

THE ROLE OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL
IN SAN FRANCISCO IN RELATION
TO CULTURAL IDENTITY

Chen Yung Fan

(I)

The United States is a nation of immigrants. "All Americans are of immigrant stock including the 'indigenous' indian population."¹ If the color of the people's skin is used as one of the biological distinctions between races, then we find all the races—white, red, yellow, brown, and black—represented in the United States. But studies of the origins of early immigrants show that early American society did not have a majority national group because there was no preponderant national group (see Table 1) However, the overwhelming majority of the early immigrants were European Caucasians. Sheer numbers show that the European immigrants were the majority group exploring, settling and creating what came to be the United States. At the same time, "Those (European Caucasians) groups, by contrast to the Negroes and Orientals, could adjust freely to the opportunities of American life; affiliation, largely voluntary, lacked the compulsive elements based on color."²

Under the circumstances, assimilation has been generally regarded by the American majority, especially by cultural historians and socialologists, as the important process by which new immigrants fit themselves into American society. Since the eighteenth century, three principal theories: Anglo-conformity, melting pot ideology and Americanization, have been promulgated at various times in order to characterize the goal

* The author is an associate research fellow at the Institute of American Culture, Academia Sinica, and part-time associate professor at Tamkang College.

¹ Peter I. Rose, *They and We, Racial and Ethnic Relation in the United States* (N.Y.: Random House, 1964), p. 20.

² Oscar Handlin, *The American People in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954); P. 47.

of assimilation for the many diverse people of the United States.

Table 1
The Principal Sources of Immigration to the
United States From 1820–1950

Country	Total 130 Years
Germany	6,248,529
Italy	4,776,884
Ireland	4,617,485
Great Britain	4,386,692
Austria-Hungary	4,172,104
Russia	3,343,895
Canada and Newfoundland	3,177,446
Sweden	1,228,113
Mexico	838,844
Norway	814,955
France	633,807
West Indies	496,686
Greece	439,581
Poland	422,326
China	398,882
Turkey	362,034
Denmark	340,418
Switzerland	306,227
Japan	279,146
Netherlands	268,619
Portugal	263,467
Spain	173,021
Belgium	170,374
Romania	158,021
South America	143,133
Czechoslovakia	128,360

Source: Oscar Handlin. *Immigration As a Factor in American History*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959, p. 16.

It is fair to say that those theories embodied attempt to achieve equality but they maintain the European immigrant status with greater privileges than the non-white immigrants. In other words, the identity, rights and dignity of other American minorities were not considered equally in the espousing of those theories. Most important of all, the subcultures of the minorities were not respected by the majority because they were regarded as inferior races. An example is given by Dr. Francis Hsu, a Chinese American sociologist, as follows:

Fong Chow was a Cantonese who came to northern California in the later part of the nineteenth century during the Gold Rush days. In spite of white prejudice and disabling discrimination, he made a small fortune in his limited way. In appreciation of what his children's school and its teacher had done, Fong spent the colossal sum (for him) of \$100 to purchase an elaborately embroidered Chinese silk hanging for a school wall. A storm of protest was raised by the white parents of the mining town, who did not want their children subjected to any aspect of the inferior Chinese cultural influence . . .³

Dr. William Greenbaum also makes the comment on the history of assimilation in the United States as follows:

The history of assimilation in American suggests two overarching reasons why so many immigrants learned so fast, asked few questions, and rose so rapidly during the first decades of this century. Most important is the fact that the main fuel for the American melting pot was shame. The immigrants were best instructed in how to repulse themselves; millions of people were taught to be ashamed of their own faces, their family names, their parents and grandparents, and their class patterns, histories, and life outlooks. This shame had incredible power to make us learn, especially when coupled with hope, the other main energy source for the melting pot—hope about becoming modern, about being secure, about escaping the wars and depressions of the old country, and about being equal with the old Americans.⁴

After World War II more Americans came to realize the importance of cultural pluralism although the idea was not new for them. In other words, the American majority finally faced the reality that the United States is a nation of heterogeneous peoples and cultures. It is this concept of cultural pluralism

³ Francis L. K. Hsu, *The Challenge of the American Dream: The Chinese in the United States* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1971), p. 117.

⁴ William Greenbaum, "American in Search of a New Ideal: An Essay on the Rise of Pluralism," *Harvard Educational Review* (August, 1971), p. 431.

which gives an equal chance to many subcultures which may participate fully in the development of the total American culture. In November 1972, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education officially adopted a policy statement, *No one Model American*, to express its concern for multicultural education. The definite of cultural pluralism is well presented in the following statement:

Cultural pluralism rejects both assimilation and separation as ultimate goals. The positive elements of a culturally pluralistic society will be realized only if there is a healthy interaction among the diverse groups which comprise the nation's citizenry. Such interaction enables all to share in the richness of America's multicultural heritage. Such interaction provides a means for coping with intercultural tensions that are natural and cannot be avoided in a growing, dynamic society. To accept cultural pluralism is to recognize, that no group lives in a vacuum—that each group exists as part of an interrelated whole.⁵

As Americans begin to recognize and respect the cultural differences between the various ethnic groups, the young Chinese in San Francisco are also looking for something which is worthy of pride and will enable them to identify with others seeking equal participation in American life. Unfortunately they are often under the influence of the Civil Right movement and causes espoused by other minority groups. In recent years quite a few radical groups have formed in San Francisco "Chinatown" area under the leadership of Chinese radicals. To achieve a "Yellow identity" or "Yellow power," many young Chinese serve as willing followers and join demonstrations in the streets. However, their acts of self-emancipation sometimes bring only disaster to their families and community. The rate of juvenile delinquency and family tragedy has been increasing in the Chinese community.

Taking these factors into account, the Chinese language school serves as a useful intermediary means of promoting cultural identity for the "Chinatown" Chinese. Since the traditional Chinese moral education is still the essential core of the curriculum of the school, the students are taught the value of

⁵ "No One Model American; A Statement on Multicultural Education," *Journal of Teacher Education* (Winter, 1973), p. 264.

harmony with other races in the United States. At the some time, the Chinese language school gives the students a more accurate knowledge of Chinese culture; it enables them to appreciate their parental customs and to identify themselves at last as Americans with a proud Chinese heritage.

(II)

The early Chinese immigrants in American suffered great hardships because of racial discrimination and unjust legislation. Therefore they could not established their roots in the United States and their final goal was to return to their birth-places in China. The young Chinese, along with their parents, also believed that their future was entirely tied up with their native land. Meanwhile, in order to perpetuate their original culture and provide a proper education for their children in the United States, the early Chinese language schools were established in "Chinatown."

As a matter of fact, the origin of the Chinese language school in San Francisco's "Chinatown" was the product of racial discrimination. In the early sixties of the nineteenth century, Chinese children and other minority groups in California were not admitted into the public schools with the white children. Andrew Moulds, California State Superintendent of Public Instructure in 1859, said:

Had it been intended by the framers of the law that the children of inferior races should be educated side by side with the whites, it is manifest the annual school census would have included children of all colors. If this attempt to force Africans, Chinese and Diggers into our white schools is persisted in, it must result in the ruins of our school.⁶

Because Mr. Moulder protested against the right of children of minorities to study in white schools, the philosophy of public education in California was set for the next three quarters of a century. In 1860, the California State Legislature declared that:

Negroes, Mongolians, and Indians, shall not be admitted into the public

⁶ California, Superintendent of public Instruction, Ninth Annual Report, 1859, p. 14.

schools, and, whenever satisfactory evidence is furnished to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to show that said prohibited parties are attending such schools, he may withhold from the district in which such schools are situated all shares of the state School Fund; and the Superintendent of Common Schools for the county in which such district is situated shall not draw his warrant in favor of such district, for any expenses incurred, while the prohibited parties aforesaid were attending public schools therein; provided, that the Trustees of any district may establish a separate school for the education of Negroes, Mangolians, and Indians, and use the public school funds for the support of the same.⁷

The Chinese were prevented from enjoying public education with the majority on one hand and they were accused of being an unassimilable group on the other. A report on Chinese immigration, made in 1877 by the California Senate, gave the following statement.

During their entire settlement in California they have never adapted themselves to our habits, mode of dress, or our educational system, have never learned the sanctity of an oath, never desired to become citizens to perform the duties of citizenship, never discovered the differences between right and wrong, never ceased worship their idol gods, or advanced a step beyond the tradition of their native hive.⁸

The first separated school, the Chinese Public School, for Chinese children was established by the School Board of San Francisco in 1859. The school was poorly equipped, the curriculum was mainly religious teachings and the school authorities were only lukewarm in their support of the project. Therefore the school was finally closed in 1871. Even though San Francisco's "Chinatown" was the largest Chinese community in the United States at the time there was no public education for the Chinese. It seemed that the Chinese tolerated the situation even though they were angered at the discrimination. First of all, they realized that since they were temporary sojourners and a minority group in the United States, it was better for them to avoid any direct conflict with the majority in order to survive. Secondly, the Chinese could manage to make a living in "Chinatown" without learning English. Thirdly, "Chinatown" was mainly a bachelor society, the education of

⁷ California Statutes, 1860, Chapter 329, Section 8.

⁸ Mary, Roberts Collidge, *Chinese Immigration* (N.Y.: Henry Holt and Co., 1909), p. 87.

Children was not very serious. In order to provide an education for their children and to keep their culture, customs, heritage and language alive in the United States, many Chinese language schools were established by Chinese scholars in San Francisco's "Chinatown" after 1884. However a number closed because of lack of funds, teachers and certain other immediate reasons.

According to the *Chinatown 1970 Census*, San Francisco's "Chinatown" is divided into three areas.⁹ They are: (1) the core area; (2) the residential area; and (3) the expanded area. There are six Chinese language schools in the core area. (see Table 2). These schools can be divided into three types: (1) public schools; (2) private school; and (3) church supported school.

1. public school: the public Chinese language schools in American "Chinatowns" are usually supported by the Chinese Six Companies. "The Chinese Six Companies," writes Betty Lee Sung, "derives its name from six regions (of Kwangtung Province, China) whose emigrants make up practically the entire Chinese population in the United States."¹⁰ The functions of the Chinese Six Companies are described by Dr. Melendy as follows:

As to powers and influences, in its early days, it was practically the Supreme Court of the Chinese in California. By general agreement it was empowered to speak and act for all the California Chinese in problems and affairs which affect the majority of them. It also became the official board of arbitration for disputes which arose between the various district groups, as well as other social groups. It was given the power to initiate and promote programs for the general welfare of the California Chinese. Then, too, before the establishment of any Chinese Consular or other diplomatic agency in America, the Chinese Six Companies acted as spokesman for the Imperial Manchu government in its relations with the Chinese in America."¹¹

2. Private school: This kind of the Chinese language school

⁹ *Chinatown 1970 Census: Population and Housing Summary and Analysis* (San Francisco, Calif.: Department of City Planning, August, 1972), p. 1.

¹⁰ Betty Lee Sung, *The Story of the Chinese in America* (N.Y.: Collier Books, 1967), p. 12.

¹¹ H. Brett Melendy, *The Oriental Americans* (N.Y.: Hippocrene Books, 1972), p.

Table 2
The Chinese Language Schools in the Chinatown Core Area 1973-74

Name of School	Address	Year of Establishment	No. of Teachers	No. of Students	Grades	Class Hours
Chinese Central High School	827-29 Stockton St.	1886	17	480	1-6	4-6 P.M. 6-8
Chinese Christian Union Academy	920 Washington St.	1924	7	250	1-6	4-6
Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese School	855 Jackson St.	1908	7	250	1-6	4-5:30
Kin Kuo High School	846 Stockton St.	1937	6	150	1-6 7-12	4-6 6-8
Nam Kue School	855 Sacramento St.	1920	6	200	1-6	4-6
St. Mary's	902 Stockton St.	1922	16	550	1-4 5-12	4-6 6-8

Sources: Part of the data from San Francisco Community Citizen Survey and Finding Committee Report, 1969, p. 196. Part of the data from the author's research in the Chinatown of San Francisco, 1973.

is either established by a political party or is founded by a certain district association.

3. Church supported school: The church supported school is established either by a Protestant or Catholic church.

All the six Chinese language schools in San Francisco's "Chinatown" are administered by their own boards. There are several functions which each board holds in common: (1) The principal of each school is invited and approved by its board; (2) Teachers are selected by the principal from a roster of qualified persons and are approved by the board; (3) It is the responsibility of the board to collect and administer funds for the school; and (4) The board is the highest decision-making authority for school policy. The background and organizations of the six Chinese language schools may be somewhat different but one of their main purposes—the promotion of cultural identity—is similar for their students.

(III)

The Chinese language school consciously seeks to inculcate a specific set of ideals and values which are endorsed by a majority of parents but by no means all the citizens of "Chinatown." This configuration of concepts is derived from the history of the Chinese in the United States as well as from contemporary political conflicts in "Chinatown" and the world today.

From the historical point of view, the majority white population has imposed its views on the Chinese minority. They, unlike many minorities of European origins, have found it difficult to integrate themselves with American culture because of specific racial attitudes. William Joyce, a noted educator, has put it this way: "To be sure the American melting pot did achieve reality in some instances—initially for the white Western European immigrant and later for his Eastern European counterpart, but for the non-European, non-white immigrant, the melting pot had little meaning."¹²

¹² William Joyce, "Minority Groups in American Society: Imperatives for Educators," *Society Education* (April, 1969), p. 430.

Among the minority groups, the member of Chinese is relatively small. Because the majority group enjoys higher social status and greater privileges, the Chinese must be subservient and bear the stigma of the stereotype which the majority group created for them. From the private document of Rose Hum Lee, "Social attitudes toward Chinese in the United States expressed in periodical literature, from 1919-1944," the image of the Chinese in the mind of the majority group were harsh and strange:

1. Their favorite delicacies are rat and snakes (commonly stated in text-books of elementary school children).
2. They do things backwards (read from right to left).
3. Eat soup with chopsticks (thought to be hollow like straws for cold drinks).
4. Chopsuey and chowmein are national dishes and the only other food eaten is rice).
5. Chinese is "Chinaman," and "Chinese" is singular for Chinese.
6. They are all cunning and crafty.
7. They are honest and absolutely trustworthy (Americans believing this always tell about Japanese banks using Chinese cashiers because Japanese do not trust their own people).
8. They never lose their tempers.
9. They are industrious and temperate.
10. They all look alike (still a current notion).
11. They are all members of tongs and fight feuds.
12. They speak pidgin English. (Americans still talk down to Chinese in what they believe is pidgin English).
13. They drink hot beverages to cool off.
14. They have no nerves and can sleep any time anywhere.
15. They hate water and never bathe.
16. They have no souls because they are not Christians.
17. They are a mysterious and inscrutable race.
18. They never say what they mean and abhor the straight line.¹³

¹³ Rose Hum Lee, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), pp. 361-362.

Even today the American public, while ostensibly endorsing the promulgation of cultural pluralism, remains largely ignorant of contemporary minority groups. Nothing that has once existed disappeared entirely. If this is true, then the old prejudicial image of the Chinese remains valid for many Americans. Therefore it is not surprising for us to view a dark and seamy side of "Chinatown" on the mass media in the United States. How long will it be before the majority realizes that all Chinese are not alike and that they are worthy of being treated individually and respected as American?

In "Chinatown" today there are two cultures—the old and the new. In other words, the old generation has one view of culture and the young generation has a different view. The Chinese language school is part of the establishment of the old culture. Generally speaking, abiding by the law, living in harmony, yielding, accepting compromise and being tolerant are the traditions of the older generation and are used in dealing with other groups in the United States. They proudly maintain their native culture in their smaller community and respect the American culture as well. Politically, the older generation are always the loyal supporters of the Republic of China. On the other hand, the young people are fighting for their rights as Americans and often challenge the established authority. They now come under the influence of other American minorities and identify with American democratic concepts. Street demonstrations, loud speakers and political rallies—even riot—are often used by the young generation for their political ends. They are looking for their special cultural identity but they often lose their original goal in this wider conflict with other groups. In order to dispel the popular image of Chinese sameness, it is for us to examine the opposing views of cultural identity in "Chinatown" and the conflicting forces they represent.

Today, the old organizations in "Chinatown", such as the Chinese Six Companies, are still faithful supporters of the Republic of China. At the same time, Confucianism still influences the older generation in "Chinatown" and it is under-

standable that they still identify themselves with the Republic of China because Confucianism is respected and adhered to by both these Chinese communities.

Due to its increasing population, the social structure of "Chinatown" has become more complex and the old organizations cannot meet the needs of all Chinese. The young Chinese in "Chinatown" today no longer desire to accept being members of the "silent minority" as their forefathers or their parents have done in the United States. A sixteen-year-old Chinese girl student at Galileo High School, San Francisco, said: "We, the Chinese must speak out against all the injustices shown to us. We should not make the mistake that our ancestors made in letting others take advantage of them."¹⁴ In his article, "Asian Americans and Education for Cultural pluralism," Dr. Hata also points out:

The emphasis of the American educational system on the Western and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition is no longer acceptable to Asian Americans. Unlike their cautious, conservative parents who were raised in an atmosphere of overt racial discrimination, fear of bodily injury, and deprivation of their basic rights as citizens, young Asian Americans are challenging the monocultural ideal of the majority society which in their eyes causes imperialism abroad and the various manifestation of racial inequality at home.¹⁵

At the same time the political environment of "Chinatown" is also becoming complex with the appearance of various groups of young Chinese radicals in the community. Their background and organization may be various but they unite in a common purpose to challenge the majority group. Racial discrimination in the United States is highlighted in their posters, leaflets and propaganda materials appealing to the community. Their intention is apparently to use racial consciousness to stir up the political and social thinking of the "Chinatown" Chinese. After the middle 1960's, posting of so-called "eleven

¹⁴ Darlene Chan, "Time to Speak Out," *East West* (Newspaper), April 16, 1975, p. 7.

¹⁵ Dow Hata, Jr., "Asian Americans and Education for Cultural Pluralism" in *Cultural Pluralism in Education: A Mandate for Change* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), p. 129.

demands” of the Red Guard Movement in “Chinatown” openly challenged the majority group as follows:

1. We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our people in the Asian community. We believe that Asian people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
2. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Asian community, then the housing and the land should make into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and made decent housing for its people.
3. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our true role in the present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have the knowledge of himself and his position in society and in the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
4. We want all Asian men to be exempt from military service. We believe that Asian should not be forced to fight in military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Asian people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
5. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF ASIAN people. We believe that we can end police brutality in our Asian community by organizing Asian self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Asian community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We, therefore, believe that all Asian people should arm themselves for self defense.
6. We want freedom for all Asian men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. We believe that all Asian people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
7. We want all Asian people when brought to trial to be tried in a court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Asian communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Asian people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this, the court will be forced to select a jury from the Asian community from which the Asian defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the “average reasoning man of the Asian community.”

8. We want adequate and free medical facilities available for the people in the Asian community. We know that the Chinatown has the highest density area next to Manhattan. It also has the highest TB and sickness rate in the nation.
9. We want full employment for our people and an end to their exploitation. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man decent employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the businessmen will not give full and decent employment, then the means of production could be taken from the businessman and placed in the hands of the working class so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living. There are thousands of emigrants coming into Chinatown every year and it is almost impossible for them to find gainful employment.
10. We demand that the United States government recognize the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF KOREA. We believe that MAO TSE-TUNG AND HO-CHI MINH are the true leaders of the Asian people; not Chiang Kai Shek, or Nguyen Van Thieu. The government of the United States is now at war with Asian people. The racist government of the United States has proven that it will put only peoples of color in concentration camps. American Indians were placed in concentration camps; Japanese were placed in concentration camps; therefore, it is logical that the next people that will be going are the Asian people, because the United States is gearing its war time industrial complex for war against Asian people.
11. We demand that United States government halt the rape of the land. We believe that if greedy businessmen, with the help of the U.S. government do not stop destroying our land, air, oceans, and streams, the earth will become a lifeless planet of rock and dust.¹⁶

It is a fact that the young Chinese in "Chinatown" today eagerly looking for their special cultural identity. Due to their separate cultural origins and physical traits which distinguish them from the white majority, many young Chinese doubt their values and feel that they must visibly demonstrate their uniqueness. Therefore they often follow the patterns of other minority groups in order to engage in hostility against the whites. It is not surprising that those Chinese joining forces with the dissenting groups have difficulty in fitting into the older, stable community. In many instances they try outwardly to challenge the majority group and also denounce their

¹⁶ "Red Guard Political Program," *AION*, vol. 1, No. 1, (Spring, 1970), p. 30-31.

ancestral culture in order to create a "new" culture with which they can identify. Many times this results in their being resented and rejected by their white fellow-Americans as well as their fellow-Chinese.

(IV)

Since the current situation in "Chinatown" may be said to foster cultural disorder and many young Chinese are at a personal crossroads, it is very important for the Chinese language school to expand its functions so that it may present a meaningful concept of cultural identity. The doctrine of *jen*, which means love, humanity, charity, kindness, unselfishness or benevolence in English, is the essence of Confucianism. Confucius said: "The man of *jen* is one who, wish to sustain himself, sustain others, and wishing to develop himself, develop others." Therefore the teaching of their native culture in the Chinese language school is an express of *jen* toward the next generations on the part of their teachers. This is a concept which the parents and the school authorities endorse and seek to perpetuate through the curriculum of the school.

Generally speaking, the spirit of nationalism is very strong in the Chinese language school. Traditionally the students of the six Chinese language schools in "Chinatown" participate in a colorful parade to celebrate the National Day of the Republic of China on the tenth of October every year. It is one of the two major extracurricular activities for students each year—the other being the celebration of the Chinese New Year. The community also engages in various political activities supporting the Republic of China and students join these under the influence of their family and various district associations.

In recent years Communist China has come to play a more "important" role on the international stage. Its political positions are voiced frequently by partisans in the "Chinatown" community. However, students of the Chinese language schools joined in demonstrations against Communist China's entry into the United Nations in 1971 and in demonstrations

against President Richard Nixon's visit to Communist China in 1972. In this way they articulated their reaction to Communism and their loyalty to the Republic of China. "The spirit of our school," says Mr. Wun Sun Wong, the Principal of Chinese Central High School, "is based on Confucianism. We will always support the Republic of China, the defender of our culture, and will never compromise with evil Communism. We not only train our students to be good citizens in the United States but also want them to be dignified Chinese."¹⁷

However, it is important to recognize the word "nationalism" in Chinese, "min tsu chu i," does not emphasize the superiority of the Chinese race, but venerates cultural survival and racial dignity which will enable the Chinese to live peacefully and harmoniously with other peoples in the world on the basis of equality. Therefore the traditional Chinese emphasis on universal brotherhood should not be ignored even when acknowledging their strong feelings regarding nationalism.

A major purpose of the Chinese language school in emphasizing the bonds of cultural nationalism is to provide a link with China for its students. From the school's point of view, nationalism is an important factor in achieving cultural identity for all minority groups. Similar examples can be cited: Jewish and Japanese minorities in the United States traditionally have very close ties with Israel and Japan, their cultural homelands. This is another proof that a feeling of nationalism—union with a homeland—is one of the important ways in which students may be helped to find the roots of their origins.

In the curriculum of the lower classes of the Chinese language school, Common Sense (常識)—which we might call the "basics" of elementary education—is taught to all students from the first to the fourth grade. It usually includes a general knowledge of Chinese history, geography, civics and politics. From the point of view of the school authorities, the teaching of "Common Sense" is one of the unique features of the Chinese language school because it helps the students to under-

¹⁷ Interview with Mr. Wun Sun Wong, the Principal of Chinese Central High School, San Francisco, U.S.A., in his office on November 14, 1973.

stand and respect their parental culture. As a matter of fact, a good knowledge of Common Sense is considered necessary for young Chinese to participate adequately in the social life of "Chinatown." To sing the national anthem of the Republic of China, for example, is routine procedure at the beginning of various social activities such as the celebration of National Day of the Republic of China or even during the regular Miss Chinatown pageantry.

Compared with other minority groups, the Chinese are newcomers in the United States. This later arrival may be partly responsible for their intense consciousness that they still have important connections with China. During the forty minutes of the assembly period each week in the Chinese language school, students are often reminded by the principal or other speakers that China has five thousand years of glorious history. The contribution of the Chinese to world civilization are also attributes to be mentioned repeatedly by these speakers.

It is impossible for anybody to understand the culture of a nation without an adequate knowledge of its history, traditions and customs. Although they are eagerly seeking for their own cultural identity, many young Chinese in "Chinatown" have meager knowledge of their ancestral history and culture. What knowledge of China they do have is received from only English reading materials. In many cases the subjective judgment and calculated distortion of Chinese culture by Western writers may unduly influence the young Chinese to scorn their ancestral culture. For example, Confucianism is often treated by many Western "scholars" as merely one of many extant religions instead of the most important philosophic thought in China. Thus the knowledge of these young Chinese of Chinese culture is diluted and they may only repeat what they hear from "scholars" who seem to represent a majority cultural bias. Under these circumstances, the older Chinese in "Chinatown" believe that the teaching of fundamental Chinese history in the Chinese language school is truly essential so that their children may understand and preserve the treasure of their cultural

identity.

Generally speaking, the teaching of Chinese history in the Chinese language school emphasizes only important events. The schools of philosophy flourishing in the Chou dynasty, the influence of Confucianism on Chinese culture, the promotion of scholarship and military expansion during the Han dynasty, the development of the poetry and the growth of Buddhism in the Tang dynasty, the Neo-Confucianism in the Sung dynasty, the influence of the Chinese culture on Japan and Korea during the Ming dynasty, foreign contact in the Ching dynasty and the contributions of the Republic of China to the Chinese people in the twentieth century are usually the chief topics taught in the history classes.

However, teaching the history of the Tang dynasty always occupies a disparate position in the history classes of the Chinese language school. The reason is simply that the older Chinese in "Chinatown" remain consistently proud of the glorious cultural achievements of the Tang dynasty. They name themselves, their dress and their language as "Tang man", "Tang dress" and "Tang language." As a matter of fact, "Tang jen chieh" or "The Tang Man Street," is often used by the Chinese to designate various "Chinatowns" in the United States. Thus it is natural that the Chinese language school teachers spend more time teaching about the cultural achievement of the Tang dynasty; it is hoped this emphasis will promote the pride of their students in their ancestral culture.

At the same time, the students of the Chinese language school are also encouraged by their teachers to read Chinese juvenile literature—especially the historical novels which are available in the school library or "Chinatown" bookstores. This reading will promote the student's reading ability, learning interest and cultural identity. The teacher also asks the students to give brief oral reports on various topics from which they have read. Most important of all, the traditional Chinese virtues, patriotism, loyalty, filial piety, heroism, integrity, brotherhood and chastity are the themes of these novels.

(V)

The assimilation of minority groups into the American

mainstream is obviously in progress today. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the minority groups will give up their identity and submerge themselves completely into American society. As a matter of fact, some minority groups are still scarcely accepted by the majority group in the United States.

Among various minority groups in the United States, the Chinese have consistently been treated by the majority group as "foreigners". Therefore Chinese culture is often ignored by American society and by American education although its culture is a combination of various important sub-cultures. Inevitably traditional Chinese culture may fade away in the United States. Recognizing this harsh reality, the young Chinese often fight blindly for their cultural identity. In many cases they are convinced that they will achieve acknowledgment of their special identity by challenging the majority group—often employing the tactics of the agitator. This may only lead to a dead end and create still more problems for the Chinese in the United States.

The children in "Chinatown" of San Francisco are required by their needs to attend public school in the daytime and they are influenced by their traditions to attend the Chinese language school in the evening. Therefore the Chinese language school is only an accessory educational system which teaches the language, culture, traditions, customs and history of their ancestors to the young Chinese in the United States. It cannot and will not replace American public education for the young Chinese. However, the important role of the school in helping to establish a cultural identity for the young Chinese should not be ignored. To teach the values of their ancestral culture properly is a noble goal. It should move students in the right direction for their continuing search.

As a minority in the United States, it is important for the Chinese to adjust themselves to the larger American society. However, they must also recognize and value of their own heritage in order to enjoy the fruits of the two cultures and to take their rightful places in a pluralistic society.

三藩市華文學校與文化認同的關係

范承源

(摘要)

美國社會大眾在近年以來，逐漸瞭解並進而強調文化多元對於美國文化之重要性。換言之，美國的多數民族，對於國內其他少數民族的文化，從以往輕視與排斥的態度而轉變為尊重與接受。因此，美國少數民族的文化因而獲得參與整個美國文化的機會。

美國加州三藩市之華埠，一向為華僑與華裔美人集聚之地。由於受到文化多元的影響，華埠中青年一代對於本身文化認同之追求亦極為強求。然而此輩青年對於本身的傳統文化缺乏瞭解，同時受近年美國民權運動及其他少數民族激烈份子的不良影響，對於追求文化認同所採取的方法往往太過偏激而不可避免的與多數民族發生許多誤會或衝突。

在此情形下，三藩市的華文學校對於華裔美國青年在追求文化認同過程中，不但極有幫助並可成為美國公立學校不可或缺的輔助力量。華文學校除教授傳統中國道德教育外，並教導學生如何與人相處之道，尤其重要的可以幫助華裔美國青年對於其祖先的文化有正確的認識與瞭解，進而成為守法的美國公民而擁有中國的傳統。