

Race, Ethnic Culture, and Gender in the Construction of Identities among Second-Generation Chinese Americans, 1880s to 1930s

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IN 1870, TWO DECADES AFTER CHINESE IMMIGRATION BEGAN, census takers counted only about five hundred American-born children (less than 1 percent) among the sixty-three thousand persons of Chinese ancestry living in the United States. Three decades later, the American born numbered some nine thousand (approximately 10 percent) among the almost ninety thousand persons of Chinese ancestry in the country. By 1920, approximately eighteen thousand (29 percent) of the sixty-two thousand persons of Chinese ancestry were listed in the census as American citizens.¹ Not all eighteen thousand had been born in the United States, however, because an unknown number of Chinese with derivative U.S. citizenship had arrived by that date.² Only in 1940 did the number of Chinese with American citizenship—a significant proportion American born—exceed the number of foreign born.

Second-generation Chinese Americans comprised a minority of the Chinese-ancestry population in the United States during the first nine decades of Chinese immigration because few Chinese women came to the United States. Chinese tradition deemed it more important for daughters and daughters-in-law to stay home to serve their parents or parents-in-law than to accompany their menfolk abroad, especially if the men intended to return to China after working overseas. Even if no cultural constraints had existed, the cost of passage for one's family was a hurdle that few peasants and laborers could surmount. Also, frontier conditions and anti-Chinese hostility in the

American West made living there unsafe for Chinese women. Finally, restrictive laws passed by Congress from 1875 onward kept Chinese women away from America's shores.³ The paucity of women meant that few children of Chinese ancestry were conceived, born, and raised on American soil.

Despite their relatively late appearance and small numbers, Chinese American children have played a significant, although unacknowledged, role in Chinese American history: They have served as one of the most important socializing agents in Chinese American communities. This statement may sound strange, because socialization usually refers to the process by which adults teach children the beliefs, values, and norms of the culture into which they are born. The socialization of children, however, is not the only kind of socialization that occurs: When individuals emigrate from their homelands to other countries, they undergo a second round of socialization—a process more commonly called “acculturation.” In the latter instance, the immigrants’ neighbors, coworkers, bosses, English teachers, and social workers, as well as the mass media, all teach them—both directly and indirectly—new ways to behave in their adopted land. What is less often recognized is that the immigrants’ children also play a significant role in socializing their parents to a different behavioral pattern.

The children of immigrants can perform this crucial function because they can learn a new language—in this instance, English—faster than adults can. Thus, they acquire the ability to communicate with members of the host society much sooner and consequently are often called upon to serve as interpreters and translators when their parents deal with the outside world. These children thereby become mediators between two cultures. Such a role reversal upsets the balance of power within immigrant families. When children see how ignorant or helpless their parents may be in relationship to the world at large, they begin to question their parents’ authority within the home. Parental authority is further eroded when the children begin attending schools where they come into close contact with American teachers and schoolmates who unwittingly become competing authority figures or role models vis-à-vis the parents. The teachers introduce them to a different set of values, whereas the other schoolchildren show them how American youngsters, who enjoy greater freedom of movement and expression than children in many other societies, are allowed to act. As the progeny of immigrants bring

these American notions home—notions that clash with what is deemed appropriate in their parents' cultures of origin—severe intergenerational conflicts almost inevitably result. To maintain family harmony or out of sheer frustration, some immigrant parents acquiesce to their offsprings' demands and modify their expectations, in the process becoming, however reluctantly, more Americanized themselves. As this happens, sojourners become immigrants, and immigrants, in turn, become members of American ethnic groups. Family formation on American soil, therefore, has greatly affected the identities of immigrant groups. Chinese Americans have been no exception.

In this chapter, to explore the evolution of Chinese American identities, I draw upon twenty-eight extant autobiographies written by Chinese Americans who grew up along the Pacific Coast between the 1880s and 1930s. These works include three books, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, by Pardee Lowe, and *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and *No Chinese Stranger*, both by Jade Snow Wong; seventeen life histories written in the first-person singular and collected by the Survey of Race Relations Project in the mid-1920s;⁴ four reminiscences in *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*, by Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee; three autobiographical essays in *Bridging the Pacific: San Francisco Chinatown and Its People*, by Thomas W. Chinn; and one autobiographical statement in *Ting: Chinese Art and Identity in San Francisco*, edited by Nick Harvey. Although twenty-eight is not a large number and the sample is not representative in a scientific sense, the fact that certain themes were stated repeatedly allows us to assume that the thoughts and sentiments expressed in these accounts were prevalent among Chinese Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These documents preserved more than the unique voices of individuals; they likely captured the consciousness of sizable numbers of Chinese Americans during the historical period that these documents covered. Before analyzing these available life stories, I review briefly the different conceptual frameworks that scholars have used to study ethnic identities.

Approaches to the Study of Ethnic Identities

Such terms as "identity," "ethnicity," "culture," and "assimilation" are

now widely used in academic discourse as well as in everyday conversation, but their meaning remains ambiguous. One reason for their lack of conceptual clarity is that scholars in different disciplines have used them in divergent ways. Historians, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists have all written about ethnic identity, but they have focused on different aspects of the phenomenon. Moreover, within each discipline, competing schools of thought have arisen.

Historians have been interested mainly in the nature of American national identity, which, as Philip Gleason persuasively argued, has been based more on a set of ideological principles than on any sense of common ethnic or cultural origins.⁵ In the early period of U.S. history, relatively little concern was expressed over the loyalties of various ethnic groups and how such homeland ties or intragroup affiliations might influence the "character" of the nation. However, as an increasing number of European immigrants started arriving from the 1840s onward, political leaders, social commentators, and scholars all began worrying about how well and how fast these immigrants would assimilate, on the one hand, and what impact their presence might have on American political institutions, social relations, cultural practices, and religious beliefs, on the other hand. The voluminous amount of historical literature that has been published about ethnic life in the United States has focused largely on the experiences of European immigrants.⁶ Until the 1970s, little attention was paid to newcomers from other continents. So, attempts to apply the European-immigrant model to other immigrant groups, such as Chinese Americans, can sometimes lead to questionable conclusions.

Among psychologists, the pioneering work on how a sense of identity develops in the successive stages of an individual's life was done by Erik H. Erikson. In several seminal works on Martin Luther, Adolph Hitler, Mohandas Gandhi, and other famous historical figures, Erikson demonstrated how biography intersects history. (The idea of "intersection," however, was popularized not by Erikson but by the sociologist C. Wright Mills.⁷) Although as a psychoanalyst Erikson was initially concerned primarily with childhood, his most influential ideas have come from his studies of adolescence, adulthood, and old age. In a conceptual scheme based on clinical case histories that he called the "eight ages of man," he posited that at each stage of an individual's maturation, a specific sociopsychological task must be

performed, the successful completion of which endows that person with the strength to cope with the challenges in the next phase of his or her life.⁸ He argued that identity development involves two kinds of time: a *developmental stage* in the life of the individual, and a *period* in history. "[T]here is," as he stated, "a complementarity of life history and history," of "identity and ideology."⁹ Although Erikson's theories have not been widely applied to the study of ethnic identities because he paid little attention to the impact of culture on identity formation, a number of his insights, particularly those on the adolescent phase of human development, can help us better understand the evolution of Chinese American identities.¹⁰

In contrast to psychoanalysts such as Erikson, sociologists, anthropologists, and social psychologists have been more interested in how culture—particularly the interaction or conflict of cultures—affects the identities of individuals.¹¹ These social scientists may be broadly divided into two schools of thought. One group of scholars asserts that members of immigrant groups possess ethnic identities because they cling to the cultural baggage that they brought with them. So-called hyphenated Americans experience conflicts because American culture differs in fundamental ways from these people's ancestral cultures. Within this "cultural legacy" school of thought, the scholars who favor assimilation believe that as soon as the immigrants and their children learn the ways of the new society and stop following the dictates of the old, cultural conflicts will automatically disappear. In contrast, those who advocate pluralism argue that no conflicts would arise in the first place if members of the majority society would accept people from other lands as their cultural equals. In the 1970s, William Yancey and his associates departed from the "cultural legacy" mode of analysis by proposing that ethnic identities are not cultural residues or sediments transplanted from other countries but are, rather, the products of structural conditions encountered *in the United States*.¹² In their view, ethnicity is an emergent or situational phenomenon because ethnic solidarity crystallizes only under certain specific conditions. For this reason, not all persons with the same national origin possess the same degree of ethnic identification.

None of the previously mentioned conceptual frameworks is fully adequate for understanding the historical development of Chinese American identities because, important as immigrant adaptation, individual psychology, and

cultural differences may be, they were not always the most powerful factors determining the consciousness of Chinese American youth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These young people's racial origin, as manifested in visible characteristics of their bodies—their skin color, the color and texture of their hair, the shape of their eyes, the flare of their noses—often impinged on their lives in even more potent ways. Like other nonwhite groups in the United States, Chinese Americans endured social segregation, economic discrimination, political disenfranchisement, and legal handicaps as a result of their physical and biological differences, regardless of whether these differences were putative or real. Gender, too, was a vital force shaping the experiences of Chinese Americans, as I discuss later in this chapter. No doubt, class was a crucial consideration as well. However, many of the available autobiographical accounts contain no information on the socioeconomic standing of the narrators' families. In the life stories where the fathers' occupations were revealed, almost all the fathers were merchants. That so many second-generation Chinese Americans were the children of merchants is not surprising, given that merchants' wives and daughters were the only Chinese females allowed to enter the country with relative ease during the sixty-one years of Chinese exclusion. In light of this lack of diversity in the narrators' class backgrounds, nothing definitive can be said about how class differences might have affected identity formation.

Can Chinese Be Americans?

Almost all the Chinese American narrators believed strongly that they were, and should be treated as, "Americans,"¹³ but the young men and women differed in what they considered to be the markers of their American identity. To the men, being American meant having certain rights—the right to be in the United States, the right to vote, the right to own property. Ying Foy of Seattle stated, "I born here... I have a right to be here."¹⁴ Chin Yen, who was born in California in 1876, related "I am a son of the Golden West. . . . The United States, we feel, is our home. . . . I got property here. I pay taxes. I vote. . . . I feel like a Chinese descendant and American citizen, because I am an American. I represent American; that is Chinese

American.”¹⁵ Bong Chin, who was born in Seattle in the 1880s, stated, “Yes, I vote. . . . I consider myself American.”¹⁶ Chin Cheung, a native of San Francisco, declared, “I own my home. They have to let me own my own home because [I am] American born.”¹⁷

These Chinese American young men recognized that when they could not enjoy the rights that other American citizens enjoyed, Euro-American discrimination (a discrimination based on race), and not Chinese culture, constrained them. The message that they were not accepted, that they did not belong, that they were not equal, was conveyed to them at a young age and was repeated in multiple ways as they grew older. When David Young, who grew up in San Francisco and eventually became the Chinese vice consul of Seattle, became old enough to attend school, his teacher at the Chinese Baptist Mission took him to be enrolled at a grammar school, but

... they refused to take me in because I was a Chinese. Finally we went in one and went to see the principal, and I think she must have taken me for a Filipino or something and I entered the fourth grade. . . . A month before I graduated from the grammar school, during lunch, I was talking to the other Chinese boy. We both had been taken for Japanese or Filipino, so the American boys went and reported us to the principal. I was called up to his office and asked if I were Chinese. Naturally, I told him yes, and he said I would have to leave the school, as there was a school for Orientals in Chinatown and I must go back there.¹⁸

Although Chinese American children living in other places along the Pacific Coast were not forced to attend segregated schools, as Chinese American children in San Francisco were, some nevertheless chose not to go to the public schools because, as Bong Chin of Seattle recalled, “Very few Chinese go to public school. Chinese at that time have cue [*sic*]. Boys make fun then. Make lots of fun. No like to go public school.”¹⁹

Outside the classroom, Chinese American young people were deprived of certain kinds of recreation. They were forbidden to sit in the better sections of movie theaters or to use public swimming pools. For instance, David Young once tried to buy tickets at a theater, “they would only sell me tickets in certain parts of the show. . . . We were forced to go up-stairs, when the lower

floor was only half full. We were so much disgusted, we came down and got our money back and I have never gone to a show since," he said.²⁰ Like African Americans, Chinese Americans were forbidden to use public swimming pools lest they somehow "contaminate" the water. Thomas Chinn was an accomplished athlete who excelled in many sports. The exceptions were swimming and other water sports "for the simple reason that when I was young there was no pool in Chinatown, and Chinese were not welcomed at any of the pools outside of Chinatown."²¹ Another young man who

... had registered in a swimming class which met at the Y.M.C.A. in town ... had no fears of being "turned down," especially since he was with the university class. What was his surprise and indignation to learn from the secretary of the Y that Orientals were not allowed the use of the pool! This astonishing statement was made unperturbably by the secretary, just as though he were not violating in one breath every principle for which his organization stood.²²

The most devastating blow came, however, when Chinese American youth began looking for jobs. Pardee Lowe had his first encounter with job discrimination when he was thirteen. When he rebelled against going to Chinese-language school, his father explained to him that learning Chinese would be "good job insurance" ²³ in the future. However, Pardee did not understand what his father meant. Instead, he decided to prove his father wrong. So, he applied to one company after another for a position as an office boy. To his dismay, he discovered that

... everywhere I was greeted with perturbation, amusement, pity or irritation—and always with identically the same answer. "Sorry," they invariably said, "the position has just been filled." My jaunty self-confidence soon wilted. ... Suspicion began to dawn. What had Father said? "American firms do not customarily employ Chinese." ... I broke down and wept. For the first time I admitted to myself the cruel truth—I didn't have a "Chinaman's chance."²⁴

Years later, as he encountered great difficulty in finding work—any kind of

work—to pay his way through Stanford University, the harsh truth again hit home. One potential employer he approached “stared at me and blurted a whole conversation in pidgin English. I was thunderstruck. . . . the tenor of her long and embarrassed message . . . was perfectly clear. It was, ‘Me no likee, me no wantee Chinee boy!’”²⁵ He finally had to admit to himself, “My employment problem was entirely conditioned by one fact: I was Chinese.”²⁶

Prejudice was encountered even when Chinese Americans were trying only to be polite. Once, David Young was in a crowded streetcar, “An old lady came into the car, and I went and offered her my se[a]t,” he recalled. “She never said a word, but just looked at me, so I went and sat down again. Afterwards, another fellow (a white man) offered her a seat. She said, ‘All right’ and sat down. That made me feel bad.”²⁷

Yet another form of discrimination that irked some Chinese American young men was the attitude of the police, who either declined to protect the Chinese or pressured the Chinese to give them bribes or free meals for protection. As Bong Chin of Seattle related, “No policeman never going to help Chinese unless you give him good feed every day. . . . They won’t pay any attention to me. You Chinese, that what they say. You’re not white, we are white. No help you.” Bong Chin deeply resented this attitude because, as he said, “I pay taxes just the same for protection.”²⁸ Speaking about the “tong wars” that raged in American Chinatowns during the early part of the twentieth century, Lew Kay observed: “The officials don’t care, they look upon it as a Chinaman killing Chinaman, and let them go, saves money for the State as they don’t have to take care of them.” Then Lew Kay lamented bitterly: “We contribute every year to the Community Fund, but share no benefits at all. . . . We get no help from the Community Fund.”²⁹

In contrast to their male peers, Chinese American young women thought that being American meant having certain freedoms—the freedom to *not* behave according to Chinese customs, to choose their own mates, to work, and to be recognized for their individual achievements. Lillie Leung of Los Angeles spoke for many other young Chinese American women when she said:

I am American-born of Chinese parentage, and because of my American

training I feel the restraints imposed by the Chinese traditions. I feel the restrictions imposed upon the girls: we are not permitted to go out to socials or to have good times as the American girls have. . . . I have wanted to work—just do any kind of work to feel that I was doing something and making my own way—but my parents would not listen to it because it might appear that they could not support their children. . . . My parents wanted to hold to the old idea of selecting a husband for me, but I did not care for them and would not marry them.³⁰

Flora Belle Jan of Fresno, whom the Survey of Race Relations researchers called a flapper because of how she dressed and whom they considered an exemplar of Americanized Chinese (see Chapter 7 of this book for more information on this woman), had this to say: "When I was a little girl, I grew to dislike the conventionality and rules of Chinese life. . . . My parents have wanted me to grow up a good Chinese girl, but I am an American and I can't accept all the old Chinese ways and ideas."³¹

A third young woman resented that her parents would not allow her to go away to college. They believed that because all Chinese girls were expected to marry, sending her to a college in another town would be a waste of money, when there was a college in their town. Neither would they allow her to work because, like Lillie Leung's parents, they feared "it would seem that they were unable to support me." After graduation, she planned to go to China to work, but she said, "I will feel that America is home, and to me, there is 'no place like home.'"³²

One Chinese American girl was even bolder in defying her father's wishes. Raised by her older sister who was married to a cook in a lumber camp, she did not trust her father when he wanted to take her to China, ostensibly to get an education:

One of my older sisters had been married in China, against her will, after she had been just a very short time in school. I felt that if I went back with him I would very shortly be married, and that I would not have anything to say about it. . . . My father brought me to San Francisco, and bought my ticket to China. But I had been away from my father for so long that I was not much afraid of him. . . . The night before the boat sailed, I told him . . . I would go

to the Mission and throw myself on their protection. . . . I was resolved not to marry, to have an education instead. . . . If I once consented to go, I would be lost. There would be no police, one could not telephone for help, the American consul could not help me.³³

She managed to find her way to the Presbyterian Mission Home for Chinese Girls, even though she had last visited it when she was only six years old. When she explained her plight to Donaldina Cameron, a missionary who spent many years rescuing Chinese prostitutes, Cameron took her to see a judge. He decided that because she was American born, she could not be forced to go to China.³⁴ In time, this spirited young woman became president of her high school class and the first vice president of the Association of Women Students at her junior college. Her goal was to become a medical missionary because, as she said, "I think I feel more American really, than Chinese, but still what I want to do is to help my own people."³⁵

For Jade Snow Wong, who wrote the most widely read Asian American autobiography ever published, being American meant being recognized as an individual. She prayed to God that she would become "a person respected and honored by my family when I grow up."³⁶ Her wish did not come true until years later, after her book had been published and was being translated into several languages. Even then, her father expressed his admiration for her only in an indirect way when he said the following prayer:

We are gathered here because of a book about which fellow villagers, merchants, and friends on the street have been congratulating me. For this book was written in America by a Chinese, not only a Chinese but a Chinese from San Francisco, not only a Chinese from San Francisco but a Wong, not only a Wong but a Wong from this house, not only a Wong from this house but a daughter, Jade Snow. Heavenly Father, this accomplishment was not mine, but Yours! From Your many blessings, this girl, raised according to Your commandments, was able to do this work.³⁷

Although Jade Snow personally received no credit for her achievement, she was touched because, she wrote, "[i]t was the first and only time the family heard what he thought about the book, and one of the few times a daughter

was complimented in prayer. . . . The prayer had rewarded Jade Snow in a way which the most flattering review from an astute critic could not."³⁸

Thus, whereas Chinese American young men felt the sting of racism in the public arena most keenly, Chinese American young women were more concerned with escaping the constrictions of Chinese cultural practices within the private sphere of their lives. This did not mean that they experienced no racism, however, for racial discrimination did not separate its victims according to gender. The childhood memories of Chinese American girls were laced with just as many unpleasant experiences as the recollections of boys. "At times I have been called a 'Chink' and I have resented it bitterly and would at times answer back, but recently I have not replied," reported Lillie Leung of Los Angeles.³⁹ A Chinese American young woman who had been brought up in Hawaii "found Americans staring at me as though I were a strange being" when she came to the mainland to attend college.⁴⁰ She could not become accustomed to such stares, having grown up in a place where people of Asian ancestry formed a majority of the population. "I was very, very lonesome; I had no friends," she confessed.⁴¹ Another Chinese American young woman was chagrined when her teacher said in class, "You belong to a dirty race, that spit at missionaries."⁴²

The contents of textbooks also sometimes caused Chinese American students great embarrassment. As one Chinese American woman recalled,

In grade school I was fairly successful in being admitted to the "inner circles," as it were. . . . It was only during geography and history that I became in any way race-conscious. When we came to the study of China, the other children would turn and stare at me as though I were Exhibit A of the lesson. . . . I remember one particularly terrible ancient history lesson; it told in awful detail about "queer little Chinamen, with pigtailed and slanting eyes"—and went on to describe the people as though they were inhuman, and at best, uncivilized.⁴³

Even the children who had Euro-American friends when they were young eventually were ostracized as they grew older. According to Lillie Leung, who had "never lived in Chinatown, but ha[d] always lived in an American neighborhood," she experienced no problems until she reached puberty. "I

have always had a number of American friends. I mingled with all the children quite freely, but when I was about twelve years old they began to turn away from me and I felt this keenly. Up to that time I never realized that I was in any way different, but then I began to think about it." ⁴⁴ When another Chinese American young woman entered high school, the relationship between her and her schoolmates also changed. "High school made my sense of race-consciousness keener," she said. "I received a few snubs from former 'friends,' which really shocked and amazed me." ⁴⁵

Why did Euro-American children begin to treat their Chinese American peers so much more negatively when they all became teenagers? Erikson's observations about adolescence offer an explanation:

The danger of this stage is role confusion. . . . To keep themselves together they temporarily overidentify, to the point of apparent complete loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowds. . . . Young people can . . . be remarkably clannish and cruel in their exclusion of all those who are "different," in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in such petty aspects as dress and gesture as have been temporarily selected as *the* signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper. For adolescents not only help one another temporarily through much discomfort by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies; they also perversely test each other's capacity to pledge fidelity. . . . the adolescent . . . is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical.⁴⁶

Adolescence was the most painful period in the lives of Chinese Americans because several processes were occurring simultaneously. According to Erikson, adolescents often go through a psychosocial "moratorium," during which they set aside many other concerns as they attempt to resolve their "identity crisis." Adolescence was the period when Chinese Americans became the most self-conscious about being pulled in opposite directions by "Chinese" and "American" cultures. Their identity crisis manifested mainly as a cultural conflict, so rebelling against their parents was synonymous with rejecting Chinese culture. Meanwhile, their Euro-American peers, in also

trying to come to terms with who *they* were, felt compelled to draw clear boundaries between themselves, the in-group, and those whom they consigned to out-groups. Their cliquish behavior—expressed in this case in racial terms—was validated by the widespread anti-Chinese discrimination during this era in U.S. history. Indeed, a “complementarity” existed between the psychosocial demands inherent in the developmental stage called adolescence and the ethos of an entire society during this particular historical period. Unfortunately for Chinese Americans, what they experienced during their adolescence was not simply a passing phase. Instead, the rejection that they encountered as teenagers became a permanent feature in their adult lives because the era of Chinese exclusion in which they lived lasted far longer than their own adolescence.

Their experiences with racism notwithstanding, some Chinese American young women still thought that Chinese culture was a more binding force because the rules that many Chinese American girls were expected to follow reached into every nook and cranny of their daily lives. For example, Jade Snow Wong was scolded by her father for daring to wear slippers in the family’s living room. Her father had always insisted that all members of the family be fully dressed outside their bedrooms. In his eyes, to have “bedroom attire flaunted publicly” was “indecorous conduct.” He reprimanded his daughter for turning the “organization of [his] household into chaos.”⁴⁷

Not only did Chinese American girls suffer from their parents’ strict expectations, but some of them did not even have friends to tell their troubles to. The only confidante Jade Snow Wong had was her second oldest sister. After the latter married and moved out of the family home,

Her [Jade Snow’s] visits to her sister were surreptitious, for Jade Snow knew that the reason her parents did not invite confidences was that they disapproved of them; they did not encourage companionship because it might undermine their respect, or offer understanding because it might conflict with obedience. Besides, Second Older Sister had married into and belonged to another family, and Jade Snow should not be seeking comfort from one who was thus an “outsider.”⁴⁸

Chinese American young women especially resented the favoritism shown

their brothers. Louise Leung said, "Chinese parents tend to restrict their daughters. I want to go to Stanford University and have been accepted there, but my father is opposed to my going. He is in favor of education for girls, but adds that there is no need of spending so much money since we will soon be married anyway."⁴⁹ Likewise, the most bitter passages in Jade Snow Wong's autobiography concerned the differential treatment that she and her sisters, on the one hand, and her brothers, on the other hand, received. The Wong family celebrated joyously when her younger brother was born: "Because he was a brother, [he] was more important to Mama and Daddy than dear baby sister . . . who was only a girl. But even more uncomfortable was the realization that she herself [Jade Snow] was a girl and, like her younger sister, unalterably less significant than the new son in their family."⁵⁰

Although Jade Snow's father had repeatedly urged her to get an education, he refused to help her financially when she decided to go to college. She was stunned. He told her: "You have been given an above-average Chinese education for an American-born Chinese girl. You now have an average education for an American girl. I must still provide with all my powers for your Older Brother's advanced medical training. . . . If you have the talent, you can provide for your own college education."⁵¹ Hearing this answer, "a new and sudden bitterness" welled up in Jade Snow, who cried to herself, "I can't help being born a girl. . . . I am a person, besides being a female! Don't the Chinese admit that women also have feelings and minds?"⁵² With no other recourse, Jade Snow earned her way through college by working as a live-in maid. Years later, after *Fifth Chinese Daughter* had become a best-seller, she sought her father's help when the book was being translated into Chinese. When they came to passages about how he had treated his sons and daughters unequally, he asked her sternly, "Did this really happen?" "Yes, it did," Jade Snow insisted. "I have not put in this book anything which did not happen."⁵³

In families without sons, daughters faced contradictory expectations from their parents. On the one hand, they had to assume heavy responsibilities—responsibilities that boys would have shouldered had there been sons in the family—while on the other hand their lives were still strictly controlled. One Chinese American female college student recalled that she not only had to work in her father's sewing factory from a very young

age onward, but

The strange thing about my early factory work was not so much the long hours, but the responsibility. When I was twelve my father gave me the oversight of 25 men; I was to give out material, see that their work was right, see that the factory was kept clean, etc. My father, at that time, had no boys, and he started in to train me as if I was a boy. . . . When I was 13 my brother was born and then he lost interest in us girls. . . . My brother has a great deal of spending money and a bank account of his own and can do just about as he likes. We girls were expected to do everything and to pay for our room and board. . . . If my father should die, everything would go to my brother, except perhaps a little to my step-mother and the children. If they had nothing, it would be the duty of my sister and myself to support them, as we are older than my brother, although he would have all the property.⁵⁴

This situation was obviously unfair, but the narrator could do little about it. Her only consolation was that the burdens that she had borne since childhood stood her in good stead as she grew up. She managed to break away from her family to live and work independently and to put herself through college.

Overall, although race and ethnic culture shaped the identities of both the male and female Chinese Americans who came of age during the six decades of Chinese exclusion, race was a more salient feature in the young men's experiences, whereas ethnic culture (and the constraints that it imposed) played a more dominant role in the young women's lives. In short, gender refracted race as well as ethnicity. One result was that the male and female narrators often ascribed different meanings to experiences that, on the surface, seemed similar.

Sources of Cultural Knowledge

Simple dichotomies are now widely disparaged by scholars, especially feminists with a postmodernist bent, but the available life stories show clearly that what is now called "essentialist thinking" was common among young

Chinese Americans in the period under study. They believed that compelling differences existed between "American" and "Chinese" cultures, they thought that the two were irreconcilable, and they agonized over how to choose between them. As Esther Wong of San Francisco explained, "For many years I struggled between the two different ways of doing things, the way my parents brought me up and the way that I became acquainted with in college. I really feel that I have had the chance to know the best in conservative Chinese bringing up and in American life, but for a long time I tried to decide which of the two was better and which I should follow."⁵⁵

Moving at will among one's various "subject positions"—a stance advocated by scholars such as the literary critic Lisa Lowe—was a freedom that Chinese Americans and other peoples of color simply did not enjoy until recently, if they do even now.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, even when Chinese exclusion was in effect, neither "Chinese" culture nor "American" culture was static or monolithic. Internal contradictions characterized both. Like all other cultures, each was constantly being interpreted by its bearers. Such a process of negotiation is apparent when we ask where Chinese American youngsters got their ideas about what being an "American" or a "Chinese" meant. During the exclusion era, public schools, Christian institutions, and employment as domestic servants in Euro-American homes were the most common sources of information about American culture, whereas Chinese immigrant parents and Chinese-language schools were the chief repositories of Chinese cultural knowledge.

Of the American socializing agents, the most important was the public school. Pardee Lowe not only learned self-reliance at school, but developed "Presidential fever" after hearing his teacher tell the class that "every single one of you can be President of the United States someday!"⁵⁷ Pardee could take such a statement to heart because the principles encapsulated in the American creed are couched in universalistic terms—all men, and not just some men, are created equal . . . didn't his teacher tell him so? And wasn't she his most reliable American cultural authority?

Pardee explained why his teacher had such a profound impact on the children of immigrants like himself:

Coming mainly from immigrant homes where parents were too preoccupied

with earning a living to devote much time to their children, we transferred our youthful affections to this one person who had both the time and the disposition to mother us. We showered upon our white-haired teacher the blind, wholehearted loyalty of the young. Our studies we readily absorbed, not because we particularly liked them so much as because it was "she" who taught us. . . . Thus, . . . she whom we staunchly enshrined in our hearts laid the rudimentary but firm foundation of our personal brand of American culture.⁵⁸

To Pardee, the American public school was the "institution in which I was free to indulge my own most un-Chinese inclinations."⁵⁹ For this reason, when his father proposed sending him to a boarding school in China, he burst out vehemently, "I want to stay in America!" He explained his reaction as follows: "I loved America, . . . why would I wish to go to China? All the things I had learned from our kinfolk about the old country were bad, with no redeeming features. After all, I added as my clinching argument, if this were not so, why should our kinsmen wish to come to the United States?"⁶⁰

Admittedly, the last sentence does ring with ironic logic.

Jade Snow Wong also first became aware of the differences between Chinese culture and American culture during an incident at school. One day, while she was playing in the school yard, one of her classmates accidentally hit her hand with a baseball bat.

As Jade Snow cried out, the teacher was there. She leaned down and held Jade Snow closely, rubbing her fingers, wiping the tears which fell involuntarily as the pain gradually flowed into her numb hand. It was a very strange feeling to be held to a grown-up foreign lady's bosom. She could not remember when Mama had held her to give comfort. Daddy occasionally picked her up as a matter of necessity, but he never embraced her impulsively when she required consolation. . . . [It was] wonderful to be embraced by Miss Mullohand. But suddenly the comfort changed to embarrassment. What was one supposed to do now in response? The embarrassment turned to panic [S] he was now conscious that "foreign" American ways were not only generally and vaguely different from their Chinese ways, but that they were specifically different, and the specific differences would involve a choice of action.⁶¹

Although its influence was less pervasive than that of the public schools, the Christian church—and its offshoots, such as the YMCA and the YWCA—likewise served as a source of American cultural knowledge, even though Chinese were treated as foreigners by the church and had to use segregated facilities. (When the various Protestant denominations established churches in Chinatowns, they called them “missions,” which were supported by the denominations’ boards of *foreign* missions. The YMCA and YWCA, meanwhile, set up special branches for Chinese Americans.⁶²) Pardee Lowe became active in church because he thought that it provided a “spot in which to exercise all my American proclivities.”⁶³ However, the hypocrisy of certain Euro-American Christians, such as the YMCA secretary described previously who refused to allow a Chinese American young man to use the organization’s swimming pool, turned some Chinese Americans away from the Christian faith. As Lew Kay of Seattle noted, “Many are very much against Christianity, because they say Americans are Christians. . . . Chinese don’t believe that Americans live up to what they preach.”⁶⁴ Even Pardee Lowe, who had fervently embraced the religion, became disillusioned when Christians defended their religion and their ideals in the same breath as they refused to hire him: “If that was the type of religious conduct practiced by pillars of [the] church, I concluded in my despair, I would have none of it.”⁶⁵

Besides the public schools and Protestant churches, only a few other settings existed in which Chinese American young people could come into close contact with Euro-Americans. Becoming domestic servants in Euro-American homes provided one such venue. When Jade Snow Wong was a teenager, she started working as a maid in Euro-American families to earn pocket money. There, she had a chance to observe social relationships within what she assumed to be a typical American home—relations that seemed the opposite of those in her own family.

It was a home where children were heard as well as seen; where parents considered who was right or wrong, rather than who should be respected; . . . where the husband kissed his wife and the parents kissed their children; . . . where the family was actually concerned with having fun together and going out to play together; where the problems and difficulties of domestic life and

children's discipline were untangled, perhaps after tears, but also after explanations; . . . where, above all, each member, even down to and including the dog, appeared to have the inalienable right to assert his individuality . . . in an atmosphere of natural affection.⁶⁶

It is poignant how Jade Snow Wong lamented what seemed lacking in her own home environment more than she did the menial position to which she had been relegated in American society.

Making these kinds of comparisons between their own families and those of Euro-Americans, Chinese American children and youth often felt deprived. Chinese culture and social relations seemed rigid and restrictive, whereas American culture and social relations seemed warm and affectionate. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ideology of assimilation ruled supreme in American society. Cultural pluralism was not an available option. Therefore, Chinese Americans found that drawing strength from both their heritages was difficult. Rather, they thought that they always had to make choices, because, in the words of Pardee Lowe, "it was difficult to be a filial Chinese son and a good American citizen at one and the same time."⁶⁷

In virtually all instances, during their childhood Chinese Americans showed a strong preference for the American part of their legacy because in American society children can speak freely and express themselves in other ways with exuberance. They are allowed to "be themselves." As Chinese American children reached puberty, however, and as their Euro-American peers began to reject and ostracize them, they became painfully aware that no real choice was possible. Regardless of where they were born, how they behaved, or how well they spoke English, they, like their immigrant parents, were considered unassimilable aliens and perpetual foreigners. As the young woman from Hawaii recalled,

I realized very soon that I was not an American in spite of the fact that I had citizenship privileges. At the university, I was referred to as a *foreign* student; I objected to being called such at first; I insisted that I was an American—born on American soil and coming from an American . . . state. But soon, I learned that I was laughed at, mocked at my contention that I was an American and should be treated as such. . . . I gradually learned that I am a foreigner—a

Chinese—that I would be wiser to admit it and to disclaim my American citizenship.⁶⁸

Then, when they began to enter the labor market, the full force of prejudice and racial discrimination hit them: Regardless of how they might have perceived themselves, other Americans did not consider them to be “real” Americans. Sadly, this was only half the dilemma that faced, for they were not “real” Chinese, either. This was so because the manner in which Chinese cultural knowledge was transmitted to them was shot through with ambiguities.

Although Chinese immigrant parents, in the eyes of their American-born children, were the fount from which all things Chinese flowed, they were, in fact, not always paragons of Chinese propriety. In the Chinese American life stories that have been passed down to us, many parents were not stereotypically Chinese in either outward appearance or inner thoughts. In Thomas Chinn’s family, although his mother spoke no English, she managed to communicate well with her Euro-American neighbors, who spoke no Chinese. She learned to make American desserts that her children loved. And, most significant, at the age of forty-three, she decided to unbind her feet—a painful process that took years, during which the bandages were loosened bit by bit.⁶⁹

According to Lillie Leung of Los Angeles, her parents, “contrary to the Chinese custom,” wanted both their sons and their daughters to secure a good education. Her father even urged her to study medicine.⁷⁰ Another young Chinese American woman growing up in Los Angeles said, “Father . . . believes in the old Chinese idea that all girls must eventually be launched into matrimony. He is modern enough to allow me to launch myself, but that I will be launched he seems very sure.”⁷¹ Such attitudes deviated from those commonly found in pre-1911 China (that is, before the Qing dynasty was overthrown and a republic was established), where girls were not sent to school and were given away in arranged marriages soon after they became nubile.

In the case of Jade Snow Wong’s father, his outlook was “revolutionized” after he converted to Christianity. Arriving as a youth in San Francisco, he

had attended the English classes offered by the Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Mission. The Chinese pastor at that mission not only taught him English but also "educated him in a new doctrine of individual dignity and eternal personal salvation." He then wrote his wife who was still in China with their two daughters: "Do not bind our daughters' feet. Here in America is an entirely different set of standards, which does not require that women sway helplessly on little feet to qualify them for good matches as well-born women who do not have to work. Here in Golden Mountains [America], the people, and even women, have individual dignity and rights of their own."⁷²

After a few years, Mr. Wong brought his wife and two daughters to the United States because "here my wife will have opportunity to do honest work and my daughters will enjoy an education."⁷³ He wanted his children to attend both the American public school and the Chinese-language school. However, because the latter did not accept girls until the late 1920s, he tutored his daughters himself to help them master the Chinese language. He justified his efforts to educate his daughters as follows:

Since sons and their education are of primary importance, we must have intelligent mothers. If nobody educates his daughters, how can we have intelligent mothers for our sons? . . . The peace and stability of a nation depend upon the proper relationships established in the home; and to a great extent, the maintenance of proper relations within the home depends on intelligent mothers.⁷⁴

His reasoning, although still sexist from a contemporary perspective, was a far cry from the beliefs that were prevalent in most of China (except possibly such large cities as Canton or Shanghai, where Western influences had penetrated) and in American Chinatowns during that period. Wanting his daughters to become educated was not the only way in which he differed from his peers. When Jade Snow reached marriageable age, her parents made some desultory attempts to find her a suitor. However, when one of her father's fellow villagers indicated that he "would like very much to have a daughter-in-law [from the Wong family] live with us and help around the house," Mr. Wong replied, "Very difficult. That will make a problem with these American-born girls."⁷⁵ By declining this marriage offer, he was looking

out for Jade Snow's welfare; he did not want to put her into a situation where she might have to suffer at the hands of her parents-in-law. These aspects of Mr. Wong's behavior are worth pointing out because more often than not, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* has been read as a chronicle of an American-born daughter's rebellion against her China-born "patriarchal" father. In fact, Mr. Wong's efforts to "liberate" women extended beyond his own family: he personally delivered cut denim, to be sewn into overalls, to Chinese women who wanted to work but whose husbands would not allow them to leave home to earn money.⁷⁶ (Of course, a more cynical interpretation of his actions is also possible: He could not have exploited the labor of these women had he not delivered the fabric to their homes.)

Pardee Lowe's father likewise was no patriarch avidly upholding Chinese tradition. He had cut off his queue long before it was legal to do so in China. At his wedding, he refused to put on a cap to which a fake queue had been attached. "I am not a slave!" he proclaimed angrily.⁷⁷ (The Manchus, who founded the Qing dynasty [1644–1911], forced all Chinese men to wear a queue. Many Chinese thus considered the queue a symbol of their subservience.) As his children were born, he, like Thomas Chinn's father, gave them American first names. He did not simply choose names he liked, though; he made his children the namesakes of famous Americans. Pardee was named after Governor George C. Pardee of California; his sisters, Alice and Helen, were named after family members of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft (Alice Roosevelt and Helen Taft); and his twin brothers, Wilson and Marshall, were named after President Woodrow Wilson and Wilson's vice president, Thomas Riley Marshall. When Mr. Lowe's Euro-American friends alerted reporters to the christening of Pardee's twin brothers, the event was duly noted in some of San Francisco's newspapers. Pardee commented, "I think Father liked the idea that in the eyes of the Barbarian Press we had . . . been accepted as Americans."⁷⁸ Pardee's mother, meanwhile, learned to cook turkey for Thanksgiving. "We share the holiday of our American neighbors . . . because we wish to live in peace and harmony with them and because I do not wish you children to grow wicked with envy of others," she explained.⁷⁹

Because cultural boundaries are permeable and meanings can change even as cultural forms remain the same, the interplay of Chinese and American

cultures within Chinese immigrant families sometimes led to unusual outcomes. After Pardee Lowe's mother died, the skillful manner in which she had managed to bridge the gulf between her husband and her children suddenly became apparent. Once she was gone, Pardee and his siblings began quarreling more often with their father. The most bitter disagreement between the two generations arose over Mr. Lowe's reluctance to move the family into better quarters. When he claimed that he could not afford to do so, Pardee burst out angrily: "It's possible for you to buy a one-thousand-acre fruit ranch, but it is not possible for you to satisfy our family with a home!" His father refused to yield, however. The impasse lasted for two years, until Pardee's step-mother found a way to change her husband's mind by asking him, "What are dollars compared with family harmony?"⁸⁰ She had cleverly used something greatly valued in *Chinese* culture—family harmony—to persuade him to give in to his children's *American* desires.

Given the immigrant parents' own ambivalent and changing stances as they negotiated between their Chinese legacy and the American milieu in which they now lived, some Chinese American children predictably found their childhood world confusing. Lisa Mar [pseudonym], who grew up in an apartment above a bar in the Mission District in San Francisco in the 1930s, recalled that her parents gave her mixed messages about the outside world:

I never knew certain things . . . that you would think I should know, because my parents never would explain enough to me. . . . What my parents told me about being Chinese, and the outside world, was a very mixed thing. . . . When my parents would talk about the outside being a bad place, they would refer sort of generally to "the whites out there," they always called them *sai yen*. To me, of course, that meant the whites right around us. . . . The same people who would vomit and pee on our doorstep, were the people who had the power to take our home away from us. We had to do a little placating of them. . . . But there were other things my family would tell me. Like when my mother got locked out of the house, she would go down to the bar and one of these men would go around back, climb up some steps, crawl across a ledge and in through the window to open the door for her. And my mother would tell me, "You know, only a *sai yen* would do that for you."⁸¹

Confusion also characterized Jade Snow Wong's childhood. "[L]ife was a constant puzzle," she wrote. "No one ever troubled to explain. Only through punishment did she learn that what was proper was right and what was improper was wrong. . . . The daughters of the Wong family were born to requirements exacting beyond their understanding. These requirements were not always made clear, until a step out of bounds brought the parents' swift and drastic correction."⁸²

Victor Wong, who also grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown in the 1930s, was stymied not so much by his parents' failure to explain things to him, but by the gap between their words and their actions. He recalled:

The thing that is so puzzling is not to know what Chinese culture *is*. I mean, I'm taught by my parents what it means to be Chinese, and then I watch their actions, and there's so much discrepancy. They say one thing and then they act another way entirely, and so you wonder which *is* the Chinese culture, the way they're actually performing or what they're trying to transmit by word of mouth.⁸³

These accounts reveal that although Chinese immigrant parents tried their best to pass on to their children the *ideals* they had learned from their own childhoods in China, they did not always follow those guiding principles after they arrived in the United States.

The traditional idea of how children should be raised was not the only reason that Chinese immigrant parents did not explain things to their young. Two other considerations were perhaps even more important. First, in Chinese immigrant communities in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America, telling children too much was often unsafe, given the harsh treatment that the Chinese received from tax collectors, policemen, and immigration officials. After the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, some Chinese managed to get themselves smuggled into the country, whereas others entered as "paper sons," having purchased documents and assumed the identities of individuals who were eligible for entry. All Chinese attempting to enter the United States during the six decades of exclusion were subjected to

detailed interrogation and grueling confinement. Between 1882 and 1910, the aspiring immigrants or returning residents were held in a shed on the wharf in San Francisco. From 1910 to 1940, they were confined in the immigration station on Angel Island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. Even after individuals were allowed to land, they could still be arrested at any time. Those found without the registration cards required by the 1892 Geary Act could be arrested, imprisoned, and deported. During these terrifying years, the Chinese community lived in constant fear. In such an intimidating atmosphere, adults could not afford to tell children anything, lest the little ones unwittingly reveal secrets that might jeopardize other family members.

Second, parents sometimes gave conflicting signals because they often felt torn over how to rear their young. Many immigrant parents changed their attitudes and behavior as time passed. In general, the longer they remained in the United States, the more "liberal" and less "old-fashioned" they became. Commonly, the younger children in a family grew up with far fewer restrictions than their older siblings had been subjected to. These changes in the parents' behavior made them seem inconsistent and, worse, unfair, from the older children's viewpoint. But such, unfortunately, were the hard facts of life in many an immigrant family.

Given their own uncertainty about their adequacy as cultural authorities, almost all Chinese immigrant parents insisted that their children attend Chinese-language school—at least in the localities with such schools. Thomas Chinn's family, for example, felt so strongly about having their children attend Chinese-language school that they moved from a small town in Oregon, where they had lived comfortably, to San Francisco to make such enrollment possible.⁸⁴ The parents who could afford to do so kept their children in Chinese-language school as long as possible. Years of schooling were required not only because Chinese is such a difficult language to learn, but also because, teaching children to show respect to their elders, in particular their parents and teachers, takes time and repeated lessons. When Pardee Lowe protested that going to Chinese-language school was a waste of time, he missed the point because he was thinking in purely utilitarian terms. He declared, "I wrote no Chinese letters to our relatives in China. Only the simplest phrases were used in Chinatown. In our home I spoke mostly pidgin Chinese or English." The adult members of his family had a

more compelling reason for sending him to Chinese-language school, however; they wanted to “neutralize” his “excessive Americanism.”⁸⁵

Even American-born men of Chinese ancestry, who may not have enjoyed going to Chinese-language school during their youth, believed that sending their own children there was imperative. The reason is that, apart from teaching the Chinese language, the Chinese-school teachers were also expected to instill social decorum into their wards. As Chin Cheung of Seattle related, “I want my children to get Chinese education first; they must have Chinese custom and understand Chinese language because they always be Chinese. . . . If they don’t have this old country education they no good.”⁸⁶

What did he mean by “no good”? His main criticism centered on the liberties allowed American-born girls: “This country you know, girl too independent. Go out in the evening, dance, spend money, don’t like stay home much. . . . Girls this country don’t make so good wives as girls in China. Girls in China have more respect I think for husband. They look after husband better; look after children better; have more children.”⁸⁷

His sentiments were echoed by other men, all American born. Bong Chin confirmed, “Chinese generally prefer to marry women in China. Born this country to [*sic*] much American. . . . Too freedom this country, the women.”⁸⁸ Ying Foy explained why he had returned to China to marry: “I go back China get girl to marry. Over here all girl born in this country no good. Spend too much money, no like to have too many children. . . . I think women got too much freedom, too much power over here. I think divorce very bad. Break up lots of families. These customs U.S. very, very bad.”⁸⁹

The broader social functions performed by Chinese-language schools help explain why some Chinese immigrants did not always support their children’s desire for a college education, the extraordinary value that Chinese have traditionally placed on education notwithstanding: They feared that their children’s acquisition of an *American* higher education might prove subversive. The ideas learned in college, even more so than those absorbed in elementary, junior high, and high schools, might erode some of the fundamental tenets of Chinese culture.

When Pardee Lowe was about to graduate from high school, he not only

wanted to go to college, but also desired to enroll specifically at Stanford University, then, as now, an expensive institution. When his father asked him who had suggested that he apply to Stanford, Pardee replied that it was his favorite teacher in high school. "Who is this woman," his father asked irritably, "whom you would set above your father?"⁹⁰

Jade Snow Wong offended her father in a similar way. She had taken what her college sociology teacher said to heart when he declared: "Today we recognize that children are individuals, and that parents can no longer demand their unquestioning obedience. Parents should do their best to understand their children, because young people also have their rights." Soon thereafter, when her father stopped her as she was stepping out the front door to go on a date, she responded verbatim with the passage she had heard in her sociology class. "Where," demanded her father, "did you learn such unfilial theory?" "From my teacher . . . who you taught me is supreme after you, and whose judgment I am not to question," Jade Snow replied. In furor, her father shouted, "A little learning has gone to your head! How can you permit a foreigner's theory to put aside the practical experience of the Chinese, who for thousands of years have preserved a most superior family pattern?"⁹¹

In both instances, the Chinese immigrant parents obviously felt threatened by the existence of alternative authority figures to whom their American-born children could turn. The dilemma that these parents faced was that although they were pleased to see their children respect their teachers' opinions, they did not want their progeny to follow the counterexamples set by these instructors whose teachings undermined the two key organizing principles in traditional Chinese society—showing respect and obedience to those who are older than oneself, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, and upholding the dominance of males over females.

Some Chinese parents opposed their offsprings' desire to go to the university for more pragmatic reason as well. For one thing, few immigrant families eking out a meager living in early-twentieth-century America could afford the tuition. In the case of Pardee Lowe, if he were allowed to go to Stanford University as he desired, not only would he use a large portion of his father's earnings, but he would also deprive his family of the money that he could have earned had he gone to work instead.⁹² Even more important, in the

years before World War II, immigrant parents were acutely aware that persons of Chinese ancestry—regardless of where they had been born, what citizenship they held, and what level of education they had attained—were barred from a wide variety of jobs. Therefore, even though these parents might have prized education per se, they hesitated to pay tuition for additional years of schooling that promised no economic or social returns in America. James Low, who was born in 1925 in San Francisco, recounted, "My father used to tell me, 'Look at your boss, he was going to be an engineer, look what happened to him! What are you studying engineering for?' At the time I was working for a man who had trained to be a mining engineer, but he ended up running a sewing factory. This was one of the reasons my father really disapproved of my going to school."⁹³

However desperately members of the American-born second generation tried to prove that they were Americans, in time they did learn to reconcile themselves to their Chinese origins. Ironically, neither their parents nor their Chinese-language school teachers effected this change. Rather, the racial discrimination that they encountered in the larger society as they grew up, finished school, and tried to find jobs finally forced them to make peace with their Chinese heritage.

Becoming Chinese Americans

Anti-Chinese prejudice and discrimination expressed themselves in myriad ways during the first century of Chinese settlement in America. Being called names, being stoned in the streets, having to attend a segregated "Oriental" school in San Francisco, and often being ostracized by their Euro-American classmates in towns where Chinese American pupils could attend integrated public schools were all common experiences. So were being forbidden to use public recreational facilities, having to live within the confines of a ghetto, being perceived as foreigners even when they were born as Americans, and not having police protection. How, then, did Chinese Americans deal with the hostility that confronted them at every turn? Some avoided situations where they knew that they would be singled out for maltreatment, others tried to repress their upset feelings, a few worked to

combat the negative stereotypes imposed up on them, and a handful resisted, while a large number began identifying with China.

Avoidance and repression were forms of behavior that many Chinese Americans adopted as they tried to survive with a modicum of dignity in America. Some avoided physical confrontations, not because they were cowardly or stoic, but because common sense compelled them to do so: They fought back only when they were certain that they would not be outnumbered. Such occasions were rare because Chinese were a minuscule minority in most places. As Chin Cheung of Seattle remembered: "When I in San Francisco they treat me very bad. . . . Young fellows throw stones, cans, bricks; make lots trouble all the time, but I always run away. I have no trouble that way because I never stay a fight. Too many white people; same number Chinamen, lots of fight; not many Chinamen[,] no can fight."⁹⁴

As a survival tactic, avoidance is not as passive as it may appear. Rather, it can be seen as one form of what the political scientist James C. Scott called "weapons of the weak."⁹⁵ In the face of overwhelming odds, people who are relatively powerless have a limited range of options. By deciding *when* to fight back, such individuals or groups make a strategic choice. Historically, not only did Chinese Americans often choose the occasions when they would resist, but some of them also chose what *form* such resistance would take. Those who tried to maintain their equanimity were trying consciously not to let disturbing situations "get to" them. Lew Kay of Seattle said: "I was born and raised here, . . . [so I] know what to expect and what others get. . . . I generally know the places where discrimination is shown and I make no attempt to go. That has been my policy after high school and University."⁹⁶ Chin Cheung stated that after he moved from San Francisco to Seattle, "I never have trouble in get[sic] my hair cut in barber shop or have trouble to go in restaurant and not have them serve me. I know where they treat Chinese all right, then I go. I stay away from other places."⁹⁷ One Chinese American young woman admitted, "Of course I resented it, but not enough to fight back or to be embittered."⁹⁸ It was important for Chinese Americans not to become embittered lest chronic anger would deprive them of any semblance of a normal life.⁹⁹ In time, conditions did improve. According to David Young of Seattle, "In my young days, when they see any Chinese walking around, they would throw bricks and stones, but not now. Everything is better."¹⁰⁰

Others took a more active approach by trying to combat negative images of the Chinese. According to Chingwah Lee, "In order to avoid being mistaken for . . . prostitutes . . . Chinese housewives would wear nothing but black [as Chinese prostitutes wore brightly colored clothes]." ¹⁰¹ A few Chinese Americans became tour guides "to combat these sightseeing companies" that spread erroneous and biased information about Chinatown to tourists. ¹⁰² (See Chapter 6 of this book, for further discussion on this topic.)

A handful of individuals went even further and refused to accept assignments that were stereotypically Chinese. Luke Chess, who was born in San Francisco in 1890 and claimed to be the first Chinese American to be accepted for enlistment in the U.S. Navy, recounted the following incident, speaking of himself (like Jade Snow Wong) in the third-person singular:

The commander officer of the U.S.S. Charleston wanted to command him to be a COOK to the Captain, but he enlisted rated as 2nd class fireman U.S. Navy. Chess have had the most patriotic courage to replie his commander officer, and said to him, "I came to serve and to die might I need for my Country. And I shall not serve as servant to be a cook for the Captain." . . . Stopped! all the nonsense, the Commander officer said. . . . You know that I have the power to put in the Brack (lock-up) and lock you in there, if you do refused me to go to the Galley for cook to the Captain. . . . Fool! you understand that? Yes sir I do. . . . I rather take the Brack, . . . I am here and ready to serve for the U.S.A. and not for cook and servant to the Captain. ¹⁰³

His pride in himself for being courageous enough to refuse to be relegated to the role of a domestic servant shines through even his garbled English. His motto was "Give me Equal or give me death," while his goal in life was to "fight the battle of the prejudice and narrow minded . . . Unamericanism." ¹⁰⁴

Unlike Luke Chess, who managed to have a most unconventional career as a technician first in the U.S. Navy and later in a number of manufacturing companies on the East Coast, Chinese Americans on the West Coast found it virtually impossible to secure jobs in the fields in which they had been trained in college. C. C. Wing, who graduated magna cum laude from St. Ignatious School of Law (now part of the University of San Francisco), recalled: "They

told me I could not make a living practicing law on account of my race."¹⁰⁵ By taking in every kind of case, however, Wing managed to eke out a living as Chinatown's one and only lawyer. Alice Fong Yu, the first Chinese American ever hired as a public-school teacher, had difficulty persuading the president of San Francisco Teachers College to allow her to enroll. "Nobody is going to hire you when you graduate," he said, "so why study to be a teacher?" He finally accepted her application only when she told him, "I'm not going to stay here; I'm going to China to help my people."¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Ling-So Hall, who became the first Chinese American principal in the San Francisco public school system, could not land a job after receiving her teaching certificate. So she began her career by teaching English in Chinatown and later working at a private nursery school.¹⁰⁷ Daisy Wong Chinn recalled that the only American corporations that hired any Chinese Americans were those with a branch in China or Chinatown.¹⁰⁸

When Jade Snow Wong was a senior at Mills College, she received the following advice from the placement office: "If you are smart, you will look for a job only among your Chinese firms. You cannot expect to get anywhere in American business houses. After all, I am sure you are conscious that racial prejudice on the Pacific Coast will be a great handicap to you."¹⁰⁹ The vocational counselor who made this statement thought that she was being kind. She wanted Jade Snow to have a realistic idea of what the world after college would be like.

At such a point in their lives, college-educated Chinese Americans stopped perceiving China as that strange land from which their parents had come and considered it, instead, as a place where they might find an outlet for their talents. Sun Peter Lee of Los Angeles told an interviewer, "I am directing my studies toward a course in electrical engineering, after which I plan to go to China, where I will find greater opportunities than in America, where they will not employ me because I am Chinese."¹¹⁰ Louise Leung, also of Los Angeles, likewise noted, "The Chinese who are trained in the schools here do not expect to remain in the United States, but they are looking toward China for the future. . . . I myself am planning to go to China to teach."¹¹¹ Jade Snow Wong's father urged her to think about going to China as she was about to graduate from high school, because, as he told her, "a Chinese could realize his optimum achievement only in China."¹¹² After experiencing multiple

rejections—by Euro-Americans, mainland Chinese Americans, and students from China alike—the young woman from Hawaii came to the dejected conclusion that

Verily, I am a “man without a country.” I love America and would be her citizen but she would not have me; . . . I am . . . feeling more sympathetic for China—a great deal more sympathetic than I have ever been before. I am acquiring a love for her as I never had before. I am beginning to feel a sense of nationalism. . . . While I love America, I love China also now. I see no place in American life for me; and I see very little place for me in China but there is more hope there than there is here.¹¹³

As David Young of Seattle said more succinctly, “The prejudice against the Orientals, you get sick of it and feel you would like to go back.”¹¹⁴

The tragic irony, of course, is that to “go back” is a misnomer: Most of the Chinese Americans had never been to China! Nonetheless, whether their future lay in China or in America was the main topic of discussion among Chinese Americans in the 1930s. The *Chinese Digest*, founded by Thomas Chinn and Chingwah Lee as the first English-language journal for Chinese Americans, published essays submitted for a nationwide debate on this topic. The debaters on each side offered many reasons for choosing one country or the other.¹¹⁵ (See Chapter 6 of this book for more details on this debate.) The true significance of the question that they addressed, however, was not cognitive but psychological. By finally allowing China to occupy a place in their consciousness, by reconciling themselves to the Chinese part of their ethnic identity, Chinese Americans learned to accept themselves as whole persons. Victor Wong of San Francisco described the process in the following way: “The funny thing is that after I consented to return to the culture I felt much better as a person. And much easier to live with. . . . Much more quiet inside myself since I returned.”¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In an earlier work, I argued that “the history of Asians in America

can be fully understood only if we regard them as both immigrants and members of nonwhite minority groups. As immigrants, many of their struggles resemble those that European immigrants have faced, but as people of nonwhite origins bearing distinct physical differences, they have been perceived as 'perpetual foreigners' who can never be completely absorbed into American society. . . . [T]he acculturation process experienced by Asians in America has run along two tracks: even as they acquired the values and behavior of Euro-Americans, they simultaneously had to learn to accept their standing as racial minorities." 117

The European-immigrant analogy does not apply fully to Asian immigrants because although some of them—like the parents of Pardee Lowe, Thomas Chinn, and Jade Snow Wong—did acculturate (that is, they learned to think and behave like Euro-Americans), structural barriers prevented them from fully assimilating (that is, they were not allowed to become members of mainstream organizations and social group). Whereas acculturation depends mainly on the immigrants' efforts, assimilation is contingent upon the immigrants' efforts *as well as* on the receptivity shown by members of the majority society. Thus, if Asian immigrants did not assimilate as speedily as their European counterparts did, the reason was not entirely their proclivity to "cling" to Asian culture, as commonly alleged.

The racial minority analogy is not fully applicable to Asian Americans, either. Much of our theoretical understanding of racial minorities is based on studies of African Americans. However, unlike African Americans whose connections to Africa were ruptured in many ways during slavery, Asian Americans retained strong ties to their ancestral homelands. When Chinese in America encountered discrimination and became discouraged, some of them found a psychological refuge that was not available to African Americans: The immigrant parents dreamed of returning to China to retire, while their American-born offspring looked to China as a place where they might find employment commensurate with their education.

The historical experience of second-generation Chinese Americans was even more complex than that of their immigrant parents. Their sense of self changed as they grew up and interacted with different groups of "significant others." Wanting desperately to be accepted as Americans during their childhood, they resisted their parents' attempts to teach them the Chinese language, in which

was encoded the values and norms of Chinese culture. Because many of their Euro-American teachers and schoolmates had accepted them when they were children, their self-identification as "Americans" seemed justified. As they became adolescents, however, they increasingly experienced rejection from their former Euro-American friends. They were stunned to discover that the identity imposed on them as "Chinese" (or worse, as "Chinks" and "Chinamen") was far more powerful, in terms of determining their "place" in American society, than whatever labels they might have fashioned for themselves. Nevertheless, fervently believing in the American dream, they insisted on going to college and worked to pay their way when their parents declined to give them financial support. Only after they had received their college degrees and entered the adult world of work did American racism hit them full force. Job discrimination was something that their parents had always warned them about, but they never realized its impregnable power until they sought employment outside their own ethnic communities. Under such circumstances, they paradoxically began to look to *China* as a place where their *American* ambitions might best be fulfilled. However, when some of them did "return" to China, they had difficulty fitting into the land of their parents. Suspended uneasily between two cultures, they had no choice but to try with quiet determination to create a new world of their own—a Chinese American world.

Notes

1. The total Chinese-ancestry population had declined from a peak of more than 107,000 in the early 1880s to a low of 61,639 in 1920 as a result of the Chinese exclusion laws. From this nadir, the number began to climb slowly as more children were born on American soil and, in the late 1940s, as Chinese war brides entered the country. Only in 1950 did the Chinese-ancestry population finally outstrip the figure shown in the 1890 census.
2. According to U.S. law, children born in China to fathers (but not mothers) who were U.S. citizens were considered derivative citizens who could enter the United States even during the years when the Chinese exclusion laws were in effect. Between 1878, when the *In re Ah Yup* decision explicitly denied Chinese the right of naturalization—a decision affirmed in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act—and 1906, when the San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed all official records in the city,

one can assume, with rare exceptions, that persons of Chinese ancestry with U.S. citizenship had been born in the United States. However, after the earthquake, some foreign-born Chinese claimed to be American born because no records were available to prove or disprove their claim. Individuals who managed to acquire American citizenship in this manner could then bring their China-born children into the country as derivative citizens. After 1906, therefore, the number of Chinese with U.S. citizenship and the number of American-born Chinese cannot be assumed to be the same. Chinese finally regained the right to become naturalized citizens in December 1943, when Congress repealed all the existing Chinese exclusion laws.

3. For details on how the California legislature, the U.S. Congress, and the various federal courts tried to minimize the number of Chinese women who could enter, see Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870-1943," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 94-146.
4. The Survey of Race Relations archives housed at the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University contain many more life histories, most written in the third-person singular by the project's field researchers. I chose to use only the documents written in the first-person singular because I am analyzing autobiographies, not biographies.
5. Philip Gleason, "American Identity and Americanization," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1980), 31-58.
6. It is outside the scope of this study to cite the voluminous amount of literature on European immigration and its relationship to American identity, but a review essay by Rudolph J. Vecoli, "European Americans: From Immigrants to Ethnic," in *The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture*, ed. William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1973), 81-112, offers a useful overview of the writings published up to 1972. Only selected works that set the pace for American immigration and ethnic history (each pointed the field in a new direction either conceptually or methodologically) can be listed here. In chronological order by date of publication, they include Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States: Studies in the Group Psychology of the American Peoples* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924, reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1970), which contains a reprint of his famous essay, "Democracy and the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality," first published in 1915 in *The Nation*; William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1918-1920; 2d ed., New York: Dover, 1927, reprint, 1958; abr. ed., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1869* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Carl F. Wittke, *We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant* (New York: Prentice-Hall,

1939); Marcus Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860: A History of the Continuing Settlement of the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940); Marcus Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940); Edward G. Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant*. Columbia University Studies in the Social Sciences, no. 545 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1865: A Study in Acculturation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941; rev. enl. ed., Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1959); Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951, 2d enl. ed., 1973); Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1954); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955, 2d ed., 1988); Charlotte Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957); Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*," *Journal of American History* 51, no. 3 (1964): 407-417; Frank Thistlewaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Population Movements in Modern European History*, ed. Herbert Mollor (New York: Macmillan, 1964); 73-92; Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964); Timothy L. Smith, "New Approaches to the History of Immigration in Twentieth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (1966): 1265-1279; John Higham, "Immigration," in *The Comparative Approach to American History*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 91-105; Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension of American History," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 70-88; Rowland Berthoff, *An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in an American Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Josef J. Barton, *Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians, and Slovaks in an American City 1890-1950* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); Dino Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco: The Immigrant Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

7. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

8. Among Erikson's writings, the most pertinent to my study here are Erik H. Erikson, "Ego Development and Historical Change—Clinical Notes," in Erik H. Erikson, *The Psychoanalytical Study of the Child*, vol.2 (New York: International Universities Press, 1946), 359–396, reprinted in *Psychological Issues* 1, no. 1 (1959): 18–49; "Growth and Crisis in the 'Healthy Personality,'" in *Symposium on the Healthy Personality*, ed. M.J.E. Senn (New York: Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation, 1950), reprinted in *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture*, ed. Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray, 2d enl. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 185–225, and reprinted in *Psychological Issues* 1, no. 1 (1959): 50–100; *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950, 2d rev. and enl. ed., 1963), especially chapters 7 and 8; "Ego Identity and the Psychosocial Moratorium," in *New Perspectives for Research in Juvenile Delinquency*, ed. H. L. Witmer and R. Kosinsky (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Children's Bureau, 1956), 1–23; *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958, repr., 1962); "Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations," in Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1964), 111–157; *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969; reprint, 1968), especially chapter 3; *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993); and *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). Erikson discussed the "eight ages of man" in several of his writings; the most succinct exposition is found in chapter 7 of *Childhood and Society*.
9. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 309.
10. For useful overviews on the psychology of adolescents, see Glen H. Elder, Jr., "Adolescence in the Life Cycle: An Introduction," in *Adolescence in the Life Cycle: Psychological Change and Social Context*, ed. Sigmund E. Dragastin and Glen H. Elder, Jr. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 1–22; James E. Marcia, "Identity in Adolescence," in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, ed. Joseph Adelson (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1980), 159–187; Ruthellen Josselson, "Ego Development in Adolescence," in *Handbook*, ed. Adelson, 188–210; Sigrun-Helde Filipp and Erhard Olbrich, "Human Development across the Life Span: Overview and Highlights of the Psychological Perspective," in *Human Development and the Life Course: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Aage B. Sorensen, Franz E. Weinert, and Lonnie R. Sherrod (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1986), 343–375; Jean S. Phinney, Bruce T. Lochner, and Rodolfo Murphy, "Ethnic Identity Development and Psychological Adjustment in Adolescents," in *Ethnic Issues in Adolescent Mental Health*, ed. Arlene Rubin Stiffman and Larry E. Davis (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1990), 53–72; and Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research," *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 3 (1990): 499–514.
11. The social scientific writings on ethnicity, acculturation, and cultural conflict are even more voluminous than historical studies of the same topics, so no comprehensive

listing is possible here. The journal articles and books that began to appear in the late 1920s were authored mostly by sociologists trained at the University of Chicago by Robert E. Park, Meredith Burgess, Louis Wirth, William I. Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, and their colleagues. Interest in ethnicity reached a new crescendo in the 1960s and early 1970s, when racial and ethnic minority groups struggled for their civil rights partly on the basis of their newfound ethnic consciousness. Among the books that helped define the field in that tumultuous period, see Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963, 2d ed., 1970); Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969); Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); William M. Newman, *American Pluralism: A Study of Minority Groups and Social Theory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Andrew M. Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974); and Harold R. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981; paperback ed., New York: Praeger, 1987), and John Rex and David Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) are useful introductions to issues related to race and ethnicity.

12. William L. Yancey, Eugene P. Ericksen, and Richard N. Juliani, "Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation," *American Sociological Review* 41, no. 3 (1976): 391-402.
13. The pervasiveness and strength of this conviction may be an artifice of the research design of the Survey of Race Relations. Because Robert E. Park, the director of research for this project, and his colleagues were so concerned about the assimilation—or lack thereof—of "Oriental" Americans, they tried diligently to gauge the extent to which their subjects had become Americanized. Furthermore, because none of the researchers could speak any Asian languages, they had to rely almost entirely on college-educated Asian American informants who were fluent in English, articulate, and at ease with social scientific research to supply them with the life histories that they desired. For a lengthier discussion of Park and the Survey of Race Relations, see Chapter 7 of this book.
14. "Life History and Social Document of Ying Foy," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 184, 2.
15. "Life History as a Social Document of Mr. Chin Yen," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 186, 2, 4, 6, 7.
16. "Life History as a Social Document of Bong Chin," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 172, 6.

17. "Life History as a Social Document of Mr. Chin Cheung," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 187, 3.
18. "Life History and Social Document of David Young," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 272-A, 2.
19. "Life History as a Social Document of Bong Chin," 2.
20. "Life History and Social Document of David Young," 8.
21. Thomas W. Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific: San Francisco Chinatown and Its People* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1989), 164.
22. "Life History of Chinese Student," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 233, 7.
23. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943), 106.
24. *Ibid.*, 146-147.
25. *Ibid.*, 190-191.
26. *Ibid.*, 190.
27. "Life History and Social Document of David Young," 10-11.
28. "Life History as a Social Document of Bong Chin," 3.
29. "Life History and Social Document of Lew Kay," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 194, 7.
30. "Interview with Lillie Leung," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 76, 1.
31. "Interview with Flora Belle Jan, Daughter of Proprietor of the Yet Far Low Chop Suey Restaurant," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 225, 1.
32. "Life History of Chinese Student," 8.
33. "Story of a Chinese Girl Student," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 56, 4-6.
34. *Ibid.*, 6.
35. *Ibid.*, 9.
36. Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York: Harper and Row, 1945), p. 93.
37. Jade Snow Wong, *No Chinese Stranger* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 6.
38. *Ibid.*

39. "Interview with Lillie Leung," 3.
40. "The Life History of a Hawaiian-Born Chinese Girl, F.L.," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 310, 8.
41. Ibid., 8.
42. "Story of a Chinese College Girl," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 54, 4.
43. "Life History of Chinese Student," 2.
44. "Interview with Lillie Leung," 2.
45. "Life History of Chinese Student," 3.
46. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 262–263.
47. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 83–84.
48. Ibid., 88.
49. "Interview with Louise Leung," Survey of Race Relations, minor document no. 63, 1.
50. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 27.
51. Ibid., 109.
52. Ibid., 109–110.
53. J. S. Wong, *No Chinese Stranger*, 54.
54. "Story of a Chinese College Girl," 1–3, 9.
55. "Interview: Esther Wong, Native Born Chinese," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 239, 5.
56. Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 24–44.
57. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 91, 131–132.
58. Ibid., 131.
59. Ibid., 129.
60. Ibid., 139.
61. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 20.
62. On the historical relationship between Chinese immigrants and various Protestant denominations, see Wesley Woo, "Chinese Protestants in the San Francisco Bay Area," in *Entry Denied*, ed. Chan, 213–245.

63. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 168.
64. "Life History and Social Document of Lew Kay," 8.
65. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 192.
66. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 113–114.
67. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 142–143.
68. "The Life History of a Hawaiian-Born Chinese Girl, F.L.," 8–9.
69. Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific*, 157, 192.
70. "Interview with Lillie Leung," 2.
71. "Life History of Chinese Student," 7.
72. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 72.
73. J. S. Wong, *No Chinese Stranger*, 15.
74. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 14–15.
75. *Ibid.*, 230.
76. *Ibid.*, 5.
77. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 13.
78. *Ibid.*, 18.
79. *Ibid.*, 68.
80. *Ibid.*, 176–178.
81. Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 162, 164–166.
82. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 3, 67.
83. Victor Wong, "Childhood II," in *Ting: Chinese Art and Identity in San Francisco*, ed. Nick Harvey (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1970), 69.
84. Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific*, 157–158.
85. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 112, 110.
86. "Life History as a Social Document of Mr. Chin Cheung," 4.
87. *Ibid.*

88. "Life History as a Social Document of Bong Chin," 3, 5.
89. "Life History and Social Document of Ying Foy," 3-4.
90. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 186.
91. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 128.
92. Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 184.
93. Nee and Nee, *Longtime Californ'*, 169.
94. "Life History as a Social Document of Mr. Chin Cheung," 2.
95. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Although Scott studied peasants in Southeast Asia, I think the concept that he proposed is applicable to the behavior of Chinese Americans during the Chinese exclusion era.
96. "Life History and Social Document of Lew Kay," 3-4.
97. "Life History as a Social Document of Mr. Chin Cheung," 2.
98. "Life History of Chinese Student," 3.
99. This is a point that some Asian Americans who became political activists during the 1960s and 1970s seem to have difficulty understanding. Since the 1960s, because overt resistance has been possible, has enabled various minority groups to fight for their civil rights, and has consequently been greatly valorized, there has been a tendency to disparage the subservient behavior of individuals who lived in earlier years—under conditions far more oppressive than today's Asian Americans can even begin to imagine.
100. "Life History and Social Document of David Young," 7.
101. Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific*, 222.
102. *Ibid.*, 223.
103. "Autobiography of Mr. Luke Chess," Survey of Race Relations, major document no. 193, 3.
104. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
105. Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific*, 195.
106. *Ibid.*, 236.
107. *Ibid.*, 242.
108. *Ibid.*, 251.

109. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 188.
110. "Interview with Sun [Peter] Lee," Survey of Race Relations, minor document no. 62, 1.
111. "Interview with Louise Leung," 1.
112. J. S. Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 95.
113. "The Life History of a Hawaiian-Born Chinese Girl, F.L.," 10-11.
114. "Life History and Social Document of David Young," 9.
115. For a reprint of the essays, see either Chinn, *Bridging the Pacific*, 138-144, or Chinese Historical Society of America, ed., *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*, 1992 (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1992), 150-175.
116. Victor Wong, "Childhood II," 72.
117. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, Publishers, 1991), 187.