

# The Impact of the Chinese Diaspora in the U.S. on the American View of China

Jan Misiuna

Warsaw School of Economics  
Collegium of Socio-Economics  
Department of Political Studies  
e-mail: [jan.misiuna@sgh.waw.pl](mailto:jan.misiuna@sgh.waw.pl)

## Abstract

The first Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States in the 1820s and initially their presence did not result in improving the American perception of China. On the contrary – intense immigration from China led to the development of racist and xenophobic attitudes towards the Chinese (*Yellow Peril*), which culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. During the Second World War, China became an important ally of the United States, which triggered a succession of changes to laws barring Chinese immigration (Magnuson Act). Contemporary Chinese Americans – particularly Taiwanese Americans – can be located in the upper spheres of immigrant population: they are considered to be a well-educated and affluent group. This paper presents the historical and contemporary socio-economic characteristics of the Sino-American population set against a historical and legal background.

**Keywords:** Chinese Americans, immigration, Model Minority, Yellow Peril, immigration law

## Introduction

As President John F. Kennedy aptly phrased it in the title of his 1959 book encouraging a reform of the United States' immigration laws, Americans are "a nation of immigrants". Immigration lies at the heart of many narratives and family histories of American citizens and is a crucial component of their collective consciousness. Yet even though many contemporary Americans take pride in their immigrant heritage and emphasise their dual identity (Polish-American, Lithuanian-American, German-American etc.), the word "immigrant" continues to evoke negative associations for a large portion of American society (Jones). Historically, this prejudiced view of immigration was widespread and prevalent (see e.g. Knoll, Schrag); not until the twentieth century have the Americans begun to appreciate and acknowledge the role immigration played in the development of their traditions, identity and national character. Ironically, these attitudes started to shift following the introduction of radical restrictions – immigration quotas – on the influx of new immigrants (Huntington, 39). American citizens' views on immigration in general have changed and so has their perception and treatment of individual ethnic groups, including the Irish<sup>1</sup> and the Chinese (see e.g. Tong, Lai). Attitudes towards these minorities shifted from hostile, bordering on racist, through to accepting and being inclusive. Changes to the perception of individual ethnic groups also affected the way their country of origin was perceived. The aim of this article is to present the Chinese diaspora in the United States and the changes it has undergone, to examine the causes of these transformations and provide an overview of the socio-economic situation of Sino-American people with a particular focus on the image of China and the Chinese in the eyes of American citizens in an attempt to clarify the background of Chinese-American relations.

## The First Wave of Chinese Immigration into the U.S.

Although some sources indicate that the first Chinese arrived in United States as early as the eighteenth century, the beginnings of a significant Chinese presence in the U.S. date back to the mid-nineteenth century. The influx of the Chinese resulted from a growing demand for mining labourers, which followed the discovery of large deposits of gold in California in the late 1840s (the so-called California Gold Rush) (Portes, Rumbaut, 11). Transcontinental transportation routes connecting the East and West coasts of North America did not exist at the time – people and goods travelled by sea, via a circuitous route around South America, which proved

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<sup>1</sup> The Irish arriving in the U.S. in large numbers throughout the nineteenth century have faced widespread discrimination which included barring them from employment ("No Irish Need Apply"). These anti-Irish attitudes prevailed for a long time (see e.g. Dolan, Ignatiev).

lengthy, hazardous and very costly. Consequently, labour shortages could not be easily and cheaply filled through internal migration from the East Coast states. As a result, mining companies developed a system for recruiting contract workers from Southern China, predominantly the Pearl River Delta (Portes, Rumbaut, 11). The scale of the resulting influx was substantial: in 1852 – the first year of mass immigration alone – California saw the arrival of 52 000 Chinese (*The Rise...*, 37). The end of the California Gold Rush in the mid-1850s did not reduce the flow of Chinese workers into the United States; on the contrary, their numbers continued to grow. Continuing demand for cheap labour from China was generated by the decision to build the Transcontinental Railroad, which in 1869 finally linked North America's East Coast to the West (Portes, Rumbaut, 11). It is now estimated that as many as 90% of all workers involved in the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad were Chinese (*The Rise...*, 37).

**Table 1.** Chinese immigrants in the USA, 1870–1930

Year	Number of immigrants
1870	63 199
1880	105 465
1890	107 488
1900	89 863
1910	71 531
1920	61 639
1930	74 954

Source: Bartnik, 43.

American public statistics responded very quickly to the mid-nineteenth century immigration from China: as early as 1860, Californian questionnaires used in the decennial United States Census featured “Chinese” as an answer to the question about nationality (*The Rise...*, 37). Owing to that, as well as to the records maintained on the nationality of people arriving in the U.S. by sea in the first half of the nineteenth century, we are able to evaluate the scale of immigration from China and the size of the Chinese population in the United States at the time. Unfortunately, information concerning the scale of Chinese emigration from the U.S. is not detailed or entirely accurate. According to official records, between 1850 and 1889 the number of Chinese immigrants arriving in the United States stood at nearly 300 000, of which 50% are estimated to have returned to their country of origin (Hooper, Batalova). At no point did the number of people of Chinese descent (born both in China and the U.S.), residing in the United States between 1870 and 1930, drop below 60 000; the number peaked, in absolute terms, between 1880 and 1890,

when it exceeded 100 000 (see Table 1). In 1870, immediately upon the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, the Chinese made up 9% of California's population and as much as 25% of the total workforce in the state (*The Rise...*, 37). The above disproportion between the share in the general population and the importance for the labour force was caused by a dramatic discrepancy between the number of men and women who emigrated from China. This imbalance persisted well into the 1930s, with the ratio of Chinese men to Chinese women in the United States remaining at 26:1 (Portes, Rumbaut, 12).

For the Chinese workers contracted to build the Transcontinental Railroad, the completion of the investment was equivalent to unemployment. The only sector of Californian economy that could quickly absorb a large number of workers was farming, but the number of available jobs was still lower than that of Chinese job seekers. Relatively few people returned to China – wages paid to workers constructing the railway in extreme mountain conditions were too low to enable them to save enough money to buy a return ticket and purchase land in their home country (Portes, Rumbaut, 12). Some sought employment in cities. The migration of Chinese workers from their secluded camps scattered across a wasteland surrounding the railroad route into the cities revealed the scale of Chinese migration. Californian cities and farming communities, dominated by settlers of European descent, were suddenly faced with an influx of Chinese migrants, who radically differed from their fellow inhabitants in cultural terms. At the same time the country suffered from severe drought, economic recession and resulting high rates of unemployment. This situation provoked widespread anti-Chinese sentiment. Chinese men residing in the United States were believed to be “coolies” – forced labourers – while Chinese women were alleged to earn their living as prostitutes or engage in polyandry (Fuhriman, 400). These claims should be approached with caution: based on what we know today, forced labour and slavery among the Chinese in the United States can be virtually ruled out, even if there may have been a few isolated instances thereof. The issue of widespread prostitution and relationships of Chinese women with multiple men should be viewed in the light of cultural norms governing the relations between women and men in China (first wives, second wives, concubines, prostitutes) that stood in vast contrast to the Anglo-Saxon culture. Another factor to consider is the disproportion between the number of women and men in the Chinese diaspora (see, e.g. Wolf, Huang). From the viewpoint of the diaspora itself the relationships between women and men within the Chinese community did not deviate substantially – if at all – from the rules of conduct expected in Chinese culture; meanwhile for the Americans that conduct violated fundamental moral principles (Fuhriman, 400–401)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Intercultural marriage was relatively rare in the United States, due to legal obstacles, even following the American Civil War (Chan, 62–3). For an overview and analysis of Chinese-Western intercultural marriage in China, see (Bo).

These and other differences between the Chinese immigrants and the white population fuelled a rise of xenophobia and racism. “The immigration of Chinese labour was viewed as a threat to both American free labour and the sanctity of white womanhood. Anti-Chinese propagandists proclaimed that Chinese labour would drive down the working wage and force the wives of white working men into prostitution” (Teng, 96). The Chinese – not only those residing in the USA – were denied their humanity and instead presented as “half civilized beings who spread filth, depravity and epidemic” (Portes, Rumbaut, 12). Xenophobia and racism, coupled with the dehumanisation of Chinese immigrants in vicious pamphlets, propaganda materials and at rallies in anti-Chinese clubs quickly led to acts of violence perpetrated by members of both white and Mexican communities (Norton, 509). One of the most notorious attacks, resembling the *pogroms* of Eastern Europe, occurred in Rock Springs in Wyoming, where in the summer of 1885 a group of white men attacked 500 Chinese miners, killing 28 (Zinn, 266). The Chinese found it very difficult to prevent such attacks, especially given the aggressive anti-Chinese propaganda; they usually resorted to moving to another town or mining camp (Norton, 509).

## Legislation Governing the Migration of the Chinese into the U.S.

Widespread anti-Chinese sentiment forced the federal government to take action. The legal situation of the Chinese in the United States (and of Americans residing in, or visiting China) was regulated first and foremost by the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868. Apart from trade matters (in this respect the Burlingame-Seward Treaty incorporated and extended the provisions of the Tientsin Treaty of 1858), this agreement regulated issues related to migration. Upon signing the Burlingame-Seward Treaty, the United States granted the Chinese the right to free immigration and travel within the United States and guaranteed the protection of Chinese citizens in the United States in accordance with the “most favoured nation” principle (The Burlingame-Seward Treaty). The terms of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty meant that should the United States government wish to change its immigration policy with regard to the Chinese, it would be obliged to establish a new agreement with China or terminate the existing one. Faced with rising anti-Chinese attitudes at home, President Rutherford B. Hayes chose to renegotiate it. A new agreement between the United States and China, which came to be known as the Angell Treaty (named after the chief American negotiator), was concluded in 1880 in Beijing. Under its provisions, the United States reserved the right to impose temporary restrictions on the influx of low-skilled labourers from China, while at the same time permitting the influx of highly skilled workers (Chinese Immigration and

the Chinese Exclusion Acts). In 1882, seizing new opportunities arising from the revised Treaty, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, designed to carry out selected terms of the agreement relating to the Chinese (22 Stat. 58) and imposing a ten-year suspension on immigration and settlement of both skilled and unskilled Chinese workers in the United States. The Act also required every Chinese person already residing in the US and travelling out of the country to carry a special certificate enabling them to return. It was the first Act in American history to place such broad restrictions on immigration (Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts)<sup>3</sup>.

Introducing tight immigration policies towards people of Chinese descent – exemplified by the Chinese Exclusion Act – was only one of many steps taken against the Chinese. Another measure was the so-called Scott Act, passed by Congress in 1888. It was introduced after both sides failed to ratify the Bayard-Zhang Treaty, under which the Chinese agreed to voluntarily curtail emigration into the United States for a period of 20 years in exchange for better protection of their diaspora (Liu, 38). The Scott Act stated that Chinese workers who travelled abroad and held valid re-entry certificates but who failed to meet new immigration criteria, would be denied entry into the United States despite being entitled to return under the most-favoured-nation principle guaranteed in the Burlingame-Seward Treaty. As an immediate consequence of passing the Scott Act, over 20 000 Chinese were denied re-entry into the United States – people who were, in fact, long-term legal US residents and only temporarily out of the country (Liu, 38).

Around the time when the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Scott Act were passed, the term *Yellow Peril* was coined to describe Chinese immigrants residing in the United States (Bartnik, 43). In the context of such aggressively anti-Chinese rhetoric, it is not surprising that further steps were taken with the view to limit the size of the Chinese diaspora in the United States. The Scott Act was followed by the 1892 Geary Act which prohibited the entrance of Chinese persons into the United States (27 Stat. 25). The Geary Act extended the term of the Chinese Exclusion Act for another 10 years and imposed further onerous requirements and restrictions on Chinese residents, obliging them to carry a certificate of identity and a certificate of residence at all times. Immigrants from China were expected to bear the full burden of proof of their right to stay in the United States. A person who did not hold the required documents could be sentenced to hard labour or face deportation. At the same time, the act required two white witnesses to testify to a Chinese person's immigration status – effectively denying the Chinese their right to bear witness in court. Furthermore, Chinese citizens were not allowed

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<sup>3</sup> Prior legal restrictions, albeit not on the influx of immigrants into the United States, could still deter potential immigrants. One such restriction was the Naturalization Act of 1790 which limited naturalization to white persons and was not repealed until a few years after the American Civil War (see e.g. Cohn).

to receive bail in *habeas corpus* proceedings. The constitutionality of the Scott Act and Geary Act was challenged in the courts (Liu, 38–39), but both laws were subsequently upheld by the United States Supreme Court in its respective decisions: *Chae Chan Ping v. United States* (130 U.S. 581 (1889)) and *Fong Yue Ting v. United States* (149 U.S. 698 (1893)).

The American anti-Chinese sentiment seems to have reached its peak in the early 20th century with Congress extending the ban on Chinese settlement for another decade and subsequently making the ban permanent (Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts). This decision epitomised an immigration policy based upon xenophobia and racism, deeply rooted and prevalent in the United States at the time. It was not until the post-World War II period that this nation scarred by the Civil War – a conflict rooted in racial discrimination – would depart from such an outlook<sup>4</sup>.

The American view of China and the Chinese<sup>5</sup> began to change following the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, which led to the Second Sino-Japanese War. The United States' support for China gradually increased throughout the military conflict; once Japan became the common enemy and China the fourth ally, granting such support was of strategic importance for the United States (Tiezzi). Thus the attitude towards the Chinese began to shift away from the pre-war approach. The Congress decided to depart from the radically anti-Chinese immigration policy – the Chinese were allies in the fight against Japan and could no longer be treated poorly and on a par with the mutual enemy. The Chinese Exclusion Act was formally repealed on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943, when President Franklin

4 American xenophobia and racism were by no means directed solely against the Asian and Black populations, but also against immigrants from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe – chiefly representing Slavic nations – as well as Italians and Jews. These attitudes were further reflected in the immigration quota system aimed at curbing the influx of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The legal framework for the quota-based immigration policy was provided in the Emergency Quota Law (An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States (42 Stat. 5), passed in 1921. That system, naturally, did not apply to the Chinese, who were already barred from settling in the United States. As for Asian (primarily Japanese) and Black people, the racist immigration policy reached its peak with the Immigration Act of 1924 (An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States, and for other purposes (43 Stat. 153), also known as the Johnson-Reed Act. The Act included provisions directed specifically against non-whites (including the Chinese), which, as it were, built upon the previous regulations, including the Naturalization Act of 1790 – they denied Asian and Black people the right to naturalization. American racial attitudes of the time are best summed up in the Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, where Articles 3 and 4 prohibit the admission to the United States of Asians and “idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons, persons with chronic alcoholism, paupers, convicted criminals, beggars, persons afflicted with tuberculosis or a loathsome or contagious infectious disease, people certified to be mentally or physically defective... polygamists, anarchists... prostitutes”.

5 For the history of American-Chinese relations see e.g. Sutter, Wang.

D. Roosevelt signed what came to be known as the Magnuson Act (An act to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act, to establish quotas, and for other purposes (57 Stat. 600). Not only did the Act abolish the ban on immigration from China, but it also permitted people of Chinese descent to be naturalized. From then on, immigration of the Chinese into the United States was to be regulated by the Immigration Act of 1924 and the quota system: this limited the annual number of Chinese immigrants to 2% of the Chinese population living in the United States as of the 1890 census. The change in the rhetoric concerning the Chinese community in the United States around the time of signing the Magnuson Act was striking – not only when compared to the era of the initial restrictions on Chinese immigration, but also to the period immediately preceding World War II. The Chinese were no longer considered the “yellow peril” and “half-civilised creatures”; instead they became “allies”. President Franklin D. Roosevelt went as far as to call the Chinese Exclusion Act “an unfortunate barrier between allies” and added that removing that barrier was a “manifestation on the part of the American people of their affection and regard” for the Chinese (Roosevelt).

Another decision to impact the growth of the Chinese population in the United States (albeit due to the Magnuson Act – but less prominently for the Chinese than for other ethnic groups) was taken by Congress in 1945 with the passing of the War Brides Act (an act to expedite the admission to the United States of alien spouses and alien minor children of citizen members of the United States armed forces (59 stat. 659), and – a year later – the complementary Chinese War Brides Act to place Chinese wives of American citizens on a non-quota basis (60 stat. 975). These two pieces of legislation enabled members of the American armed forces – who had served overseas during World War II and married while in service – to seek immigration visas for their spouses. The Chinese War Brides Act exempted Chinese spouses of American military men from the immigration quotas allocated for the Chinese population under the Magnuson Act.

Over a period of nearly 80 years, American immigration policy had undergone two dramatic transformations. The first one could be observed in public attitudes towards immigration, which spanned from welcoming newcomers with open arms, through almost completely excluding them, to finally embracing selective, but not restrictive, openness. The second transformation concerns the criteria adopted to identify *desirable* immigrants. Here the trajectory of change began with moderate racism (i.e. anyone could enter the United States, but some would never be granted citizenship), through racial criteria being deemed key in the selection of groups permitted to settle within the United States, to finally rejecting racism in favour of a merit-based approach. Both of these transformations were triggered by shifting attitudes towards Chinese immigrants and China itself. The anti-Chinese sentiment reflected in the Chinese Exclusion Act was the first step on a path to racial criteria forming the foundation of American immigration



policy, while the political aim to aid the Chinese resistance movement against the Japanese invasion led to the rejection of these criteria, as indicated by the Magnuson Act. Further support for immigration from China – a recent ally – was reflected in the first act that toned down (but hadn't entirely discarded) the racial nature of American immigration policy. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act – an act to revise the laws relating to immigration, naturalization, and nationality; and for other purposes (182 Stat. 66) introduced – apart from other selection criteria – merit-based assessment, focusing on the prospective immigrant's qualifications (Bartnik, 52–53). However, only after a complete overhaul of the immigration policy, including the abolishment of quotas allocated to particular nationalities, adoption of general limits and the introduction of a selection system based on the qualifications demonstrated by a prospective immigrant – which was executed in 1965 in the form of the Immigration and Nationality Act, the so-called Hart-Cellar Act. It was a law to revise the regulations relating to immigration, naturalization, and nationality; and for other purposes (79 Stat. 911) – was a large influx of Chinese people into the U.S. once again made possible.

## The Second Wave of Chinese Immigration

New migrants from China began arriving in the United States in the late 1960s. The first group to settle in the US were people born in Hong Kong; today this group represents 10% of the Chinese population residing in the United States. A large influx of immigrants from mainland China occurred as late as 1978 and followed the decision of the People's Republic of China to lift migration restrictions and open its economy to global markets. As a result, the number of immigrants from mainland China nearly doubled between 1980 and 1990, climbing from 299 000 to 536 000 (Hooper, Batalova). Furthermore, according to the data collected in the 2010 United States Census, the Chinese population in the U.S. stood at 3.535 million and that figure was almost 38% higher than it had been a decade earlier. Between 2000 and 2010, the Chinese population grew slower than the overall Asian population by 5.3 percentage points (in the case of the overall Asian population a 44.3% growth was noted – from 10 242 million in 2000 to 14 674 million in 2010) (Hoeffel et al., 15)<sup>6</sup>, but the rate of its growth was still significantly higher than that of the total U.S. population, which amounted to 9.7% (Hoeffel et al., 4).

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<sup>6</sup> This concerns only the people who checked the Asian alone box. If the individuals who marked more than one box in the race/ethnic origin category (i.e. people born in mixed-race marriages) were included, the Asian population would show a growth from 11.9 million in 2000 to 17.3 million in 2010, whereas the figure for people of Chinese origin would be 2.86 million and 4 million, respectively.

Between 2000 and 2010 the share of the Chinese in the Asian population dropped by one percentage point – to 24% (Hoeffel et al., 15).

While discussing the influx of Chinese migrants into the United States, it is worthwhile to remember that – in contrast to other immigrant communities – the mass arrival of the Chinese is a fairly recent phenomenon. According to the United States Census Bureau, as many as 47% of all Chinese immigrants residing in the United States in 2013 had arrived in 2000 or later – and as many as 17% of these arrived in 2010 or later. For the sake of comparison, the figures for the total foreign-born population are as follows: immigrants who arrived in 2000 or later represented 39% of the total, while only 10% of the total number of immigrants arrived in the United States in 2010 or later. Moreover, as many as 61% of immigrants currently residing in the United States entered the country prior to 2000, whereas for the Chinese population this figure stands at 53% (Hooper, Batalova).

The significance of the arrival of the Chinese – or more broadly, people of Asian descent – for the growth of the foreign-born population in the United States becomes clear when one compares the share of Asians and Latin Americans in the general population, the Latin American people representing the largest of the new arrival groups over the past few decades. While as recently as in 2000, Latin Americans made up 60% of all new immigrants arriving into the United States, by 2010 their share had halved to 31% of the total. Meanwhile, the share of Asian-born immigrants in the total number of new arrivals increased from 20% in 2000 to 34% in 2010 (*The Rise...*, 1). Data collected during the 1860 United States Census – the first to include Chinese as a distinct nationality – indicated that the entire Chinese-born population (equalling the entire Asian population within the United States at the time) was concentrated in the west of the United States (Frey, 95). Looking at regional distribution, contemporary Chinese settlement in the United States is concentrated in the West and the North East. States situated in the first of these two regions are home to 49% of the total Chinese population, while the second region is populated by 26.4% of the total. In other words, these two regions are inhabited by over 75% of the total Chinese-born population (Hoeffel et al., 18). The overall population of the United States is more evenly geographically distributed, with the largest percentage inhabiting the South (37%), and only 41% living in the West and the North East (*The Rise...*, 33). “Chinese Americans are the Asian group that is most concentrated in metropolitan areas; in fact, more than one-half of Chinese Americans reside in just five metropolitan areas” (Frey, 96). In 2010 these areas included New York – home to nearly 20% of the total American Chinese population (close to 650 000), followed by Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose and Boston, which account for 54% of all Chinese residents born the United States (Frey, 95–96).

The Chinese American population differs from the general population of the United States in many respects. The Chinese are slightly younger than

the general population, with the median age two years lower than the overall figure. Although the percentage of Chinese Americans in a marital relationship is higher than that of the general population, they are much less likely to have children. The same holds true for the Chinese in informal relationships, with fewer children born outside of marriage. In the general population, around 37% of children are born outside of marriage, while for children of Chinese origin this statistic is barely 11.3%. Another clear difference between Chinese Americans and the rest of the population lies in the area of education: as many as 18% of Chinese Americans did not graduate from secondary school, with the percentage for the overall population standing at 14.4%; however, as many as 51% are university graduates, compared to 28% of the general population of the United States. These educational achievements are reflected in the financial well-being of the Chinese communities. The median household income of Chinese American families amounts to USD 65 000 per annum, while the median income for the general population stands at USD 49 800. On the other hand, the home ownership rate is slightly lower for the Chinese American population (by 3.5 percentage points); this may be attributed to its share of fairly recent immigrants. While analysing data concerning the wealth and schooling of Chinese Americans one may notice an interesting fact – people of Chinese descent relatively rarely state proficiency in English. Only 51.9% of the Chinese residing in the United States report a “very good” command of English, whereas for the total Asian population and the general United States population that percentage stands at 63.5% and over 90%, respectively. Despite the comparatively poor command of the dominant language and a relatively high proportion of individuals without secondary education, only 13.7% of the Chinese American population live in poverty – only 0.9 percentage points above the figure for the general population (*The Rise...*, 37).

Economic data may be seen as the most objective, if imperfect, way to assess the well-being of Chinese Americans in the United States and it seems to paint an unequivocally positive picture, further confirmed by the findings of the intergenerational mobility survey conducted in 2012 by the Pew Research Center. As many as 57% of the Sino-Americans who participated in the survey believed that their standard of living was much better than that of their parents. At the same time, a similar study carried out in China yielded vastly different results, with only 39% of the respondents expressing the same opinion (*The Rise...*, 134). When juxtaposed, the findings of these two studies raise important questions. Firstly – how does the economic growth of China over the past 40 years translate into the standard of living of the population of the People’s Republic of China and its subjective perception? Secondly – considering the costs of emigration, such as acculturation or weakened family ties, do the benefits outweigh the costs? Another study by Pew Research Center conducted in 2012 has demonstrated that as many as 76% of the immigrants of Chinese descent surveyed would yet again choose to emigrate

to the United States and only 11% would rather have remained in the People's Republic of China (*The Rise...*, 120). These findings provide an affirmative answer to the second question and reinforce doubts expressed in the first.

The new wave of immigration from China affected not only the social structure of the United States, increasing its diversity, but also the American Chinese community itself, breaking it out of Chinatown ghettos and low-skilled jobs. This development was supported by the establishment of new immigrant organisations, distinct from pre-existing business, family or regional associations (the so-called *tongs*). The overwhelming majority of new organisations bring together people of Chinese origin across all business sectors – including the medical, financial and new technology industries – and maintain close ties with Chinese government agencies, some of which have been created at local and central levels with the sole purpose of reinforcing the ties of the Chinese diaspora with their country of origin. Chinese Americans can also benefit from a number of schemes and initiatives aimed at fostering their contacts with the “old country”, such as Chinese language courses offered by the rapidly expanding Confucius Institute network, or organized trips to China aimed at the younger generation of the Chinese born abroad. Such initiatives are supported by the Chinese authorities, in whose view the Chinese diaspora can contribute to the development of China and influence its international perception. The Chinese diaspora is also seen as a potential source of know-how and prospective investments. This view seems justified: Chinese American organisations have financed or co-financed the development of various kinds of infrastructure in China and contributed to the creation of universities (Portes, Rumbaut, 178–181). However, the impact Chinese immigrant organisations exert on the United States policy seems to fall short of their efficiency in other operations for the benefit of China. Although the “proactive stance of Chinese authorities at all levels (...) enhanced the power and visibility of immigrant organisations” (Portes, Rumbaut, 181), the People's Republic of China lobby in the United States is not among the most powerful in terms of influencing American foreign policy<sup>7</sup>.

Contemporary Chinese immigrants into the United States are entirely different from those who arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – they are well-educated professionals living in a community free of the demographic problems of the past. The attitude of the American public towards the Chinese, or more broadly – towards people of Asian descent in general – is also very different. The American public no longer sees Chinese communities as a “yellow peril”, instead calling them a “model minority”, one which assimilates easily and causes no trouble; Chinese people are believed to be driven and determined to succeed through hard work and study (Frey, 102–106). This view – seemingly flattering – is not free of stereotypes; for example,

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<sup>7</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that the Taiwanese Americans have formed the most powerful lobby (Hrebenar, Thomas, 312).

the belief that Asians lack originality and creativity, but compensate for it by hard work. As a result, people of Chinese descent are frequently offered jobs that require a lot of responsibility, but are placed on a relatively low level in the corporate hierarchy. Chinese employees are given few opportunities for promotion to top executive positions (the *glass ceiling*) and are hugely under-represented in that sphere, especially considering the large proportion of highly qualified professionals in this ethnic group (Węgleński, 63–64). It is therefore not surprising that in 2012, Chinese Americans voiced their complaints of discrimination more intensely and frequently than other Asian communities, seeing it as an important problem that affects their well-being (*The Rise...*, 40) and limits their access to top universities or governmental and other administrative posts (*The Model...*).

## Conclusions

Beliefs of contemporary Americans concerning the growing power of the People's Republic of China are likely to be based not just on messages presented in the media, but also on observing Chinese-American communities within the United States. The emerging picture – that of well-educated, family-oriented, quiet and hard-working people – affects the perception of China as a country inhabited by hundreds of millions of people that share these positive traits. Unfortunately, this positive image is tainted by an array of racist stereotypes which make it difficult for the general American public to develop a reasonably realistic view of China's true potential and the contribution of the Sino-American diaspora to the benefit of both superpowers. How soon these perceptions change depends largely on the efforts of Chinese diplomats promoting a new image of China<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Some of the tasks related to promoting a positive image of China in the United States are performed through public policy means, such as think tanks sponsored by the Chinese government, or by Chinese scholars employed by American institutions. However, no reliable or recent data on the subject is available. American think tanks usually do not provide information on the ethnic composition of their workforce, and while some studies on Chinese scholars in the U.S. exist, they are not concerned with ethnicity (Zhong, Shen). As to the importance of Chinese government-sponsored think tanks, the data on their number is imprecise and ranges between 2 and 12. This is, however, enough to conclude that their power to influence the American government policy and public opinion is very limited (Fish).

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