

Separate But Connected: Challenges Amid Progress for Chinese American Enclaves in
Boston

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Abstract

Chinatowns have long been symbols of overseas Chinese settlements and experiences. In North American major cities, traditional Chinatowns have changed gradually. Suburban Chinese American settlements have emerged. They exhibit signs of greater integration into the larger society than the isolation of Chinatown development of earlier generations. However, the new Chinese American enclaves are still connected to the old Chinatowns. This paper explores the recent demographic, economic, community, and political development of two Boston area Chinese American enclaves in the context of contemporaneous developments in Boston Chinatown.

Introduction

Recent U.S. Census reports project that by 2050, the U.S. population will be almost evenly split between whites and nonwhites. Among the nonwhite population, Asian American population is projected to reach 10 percent of the 2050 population, in comparison with the current 4 to 5 percent. Chinese Americans are among the first Asian Americans to settle in the U.S., and still constitute a significant proportion of Asian Americans in spite of recent immigration of other Asian American groups like Asian Indians and Southeast Asians.

Chinatowns have long been symbols of Chinese settlements and experiences outside the Greater China Region¹. In U.S. major cities, traditional Chinatowns have changed gradually in the last few decades. Suburban Chinese American settlements have emerged. The dispersal of Chinese American settlement is likely to continue in the next few decades. An examination of the current development in these traditional and new enclaves will help us connect the past with the future of these ethnic enclaves.

This paper traces the historical and ongoing process of social, economic, and political integration of Chinese Americans in the greater Boston area – especially in Quincy and Malden in the context of Chinatown developments. Data for the paper come from multiple sources --- including the U.S. Census, state and local government resident and campaign contribution databases, newspaper archives, personal communication with Chinese American activists in both cities, as well as the author's participant observation as a board member of a community organization.

The Beginning -- Boston Chinatown

It is commonly accepted that Chinese settlement in the Boston area began in the 1870s, after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. The first group of Chinese came as strike breakers to replace Irish workers at a North Adams shoe factory. Some of them later settled around the Oxford Street in today's Boston Chinatown. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent legislation put a stop to immigration of Chinese laborers to the US. Only Chinese merchants, diplomats, and students were allowed to come. It was not until the repeal of the Act in 1943 and the immigration reform legislation in 1965 did Chinese immigration resume on a large scale. Although there were evidence of Chinese settlements in other cities and towns like Lowell (Chen 2003), Boston Chinatown remained the center of Chinese settlement and activities for almost a century.

Life in Boston Chinatown is not unlike the pattern in other older Chinatowns in the U.S. (Peter Kwong, 1999). For generations of Chinese immigrants who came to the US in their adult years and without prior knowledge of the English language, they worked, lived, and died in Chinatown. Some may never stepped outside Chinatown in their whole life. Given the prevalence of mistreatment of minorities in the first half of the twentieth century as well as difficulties associated with adjusting to the adopted country, traditional kinship or business associations evolved. They were later grouped under the umbrella organization of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. This association became the sole source of protection for most Chinatown residents against external threats

¹ The Greater China Region includes Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

These old Chinatowns were separate, distinct, and isolated from the mainstream society. Outsiders had little access to the community. Nor did government agencies intervene in its internal matter unless there were serious crimes or disturbances affecting society at large. These traditional associations then became the spokesman for the community and act as liaison with the mainstream society. A few association leaders may have established connection with mainstream institutions like City Hall. Public agencies like city governments relied on these organizations for advice and cooperation in any city matters related to the community. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association leaders basically monopolized the political power within the community. For the most part, they were left alone for self governance, like party bosses in the political patronage system of machine politics. These traditional association leaders are primarily business owners in Chinatown. Thus, their concern for the community may be limited to business interests at the expense of workers or the general resident population.

After decades of exclusion from immigration, a series of immigration reforms that cumulated in the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 finally opened the doors of America to Asian immigrants. Since 1965, significant number of Chinese immigrants came to US cities. For those with language barriers, Chinatown became their stepping stone to a better life in this country. The 1965 immigration reforms is only one manifestation of the more liberal trend in the mainstream society at large. Civil rights legislation also opened up more opportunities to racial minorities. The Great Society programs expanded various social services. Chinese Americans also benefit from the civil rights movement and the expanded social services.

Various new associations were formed in this new era of a more open society. For instance, the Chinese American Civic Association (later changed to Asian American Civic Association) was formed in 1967. The organization has developed into a multi-service center and changed its name to Asian American Civic Association. Another example is the Chinese Progressive Association, a primarily advocacy group, which was established in 1977. Just as the expanded publicly provided social services began to break down political patronage in machine politics, the availability of similar services to Chinese immigrants also began to challenge the monopoly of community affairs by traditional ethnic organizations in Chinatowns. The development in Boston Chinatown in the last few decades in the twentieth century illustrates well this changing pattern of community organizing and development (Liu 1999).

Chinese American settlements in Malden and Quincy

Just as the post World War II Chinese American immigrants began to settle in the Boston area, urban development in the city gradually took land away from the Chinatown community. Beginning in the 1960s, the construction of the Central Artery, the Massachusetts Turnpike, and the subsequent expansion of nearby medical institutions together reduced the land area of Chinatown by one-third of its original size. Some existing residents began to move out to other parts of the Boston area. Some moved to more wealthy western suburbs like Brookline, Newton, or Lexington. Some others took advantage of the subway system connecting Chinatown to the rest of the city and moved to the working class communities of Malden and Quincy. The out-migration and new settlements into these two satellite cities have been most dramatic.

According to US Census figures, Asian American population growth in Malden (196 %) and Quincy (146%) outpaced by a wide margin all other Boston area towns and cities between 1990 and 2000 (Table 1). A large part of the growth is attributable to increase in the Chinese population in these two communities at the respective rate of 212 (Malden) and 149 percent (Quincy). This followed an even more spectacular growth in the 1980s, when Asian Americans in Quincy increased from 740 to 5577, a 650 percent increase²; whereas Asians Americans in Malden increased 10 fold from 300 to 3000 during the same period³. In contrast, the number of Chinese in Brookline doubled during the 1970s, from about 950 to 1931, or nearly 4 percent of the town's residents⁴. The Chinese population in the Chinatown area actually declined by almost 5 percent between 1990 and 2000, despite a 58 percent increase for the state as a whole. This is a continuation of the downward trend between 1980 and 1990, when the Asian Pacific Islander population in Chinatown decreased from 5100 to 4692, or 8 percent reduction (Chinatown Masterplan, 2000)

At the early stage of the influx of Chinese and other Asian Americans to these areas, there was evidence of local residents' resistance. Racial tension began to develop in Quincy when they came in large numbers in the 1980s. Inter-racial fist fights at public schools and on the street prompted public officials to intervene. Disciplinary actions were taken at the schools, but none of the incidents reached the criminal justice system – partly because the affected Chinese American families chose not to pursue retribution. The continued influx of Chinese residents did catch the public's attention, so much so that there were repeated efforts to educate the public and public officials about this new group

² Boston Globe, March 10, 1991

³ Boston Globe, June 2, 1991

of residents (Patriot Ledger, 1989, Chung, 1998). Reactions to the new Asian residents in Malden may not be as obvious or confrontational, but some Chinese residents and students there did observe racism and prejudicial remarks⁵.

Chinese American businesses follow the influx of Chinese and other Asian Americans into the new enclaves. The traditional Chinese retail businesses in Chinatown are mostly set up next to each other at the street level. In Quincy and Malden, until recently, all Chinese retail businesses are set up similarly although they not as concentrated as those in Chinatown. Chinese restaurants are among the first Chinese businesses in most cities and towns. These early Chinese restaurants serve primarily non-Chinese clientele. In the spring of 2003, a former department store site with 90,000 square feet in Quincy was converted into a Chinese shopping plaza. A large Chinese grocery store occupies about half of the space, with the rest divided into numerous much smaller rooms for individual vendors like gift shops, bookstores, or travel agencies. A large Chinese restaurant shares the same parking lot with the Chinese plaza. Chinese Americans in Quincy and South Shore no longer need to travel to Chinatown to buy Chinese grocery. There is some concern that another Chinatown will evolve, similar to how Flushing has become a second Chinatown in the New York area⁶. If it does, the pattern of development will be very different from that in Boston Chinatown. Instead of having shops and residence concentrated in a few blocks, there will be a clear separation between the two. Chinese businesses will be located in a few separate strip mall areas, while Chinese American residents will be scattered around the city. This pattern of

⁴ Boston Globe Feb. 10, 1982

⁵ Boston Globe, June 2, 1991

⁶ Patriots Ledger, June 28-July 2, 2003.

development is likely to be less alarming to the general population at large than the concentrated pattern.

Achieving Socioeconomic Parity

Some socioeconomic indicators, based on the 2000 Census, may show how close Chinese Americans in Boston Chinatown, Malden, and Quincy are in achieving parity with the rest of the population. The Chinatown census tracts include 701, 702, 704, and 705. In terms of education level, Chinese Americans in these three enclaves have fewer formal schooling than the average Asian American in the state. About 50 percent of the state's Asian Americans are college graduates. Chinatown has the fewest Chinese American college graduates (16 %). Both Quincy (24%) and Malden (34%) have significantly more Chinese American college graduates than Chinatown does. At the other extreme, more than half of the Chinese Americans (57%) living at Chinatown have received less than high school education – 20 percentage points more than those in Quincy or Malden. The percentage of English proficiency of Chinese Americans in the three enclaves is significantly smaller. About 60 percent of Chinese Americans in all three enclaves speak good or very good English. Again, the difference is more pronounced at the extreme ends of the distribution. There are almost the same percentage of Chinatown Chinese Americans who speak very good English (26.5%) as there are Massachusetts Asian Americans who speak little or no English (24.1%), and vice versa (42.5% v. 46%).

As for economic indicators, the measures tell a different story. The per capita income of Chinese Americans in Chinatown and Quincy is practically the same at about

\$15500 --- \$2500 less than the Malden level of \$18000. All of them are substantially less than the Asian American per capital income of \$21500 for the state, or the state average of almost \$26000 for the population as a whole. Poverty is a bigger issue among Chinese Americans in Chinatown, with a poverty rate of 15 percent --- the same rate as Asian Americans in the state. The poverty rates for Chinese Americans in Quincy and Malden are the same as the state average, all just under 10 percent. Homeownership shows the biggest difference among Chinese Americans in the three enclaves. Consistent with the income measures, Chinese Americans in Chinatown have the lowest rate of homeownership at 34 percent --- significantly lower than the Asian American average of 41 percent in the state and the state average of 62 percent. However, both Quincy (68%) and Malden (51%) have high homeownership rates among Chinese American. These two rates are higher than the Asian American rates in the state (41%), or the state average (61.7%), or both; although they are still significantly lower than the 80 to 90 percent Chinese American homeownership rates in wealthy suburbs like Lexington or Newton.

Thus, in terms of social and economic indicators, the Chinese American population in Quincy and Malden on average is clearly half-step or one-step up in comparison with those in Boston Chinatown. Except for building home equity, they still have not achieved economic parity with other Asian Americans or the population at large. It is this middle-rung status that post challenges for them. Unlike the Chinese population in Chinatown, they may not be poor or impoverish enough to merit the attention or help from outside the community or from public agencies. Yet, they may not be fully prepared to participate in the mainstream society, especially if achieving economic security is the primary or only objective. It may take Chinese Americans in these two

enclaves longer to become actively engaged in the political arena than to achieve economic parity with the rest of the population.

[Table 1 About Here]

Community Organizing among Chinese Americans in Boston

How community residents work together to deal with common problems can be a measure of the community's maturity. Although community organizing involves a smaller number of active participants, in contrast to populous participation as in voting, it requires a higher level of coordination. Chinese Americans in the three enclaves exhibit different patterns of community activism. This section begins with a brief discussion of community organizing in Quincy, Malden, and Chinatown, and follows with a comparison of them.

Quincy

When Asians started moving to Quincy in large numbers, a group of white community leaders in Quincy were concerned enough of the new comers to form the Asian American Committee. They were instrumental in the city's decision to hire an Asian American Liaison Officer who could speak the languages of the new comers. After the initial racial tension cooled down, some concerned Chinese residents also began to talk about issues in their community. Their organizing resulted in the formation of the Bridge Committee. In 1992, the Bridge Committee merged with the Asian American Committee to form the Quincy Asian American Association (QAAA). The purpose of the QAAA is to promote the welfare of Asian Americans in the city of Quincy. It is primarily an informal advocacy group, although it has also promoted cultural enrichment

and civic participation by organizing annual ethnic festivals and occasional voter registration drives. In 1999, community collaboration took one step further to involve some mainstream social service agencies and local Chinese Americans. It took the name of the Quincy Asian Collaboration (QAC). Funded initially by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and after two years of strategizing, QAC evolved into a formal 501c(3) organization, called Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. (QARI). This new organization hired its first executive director in late 2002. It has now been operational for just over a year.

Parallel to the community level organizing is the provision of social services, especially to the non-English speaking segment of the Chinese population. The placement of the Asian American Liaison Officer in the Quincy city hall has certainly facilitated the utilization of public services by them. In the last 10 years, several local public service establishments have also hired Chinese-speaking staff --- including the Police Department and the Hospital. Although the proximity to Chinatown 10 miles and a few subway stops to the north of the city may have prompted some to seek services there, some of the Chinatown service agencies are also branching out to set up local services in Quincy. Most notable are the South Cove Health Center, a nonprofit medical clinic, and the Golden Age Center, an agency tailored to serve seniors. A Chinese Language School has also been set up for the children of Chinese immigrants. In the last three years, a new day care center has been opened with Chinese-speaking staff. This center is run by the Asian American Service Association, which is affiliated with a local Lutheran church with a Chinese ministry. The Asian American Service Association was set up in 1995 to provide a variety of immigrant-related services in Quincy. Three

Chinese churches have also provided English classes for adult learners. More recently, the Chinese ministry of the Episcopal Church in the Chinatown has also begun to provide numerous social services at its Quincy locations.

Malden

Community organizing at Malden took off with the formation of an advocacy group and a nonprofit direct service agency. The advocacy group, called Malden Asian Pacific American Coalition (MAPAC), was first organized in the 1990s. The group was founded by a handful of local Chinese American residents, with the assistance of local attorneys. MAPAC serves as the liaison between the city government and the Chinese population in Malden. Its organization is rather loose and informal. The coalition meets on an as needed basis. MAPAC has been able to organize a number of cultural and recreational activities for the Chinese-speaking residents in Malden. These activities include the annual Chinese New Year Festival, weekly badminton club, and a regular Chinese (Cantonese) TV program. The New Year Festival is funded by CDBG money distributed by the Malden city government. The city also provides the facilities for the badminton club's weekly games in one of the public school's gymnasium. The TV program was suggested by the local Public TV station, after it invited a founding member of MAPAC to host a 5-minute talk show. The TV programming is more informational than entertaining. It has been running for almost 10 years now, broadcasting twice a week for an hour in Malden. In 2001 it began re-broadcast twice a week in Boston's public TV station as well. The whole operation of the TV program is run by at least ten

volunteers for each show, who comes from both Malden and other communities in the metropolitan Boston area.

Until recently, the Great Wall Center is the only nonprofit Chinese or Asian American social service agency in Malden. It is a 501c(3) organization with half of its board membership coming from MAPAC. Its primary mission is to provide direct service to abusers in spousal abuse situations, and to organize an advocacy group on behalf of disabled Asian Americans. While the Great Wall Center is based at Malden, its vision is to serve Asian Americans in the Boston or even Eastern Massachusetts area since there is no other such service for this population.

Of course, the social service needs of Chinese Americans in Malden are not limited to these types of services. Because of the proximity to Chinatown, which is only a few subway stops to the south of Malden, many Chinese residents travel to Chinatown not only for shopping and dining, but also for social services. Like the case of Quincy, this has prompted some Chinatown based social service organizations to set up satellite facilities in places like Malden. One example is the Golden Age Center, which serves Asian American senior residents. But Chinese residents cannot rely only on Chinatown agencies for service. Some of their needs are no different from that of the general population in Malden, except for the language barrier for some immigrants and residents. Thus, MAPAC has requested the city to hire a Chinese-speaking staff member to act as service liaison for non-English speaking Chinese residents. Thus far, the city has not taken any action in this regard, although the mayor has taken initiatives to speak to the Chinese residents in the city via the Chinese TV program. However, the federally funded Malden Redevelopment Authority has hired a Chinese speaking employee, after

discovering that some Chinese homeowners requesting renovation subsidy cannot speak English.

In the last two years, internal conflicts have unraveled the Chinese American community in Malden. A group of volunteers working on the Chinese TV program have formed a 501 c(3) organization, excluding the program's Chinese American founding member. The new organization bears the same name of the TV program (Asian Spectrum). Un-resolvable difference with the founder's approach in running community affairs was cited as the reason for the split up. The founder has pursued legal action against the new nonprofit organization. The case is still pending.

Boston Chinatown⁷

Like many Chinatowns in other North American cities, Boston Chinatown is situated in close proximity to the central business district. There are competing demands for prime real estate inside and outside of Chinatown. Reactions to land use issue have dominated community organizing in Boston Chinatown during the last quarter of the twentieth century. This is not unlike the development in other cities with significant pockets of concentrated Asian American settlement like Monterey Park (Fong, 2001). Grassroots community organizing is a balancing force against land use determination based on market exchange values. Community organizing in Boston Chinatown has learned and grown. The strategies used have diversified from relying on the traditional associations' private consultations to employing more confrontational approaches by a newer generation of community activists. Even among the latter, they have diversified

from direct lobbying and mass demonstration to utilizing the media, forming coalitions within and beyond the Chinatown community to take advantage of different group's expertise and strength. For instance, the strategy to bring in environmental concerns in land development projects has some success in Boston Chinatown as in other minority communities (Leong 1997; Diaz 2001). However, leadership has been composed of primarily non-resident activists who may work, but do not live, in the community. Local residents have been largely followers. Although Chinatown issues may appeal to the larger Chinese-American community due to its centrality of cultural and retail activities, more active participation of Chinatown residents is central to the sustainability of community organizing in Chinatown. In spite of the limited success in reversing the negative impact of the growth regime to the community – especially regarding the lack of affording housing development, grassroots community organizing has successfully challenged the traditional association's monopoly of influence in the community. New generations of activists have provided at least an alternative voice for the non-business segment of the community. The rise of a new generation of Chinese American community activists is not unique. For instance, the Los Angeles riots in 1992 ignited long lasting changes in the area's Korean American community. The older immigrant leaders failed to respond to the plight of Korean American small businesses adversely affected by the riots. A new generation of American born or 1.5 generation Korean Americans rose to speak on behalf of the community (Park, 2001).

Built on the experience and credibility acquired over the years of countering institutional expansion in Chinatown, the new generation of activists have made progress

⁷ Please see Michael Liu (1999) for a detailed discussion about community organizing in Boston Chinatown during the last quarter of the 20th century. A significant portion of this section's discussion of

in forcing more recent land development projects in and around Chinatown to attend to the needs of the community. Some recent examples of the success include the development of a master plan and subsequent revisions for Chinatown development, the concession of a condominium project (Liberty Place) to provide more affordable housing unit, the city official's recognition of the newer advocacy groups' role in future land development issue, and a formal process to involve the Chinatown community in redeveloping adjacent land vacated by the central artery reconstruction project⁸.

Comparison

In contrast to the traditional urban enclave of Chinatown, community organizing in the newer Chinese American enclaves in Quincy and Malden is still at its infancy. Some newer nonprofits are struggling to establish a stable footing in the respective community. Community organizing is much more mature and complex in Boston Chinatown than in Quincy or Malden, because of the former's history and concentration of population. In 1997, there were 75 non-commercial Asian American organizations in Boston Chinatown (Liu, 1999), many of which were advocacy or social service agencies. The number has increased to more than 100 by 2001. There are about 10 Asian American community organizations each in Quincy, or Malden (AARW, 2001). This is not a surprising development. The series of land use disputes in the Chinatown area have gradually intensified community organizing in response. In the newer enclaves, there have been few external threats to the Asian American communities at similar scale and frequency. Community organizing in these new enclaves focuses primarily on meeting

Boston Chinatown is based on Liu's dissertation.

⁸Sampan, February 2003).

the cultural and social services needs of fellow residents, whereas the concerns in Boston Chinatown have moved beyond direct services to individuals and into community-wide issues like land use or even the long term viability of the Chinatown community.

As Chinese American residents in Quincy and Malden are more integrated than their counterparts in Chinatown, so are the community organizations. Recognizing the needs of the growing Asian American population in the two newer enclaves, some mainstream service agencies are involved in Asian American community organizing for the benefits of Asian-American new comers. This is a much more favorable environment than when the early Chinese immigrants moved to the Chinatown area a century ago. In the last 25 years, the city government of Boston aligned itself with the growth regime that adversely impacts the Chinatown community. On the other hand, city governments in Quincy and Malden support, if only symbolically, the respective Asian American community, either by arranging for recreational facilities or hiring bilingual staff members. The potential voting power of Asian Americans in these two communities may account for the difference in the support the Asian American community receives from the respective city government. Because of how electoral districts are drawn in the city of Boston, Chinese Americans or Asian Americans never have much impact on local elections.

There is a tendency for Chinese American community organizing to become more assimilated into mainstream approaches. Traditional associations in Boston Chinatown, like their counterparts in other North American major cities, rely mostly on informal means of influence. Their mode of operation is built on interpersonal relationship within and outside the community, rather than following a common set of rules of the game. This gives rise to outsiders' perception of secrecy regarding their operation. Lack of

proper record keeping is a consequence of this mode of operation. In 2000, because of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association's failure to account for its finances, the Massachusetts state Attorney General won a court order to require the association hire an outsider to put its business in order⁹. The newer generations of activists in all these communities are college educated and employed in various professional occupations. They tend to adopt the mainstream modes of operation, not only in internal organization, but also in employing multiple and confrontational strategies to achieve their goals.

The geographic concentration of multiple groups within the 25 blocks of Boston Chinatown renders competition among them inevitable. The various land use disputes put business interests of attracting more customers as the side benefits of development projects in direct competition with making land available for housing development for residents. Thus, traditional associations in Chinatown, whose members hold various business interests in the community, and activists sympathetic to social service needs of the community are more often than not in opposition of each other. This conflict of institutional interests within the newer enclaves of Malden and Quincy is largely absent -- partly because of the absence of significant ethnic business establishments in these communities, partly because the ethnic residents here are much more dispersed than their counterparts in Chinatown. A significant portion of the leadership in Chinatown grassroots organizations comes from activists who do not live at Chinatown but may have work, social, or cultural tie with the community. In the newer enclaves, however, local Asian American residents themselves provide much of the leadership. In both the traditional and newer enclaves, Chinese American community organizing share the same challenge as mainstream nonprofits in encouraging ethnic residents to take part in

⁹ Sampan, January 19, 2001

community affairs. Another common challenge is how successive generations of Chinese American community leaders and volunteers work together as a team, instead of forming competing groups.

Civic and Political Participation

A measure of the political integration of immigrant community is its level of civic and political participation, which may include citizenship naturalization, participation in city censuses, registering to vote, and financial contribution to political campaigns.

This section is based primarily on the 2000 US Census, Massachusetts city and town annual census, and campaign finance contribution data. For the latter two sources, Chinatown data is not available at the census tract level. Instead, the information for the city of Boston or zip code 02111 is used. This is the zip code for the South End neighborhood, where Chinatown is part of. Furthermore, US Census data for this zip code is available for Asian Americans, not for Chinese Americans.

The 2000 US Census shows that the naturalization rate among Chinese Americans (61%) in Quincy is substantially higher than their counterparts in Malden (44%) and Boston Chinatown census tracts (45%). In all three ethnic enclaves, Chinese Americans are slightly more likely than other Asian Americans to become naturalized US citizens. All residents, regardless of citizenship status, in Massachusetts cities and towns are invited to participate in the separate annual local census. Participation in the annual census is a civic responsibility of each resident. Chinese Americans in the three enclaves are similar at this level of civic participation, ranging from 72 to 78 percent. Although Chinese American civic participation is somewhat higher than other Asian American

groups, they lag behind the respective general population's civic participation rates of 85 percent or more.

When it comes to voter registration, Chinese Americans, or Asian Americans in general, lag even farther behind the general population in the three communities. The percentage of eligible Chinese American voters, citizens who are 18 years or older, who have registered to vote is 15 to more than 30 percentage points lower than that of the general population in Boston, Malden, and Quincy. The difference among Chinese Americans in these three enclaves is relatively small, although those in Malden are slightly more active. About 60 percent or more of Chinese Americans and Asian Americans in all three enclaves alike are affiliated with neither one of the two major political parties. Although they are similarly unlikely to align with the Republican Party as the population in general, Chinese or Asian Americans in the three enclaves are only half as likely as the general population to identify themselves as Democrats. In terms of campaign contribution to state office candidates, Chinese American participation during 2001 to 2003 is largely insignificant in comparison to that of the general population, although the average amount of campaign contribution is not substantially different between Chinese or Asian Americans in these three enclaves and the population at large. Thus, these Chinese Americans are far less active than the general population in civic and political participation. However, Chinese Americans in Boston or Chinatown are similarly politically active as their counterparts in Malden and Quincy. Although Chinese Americans in Boston or Chinatown generally have fewer human and financial resources than their counterparts in Malden or Quincy, the more intensive community activism in Chinatown may have enhanced its Chinese American residents' political

consciousness to a level comparable to that in the Malden or Quincy Chinese American community.

Despite the concentration and growth of Chinese Americans in these three enclaves, no Chinese Americans have been elected to public office yet. Like the case of New York's Chinatown (Saito, 2001), the location in a multicultural electoral district may have deprived Chinatown's opportunity of having Chinese American representation in the Boston city council as well. In 2001, Jimmy Liang, a young Chinese-American entrepreneur ran in fifth among 6 candidates for 3 Quincy city councilor-at-large vacancies. Liang tried but failed again in 2003. Richard Cheng, a Chinese-American community activist and social worker, also failed to win a seat in the 2001 Malden city council election. In contrast, Chinese or Asian Americans in cities and town with less concentrated ethnic population have more success. In the greater Boston area, there are 3 Asian Americans elected to city level offices and two others are school district board members. Chanrithy Uong is a Cambodian-American serving his second term as a city councilor in Lowell. Daniel Lam, a Vietnamese-American of Chinese decent, won re-election in 2003 to serve another term as one of three Randolph selectmen. He was also elected to be the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen in April 2004. Amy Mah Sangiolo is a first generation U.S. born Asian American serving her second term as an alderman in Newton. Ira Chan has just won a seat in the Brookline Public School Committee, replacing another Chinese American, Terry Kwan, who retires from her seat after eighteen year. Fred Wang is the other Chinese American on the same committee of nine members in a school district with 19 percent Asian American students (Sampan, May 2-16, 2003). All these office holders were elected the first time they were on the ballot.

No simple answer can explain the election outcome of Chinese or Asian Americans in local offices. Newton, Randolph, and Lowell, the electoral districts for the 3 incumbent Chinese or Asian American city office-holders, include Asian American enclaves of three entirely different socioeconomic backgrounds. Asian American candidates may win, or lose, in any socioeconomic context of the ethnic community. Nor is the relative size of the Asian American population a guarantee for forming a winning coalition. Both Quincy and Lowell have about 15 percent Asian Americans in the respective population. Yet the Chinese American candidate lost in Quincy but the Cambodian American candidate won in Lowell. A more relevant winning coalition is one that includes the non-Asian American voters as well. The current Asian American office holders may also share similar personal factors with the candidates who have lost. For instance, a candidate's prior experience in community organizing might have contributed to the success of Chanrithy Uong in Lowell but not enough to help Richard Cheng in Malden. The extensive employment experience of Daniel Lam with state government might have established his credibility in running a local government, but the absence of it for Amy Mah Sangligo did not seem to hurt her chances. Electing Chinese or Asian American to an elected political office in the Boston area may involve some combination of personal factors, structural factors, and idiosyncratic circumstances for each race. A more careful examining of this issue awaits further research. The experience of Chinese or Asian Americans running for local offices in the Boston area in the last few years does show, however, that there is growing interest among this ethnic population to impact not only within the ethnic enclaves but also the larger community.

Conclusion

Chinese Americans in Boston Chinatown and their counterparts in the newer enclaves of Malden and Quincy have made more progress in approaching economic parity than political parity with the population at large. Significant challenges lie ahead for community development in all three enclaves. First is the viability of Chinatown itself. The relentless market pressure to gentrify Chinatown is likely to continue. In the past few decades, active community organizing has tempered somewhat institutional encroachment into Chinatown and succeeded in ensuring a greater role for all stakeholders in influencing future land developments in the vicinity of Chinatown. Depending on the pace of the suburbanization of Chinese shopping and restaurant businesses serving the ethnic clientele, the centrality of Chinatown in the life of Chinese Americans in the Boston area may diminish. Boston Chinatown is only one of very few North American Chinatowns where the ethnic population still visit on a regular basis for shopping and food. The lack of abundant land in the city's surrounding ethnic enclaves may prolong the economic viability of Chinatown businesses. If recent Chinese commercial development in Quincy continues in other Boston area cities and towns with substantial Chinese population, Boston Chinatown may soon lose its economic value as a distinctive ethnic neighborhood.

The intensive and extensive community organizing in Boston Chinatown is largely reactive to urban land use development. The challenge for community organizing in Quincy and Malden is whether, in the absence of similar external threats, community organizing in these two enclaves is sustainable and makes a difference in the life of Chinese Americans in the community.

Some existing Chinatown social service agencies have expanded their service to Chinese American residents in the two newer enclaves by setting up satellite offices there – a big help to service recipients who may no longer need to travel to Chinatown to receive the same service. Local Chinese American agencies have also been set up to meet the other needs of the ethnic population in the communities. Greater cross learning and collaboration between agencies in Chinatown and in the two newer enclaves is warranted. Common to all three enclaves is the internal division among active participants in community affairs. If such tension persists within each enclave, it not only adversely affects the local community, but also creates additional barriers to cross-enclave collaboration.

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Table 1. Socioeconomic condition of Chinese Americans in Boston Chinatown, Malden, and Quincy 2000

	Boston	Malden	Quincy	Chinatown	MA - AA	MA - ALL
1990 Chinese	16263	1445	4144	5904		
1990 % AA Chinese	53.4%	54.1%	75.5%	95.6%		
2000 Chinese	19665	4502	9497	5620		
2000 % AA Chinese	44.3%	57.1%	67.8%	93.1%		
Growth rate of Chinese Americans 90-00	20.9%	211.6%	129.2%	-4.8%		58.0%
Growth rate of API's 90-00	46.6%	196.4%	147.1%	-2.3%		69.3%
% 18-64 Bilingual CA's speak very good English	40.5%	37.5%	38.4%	26.5%	46.0%	56.7%
% 18-64 Bilingual CA's speak good English	22.0%	23.0%	25.5%	31.0%	29.9%	23.4%
% 18-64 Bilingual CA's speak little or no English	37.5%	39.4%	36.2%	42.5%	24.1%	19.9%
CA Adults' (25+) Education Attainment						
% less than high school	42.1%	37.3%	36.9%	57.4%	23.8%	15.2%
% high school graduates	16.5%	17.9%	23.5%	16.0%	13.9%	27.3%
% some college + associate degree	9.3%	10.8%	15.7%	10.3%	12.5%	24.3%
% college graduates and above	32.2%	34.0%	24.0%	16.4%	49.8%	33.2%
CA per capital income 1999	15849	18061	15484	15788	21542	25952
CA persons under poverty line 1999	27.6%	9.4%	9.6%	15.0%	16.2%	9.3%
Percent CA owner-occupied housing	23.6%	51.0%	67.8%	34.1%	41.0%	61.7%

Table 2. Civic and Political Participation of Chinese Americans in Boston Chinatown, Malden, and Quincy 2000-2003

	Boston	Zip Code 2111	Malden	Quincy
No. of Residents (2000 US census)	589141	5180	56340	88025
Asian American Naturalization rate	41.4%	41.2%	42.5%	56.3%
Chinese American Naturalization rate	45.5%	45.0%	44.4%	61.1%
No. of registered residents (18 yrs. +)	415513	3425	40614	60807
No. of registered AA residents (18 yrs. +)	22904	1911	4009	6859
No. of registered Chinese residents (18 +)	12809		2463	5062
Chinese American response rate	77.1%	70.6%	78.2%	72.2%
AA response rate to city census	62.8%	70.6%	66.6%	66.0%
Non-AA response rate to city census	89.9%	78.2%	93.7%	86.7%
Number of registered Chinese American voter	4057	608	745	1860
Percent registered CA voters (eligible voters)	43.7%	43.4%	49.0%	40.2%
percent CA Democrats	32.1%	28.3%	22.6%	24.7%
percent CA Republicans	7.5%	5.4%	9.3%	7.8%
percent CA Independent	60.1%	65.6%	66.8%	66.7%
Number of registered AA voters (18 Yrs)	6923	608	1218	2477
Percent registered AA voters (eligible voters)	36.0%	43.4%	43.8%	37.8%
percent AA Democrats	30.6%	28.3%	24.3%	25.2%
percent AA Republicans	10.3%	5.4%	11.7%	9.6%
percent AA Independent	58.5%	65.6%	62.4%	64.3%
Number of registered non-AA voter	217489	672	27234	44763
Percent registered non-AA voters (eligible voters)	58.9%	37.8%	79.2%	76.6%
percent non-AA Democrat	63.2%	40.5%	46.3%	50.7%
percent non-AA Republican	9.8%	12.2%	8.2%	13.8%
percent non-AA Independent	40.0%	46.4%	44.8%	34.8%
2001-2003 no. of CA contributions	97	6	2	34
2001 - 2003 CA average \$ contributions	\$150	\$79	\$113	\$173
2001 - 2003 no. of nonAA contributions	27,115	444	1,183	3,425
2001 - 2003 nonAA average \$ contributions	\$179	\$239	\$161	\$158
no. CA / non AA ratio	0.4%	1.4%	0.2%	1.0%
\$ CA / non AA ratio	84%	33%	70%	109%