinese and Japanese Americans prior to and after World War II nor account for the differences between Asian Americans and other ethnic and minority groups.

Historically, from the supply side, we will show that formation of family in the host society was critical for the formation of household production units, which in turn opened the way for social and economic mobility. Unlike working under a labor contract where most of the profit went to the labor contractor, profit generated from the household production unit funneled back to the families as accumulation of capital for the development of small businesses. Cheap labor generated by household units allowed these ethnic businesses to be competitive in the dominant society; formation of family businesses coincided with the development of an enclave economy, which opened ethnically controlled avenues for socioeconomic mobility, and
provided a stable environment for family life and the socialization and education of an upwardly mobile second generation. With the changes in the structure of opportunity following World War II, native-born Asian Americans entered the primary labor market in increasing numbers.

VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND EARLY CHINESE IMMIGRATION

The characteristic features of the first wave of Chinese immigration from 1850 to 1882 to California were molded by the social structure of the peasant society of South China. The early Chinese immigrants came from impoverished rural counties in the Pearl River Delta. In rural Kwangtung province, villages were exogamous single or multilinear communities (Freedman, 1966). Ancestor worship, widely practiced by peasants, reflected the strength and importance of lineage solidarity (Hsu, 1948). So central was family and lineage to the social organization of peasant life that scholars have characterized Chinese peasants of this period as "familist," lacking a developed sense of national identity (Fei, 1939; Freedman, 1964; Johnson, 1962).

This strength of family and lineage bonds of village society resulted in a pattern of domestic and international migration in which males left for economic opportunities in Canton, Hong Kong, or distant lands—Southeast Asia and America—leaving wife and children behind in the village. According to the Chinese system of patrilineal descent, the household property and land were divided equally among adult sons, usually upon the marriage of the youngest son. Responsibility for support of parents in old age was thus shared by all sons; whereas daughters married out of the village, did not inherit property, and were not responsible for the support of elderly parents. Ownership of land and property provided a strong tie to the village of emigration. However, peasants who emigrated abroad typically came from poorer families in which landholding was modest. Indeed many peasants from impoverished families were landless when
they emigrated to America. To ensure a continuing bond to family and village for both the land-owning and landless, emigrating men were expected to leave their wives and children behind (Nee and Nee, 1973). Thus cultural sanctions against women accompanying their husbands to distant lands had an economic basis in the interest of parents to guarantee that emigrating sons would continue to send back remittances to support them in old age (Glick, 1980). The few women who emigrated to California from 1850 to 1882 came either as prostitutes or wives of the small group of urban merchants who came from Canton to establish businesses in California (Lyman, 1977: 69). Though the sex ratio of Chinese emigrant society in America was dramatically masculine, most male migrants were married, but lived their lives in America as “bachelors.” Chinese women were legally able to enter the United States before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, but the sex ratio in 1880, three decades after the start of immigration, was still 2,106 males to 100 females (Lyman, 1977). The Chinese “bachelor” immigrant thus lived a lonely life in America, working to save money to remit back to villages in Kwangtung and to accumulate sufficient capital to enable him to return to his village to retire as a returned overseas Chinese. Without the establishment of families in America, there was little incentive for early Chinese immigrants to invest in acquiring the cultural and social skills necessary to get on in white society (Siu, 1952). Instead the Chinese lived among fellow sojourners in Chinatowns and the smaller “China camps” that were scattered throughout the Western states.

Confucianism was the product and inspiration of a rich literary tradition, yet illiteracy was very high among Chinese peasants. In village society, only the landed gentry could afford the long years of study necessary to acquire knowledge of classical Chinese for the Chinese examination system (Fei, 1953). The gentry was also affected by rural social disorder in Kwangtung, but they did not participate in the migration abroad (Barth, 1964). Compared to the high educational attainment of Japanese immigrants and of Chinese Americans after World War II, the literacy of the early Chinese male migrants was
among the lowest of the immigrant groups in California. As long as Chinese remained sojourners, failing to establish families and produce a sizable second generation in America, low educational attainment and high illiteracy continued to characterize this group. Their children in China, supported by remittances sent back by their fathers abroad, generally did not pursue scholarly ambitions, and instead remained within the peasant class, though in many cases they were economically better off than peasants without money from abroad (Chen, 1940).

The supply side of early Chinese immigrant labor, as determined by the socioeconomic factors at the point of departure, thus sets the stage for the problem of social mobility in America. Low education level coupled with lack of family formation in America for the early Chinese immigrants resulted in demoralization as well as holding down the accumulation of capital and resources for social mobility in America.

On the demand side, the emergence of a capitalist economy in California and the Western states in the mid-nineteenth century stimulated new migrations of people (Cheng and Bonacich, 1984). The search for a ready source of cheap and efficient labor to develop the rich resources of the new state was a central issue for California’s early capitalists. Sources of cheap labor were in fact quite limited because indigenous Indian labor proved unsatisfactory, slavery was foreclosed, and the Americans who came to California as settlers provided unreliable and expensive labor for the large-scale infrastructure projects. The attraction of Chinese labor for California’s early capitalists was not only that Chinese were cheap relative to white labor, but that they were also hard working and, above all, thought to be temporary. The cheapness of Chinese labor was rooted in the low cost of reproduction of labor because the sojourner supported his family at much lower costs than would have been possible had his family joined him in California (Bonacich, 1973).

The opportunity structure for Chinese in nineteenth-century California was primarily defined by this demand for cheap labor. Controlled by labor contractors, and facing a growing
anti-Chinese movement, only a few were successful in leaving laboring jobs to establish viable small businesses in ethnic enclaves. These small Chinese businesses survived because they filled niches in noncompetitive areas, such as laundries and Chinese restaurants. However, the majority of the sojourners drifted from mining to heavy construction, to farm labor, and finally into manufacturing (Saxton, 1971).

The qualities that made Chinese labor so attractive to capitalists, however, contributed to the eruption of a split-labor market conflict with the California working-class movement two decades after the start of large-scale Chinese immigration, culminating in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 (Saxton, 1971). The ethnic antagonism and violence of the nineteenth-century anti-Chinese movement far exceeded subsequent anti-Oriental movements directed against the Japanese and was only approached by the anti-Filipino movement in the 1930s (Melendy, 1980). The outcome of the anti-Chinese white working-class movement was the erection and consolidation of a caste-like system, which spatially and legally separated Chinese from white society in the enclaves of Chinatowns. Chinese labor was excluded from most labor markets by white labor unions and legislation that they sponsored.

In the early Chinese immigration, from the supply side, peasant culture and the social structure of immigration locked Chinese laborers in a split labor market conflict that resulted in violent exclusion. For those who remained in America after exclusion, their continued status as poorly educated "bachelor" sojourners foreclosed any appreciable socioeconomic gain in America. It was over eighty years after the start of large-scale immigration and the formation of immigrant families in America before substantial socioeconomic gains occurred.

**VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE JAPANESE IMMIGRATION**

The early history of Japanese immigration to California paralleled that of the Chinese in many respects. Like the
Chinese laborers, Japanese immigrants were young peasant men from several prefectures in southern Japan and Okinawa; they came as sojourners, with the intention, as temporary residents, to earn the higher wages available in America and return to Japan upon completion of their work contracts; and they lived in bachelor societies, often next to Chinatown, where prostitution and gambling were also prevalent.

Despite these similarities, differences in Japanese rural social structure resulted in a weaker tie to family and village for Japanese immigrants. The peasant household (ie), the basic unit of the rural society, was both a kin group and an economic corporation, a “continuing entity transcending individuals” (Fukutake, 1967). With the emphasis on the continuity of the household unit, centered on the house, fields, and agricultural implements, the Japanese inheritance system was based upon primogeniture, in which one son, usually the eldest, inherited the house, and became successor of the ie. According to village custom, the eldest son was thus responsible for the care of aged parents, whereas the other sons, who did not inherit land or only a small fragment of the household property, were free of this responsibility. The younger sons could pursue their fortunes elsewhere, leaving the village to join the army or to migrate to the industrializing cities of Meiji Japan to become factory workers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and service workers. By contrast to the strength of lineages in South China, the extended kinship system in Japanese villages was much weaker (Nakane, 1970). The village, made up of independent households, was more closely integrated with the State, and inter-village mobility was a common feature of rural life.

At the start of large-scale Japanese emigration to America in the late 1880s, Japan had completed two decades of rapid westernization and modernization under the Meiji State and was rapidly emerging as a major capitalist economy and state. After the Meiji Restoration (1868), universal education was introduced in villages, which succeeded in eliminating illiteracy among peasants. In rural schools, patriotism and the striving for national glory were pushed by the Meiji public educational system (Smethurst, 1974). It was in this modernizing cultural
context that young male peasants applied to government review boards to emigrate to America. The purpose of government screening was to ensure that the peasant men “sent” abroad were healthy and literate, and could well represent the Japanese nation (Ichihashi, 1932). In short, from the supply side, Japanese immigrants came to America with a higher level of human capital compared with early Chinese immigrants.

Japanese immigration to America began shortly after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. On the demand side, Japanese laborers were brought to replace the departing Chinese laborers, in fact, in the very industries where Chinese previously were concentrated—railroad, agriculture, restaurants, and personal services (McWilliams, 1945). Their entry into the American labor market, when the anti-Chinese sentiment was still strong in California, resulted in the association of Japanese laborers with their predecessors. Like the Chinese laborers, Japanese were also declared ineligible for citizenship and were objects of economic and social discrimination (Ichihashi, 1932). After the first decade of large-scale immigration, the same social forces that had participated in the anti-Chinese movement organized the Anti-Asian League in 1905 to oppose Japanese immigration (Millis, 1915).

The labor market concentration of Japanese laborers was in agriculture, due to their rural origins, where they worked as contract laborers for white agriculturalists (Iwata, 1962). By 1909, more than 30,000, 75% of Japanese immigrants, worked in agriculture where they engaged in wage-cutting to gain a larger share of this labor market (McWilliams, 1945). Though they began at the bottom as contract laborers working under the supervision of Japanese labor contractors, the Japanese farm laborers soon began to strike out to work on their own, leasing land from white farmers and becoming tenant farmers (Iwata, 1962).

Light (1972) stressed the importance of rotating credit associations in Japanese-American ability to establish small businesses. Equally important, if not more so, was the early family formation by Japanese immigrants. Though Japanese sojourners came with the intention of returning to Japan, by the
second decade of sustained immigration, many began to send for "picture brides" to establish families in America. In sharp contrast to the Chinese sojourners, the sex ratio dropped from 2,369 males to 100 females in 1900 to 694 males to 100 females in 1910, and by 1920, it was 189 males to 100 females (Lyman, 1977). The more rapid formation of families was linked to the Japanese village and family culture, which through primogeniture, resulted in relatively weak ties to family and village for sons who were not successors to the ie. Without the economic interest of ensuring support from all sons, there were also weaker sanctions against women leaving village communities to join "picture" husbands in America, rather than, as in the Chinese case, remaining as virtual hostages in their parents-in-law's households.

Yanagisako (1975: 200) emphasized that "the building of families coincided with the movement from wage-labor to entrepreneurship." The formation of families allowed the issei to create in America a household mode of production, along similar lines to that of the ie corporate unit in Japan, which provided the issei farmer with the labor force required to operate an independent truck farm that utilized the labor of a husband-wife-children team. Moreover, it enabled issei males to make a rapid transition from the unskilled wage-labor market that they had entered to form a thriving ethnic enclave economy, which though dispersed in its settlement pattern nonetheless utilized ethnic solidarity to enhance competitiveness. This enabled Japanese immigrants to avoid being locked in secondary labor market jobs characterized by low wages, lack of internal mobility, temporary employment, and low return on human capital investment (Portes, 1981). The availability of unpaid household labor allowed issei truck farmers to compete effectively with white farmers, enabling them to gain a dominant share of the produce market. As Bonacich and Modell (1980) argued, household labor and ethnic solidarity facilitated the creation of vertical integration in the produce market, which created a monopoly-like control by Japanese farmers and distributors. Without the formation of nuclear families it would not have been possible for Japanese immigrants to establish indepen-
dent truck farms that utilized the optimal division of labor and corporate household unit resulting in high per/unit land yields as in Japan.

Another aspect of the early family formation of Japanese was the emotional resources it provided the issei men, in addition to meeting their sexual needs (Kikumura, 1973). In the face of harsh and continuous racial and economic discrimination, the issei were nonetheless able to remain competitive and, against difficult obstacles, achieve impressive economic gains so that they became a dominant force in the produce industry (Broom and Riemer, 1949). The growth of a sizable second generation by 1920 accelerated the process of acculturation for Japanese as the nisei entered into American public schools and began to achieve the high educational attainment that now characterizes the Japanese-American second generation.

Thus in the early Japanese immigration, the weaker tie to family and village in Japan permitted the early formation of family life in America. This in turn resulted in a faster transition from sojourner to settler for Japanese immigrants in comparison to the Chinese sojourners on the mainland. Though Japanese immigrants confronted the same anti-Asian prejudice and discrimination as the Chinese, this did not generate a split-labor market conflict because by 1910 Japanese were leaving wage-labor rapidly and establishing ethnic enterprises in both rural and urban areas based upon a household mode of production.

Japanese success in truck farms provoked ethnic conflict with white farmers competing against the Japanese family farm. Unlike a split-labor market conflict, in which the threatened dominant working class seeks to exclude and drive out the cheaper competition, the conflict with white farmers was more like business competition between competing firms. Some white farmers favored Japanese tenant farmers for the higher prices they paid for their leases, while others suffered from their superior competitiveness. Thus while the competition and conflict generated anti-Japanese economic sanctions, chiefly in the passage of the 1913 Alien Lands Act, there were always white farmers, eager to profit from the higher leases and land
prices paid, who helped Japanese tenants circumvent this discriminatory act (Iwata, 1962). Popular pressure against the continuation of Japanese immigration eventually resulted in the 1924 Immigration Act that excluded Japanese immigration. But the intensity of ethnic conflict and violence never approached that which was directed against Chinese laborers. After the Japanese exclusion act, Japanese small businesses continued to prosper in California until the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II.

POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT AND CHINESE IMMIGRATION

The tendency to deal with culture as static and unchanging is widespread among both critics and proponents of cultural theories of ethnic stratification. Yet culture changes over time both in shaping and in reacting to socioeconomic change. Therefore, the supply side argument must be informed by historical events and their impacts on the nature of immigration.

The transition from sojourner to settler for Chinese males occurred over a period of 100 years, reflecting changes in village culture and economy and institutional contraints in America. The modern transformation of Chinese peasant culture began long before the completion of the Communist land revolution of 1949 (Yang, 1959). Not only did modern conceptions of marriage and family filter down from Hong Kong and Canton to villages in the Pearl River Delta, but the educational level of villagers improved following the introduction of modern schools in rural areas (Levy, 1971). There were two intertwined processes that resulted in the weakening of ties to the village for Chinese sojourners. The first was a gradual rural-urban migration whereby the dependents of sojourners in America left villages to reside in Toishan City, Canton, and Hong Kong. This rural-urban migration accelerated after the Communist victory in 1949. The second process was land reform and
collectivization in the 1950s, which dispossessed the families of sojourners, who were often landlords, of their property and economic base in the village economy (Yang, 1959). In many cases, the dependents of sojourning families were severely attacked as landlords in the Communist-led class struggle during both land reform and agricultural collectivization (Vogel, 1969). These village level changes in Kwangtung gradually resulted in weakening the ties to clan and village for Chinese sojourners in America.

Recent scholarship critical of cultural explanations has stressed that institutional constraints prevented Chinese males from bringing wives to America, thus delaying the emergence of Chinese families in America (Glenn, 1983). If institutional constraints were decisive, then there should have been larger numbers of Chinese women arriving in America after the first decades of emigration, as was the case of Japanese immigration. Instead, very few Chinese women, primarily prostitutes and wives of urban merchants, entered California prior to exclusion from 1850 to 1882. Moreover, the intergenerational succession of sojourners from 1882 to 1945, was almost exclusively a male phenomenon, whereby typically the son of a sojourner joined his father to work alongside him in America’s Chinatown. When the father returned to China to retire, his son remained to succeed him, and continued the sojourning pattern into the next generation. Few daughters were involved in this intergenerational succession because by village custom women were expected to remain behind. Nonetheless, by 1920, there was a sizable second generation produced in America, by the original population of women, approximately 4,000 who entered America prior to 1882, and by women smuggled in, mainly prostitutes, after 1882. By 1950, the sex ratio of Chinese Americans, 100 years after the start of immigration, reached the same level Japanese Americans reached after only 30 years, 189 males for 100 females. This differential, we argue, largely stemmed from the cultural differences between Chinese and Japanese peasants.

In America, from 1920 to 1940, the growth of a second generation of American-born Chinese initiated a process of
socioeconomic achievement in Chinatowns similar to that of the Japanese Americans. In Chinatowns, Chinese who remained in America and established families formed the basis of household production similar to that of the Japanese-American family enterprise. The American-born Chinese grew up in family enterprises, dividing their time between helping out in the family shop and getting ahead in school (Kingston, 1976; Nee and Nee, 1973). Like the nisei youth, the American-born Chinese were oriented to acculturation, though their social life was centered in Chinatowns, within a Chinese-American social world. Like the nisei, those who graduated from high school and college often returned to work in family enterprises because of the lack of opportunities for Chinese Americans in the primary labor market.

Changes in the demand structure for Chinese during and following World War II opened up new opportunity structures for Chinese Americans. During the war, when the United States was allied to Nationalist China, the law making Chinese ineligible for naturalization was finally lifted. Chinese Americans who joined the army often used the “War Brides” Act to marry and bring wives back from China, thus reducing further the uneven sex ratio.

The wartime industrial boom in California opened up jobs outside of the Chinatown enclave economy to Chinese Americans. It also stimulated the migration of southern blacks to California, shifting white anti-Asian sentiment to focus on the black migration. Chinese and Japanese formed a much smaller minority and, importantly, there had been no new immigration. As anti-Chinese sentiment declined in California, second-generation college-educated Chinese Americans increasingly sought professional and white collar jobs outside of Chinatown (Kwoh, 1947). This upwardly mobile second generation began the move out of Chinatown to mixed residential neighborhoods, and in the 1950s, Chinatown declined in population (Lee, 1960). The greater socioeconomic mobility of the second generation contrasted with the poverty of the elderly sojourners living out their days in Chinatown (Nee and Nee, 1973). The contrast in education, occupation, and income of these two
groups produced a bimodal socioeconomic distribution for Chinese Americans, which resulted in lower aggregate socioeconomic standing.

The new Chinese immigration was characterized by a two-level immigrant stream, each responding to different demand structures. First, were the professional and white-collar immigrants, the “brain drain” immigration, from Taiwan and Hong Kong, who entered into the primary labor market and settled outside of Chinatown. The second was composed primarily of the urbanized wives, children, and kinsmen of the old Chinese sojourners who came from Hong Kong, ending finally their “split household” arrangements to reunite in America. These immigrants settled for the most part in Chinatown, and found jobs in the enclave economy, often working in small businesses run by kinsmen or by their fathers. Those who worked outside of Chinatown entered jobs in the secondary labor market. Both immigrant streams dramatically differed from the past in that both groups came with intact families for the purposes of permanent residence and eventual naturalization.

NATIVE-BORN JAPANESE AND CHINESE

The post-World War II socioeconomic mobility of the nisei generation paralleled that of the second generation Chinese American because it was made possible by the same changes in the opportunity structure and the decline of anti-Asian sentiment in the Western states. When the nisei returned to the west coast after the War, the destruction of the Japanese-American economy meant that the nisei could not depend on working in their parents’ businesses (Broom and Riemer, 1949). This, and the greater openness to Japanese Americans, resulted in a shift away from ethnic employment to employment in the primary labor market. As white collar and professional jobs opened to Japanese-Americans, they moved into white residential suburbs and assimilated into American society. The dispersed pattern of settlement for Japanese Americans reduced their
visibility as a racial minority, because it promoted the rate of intermarriage (Kikumura and Kitano, 1973). The pattern of the postwar achievement of the native-born Chinese and Japanese population was similar, so that by 1960 the education, occupation, and income profiles of both groups were comparable (Hirschman and Wong, 1981).

CONCLUSION

We need to go beyond the "culture versus structure" debate to recognize the artificiality of an either/or framework on whether culture or structure dictates the trajectory of socioeconomic attainment. As we argue here, a "supply-demand" perspective allows us to deal with culture and structure as part of an integrated explanation for differential socioeconomic attainment. The cultural attributes of immigrant/minority groups we placed on the "supply-side," as we did the socioeconomic background and educational attainment prior to and after immigration. On the "demand-side" we grouped the structural constraints and opportunity structures created by the dynamics of capitalist economic development. We maintain that to explain the differential Chinese and Japanese socioeconomic achievement prior to and after World War II, both cultural and structural factors need to be taken into account.

The strong ties of Chinese and weaker ties of Japanese immigrants to family in the home village proved decisive in shaping the immigration and timing of family formation. Strong or weak family and village ties were rooted in the differences of village culture between Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The consequence of differences in immigration pattern and family formation resulted in different outcomes in the timing of socioeconomic achievement for Chinese and Japanese. Chinese remained sojourners, did not establish families (except for urban merchants), and were caught in an explosively violent anti-Chinese campaign fueled by a split-labor market ethnic conflict.
Japanese, on the other hand, made the transition from sojourner to settler within the first two decades of immigration, and left low-wage labor to establish small businesses based upon a household mode of production. The Japanese enclave economy was characterized by its concentration in small businesses based upon family labor, its dispersed pattern of settlement in truck farms in California, and by its ability to sustain competition with white firms. The Chinese enclave economy grew out of coercive expulsion from most labor markets, and small businesses were largely in noncompetitive sectors of the urban economy. The familyless Chinese sojourner, moreover, was more vulnerable to demoralization, whereas Japanese immigrants faced societal hostility with the emotional resources provided by a stable family life.

Though Japanese immigrants benefited from the growing international stature of a modernizing Japan, the underlying pattern of immigration and timing of family formation, rooted in strong or weak village ties, was decisive in the differential socioeconomic standing of Chinese and Japanese immigrants prior to World War II. Once Chinese Americans began to establish nuclear families in America and produce a sizable second generation, establishing household production similar to the Japanese, the socioeconomic attainment of the Chinese "family society" paralleled that of the Japanese, and sharply contrasted with the poverty and low socioeconomic standing of the aging "bachelor" sojourners.

Changes in institutional constraints, immigration laws, labor markets, and societal hostility, we argue, were rooted in the dynamics of capitalist economic development. Early capitalist development generated demand for cheap labor that could not be sufficiently filled by white labor. Both the early Chinese and Japanese immigration was in response to this demand for cheap labor. In an advanced capitalist economy, the demand for immigrant labor is more differentiated such that both skilled professional and technical labor filling empty positions in the primary labor market, and the traditional unskilled low-wage labor, combine to create bimodal immigrant streams. This has
been reflected in the character of the new Asian immigration to the United States that followed the changes in immigration laws in the 1960s.

The high educational attainment of native-born Chinese and Japanese and the concentration of Chinese and Japanese population in strategic states such as California paved the way for the movement of the second generation into the expanding primary labor market in the post World War II advanced capitalist economy. However, the destruction of the Japanese enclave economy as a result of forced internment during World War II led to the dispersal of the Japanese-American population and an acceleration of their assimilation into American society. By contrast the persistence of the Chinatown enclave economy has restricted assimilation for those who live and work in the enclave economy, though the native-born Chinese Americans who entered the primary labor market experienced socioeconomic mobility similar to that of the Japanese Americans.

A supply-demand perspective provides a dynamic model for understanding differential socioeconomic achievement. In a sense, the historical process can be seen as playing the role of the marketplace in a “supply-demand” approach. Both the cultural attributes of immigrant/minority groups and the structural constraints and opportunity structures they face change over time. Indeed the process of cultural and structural change is interactive, as illustrated in the case of Chinese immigrants. There was no clear line of demarcation between cultural values and norms that resulted in a sojourning immigration pattern and structural arrangements characteristic of the Chinese peasant family and village. The destruction of the pre-Socialist socioeconomic structures of family and village life after land reform and collectivization resulted in changes in cultural attitude toward immigration. Thus the urbanized immigrants from Hong Kong who joined their sojourning kinsmen in America after 1950 came as nuclear families with weak village ties and with the intention of permanent residence. The new immigrants, moreover, were responding to a substantially different labor market of an advanced capitalist economy.
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