CHINESE AMERICANS
Comparative Cultures
Agenda

- History
- Key Issues
- Cultural Traits
Chinese Americans

• Arrived in the 1800s, motivated by economic, political and social forces (Opium War), mainly from the coasts

• Chinese pushed to leave their countries due to colonization industrialized Europeans nations and rapid growth population

• First the Chinese were praised for industriousness and tirelessness. When the economic boom slowed and the supply of jobs dried, the attitudes changed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtGVD0oUaRs
Chinese Americans

- Gold Rush petered out and the transcontinental railroad build by thousands of Chinese worked was complete by 1869.
  - 80% of all laborers for western railroad
- 1852- 24,000
- 1870 – 100,000 Chinese in entire country
- Built America’s economic foundation & labor force
- Became a threat and suffered tremendously
  - forced out of mainstream economy
Chinese Americans

- Transcontinental Railroad Contributions
  - 1865- $28.00 a month
  - Dangerous work including blasting & explosions
  - Primarily build the road
  - Chipped at the granite
  - Suspended with ropes
    - Severe weather
    - Poor working conditions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoXVq2aLn4M
Chinese Americans

Anti-Chinese Campaign

• Bitterness arose over labor dispute for a decade
• 1871 a mob of “several hundred whites shot, hanged, and stabbed 19 Chinese to death”
• 1875 Union Railroad Track hired Chinese strikebreakers in Wyoming
  • Followed by burning of Chinatowns in Seattle, attacks in Coal Creek
  • Sept. 2 – 150 white men attacked Chinese resulting in 28 deaths
• Other attacks and riots - Denver, Tacoma & Los Angeles
• “The Chinese must go!”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOB0VCCEUa4 – Yellow Peril vs Model Minority
Chinese Americans

- Suffered:
  - Severe exploitation
  - Pay discrimination
  - Poor labor conditions
  - Violence
  - Deprived of means living
  - Embarrassment
  - Harassment

According to John Higham:

- No variety of anti-European sentiment has ever approached the violent extremes to which anti-Chinese agitation went in the 1870s and 1880s.
- Lynching, boycotts, and mass expulsions...harassed the Chinese. *
Chinese Americans

- Blaine, James Gillespie
- Laborers immigrating to the American West Coast were a servile class of workers, little better than slaves, who were lowering the standard of living for all free laborers.
The Chinese Question.

The Chinaman works cheap because he is a barbarian and seeks gratification of only the lowest, the most inexcusable wants. He is the lowest and vilest of the human race. He is an enemy to him on grounds of 1. Race 2. Industry 3. Politics 4. Morality.

Trades and Unions.

Resolved in Union Meeting:

Importation of Chinese Barbarians into the country must be stopped by the ballot or bullet. They are dishonest no false, vicious, immoral, and heathenish.

John Chinaman is an idolater heathen.

Chinese Philosophy is not a religion. It is not a morality. It is the religion of materialism.
LET THE CHINESE EMBRACE CIVILIZATION, AND THEY MAY STAY.
Chinese Americans

- 1882 - Chinese Exclusionary Act passed
  - Banning all immigration from China for 10 years, extended for two years, and then implemented indefinitely
  - Prohibited immigration based on race
    - (low divorce rates, low delinquency, paucity of youth, avoidance of welfare, illegal status, and access, retention of the language)
  - White business owners, capitalists
  - Mainly male immigrants, 25 to 1 females
  - 80 years later, 1920, 1/3 of population was native-born
    - With voting and immigration rights

- Act was repelled by Magnuson Act in 1943
  - Allowed Chinese immigrants to become naturalized citizens
  - Annual right of 105 immigrants
Ethnic Enclaves

• Chinese became urbanized as the anti-Chinese campaign and racism took their toll.
• Forced out of towns and smaller cities into urban areas offering safety and anonymity
• Chinatowns had existed since the start of immigration but took on added significance of safe haves “from the storm”
  • Merchants, skilled artisans and experienced in commerce
  • They established businesses and retail stores
• Chinatowns became the economic, cultural, and social centers of the community.
Chinatowns

- Elaborate social structures developed that mirrored traditional Chinatown
- Enforced segregation helped preserve traditional food, dress, language, values, and religions of the homeland
  - Occasionally disputes over control of disputes
  - Highly organized, self contained communities
  - Internal government – Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (coordinated activities)
    - Spoke against discrimination
    - Political
More on Chinatowns

• Largest Chinatown is in NY. Earliest Chinese resident of NY was Lee Ah-Bow. 1850 from SF, cook, who later entered the tea business

• 1884-1920 – number of Chinese in US decreased but increased in NY, problems in California and West resettled many
  • NY less anti-sentiment
  • Paper sons – by US born for immigration slots
  • Mainly laundries and restaurants and male until 1965
  • 1965 Immigration law abolished national origin quotas
    • System where preference for the skilled

• Ethnocentric and little need to assimilate

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhc-0m3SXKw
Chinese Americans

• 1930 the Chinese became our friends during WWII, although the tone of friendship was condescending. They had fought against the “sly, tricky Jap” They were more honest, hard-working, and gentle than their neighbor
Second Generation Chinese Americans

- WWII – 8000 served the armed forces
- 1940s and 50s moved out of the enclaves
- Group mobile and Americanized, could speak English, understood language
- Women pursued an education, more women attaining an education than males
- APIs still earned less and less favorable occupations
- Those in Chinatowns do not have the success profile
  - Low wages, garment district, service sector
New Trends

- Chinese women - high rates of employment
  - Men make less than white men but Chinese women make more than white women
  - Chinese women constitute a higher percentage of family income than whites (56% of the men)
  - Bipolar economic distribution in households
    - Clustered in upper and lower ends of education, occupation, and income
      - High income, higher number of households
      - NY 1980 – 50% less income than SF, 50% higher poverty rate
  - Low divorce rates
  - Small number live in single headed households
  - Increase rate of out marriage (almost 30%, more women marry out than men, 56 vs, 45%)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgAqEu8xFoc
**Families**

- Mutilated families - separated for years until 1924
- Traditional – Male dominant, hierarchical, traditional roles of parent and child, values from country.
- Bicultural – Second or third generation. They are products of the two cultures. There is some cultural conflict.
- Modern - Cosmopolitan, more American than Chinese. They desire full assimilation and they think, speak and are American.
Other Variables to Consider

- Degree of acculturation
- Assimilation
- SES
- Family experiences
- Educational level
Values

- Education highly valued
- See the informal relationship White children have with parents
- Respect for Elders and education
  - Limited questioning to authority
- Parental push –
  - disturbance, use of drug, gangs, etc
- Religion
- 1/3 of Chinese in Hawaii are Christian
- Family Importance and Community Emphasis
Cultural Traits

- Stress group membership over individual self interest
  - People see themselves as part of a larger system

- Confucianism: Loyalty to the group, conformity to societal expectations, and respect for one’s superiors.

- Business organized around kinship relationships
- Sensitivity to the perceptions of others
  - (Saving Face)
    - Importance of avoiding public embarrassment or shame
- “The nail that sticks up must be hammered down”
- Extended family kinship
Asian Philosophy

- Maintaining harmony
- Feeling obligating within families are strong
- Loss of face are used to keep connection to family
- Love is expressed to the fulfillment of obligation; debt to parents can never be paid.
  - Kids take care of parents during later years
More on Values

- Collectivism - family and group focus
- Authority
- Hierarchical family structure
  - Father is the provider
  - Father seen as distant, authoritarian, dignified
  - Mothers are seen as caretakers
  - Devoted to children
Values

- Emotional restraint = maturity
- Specific roles
- Gender specific roles
- Extended family orientation
- Gift Giving
Cultural Themes

- Familism- privacy of the family, group, and community
- Socialization occurs within the context of an extended family, and family practices promoted development of a group or collectivistic consciousness
- Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism is the philosophy by which one’s ethics social relationships and role within community are defined.
Cultural Themes

• Interdependence, such that the person is expected to function in harmony within her or his social context.
• Hierarchical relationship - one’s obligations and duties to the collective are defined by one’s social role (for example, employers, fathers and sons, experts, etc.)
More on Values

• Filial piety- the parent child bond is more critical than virtually any other, has implicit set of duties and obligations to maintain family harmony.
• Emotions are expressed through actions (taking care of one’s parents’ physical needs) rather than verbalizations.
More details

• Indirect vs. Direct Forms of Communication - the group has been referred to as quite, passive and make a great effort to avoid offending others.
• Minimal eye contact
• Silence can be a sign of respect