

Immigration, Acculturation, and Quality of Life:
A Study of the Chinatowns of San Jose, California

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The subject of immigrant adjustment into American Society has been the focus of many books and articles in the last century. Most of these reports are based on models dealing with issues such as acculturation, discrimination, settlement patterns, the effects of immigration on the economy, and standards of living for the immigrants themselves.

A number of models exist that examine how immigrants in the United States progress from when they first arrive to third and fourth generation and beyond. One of the most influential of the immigrant models is that of Milton Gordon, writing in the mid 1960s. He viewed immigrant evolution as a series of steps or stages. Gordon emphasized acculturation as the first step, which he broadly defined as everything from the wearing of American clothing, to speaking English, to adopting American values. The next and subsequent steps are the gradual assimilation into the general populace as, bit by bit, the distinct culture of the immigrant group fades away. However, Gordon's model is at times overly broad and according to later scholars, skips many steps, but as one of the earliest comprehensive models of immigrant acculturation, it still remains the benchmark for many further studies in immigration [Gordon: 1964].

Other models focus on different aspects of immigration instead, such as how immigrants succeed in society. One such model, by John Ogbu, highlights that some immigrant groups are better able to adapt to American life due to the ability and willingness to sacrifice in the present for future gain. As he wrote, "Immigrants tend to have a much more positive view of the opportunities open to them in US Society than do native-born minorities, and they are also more willing to take arduous jobs and make other sacrifices that they view as temporary expedients on the way to economic success" [Ogbu: 1991].

Still other models concentrate on how immigrants culturally subsist in the United States. This is best exemplified in the concept of voluntary pluralism, written by Lawrence Fuchs. Fuchs' model explains that the nature of American society "allows new groups to participate in the [mainstream] society through the polity while maintaining their ethnic distinctiveness in private realms" [Fuchs, 1990]. Models such as Fuchs outline how immigrants can exist in American society, and, at least early on, still keep some aspect of their own identity as separate ethnic groups.

The perhaps largest problem with such immigrant models and the majority of immigrant models is the pool of data. Mostly, such models draw on white European immigrants and almost never include non-white minorities. For example, in an otherwise well written history by Richard Alba of immigration models, he takes into account a large number of differing models of immigration, but almost completely leaves out most non-white ethnic groups, including all Asian ethnicities [Schuck: 1998].

While models such as these can tell much about an immigration group, they have little to say about how the immigrants themselves view their life and how content, if at all, they are in their new home. Such a concept can be called, in a broad sense, quality of life. Through the incorporation of such models and research into the historical accounts and material remains of immigrant cultures, it is possible to look at how groups of people were choosing to live and thus deduce quality of life. The term quality of life is hard to define and can mean many different things. This study attempts to both define the term quality of life and assess the quality of life for a specific immigrant group using the criteria stated above.

The case this study examines is that of the Chinese immigrants living in San Jose, California in the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, it compares two different residential districts, the Market Street Chinatown, lasting from the early 1870s until it was burned by arson fire in 1887, and the Woolen Mills Chinatown, lasting from 1887 until it was also burned in 1902. This study attempts to compare the quality of life for the residents of these two Chinatowns based on the material remains found in archaeological excavations of these streets. The sites are ideal for such a study mainly because of the economic make up of the two neighborhoods. A mix of bachelors and families, businessmen, merchants, and hard laborers populated Market Street. Woolen Mills on the other hand was almost entirely comprised of bachelors working as agricultural and industrial workers or other such low end, labor-intensive jobs.

An initial question to be asked is what constitutes a better quality of life for these Chinese immigrants? Many residents of Market Street had higher paying jobs than those of Woolen Mills and a number had families, while the majority of those in the Woolen Mills site had lower paying jobs and were single. Therefore, the people of Market Street should represent a higher income and so were better able to afford the comforts and unnecessary belongings desired to live contentedly.

In addition, the residents of these two habitations often had different financial goals. Generally, the bachelors of Woolen Mills were sent alone by their families in China to make money to help their relatives back home. Therefore, a large part of their income was sent back to China and their residence in San Jose was often only temporary until they could return home and start their own families. Many of the inhabitants of Market Street, however, had families in the United States and thus were more liable to be

permanent residents. Their income belonged to themselves and they could afford to spend more on making life here comfortable. Through studying the differences in material culture between these two sites, it is possible to deduce what constituted a comfortable lifestyle and thus a higher quality of life, as well as answering questions on how the Chinese were adjusting to life in America and how and if the Chinese of San Jose fit into immigrant models.

The materials being considered for this study are from the archaeological assemblages from Woolen Mills, excavated in 2002, and Market Street, excavated in 1984. The available study sample from Woolen Mills represents the entire excavation area, while the Market Street artifacts, due to the present unfinished state of cataloging the artifacts from the site, represent only half of the excavated site and only one feature. The feature chosen, feature 18, is by far the largest of the features, and mostly probably was a garbage heap behind a store.

In order to keep the comparison simple, only bowls were included in the study sample. The bowls ranged in size, categorized as small (less than 5 inch rim radius), medium (5 to 7.5 inch rim radius), large (7.5 to 12 inch rim radius), and unknown (no discernable rim size). Only bowl fragments given a Minimum Number of Vessel (MNV) count of one were considered. This meant that a fragment was diagnostic, either a rim or base fragment, and not identified as connected to another catalogued bowl. Any unassigned non-diagnostic fragments were not included in the study sample.

In collecting the data, the bowls were grouped together based on ware type and then size. The assemblage from Woolen Mills was understandably much larger. In order to compensate for this, all results are calculated in terms of percentage of the total

assemblage so that useful comparisons can be made between the two sites. Finally, the bowls were graphed both together and separately in order to clearly see the results.

Based on previous research into relative worth between bowl types, the data is meant to allow a comparison between which site had bowls of higher monetary worth and so more income spent on buying bowls, as well as the prevalence of different ware types between the sites.

The ware types of bowls in the study sample were split into eight categories. Three of these are of definite Chinese origin. First is Celadon, a type of porcelain and also the most expensive of the Chinese ware types. The second type is called Four Seasons, also porcelain, and also a somewhat expensive ware. Third is Bamboo ware, a far cheaper porcelaneous stoneware. The next two categories are somewhat complicated and only appear in the Woolen Mills assemblage. The first is Porcelain-Asian, which refers to Asian porcelain bowls, most often Chinese, with either no decoration or relating to a fragment too small to allow for identification. The second, Porcelain, is an uncertain category. In the artifact catalog from Woolen Mills, Porcelain was not clearly explained, nor indicated if it is any different than Porcelain-Asian. A further complication is that some of the bowls clearly labeled, for example, as Four Seasons were also categorized as Porcelain and not Porcelain-Asian, though such bowls obviously were Chinese in origin. The next ware type is called Whiteware, which comes from either England or the United States and refers to a refined stoneware. This category includes both decorated and undecorated whiteware. The final category Other refers to bowls not fitting any of these categories, most notably earthenware bowls. The results are as follows:

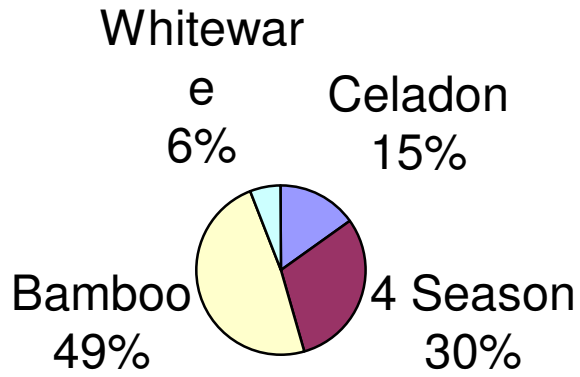
Market Street:

Type:	Small	Medium	Large	Unknown	Total
Celadon	3	5	2	1	11
Four Seasons	0	3	15	3	21
Bamboo	0	24	4	7	35
Whiteware	0	1	2	1	4
				Total Bowls:	71

Woolen Mills:

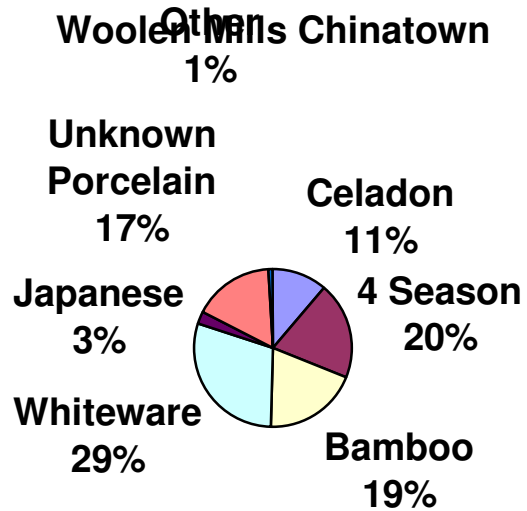
Type:	Small	Medium	Large	Unknown	Total
Celadon	14	10	0	5	29
Four Seasons	0	6	21	22	50
Bamboo	0	38	1	10	49
Porcelain-Asian	2	1	2	5	10
Porcelain	0	1	2	29	32
Whiteware	0	2	7	61	75
Japanese	0	0	0	7	7
Other	0	0	0	2	2
				Total Bowls:	254

Market Street Chinatown

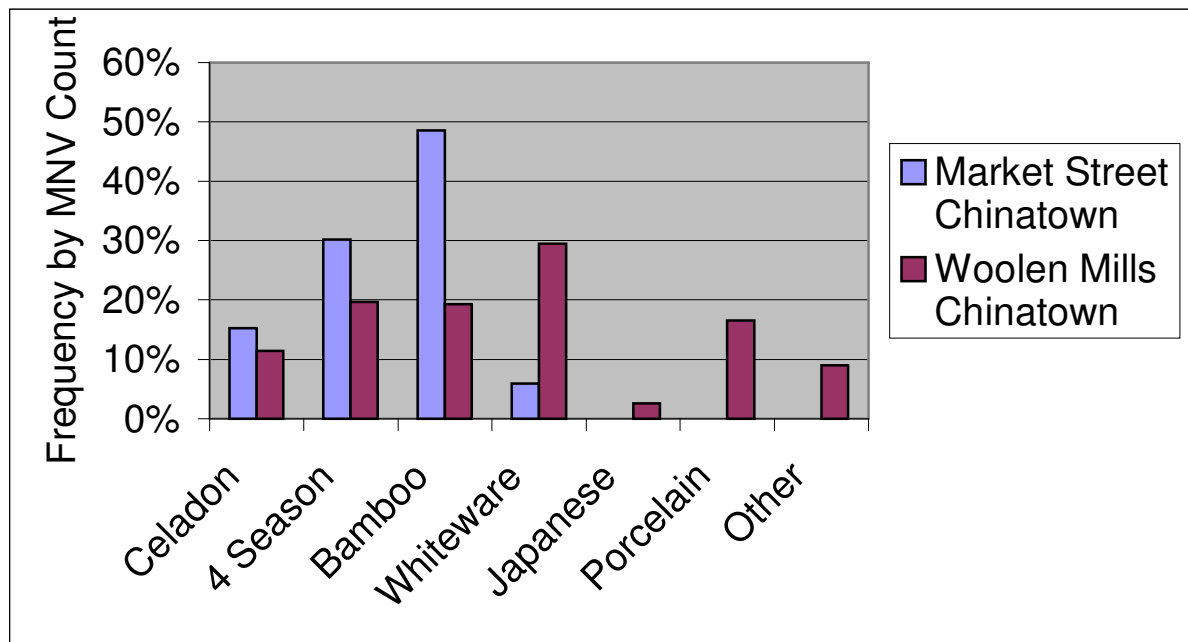


Frequency of Ceramic Ware Types, by MNV Count

Woolen Mills Chinatown



Frequency of Ceramic Ware Types, By MNV Count



Comparison of Frequency of Ware Types Between Mark Street and Woolen Mills

One result that immediately comes through from the data is the great difference in variance between the two sites. While the Market Street collection is almost entirely comprised of Chinese bowls, the Woolen Mills site has less than half of its assemblage made up of Chinese bowls; the rest is comprised of Unknown Porcelain, Whiteware, Japanese, and Other types. One way to explain this is to take into account that the Woolen Mills assemblage is much larger and so one would expect a larger amount of variance. Also, it must be considered that the Woolen Mills assemblage represents bowls from the entire site while the Market Street assemblage is only from one feature from the site. It cannot be said at this point how feature 18 compares to other features from the excavation of Market Street or the site as a whole.

Subsequently, the majority of the problems with the data analysis arise from the fact that the collections are from separate excavations and thus not all the data can be

exactly correlated. First of all, the MNV counts between the two sites pose a conundrum. Many of the bowls fragments from the Woolen Mills collection were given a MNV count of zero and thus were not included in the study sample, while very few in the Market Street collection had an MNV of zero. Since MNV was calculated in the same way for both collections, the reason for such a difference is not immediately clear. It is possible that for the Market Street Chinatown, fewer non-diagnostic fragments were given their own catalogue number due to lack of time, for the Market Street excavation, a Cultural Resource Management excavation, was necessarily executed quickly due to the need to have the site swiftly cleared for construction. The Woolen Mills excavation, though also a Cultural Resource Management excavation, was not as rushed and so possibly the archaeologists were able to catalog more of the non-diagnostic fragments.

The next problem deals with the vague titles given to some of the bowls in the Woolen Mills site. For example, seventeen percent of the assemblage from Market Street was categorized as Unknown Porcelain. As explained previously, bowls of this category could be either undecorated Asian porcelain or some other type of porcelain. Therefore, the relative value of such bowls is at this point impossible to ascertain, and, for the most part, have been left out of the analysis of the collection due to lack of information.

Another problem is with the sizing of the bowls. A bowl can be categorized with an MNV count of one based on a whole or partial base, as many of the bowls were, but a base cannot be used to figure the size of the bowl. The probable original use of the bowl is largely based on size, especially for the Chinese bowls. Small bowls were used for such things as liquids, medium bowls were primarily for individual's use, such as a rice bowl, and large bowls were for serving. If the size of a bowl is unknown, probable use

becomes almost impossible to determine. The Whiteware bowls especially pose such a problem, where the vast majority of the Whiteware bowls in the collection from Woolen Mills are of an unknown size

This leads up to the problem of the Whiteware bowls in general. The Market Street collection had a very low percentage of Whiteware bowls, making up only six percent of the entire assemblage. The remainder of the bowls were of Chinese origin and thus easily identifiable and given a relative value. However, in the Woolen Mills site, twenty nine percent of the entire assemblage is Whiteware, decorated and not decorated, and many without any indication of size. Whiteware bowls are much harder to give a relative value, since there are a wide variety of types, the sizes and country of origin are not always known, and no prior work has yet been done to compare the prices of Western Whiteware bowls to Chinese Porcelain Bowls.

The value of Whiteware bowls is partially researched in George Miller's article "Revised Compilation of CC Values for British Whitewares From The Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries." Miller is unable to give any exact price for Whitewares, but tells the values of different types relative to one another. In general, Whitewares vessels are inexpensive, especially by the middle of the nineteenth century when the practice of making Whiteware vessels had become well established. The least expensive type is the plain, white vessels, followed by transfer print decoration and rim bands. Some of the more expensive include White Granite type and "White China" Porcelain. The types of Whiteware bowls found at the Woolen Mills site were:

Plain White: 51, Decorated: 24

Decoration Types:

Transfer Print: 5
Rim Band: 5
Raised Relief Design: 2
Scalloped: 4
Painted Design: 5
Tinted Glaze: 3

On the whole, the decorated types of Whiteware bowls found in the Woolen Mills assemblage are inexpensive. Approximately two thirds are undecorated and the rest are mostly types that are on the lower end of value for Whitewares. The most expensive type found was the raised relief design, which is middle of the road, while transfer print is the cheapest type of decorated Whiteware available. Although at this point it is impossible to state exactly how Whitewares compare in terms of value to Chinese Porcelain, based on the relative cheapness of Whitewares as reported by Miller and the lower grade of quality of Whitewares as compared to porcelain, it can be assumed that the Whitewares are of less value than the finer Chinese porcelain.

Using this information, the overall quality and price of bowls found in Market Street can be said to be higher than those found in Woolen Mills, even though Woolen Mills has a higher amount of diversity in its collection. The ware types in the Market Street collection were almost exclusively Chinese, and these appear to have a higher market value than the Whitewares. This indicates that the residents of Market Street had more money available to spend on unnecessary objects such as higher quality bowls.

Next, it must be taken into account that the Market Street site was located in the center of San Jose and thus close to the non- Chinese population. This would also place the Market Street Chinatown near large, well-stocked marketplaces, where presumably

both Chinese and Western ceramics were available. The population of the Market Street Chinatown were able to buy whichever type of bowl they wanted due to location, but they chose to buy Chinese, and not Western, Bowls almost entirely. It would seem, since the residents of the Market Street Chinatown had easy access to Whiteware and did not buy them, they were intentionally buying Chinese ware types over Western ware types.

In contrast, the inhabitants of Woolen Mills by circumstance lived more frugally than the people of Market Street. As explained earlier, the residents of Woolen Mills for the most part were trying to save money to send home. Most probably, the men of Woolen Mills did not have the extra capital to buy many costly and unnecessary items. As well, the Woolen Mills site was significantly further away from the center of the city than Market Street. As a result, the nearby markets were also probably much smaller, so they perhaps had less access to the higher quality goods to which the residents of Market Street had access. Such a set of circumstances can explain why the prevalence of Chinese bowls is much smaller in Woolen Mills. The residents had less of a choice than those of Market Street, and so more Whiteware bowls are found in the assemblage.

It can be deduced then that the Market Street Chinese made a conscious decision to buy Chinese bowls. This conclusion leads back to the initial question of what constitutes a high quality of life. One aspect in the definition of quality of life can then be identified as the ability to live as one chooses. For residents of Market Street, who were better able to both afford better goods and have access to better goods, it would seem from their material possessions that a high quality of life comes at least partially from owning Chinese materials and not Western made materials.

To better understand the nature of the Market Street Chinatown, it must be known that while only a few hundred people officially lived there, many more came in on weekends and holidays. These were the Chinese who worked in factories and farms and came to the Market Street Chinatown to relax, go to the temple, get a meal and hear the latest news. The Chinese of San Jose did not have an easy life. They had to deal with many persecutions from the rest of the San Jose Community. The Chinese were widely hated by the white community, and numerous accounts record such atrocities as Chinese being stoned in the streets by white passersby. The Market Street Chinatown then was a sort of safe haven, where few white men ever tread. The Chinese there were free to live as they chose and not be molested.

Those coming in on the weekends had in the Market Street Chinatown a taste of their old life back in China. So, deliberately choosing Chinese bowls illustrates the desire to remain Chinese. The residents of Market Street Chinatown were all first generation immigrants and so were still not well acculturated into American society, especially within a white community that did not welcome them. The same circumstances were true for Woolen Mills. However, Woolen Mills was far more of a working Chinatown than Market Street, and most large events were held in the nearby Heinlenville Chinatown. Heinlenville largely took the place of Market Street for the merchants, families and other Chinese after the burning of the Market Street Chinatown.

These circumstances seem to indicate that a high quality of life can be defined as the ability to live as one chooses and to live comfortably. In comparing the two Chinatowns, it would seem that the Chinese of Market Street Chinatown thus had a higher quality of life. They were able to buy the items they desired due to some

expendable income, and a larger selection of goods from which to choose. The residents of Woolen Mills however, had far less money to spend, had less of a selection, and so lived off what circumstances would give them, which in this case was a mix of both Chinese and Western bowls. Finally, a higher quality of life is further characterized by what the Chinese of this era saw as valuable in life, which in this case is trying to remain Chinese and not acculturate into American society.

Such findings contrast with the immigrant models given in the beginning. For example, in Gordan's model, he assumes that all immigrants will move in a predictable pattern leading to complete acculturation, but does not take into account that perhaps the immigrants do not want to acculturate. The less segmented models better fit the Chinese, especially the model set forth by Ogbu on the willingness of immigrants to work hard now to reap benefits later. Such a model would apply for the residents of Woolen Mills, working at arduous jobs and getting little to live on, for the sake of a better life in the future, be it in the United States or back in China. Finally, models such as Fuchs voluntary pluralism can apply to Chinese, in that persons such as merchants had a place in American economy and still lived as traditional Chinese while at home. However, this model assumes a higher amount of interaction between the immigrant and mainstream community than took place in San Jose.

From these models, it can be seen that the Chinese are a unique immigrant group. They worked hard to better their place in life, and so fit into models such as Ogbu's, they also did not care, at least at this stage, to acculturate, and a high quality of life for them meant not acculturating. In order to make models that can account for this, perhaps a new step can be placed in Gordan's model, such as a period of initial rejection of the

American way of life. Eventually, the Chinese of San Jose were acculturated, but no model takes into account this first stage. As seen in this paper, a new model for explaining immigrant advancement in American society may be necessary; one that combines the step by step nature of Gordon, but adds into the equation what the immigrants themselves want out of life, explaining the steps they take in order to achieve their vision of a high quality of life. While models such as Gordon, Ogbu and Fuchs can tell something about the Chinese in San Jose, combining material culture and the concept of quality of life gives a far more rounded view of what life was like for the Chinese immigrants.

In order to get better results, future research needs to be completed for a more exact understanding of the Chinese in San Jose. First, use the entire collection from the Market Street Site, and see how that compares with the Woolen Mills. This would give a higher degree of accuracy in the comparison, and also perhaps contains a higher range of different goods from the Market Street site. Next, compare the assemblage of this Chinatown with other contemporary Chinatowns to see if the conclusions drawn in this paper hold, as well as including evidence from Heinlerville to see if they too choose to remain with more traditional Chinese goods as was found in the Market Street Chinatown. Further research into the value of Whiteware and perhaps an absolute value system for both the Chinese porcelain and the Whiteware would make the comparison in quality of life based on wealth more concrete. Perhaps future work on this subject would better clarify the living conditions of the San Jose Chinese, and how this can relate to the building of a new immigration model.

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