

# The Ethnic Structure of Social Capital through Chinese and Vietnamese Community Organisations

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## Abstract

Few studies have focussed on the critical roles community organisations play within ethnic enclaves. This paper seeks to address this gap and utilises social capital theory to examine the ethnic community stakeholders, resources and exchanges mediated through Chinese and Vietnamese community-based organisations serving immigrant populations in the San Francisco Bay Area. The multiple qualitative methodologies utilised included collective case study and ethnographic approaches. The procedures included concentrated participant observation, 61 key informant interviews and analysis of documentary materials. The findings suggest that the Chinese and Vietnamese community organisations reflect the historical and current challenges of ethnic enclave development and American racial politics. Within such organisations, ethnic elites and self-sufficient ethnics represent critical ethnic social capital stakeholders that provide community leadership, social adjustment, cultural preservation, political advocacy and community-building resources to immigrants and other ethnic community members. However, minority Asian status has negative social capital consequences for these organisations and other community stakeholders. The racialised politics of Asian American exclusion and 'yellow peril' ideologies persist and restricts them from full incorporation into American society. Building and sustaining key mainstream, intercultural and home country resource networks together with the development of a critical mass Asian community population and concentration can help to bridge such racial barriers and foster both organisational and multicultural community development.

## Keywords

Asian, community organisation, immigrant, social adjustment, social capital

## Introduction

It is problematic that community social capital has been steadily declining across the United States (Putnam 2000). In addition, the continuing privatisation of health and human services and education together with the recent reallocation of such types of public funds toward defense and homeland security following 9/11 have further exacerbated the state of our communities and immigrant and ethnic minority have especially been adversely affected by these events (Urban Institute 2001, 2002, 2003). Given these trends, there is a critical need to foster grassroots initiatives and civic innovations for initiating the processes for revitalising communities across our nation (Sirianni and Friedland 2001).

In particular, within the Chinese and Vietnamese American enclaves, grassroots organisations as fundamental community building blocks have represented centres of social adjustment, community resilience and neighborhood development (Lai 1996; Hein 1997; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Zhou 2000). Few studies have focussed on the role of grassroots organisations in social adjustment and community building within immigrant enclaves. This study seeks to address these gaps and examines community resources, stakeholders and exchanges (i.e. social capital) mediated through Chinese and Vietnamese community-based organisations (CBOs) that serve immigrant populations in the

San Francisco Bay Area. In particular, the study examines the major ethnic community resources exchanged through these immigrant service organisations, the donors and recipients of these ethnic community resources and the benefits and limitations of ethnic community resources, stakeholders and exchanges.

## **Background**

Chinese, Vietnamese and other ethnic populations have historically contributed to building vibrant, diverse communities across our nation (Kennedy 1964; Portes and Rumbaut 1990, 2001) and represent critical sources of community and human capital. In addition, three major events, the *Immigration Reform Act* of 1965 as part of the civil rights era, global restructuring in the Pacific region and the US involvement in the Vietnam War, have served as the backdrop to rapid population influx from Asia to the United States and consequent Asian enclave development over the past four decades (Fong 2000).

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have become the fastest growing immigrant and ethnic/racial group over the past four decades (Fong and Shinagawa 2000; Zhou and Gatewood 2000). From 1960 to 2000, AAPIs increased by a phenomenal 1355 per cent from less than 900,000 to 11.9 million or 4.2 per cent of the total US population (Barringer, Gardner and Levin 1993; U.S. Census Bureau 2002). In comparison, from 1960 to 2000, the total US population increased by 157 per cent from 179.3 million to 281.4 million. Three-quarters of the total AAPI growth have been a consequence of immigration and almost two-thirds of the AAPIs today are foreign born (Shinagawa 2000). Chinese currently represent the largest AAPI subgroup with 2.9 million or 24 per cent of the AAPI population and Vietnamese represent the fifth largest AAPI subgroup with 1.2 million or 10.3 per cent of the total AAPI population (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). By 2050, it is estimated the AAPI population will almost quadruple in size and represent approximately 40 million or almost ten per cent of the total US population (Shinagawa 2000).

The history of AAPIs has been a history of exclusion and discrimination as well as strength and resilience (Takaki 1989; Chan 1991). Major historical events of institutional racism, prejudice and violence such as the *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882, the Japanese internment during World War II and more recently the post-9/11 institutional discrimination on South Asian and Arab American communities continue to plague AAPIs and other racial minority groups. American incorporation of Asian populations into the United States continues to be on unequal terms by colored lines (Wei 1993; Ong 1994; Lowe 1996; Ong 2000).

However, alongside such challenges to American incorporation, AAPIs have built communities of solidarity and resilience (Takaki 1989; Chan 1991; Espiritu 1997) and fought and persevered through numerous barriers and challenges of institutional exclusion and racism. In the post-civil rights era, Asian American socioeconomic and political status have increased substantially alongside the dramatic growth of both the Asian-born and American-born populations (Espiritu 1992; Wei 1993; Min 1995), especially in regions of major Asian concentrations such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

For the Chinese community, these dramatic changes led to increasing government support and rapid Chinese immigration in the post-1965 period that facilitated a dramatically build up of resources to support Chinese community institutions and development (Zhou 1992; Lin 1998). For the Vietnamese community, in addition to the civil rights

movement, the Vietnam War created the pretext for rapid flows of refugees from Southeast Asia from 1975 and the largest public refugee resettlement program in US history to accommodate such flows (Robinson 1998). Contemporary transnational migration from China and Vietnam continues to steadily flow into the US through family reunification and labor immigration channels (Min 1995; Fong 2000).

In sum, institutional racism and stigmatization persist for the Chinese, Vietnamese and other Asian populations (Lowe 1996; Committee of 100 2001). However, given the dramatic potential future growth of Asian populations in the United States and the increasing interdependence of Asian and American development under global restructuring, there is a critical need for further studies to examine the dramatic restructuring of Chinese, Vietnamese and other Asian communities and institutions and their potentially increasing contribution and impact on neighborhood and national development.

### **Social capital theory**

Participation in social groups that can have positive effects on individuals and families has its origins from Durkheim's (1933) theory of social integration and group life and Marx's class consciousness and membership (Marx 1978). Contemporary examination of social capital theory by Bourdieu (1985) and Coleman (1988) emphasise the significance of social capital as an important theoretical model to describe social interactions and networks between individual agency and social structures and argue that the distinctive social nature of capital based on structural relations cannot be collapsed into economic or human capital models.

This study uses social capital theory to examine the structures and processes of immigrant services through Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs. Social capital is defined as "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes 1998, p. 6). The social capital framework can be differentiated into sources, consequences and negative social capital. And depending on the level of exchange, the donors and recipients of social capital range from individuals to communities and nations. However, there has been much contention with the use of social capital in the community participatory literature due to underdeveloped social capital frameworks at the community and national levels (Portes and Landolt 2000). More research about community and national levels of social capital will be necessary to clarify these gaps in the social capital framework. The following section briefly overviews social capital theory.

### **Sources of social capital**

The sources of social capital (Portes 1998) can be broadly differentiated into consummatory and instrumental processes between donors and recipients of social capital. Consummatory or bonding processes refer to social actors associating in group-based processes that are based on shared group values and interests. Such consummatory actions may range from obeying traffic safety rules so driving becomes safer for everyone to taking part in strikes to protest poor wages as being part of a labor union. Instrumental or bridging processes refer to social actors associating in group-based processes with on mutual benefit incentives for advancement or social exchanges that benefit both the social actors and the larger group interests. Instrumental actions may range from an individual in the local community establishing a church as a source of religious and community services and in the process gains status as a citizen of good standing in the local community to a company manager providing equipment and facility access to a subordinate

in the same division to promote business products that may result in increased company revenues and good standing for both the manager and subordinate within the company.

### **Consequences of social capital**

The three major consequences of social capital across various contexts include: "(a) as a source of social control; (b) as a source of family support; (c) as a source of benefits through extrafamilial networks" (Portes 1998, p. 9). Firstly, social capital established by social structures such as communities acts as a form of informal social control to maintain and reinforce the structural rules of behavioral and exchange. Secondly, family support such as the parents' level of involvement in children's development serves as critical family capital that can lead to positive children's outcomes. Third, social networks beyond the family can serve to facilitate social mobility for network members.

### **Negative Social Capital**

Negative social capital (Portes 1998) is also been an important consequence of social capital, although it has been underemphasised in the research literature. Negative effects of social capital include: "exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms and downward leveling norms" (Portes 1998, p. 15). Firstly, the exclusivity of membership that provides access to resources also restricts membership. Secondly, the boundaries or restrictions involved in group membership may limit access to resources outside such bounds. Thirdly, individual freedoms may be outweighed by the obligation to conform as part of group membership. Finally, group membership based on common experiences of opposition to dominant social forces may lead to downward shifts of social mobility.

### **Immigrant social capital and ethnic community organisations**

Within ethnic enclaves, CBOs represent critical sources of immigrant social capital (Zhou 2000; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The historical developments of these CBOs have been a consequence of rapidly increasing immigrant and ethnic populations and the coordinated efforts of ethnic community leaders and advocates to mediate growing ethnic community needs (Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Massey et al. 1998). In addition, their mission and programs reflect social adjustment and capacity-building issues (Hein 1997; Zhou 2000). In other words, they have been both recipients and donors of social capital for immigrants and their ethnic communities. This paper examines the stakeholders (i.e. donors and recipients), consequences and negative social capital through select Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs serving immigrant populations. In addition, through examining the social capital structure and processes of these CBOs, the paper discusses the key organisational resources, stakeholders and challenges within Chinese and Vietnamese immigrant communities.

### **Research methodology**

This research study was based on a collective case study of ethnic CBOs (two Chinese and two Vietnamese) serving immigrants and refugees in the San Francisco Bay Area. The methodologies utilised included a combination of case study (Yin 1984) and ethnographic (Miles and Huberman 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) approaches.

Fieldwork was conducted from January 2001 to November 2001 and 61 key informants were interviewed. The fieldwork process included gathering information about CBOs within the Chinese and Vietnamese communities from

key community service providers and researchers, recruiting select organisations and key informants to participate in the study, the development of an interview questionnaire used for in-depth interviews, concentrated participant observation at CBOs (i.e. spending three to four weeks at each of the organisations as full-time participant and observer of daily program activities, meetings and events), semi-structured in-depth interviews of two to three key informants of executives from each of the organisations, numerous other staff and a few non-staff key informant interviews (formal and informal), collection of a variety of internal documentary materials about these organisations and taking field notes from concentrated participant observation and formal and informal interviews. The analysis process took place during and subsequent to the fieldwork process and included transcribing interviews, coding analysis (descriptive, interpretive and analytical) of interview transcriptions, field notes, documentary materials and other field data, writing memos, drawing diagrams, developing key themes and frameworks from analysis and writing up of findings.

There are a number of limitations in this study. The study focussed only on CBOs within Chinese and Vietnamese communities and excluded organisations in other ethnic/racial communities. Also, the study targeted CBOs that primarily serviced immigrant and refugee populations. Further, the study focussed primarily on social and health services organisations and did not explore other types of organisations such as businesses, legal, media, arts and cultural and many other types of organisations within such communities. Finally, the study focussed on CBOs in the San Francisco Bay Area and the findings may not be applicable to other ethnic/racial communities and regions of the US and around the world.

In the following sections, the four CBOs will be referred as Chinese Immigrant Service Center (CISC), Chinese Community Service Center (CCSC), Vietnamese Immigrant Service Center (VISC) and Vietnamese Community Service Center (VCSC). The names are fictitious and have been constructed to reflect their ethnic identification and organisational capacity.

### **Background of ethnic CBOs**

The background of the two Chinese and two Vietnamese CBOs reflected the historical contexts of Asian community developments over the past four decades, based on the field data from concentrated participant observation, key informant interviews and documentary materials (Table 1). All four ethnic CBOs in this study were established by ethnic community leaders and advocates with key financial, legitimacy and technical support from politically affluent ethnics, government agencies and foundations during the early stages of rapid influx of immigrants and refugee flows from Greater China (i.e. China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) and Southeast Asia (i.e. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s to help incorporate these newcomer populations and address major resettlement challenges facing them in adjusting to American society. Over the past three or more decades, these CBOs have survived numerous political, fiscal and ethnic community challenges with primarily ethnic community and government support and have built up their reputations as leading CBOs that spearhead immigrant services within their respective local ethnic communities.

For all four ethnic CBOs, the composition of organisational executives, staff and clientele were primarily from within their respective ethnic communities. The organisational executives were made up of primarily Chinese or Vietnamese

elites and a few non-ethnic community members from select local government agencies and corporations. The full-time and part-time staff including administrators and service providers was made up of mostly self-sufficient Chinese or Vietnamese ethnics. The organisational clientele consisted of mostly low income Chinese or Vietnamese newcomers.

**Table 1. Background of ethnic CBOs**

<b>Background of ethnic CBOs</b>	<b>Chinese Immigrant Service Center</b>	<b>Chinese Community Service Center</b>	<b>Vietnamese Immigrant Service Center</b>	<b>Vietnamese Community Service Center</b>
<b>Year established</b>	1969	1968	1976	1975
<b>Location</b>	San Francisco	Oakland	San Jose	San Francisco and San Jose
<b>Total revenue, financial year 2000</b>	\$455,110	\$5,074,886	\$623,797	\$882,001
<b>Full-time staff, financial year 2001</b>	6	100	17	22
<b>Major types of services provided</b>	Social services	Long-term care, social Services and youth services	Social services	Social services and community development

In terms of the types of services provided across the four ethnic CBOs, they included social services, long-term care, community development and youth services. Social services included information and referral, direct assistance, employment, ESL, cultural orientation, citizenship, community outreach, translation/interpretation, computer training and food distribution. Long-term care included adult day health care, adult recreation and in-home supportive services. Community development included small business loans, technical assistance and merchant’s outreach. Youth services included child day care and youth leadership development.

**Ethnic social capital and ethnic CBOs**

The Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs in this study represented critical sites and mediators of social capital within ethnic communities and played vital roles as culturally appropriate social and health services providers for facilitating immigrant transitions and incorporation into American society according to the field observations and key informant interviews.

As one key informant put it:

“As always, I think the most useful resources come from the community based organization. That’s the organization. They go deep into the community. They speak the language of the client. They understand the culture of the clients and they perform a lot of volunteer work for the client. So in one word, I think is CBO. It’s the short name for the community based organizations are the best resources for either the newly arrived refugee or immigrant. When you’re talking about the best one, I cited the best one. Another resource are the

government agencies in charge of the programs for the newly arrived refugees or immigrants and mainly come from the social service agencies or health care agencies” (Executive Director, VCSC).

The following sections discuss the stakeholders (i.e. donors and recipients) and consequences of social capital pertaining to the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs in this study. The stakeholders of social capital include ethnic CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers. The consequences of social capital include ethnic community control, ethnic membership benefits and negative ethnic social capital.

### **Stakeholders of social capital**

The major stakeholders of social capital exchange observed through the four ethnic CBOs included ethnic CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers according to daily field observations, key informant interviews and year 2000 annual reports.

### ***Ethnic community-based organisations***

“We help them in everything, from housing, social services, language, job placement. Moreover, from cultural education and also medical too, in our agency. Well, this is a very long story because I came here in '75 myself. After the first year, we experienced a lot of difficulty for the newcomer to the new country. And we find out that stuff. We need to welcome the new refugee and immigrant to this country. So based on our own experiences, we are going to hire staff with the same experiences and then we step-by-step we learn on job training by ourselves. And after we help for more than twenty-five to twenty-six years, it's like we know exactly what to do and with a priority to serve the newcomer. I think the most important resource is the experiences of how we provided service to immigrants/refugees over the years” (Executive Director, VISC).

The Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs in this study represented culturally proficient immigrant resource centres and made critical contributions to assisting immigrants in resettlement and mediating their incorporation into American society. The types of services these ethnic CBOs provided and the leadership roles they played to guide and represent immigrant populations and their ethnic communities time and time again made a positive impact on the every day lives of their immigrant clients and families in easing their struggles to navigate American contexts and achieve self-sufficiency and empowerment. At the same time, the developments of ethnic CBOs reflected the changing population composition and needs over time alongside shifting political and economic trends of their communities.

However, the capacity of these organisations to expand and to best serve immigrants was limited because of their ethnic minority identity and mission. Due to the historical forces and constructions of Asian and immigrant exclusion, their identification as members of minority ethnic/racial communities and mission to serve primarily immigrant populations often limited their access to financial, legitimacy and other resources outside of their own ethnic/racial communities in the government, non-profit and corporate arenas. However, through their networks and coalitions with various CBOs within and beyond their own ethnic/racial communities, these organisations were able to share and pool resources with other organisations, raise their community service capacity and provide more comprehensive options to assist and advocate for their immigrant and refugee clients. Overall, the community resources and support these

ethnic CBOs have available and were able to provide could give direction and help immigrants get a head start toward achieving self-sufficiency. In addition, these ethnic CBOs served as representatives for their communities to the outside and a starting place for building community empowerment.

### ***Ethnic elites***

Ethnic elites referred to ethnics with political influence and social standing within ethnic communities and ranged from traditional to contemporary ethnic elites. At the most basic level, the power of these ethnic elites were based on accumulation and control of political and economic capital (i.e. status and class) from their home countries, within the ethnic communities and in the American mainstream. Traditional ethnic elites tended to emphasise ethnic solidarity and maintained strong ties to the home country. Contemporary ethnic elites tended to emphasise incorporation into American society and have stronger ties to American mainstream institutions. The power of most Chinese and Vietnamese community elites was primarily based within ethnic communities and tended to be limited outside of it. However, there have been a growing number of Asian social elites represented in the American mainstream. The political authority and status of ethnic elites were legitimated primarily by various traditional and/or contemporary political factions, community coalitions, ethnic businesses and other affluent ethnic stakeholders within the ethnic community. However, these community leaders could lose power and legitimacy should their agendas and actions come in conflict with dominant ethnic community and/or American mainstream political forces.

Leadership at the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs and their ethnic communities primarily came from ethnic elite groups. Ethnic elites provided critical leadership, legitimacy and financial resources to ethnic CBOs. They helped to bring social legitimacy to the ethnic CBOs, set organisational and community agendas and linked ethnic CBOs to critical ethnic community and mainstream financial resources. Ethnic CBOs also depended on substantial financial contributions from ethnic elites such as working professionals and ethnic entrepreneurs to support their programs and activities.

### ***Self-sufficient ethnics***

Self-sufficient ethnics referred to those ethnics that have achieved basic financial, cultural and language self-sufficiency to survive in American everyday life and could be either foreign-born or American-born. Their socioeconomic status typically ranged from working poor to middle class status.

The administrative and program staff composition under Chinese and Vietnamese CBO leadership was primarily made up of educated and skilled self-sufficient ethnics. They served as the engine for daily operations and programs at CBOs. Due to their common minority ethnic affiliation and experiences, self-sufficient ethnics were motivated to contribute to advancing their communities and have the multilingual, cultural and structural capacities to best assist immigrant and refugee clients with social adjustment and community empowerment. Self-sufficient ethnics serving as direct service providers of CBO programs were especially central to facilitating culturally proficient and appropriate services to immigrants.

For foreign-born self-sufficient ethnics, they have the best capacity to interface with immigrant and refugee clients and address their multiple social adjustment challenges because they have been through the immigrant experience and

process of achieving self-sufficiency. For American-born or American-raised self-sufficient ethnics, they have the best capacity work with mainstream service organisations to help facilitate immigrant services through ethnic CBOs and advocate for ethnic community interests in mainstream forums.

However, for many of them, their time and contribution at ethnic CBOs tended to be transient. Many sought personal and family advancement beyond their roles at ethnic CBOs, seeking and moving on to better financial and social opportunities through ethnic entrepreneurship or in the American mainstream workplace that ethnic CBOs were unable to offer. For those that remained at ethnic CBOs for the long term, there was often a compelling ethnic community service motivation that transcended their personal and family advancement needs.

### ***Newcomers***

Newcomers in this study referred to immigrants or refugees that have been in the United States for less than five years. The international migration contexts and the human and economic capital that newcomers brought with them affected their reception and adaptation to the United States. Affluent, well-educated urban professional newcomers tended to adapt easily and incorporate quickly into American society. While poor, uneducated rural newcomers tended to have the most trouble adapting and incorporating into American society.

The critical clientele supply base of the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs came from the respective ethnic communities and made up of primarily newcomers. In addition, some skilled and educated newcomers served as staff members at ethnic CBOs and, like self-sufficient ethnics, made valuable contributions to providing community services and advocacy. Newcomers represented new blood and growth for ethnic communities, helped to preserve ethnic languages, cultures and ties and reflected the core mission of these organisations. The continuing rapid influx of newcomers helped to sustain the ethnic community mission and programs of the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs. Without the ongoing rapid flows of Asian newcomers to build up their communities, the identity and viability of these ethnic CBOs as well as the ethnic cultures and traditions might not be sustainable across generations.

### ***Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs and sources of social capital***

Comparing between the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs, even though the ethnic entities and resources of social capital exchange were similar, the stages of organisational development between Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs were different according to the field observations and key informant interviews. The resource capacities and power of ethnic CBOs depended on the historical community developments, the relative population size and concentrations of power and wealth within these ethnic communities and how well they have been able to negotiate and take advantage of American mainstream resource networks as well as home country resource networks to further build up the capacity of their organisations.

The Chinese CBOs tended to have stronger community infrastructure, greater community resource capacity and political clout than the Vietnamese CBOs due to the differential historical dynamics of Chinese versus Vietnamese community development. These differences included the substantially longer time (i.e. 150+ years versus 30 years) Chinese community has had to build up their communities and build relations with mainstream institutions, the substantially larger and rapidly growing Chinese population, the much greater number of Chinese elites active and

influential in the American mainstream and the substantive resources from Greater China to support overseas Chinese communities and influence American politics and economics compared to the Vietnamese community.

On the other hand, Vietnamese CBOs lacked resource capacity and American political clout. Vietnamese community development in the United States has just reached three decades. In addition, the Vietnamese population and concentration has not yet grown to a size as substantive as the Chinese population. Also, most Vietnamese elites have only very recently achieved financial self-sufficiency and were in the early stages of building up their American political voice. Much fewer of them has the capacity to be as active and influential in the American mainstream compared to the select Chinese social elites. Furthermore, Vietnam currently lacked sufficient national resources to support overseas Vietnamese communities and influence American politics and economics. In contrast, the overseas Vietnamese communities have been much more resourceful and influential in financially and technically supporting the development of Vietnam.

However, for both Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs, the ethnic minority sources of social capital were clearly far weaker than the sources of social capital through the dominant American mainstream political, economic and cultural institutions. It is a continuing challenge for ethnic CBOs to balance preserving their ethnic mission and mainstreaming in order to be able to build mainstream legitimacy and accumulate much more social and economic resources that could be utilized to further build up their ethnic community services.

### **Consequences of ethnic social capital**

Ethnic CBOs and other ethnic stakeholders such as ethnic elites, self-sufficient immigrants and newcomers within the Chinese and Vietnamese communities impacted their communities in three primary ways. They included ethnic community control, benefits of ethnic community membership and negative ethnic social capital according to field observations at the organisations and key informant interviews.

#### ***Ethnic community control***

In terms of ethnic community control (Table 2), the leading Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs often set the direction of ethnic community development, controlled allocation over major ethnic community service resources and served as the primary representatives and advocates for the diverse intra-ethnic community interests. In addition, powerful ethnic CBOs maintained social control over other ethnic CBOs through community coalitions. Being part of powerful coalitions brought more legitimacy and status to the organisations and their mission. And being the leading ethnic CBO within such coalitions served to give such an organisation much authority over the other organisations within the coalition and the larger ethnic community in general. Also, ethnic elites provided the key leadership resources to lead and manage ethnic CBOs and the larger ethnic community interests in general. Ethnic elites within the ethnic CBOs and beyond possessed the community clout and authority to shape and set the agendas of ethnic organisations and their communities. Some of them utilised the ethnic CBOs as a platform to build their political status and advance political agendas within the ethnic communities.

**Table 2. Ethnic community control**

Entities of control	Types of social control
<b>Ethnic CBOs</b>	Control major community resources Set direction of community development Represent ethnic community interests
<b>Ethnic elites</b>	Manage and lead ethnic CBOs Set organisational agendas Serve as community leaders Set community agendas
<b>Self-sufficient ethnics</b>	None
<b>Newcomers</b>	None

“The role is for them to educate the community, their ethnic community, to help mobilize the community to meet the needs or to address the issues. The ethnic leader is the liaison between that community and government officials or foundations or donors, that link. And the ethnic leaders are the—spearhead the development of that community. They're the ones that start the growth or maintain the growth of that community. If no ethnic community leaders, then there's a little bit more chaos within the community structure in terms of organization or even development or getting resources” (Board Member, CCSC).

Those ethnic elites that have strong ties and status within traditional ethnic sources of authority (i.e. ‘old guard’) tended to hold the most power over the direction and resources of ethnic communities in the achieving self-sufficiency and ethnic preservation stages of ethnic community development. And those ethnic elites that held strong ties and status within American mainstream power elites (i.e. ‘new guard’) tended to hold the most power over the direction and resources of ethnic communities in the community advancement and mainstreaming incorporation stages of ethnic community development. Traditional ethnic elites tended to have been former power elites in their origin countries before coming to the United States and identified more strongly with the ethnic and home country cultures. Their power stemmed mainly from their strong ties to traditional ethnic political institutions and ethnic networks affiliated with home country interests. Their political agenda tended to be more of about preserving ethnic/national culture and seeking to build up their ethnic communities and their homelands. Contemporary ethnic elites tended to be American educated and identified more with American mainstream culture, could associate within both ethnic community and mainstream political circles and sought to build up their ethnic communities through culturally mainstreaming and advanced ethnic community interests through mainstream American politics.

“VISC has recently been undergoing a transition as senior staff are faded out and young cadre’s recruited take over. This moving from the Old Guard to the New Guard is part of a larger shift of priorities to serving a more diverse population and mainstreaming as opposed to limiting its services to Vietnamese populations. In addition, it is part of the larger ideological transition to facing up to a future in America as opposed to continue thinking of

America as a transitive residence and planning for a return to a more democratic Vietnam one day. However, there continues to be lots of anti-Vietnamese communist government sentiment in the Vietnamese community leadership in the US” (Administrative Manager, VISC).

Power struggles constantly transpired between traditional ethnic elites that promoted ethnic/national cultural preservation and development and contemporary ethnic elites that promoted full American incorporation and mainstreaming. As a part of this struggle, ethnic CBOs and various ethnic community factions that identified with the different ethnic community agendas sometimes came in conflict with each other. The mission and programs of ethnic CBOs reflected both the ethnic preservation and development tendencies and the mainstream community development tendencies. Over time, ethnic CBOs cultivated American roots and gradually shifted over decades to become more in tune with mainstream community service developments. The immigrant trajectory of newcomers and self-sufficient ethnics in terms of social adjustment and community empowerment developments also reflected such tensions and shifts over generations. However, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers did not assert much control or influence shaping the direction of their communities and primarily served as pawns or bystanders in the ethnic community political power struggle between traditional and contemporary ethnic elites and the ethnic CBOs that served as platforms for contesting and negotiating their differing ethnic community agendas.

#### ***Benefits of ethnic community membership***

The Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs together with other ethnic stakeholders including ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers served as donors of social capital and contributed to helping with achieving self-sufficiency and building up the capacity of ethnic CBOs and immigrants within their ethnic communities.

As central service components of ethnic enclaves, these ethnic CBOs served as critical sources for both recently arrived and long time immigrants to access a variety of social and health resources (Table 3). The primary community resources ethnic CBOs provided to these clients included culturally proficient, self-sufficiency and empowerment resources. These resources helped immigrants with resettlement and incorporation into American society. These CBOs also represented and advocated for their interests in mainstream American politics.

In addition, ethnic CBOs served as a critical community platform for ethnic elites and self-sufficient ethnics to advance their own, ethnic community and mainstream interests. The key resources these organisations provided them included cultural preservation, social advancement, community development and political advocacy resources. These resources helped to preserve the ethnic culture and language, elevate their social status, promote ethnic community building and advocate for the civil rights and political interests of the ethnic elites, the self-sufficient members and others within the ethnic community.

**Table 3. Ethnic CBOs as donors of ethnic community benefits**

<b>Recipients of benefits from ethnic CBOs</b>	<b>Types of ethnic community benefits</b>
<b>Ethnic CBOs</b>	Building up community resources Strengthen organisational finances Increase organisational capacity Increase community legitimacy Increase political power
<b>Ethnic elites</b>	Cultural preservation Social advancement Community legitimacy Build political power Shape community development
<b>Self-sufficient ethnics</b>	Cultural preservation Provide community support Provide direction to social advancement Community development Community representation/leadership Political advocacy/empowerment
<b>Newcomers</b>	Cultural preservation Community resources and support Provide direction to social adjustment Community development Community representation/leadership Political advocacy/empowerment

“We do two things together. The first thing, we try to interest people to be mainstreaming, to learn the life and the customs, the regulations, the system here — okay — the new country. That’s the thing we do. And at the same time we try to keep our cultural preservation like we organize the cultural events every year like the TET Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, the ancestor worshipping when we have the chance. So we do two things together. One is mainstreaming, to do the same thing as the other people are doing here. At the same time, keep our own identity and the good part of our culture” (Executive Director, VCSC).

However, besides serving as key community resource centres for various ethnic community members, ethnic CBOs also benefited from other ethnic donors of social capital in accumulating important organisational resources, maintain organisational operations, advance organisational interests, manage the social and health programs, provide such services to their ethnic community clients, represent ethnic community interests and build up the capacity of their communities. These donors included other ethnic/racial CBOs as well as elite, self-sufficient and newcomer members of the ethnic community (Table 3 and 4). For example, the focal ethnic CBOs exchanged and pooled community

service resources with external ethnic/racial CBOs to be able to more comprehensively address the various self-sufficiency and advancement needs of their clients. They also formed cross-cultural coalitions with each other to increase their capacity for seeking program grants or contracts and to raise their ethnic political voice both in the ethnic community and the mainstream community. In addition, these local and national community networks helped raise funds for community programs and advance ethnic community interests across ethnic/racial and mainstream communities. Without the support and collaborations with other ethnic/racial CBOs, the capacity of focal ethnic CBOs to advance organisational and ethnic community interests and better serve their ethnic community clientele would be much more limited.

“Yes, it means working together with other agencies or other communities to address the same issues. The bigger the volume, of course, hopefully, you can get more done. The larger the voice is to either protest or to address issues with the powers-to-be. And it also builds the community to be helping each other or with that sort of mentality. It builds a stronger city or whatever, state, country, world! And hopefully, there's that sort of ripple effect” (Executive Director, CCSC).

**Table 4. Ethnic CBOs as recipients of ethnic community benefits**

<b>Ethnic donors of benefits to ethnic CBOs</b>	<b>Types of ethnic community benefits</b>
<b>Ethnic elites</b>	Organisational leadership Community legitimacy Community networks Financial resources
<b>Self-sufficient ethnics</b>	Human resources Program staff Community legitimacy
<b>Newcomers</b>	Clientele resources Community legitimacy

In addition, ethnic elites served as vital leadership and financial resources for the ethnic CBOs in the establishment, legitimacy, resource acquisition and management of such organisations. Without the active participation, support and networks of the ethnic community elites, these organisations would not be able to access various organisational resources within and outside of the ethnic community necessary to remain viable or have the best culturally competent leadership to set organisational agenda, raise funds to support the organisation and manage their operations and programs.

Also, self-sufficient members of the ethnic community served as the primary supply of human resources under the organisational leadership to keep the various organisational operations and programs running and as the culturally competent service providers that directly interfaced with the organisational clientele. Without these self-sufficient ethnics, it would be difficult to keep the various organisational operations and programs functioning and to be able to provide the best culturally appropriate services to their clients.

Furthermore, immigrants (i.e. newcomers) served as the primary supply of clientele these organisations depended on to legitimate their ethnic mission and to maintain their immigrant and refugee service programs. Without the continuing influx of newcomers into their communities, these organisations would not be able to sustain their immigrant and refugee services mission and programs and their legitimacy as ethnic organisations.

### ***Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs and ethnic community control and benefits***

Comparing between Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs in this study, even though the general structure of ethnic community control and benefits accrued through them on their community members were similar, there were also some differences due to differential community histories and dynamics according to field observations and key informant interviews.

In terms of ethnic community control, the authority and influence of both Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs reflected the differential ethnic leadership challenges facing these communities. Moreover, the capacity of Chinese CBOs and contemporary community leaders was much stronger and able to accommodate the diverse and changing ethnic community and mainstreaming needs of their ethnic constituents much better than the Vietnamese CBOs. In part, these tendencies have been a consequence of the relative continuity, stability and steady growth of the Chinese CBOs and Chinese community leadership over the past decades with an united focus on American futures.

In contrast, there has been a crisis of leadership in the Vietnamese CBOs and their communities over the past decades in the US. The traditional Vietnamese leadership has directed the majority of resources of their Vietnamese community coalitions and organisations to serving ethnic preservation, temporary community resettlement needs and fighting against communist Vietnam with a long-term goal of returning to a democratic Vietnam one day. The young contemporary Vietnamese leadership, like a majority of the Chinese community leadership, has directed their limited community resources to building up their communities in the US and guided various community members and factions to Americanise and get more involved with their American futures. As more Vietnamese community members looked toward their futures in America, contemporary Vietnamese community leaders should gradually become more influential than the traditional community leaders and the new Vietnamese American leadership should stabilise.

In terms of ethnic community benefits, clearly Chinese CBOs have much more resource capacity than Vietnamese CBOs. For example, there were many types of contemporary Chinese CBOs available to provide for a broad range of social, health, youth, senior, legal, cultural/arts, political advocacy and other services to various Chinese community members. Each Chinese CBO could specialise in a particular area or serve a particular target population. Together, they could more comprehensively serve diverse Chinese community needs adequately relative to Vietnamese CBOs, especially in areas of large Chinese concentration. On the other hand, there were much fewer Vietnamese CBOs to take on the broad range of Vietnamese community needs and concerns. As a result, individual Vietnamese CBOs often had to take on many more community programs at once than they had the capacity to do without having adequate financial and human resources to actually do so.

### **Negative ethnic social capital**

“Asian people or Chinese people may be discriminated by the mainstream. I don't think we can do anything. It's very difficult. If they want, what can we do? Like the year before there's a case Wen Ho Lee. What's wrong with Wen Ho Lee? Well, just because this guy is stealing some secret and give them to the Chinese. But actually, the truth is no, he didn't. But they want to do it and they want to accuse him. It's very difficult. It's a tough time” (Project Manager, CISC).

In addition to ethnic community control and membership benefits, the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs in this study represented central sites of negative ethnic social capital, according to field observations and key informant interviews. Negative ethnic social capital through these CBOs included exclusivity of community outsiders and non-immigrants, limitations from accessing external resources outside ethnic communities, restricted individual freedoms to seek external affiliation and mobility and downward mobility from racial/linguistic discrimination (Table 5). For the various ethnic community donors and recipients including ethnic CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers, all of them were affected by negative social capital and their particular ethnic community versus mainstream status shaped the types of negative impact and levels of severity.

In terms of exclusivity of community outsiders and non-immigrants, the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs almost exclusively served low income immigrant members within their particular ethnic communities. Situated within ethnic enclaves, non-ethnic members also typically did not know to access community resources through these organisations unless they were referred by public, non-profit, or other ethnic agencies affiliated with these CBOs. In addition, given program funding guidelines, most services provided targeted low income immigrant populations and excluded more affluent and self-sufficient immigrant and American born members from access these services. Furthermore, these CBOs turned away poorly educated immigrants within their ethnic communities due to provider-clientele communication barriers from the client's lack of proficiency in both their native ethnic and English languages.

In terms of restrictions to external resources outside their ethnic community, minority status restricted these CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers from acquiring a number of mainstream public, non-profit and corporate resources and achieving full mainstream status in American society. Firstly, the CBOs' ethnic minority status and their primarily ethnic specific services limited their access to mainstream networks and community program resources. In addition, ethnic community resources were much more limited compared to the array of mainstream resources available. Adopting a mainstream multicultural mission can help to build mainstream legitimacy and increase access to mainstream resources for these CBOs. Secondly, for ethnic elites, their minority standing limited their ability to achieve American mainstream social elite status to influence local and national economic and political agendas. However, for those select few that achieved mainstream social elite standing, they have the potential to bridge and bring in substantive mainstream resources into their affiliated ethnic CBOs and communities. Thirdly, for self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers, like ethnic elites, they also faced the glass ceiling phenomenon. For many of them, their minority status, lack of mainstream cultural orientation and English language barriers together dramatically limited their career advancement opportunities in American society. A number of them, especially new immigrants, could only find job opportunities within their ethnic communities.

**Table 5. Negative ethnic social capital**

Types of negative social capital	Sources/causes	Affected groups	Types of limitations
Exclusivity of community outsiders and non-immigrants	Ethnic CBO services	Newcomers  Ethnic elites and self-sufficient ethnics	Serve literate, low income ethnics; exclude non-ethnic specific outsiders  Serve newcomers; exclude ethnic elites and self-sufficient ethnics
Restrictions to external resources outside minority community	Minority status	Ethnic CBOs  Ethnic elites  Self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers	Limited access to mainstream public, non-profit and corporate resources to support ethnic CBO operations and programs  Restrictions in social legitimacy for achieving mainstream elite status  Restrictions in social standing for mainstream advancement
Restricted individual freedoms to seek external affiliation	Ethnic affiliation	Ethnic CBOs  Ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers	Restrictions with altering ethnic community mission to mainstream mission  Restrictions to mainstream affiliation and status
Downward mobility from racial/linguistic discrimination	Cultural/racial politics	Ethnic CBOs  Ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers	Decreased organisational capacity and clientele size  Decreased mainstream social status compared with pre-migration home country social status

“It’s hard for Southeast Asians to move outside of the Tenderloin in SF. That being able to start up their own new businesses is very important for newcomers because there are some big barriers to life in a new country. One major barrier is language. It takes a long time to get over the language barrier. It’s easier to start up their

own small businesses because they don't have to learn to speak much English. For regular jobs in the US, there are often language requirements that are difficult for many newcomers to overcome. Secondly, the work skills newcomers bring from their home country are most often not transferable in the US. As a result, they get downgraded in the job market and often get pigeonholed into minimum wage jobs. They don't have too many choices and the only way for them to get out of the ghetto and low income conditions may be to start their own family businesses, the avenue to escape poverty" (Business Director, VCSC).

In terms of restricted individual freedoms to seek mainstream affiliation, the various ethnic stakeholders faced ethnic community pressures to shift their affiliation from an ethnic specific one to a multicultural mainstream one. For the CBOs, their ethnic affiliation limited their capacity to alter their ethnic missions and programs without coming into conflict with ethnic community stakeholders. In addition, the organisation's priority to put ethnic interests first in part restricted their ability to effectively compete with other mainstream organisations for program resources in the immigrant service industry. For ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers, their ethnic affiliations also limited their mainstream affiliations and advancement. For many of them, ethnic identity and values reflected fundamental features of their personality and character. To give up their ethnic culture would mean giving up their roots. For some, disassociating from ethnic affiliations and re-identifying fully with dominant American mainstream values and affiliations facilitated their career advancement in American society. But for most, preserving ethnic traditions was just as important as their personal career advancement, even if that limited their mainstream standing and mobility.

As for downward mobility from racial and linguistic discrimination, persistent yellow peril and anti-immigrant policies and sentiments have adversely impacted Asian immigrant and community development, especially for ethnic CBOs and elite and self-sufficient newcomers. For the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs, mainstream public discourse and policies on immigrant and minority community development have often been detrimental to their survival and facilitated organisational crises. For example, during periods of national fiscal crises, these CBO's immigrant services have typically been the first targeted and cut due to their lack of mainstream political voice to counteract consequent anti-Asian and anti-immigrant public discourse and policies, forcing these CBOs to downsize to survive. However, even during periods of national fiscal prosperity, mainstream support of immigrant services organisations tended to be prioritized last relative to other political economic priorities. Building critical coalitions with reputable mainstream public and private institutions could in part help these CBOs bridge these barriers of racial politics and mobility. For elite and self-sufficient newcomers, they faced downward mobility issues consequent to arrival in the United States due to institutional, cultural and linguistic barriers. Many arrived with high educational and professional backgrounds, but were not recognised by American educational and professional institutions. In the resettlement process, they were forced to start from scratch and have to navigate numerous cultural, linguistic and racial barriers over decades to possibly get back to the same professional standing as prior to arrival. However, for most, these barriers were too difficult to overcome and forced them to seek out new American skills and opportunities that are of lesser standing, unrelated to their pre-migration professions.

### ***Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs and negative social capital***

Comparing between the Chinese and Vietnamese stakeholders of social capital, the limitations of negative ethnic social capital were quite similar. Negative ethnic social capital restricted outsiders of these respective ethnic minority

communities from accessing the CBO resources and limited community insiders from achieving their fullest potential in American mainstream society. However, even if ethnic minority liability restricted community members from achieving equitable opportunities in American mainstream society, many of them were able to find comfortable niches and achieve recognition and good standing as ethnic professionals and entrepreneurs within ethnic communities. In terms of mainstream hopes, many looked to their American-raised or American-born children to one day fulfill their unfulfilled American dreams.

## **Conclusions**

The Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs as well as their human resources and clientele in this study represent critical mediators of ethnic social capital. This study contributes to the development of social capital theory within the context of immigrant communities by expanding on the immigrant social capital model (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) and reconceptualising an ethnic social capital model. Immigrant social capital represents the role of primarily immigrant family and community networks and exchanges that facilitate or limit immigrant incorporation into American society. However, immigrants are also part of ethnic communities. Ethnic social capital refers to ethnic community resource networks and exchanges across ethnic groups or structures that facilitate and/or restrict various ethnic community stakeholders and the ethnic community as a whole.

The major donors and recipients of ethnic social capital in this study include ethnic CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers. The ethnic elite executives and self-sufficient ethnic staff within ethnic CBOs serve as critical contributors of ethnic social capital that help to assist and pull up the immigrant, limited English speaking and low income populations within the ethnic communities out of the ethnic ghettos and help them become contributing members of American society. These organisational human and program resources provide community leadership and representation, social adjustment and support, cultural preservation, political advocacy and empowerment and community building capacity resources. In other words, ethnic CBOs mediate ethnic/racial/national conflicts and cooperation as well as facilitate cultural and structural exchanges between the ethnic community and American mainstream institutions. Overall, the best sources of ethnic social capital for newcomer and low income groups tend to be those immigrant members of the ethnic community that came before or have been in America the longest including many of the leadership and staff at ethnic CBOs. These affluent and self-sufficient immigrants within ethnic CBOs tend to be the most resourceful members of their ethnic community for newcomers and quite experienced and adept at weaving through the complex cultural and structural terrain of American mainstream society.

At the same time, ethnic CBOs and ethnic elites also serve as entities of social control within ethnic communities. Ethnic CBOs control major community resources, set the direction of community development and serve as ethnic community advocates in the American mainstream. And ethnic elites manage and lead the ethnic CBOs, set organisational agendas, channel vital resources into the ethnic CBOs and ethnic communities, serve as ethnic community leaders and set community agendas for ethnic community building and empowerment.

“Very basic I think that the leaders and also the leadership have to follow the same footsteps of the other ethnic groups have been here before. Number 1, the leader in our community have to be successful as a regular citizen first. In other words, the leaders of our community have to look like Vietnamese-American citizen in order

to lead the others. And he or she has to at least live by him or herself and resettle and then try to live economically. They are no different than other leader groups, other ethnic groups. The way the Chinese and the Japanese or maybe other ethnic groups have been here before. They survive the first time and then they relocate and they grew up the community. This is the way I think. We have to do the same, almost the same. There are no different ways to become stronger and to become good community in the United States. They have to steer them. Well, every community, new or old, big or small, they need to have some role model, the model of the one who maybe know better than the other, so they will set up the guidance for the others. So it look like even we are school-like or we have a group of society maybe together, we need to have a leader. And the leader need to be understand everything from the mainstream in order to have good guidance to the other people” (Executive Director, VISC).

Power and development within ethnic communities are contested between traditional ethnic elites and contemporary ethnic elites. Traditional ethnic elites tend to emphasise ethnic solidarity and maintain strong ties to the home country. New ethnic elites tend to emphasise incorporation into American society and have strong ties to American mainstream institutions. These ethnic elites in community leadership roles utilise ethnic CBOs and ethnic community coalitions as political platforms to advance their community agendas and build up their community legitimacy. The conflicting agendas and actions of traditional versus contemporary ethnic elites affect ethnic community development, sometimes delaying the pace of multicultural community building and American incorporation.

In addition, ethnic community and ethnic CBO development critically depend on social networks and community resources from American mainstream institutions especially government social welfare and community assistance agencies as well as resource rich ethnic stakeholders such as ethnic elites and ethnic businesses in the United States.

Furthermore, ethnic social capital also has its disadvantages (i.e. negative social capital). Ethnic affiliation, especially minority ethnic identification, often limits ethnic CBOs, ethnic elites, self-sufficient ethnics and newcomers from full incorporation and privileges in American society and from achieving their full socioeconomic potential. Building cross-cultural networks and mainstreaming can help to bridge some such barriers and build up ethnic community capacity. Nevertheless, ethnic solidarity and cultural preservation sometimes outweighs mainstream identification and incorporation, especially for the first generation. For many ethnic community members, the contradictory dynamics of ethnic solidarity and mainstream incorporation are both essential to their cultural identities, social status and structural mobility.

Finally, even though a number of mainstream service organisations such as welfare assistance centres, employment development centres, health care organisations and schools also serve newcomers in the immigrant service industry, most of them lack adequate culturally proficient human and other supportive resources to be able to best serve immigrant and limited English proficient populations. Ethnic CBOs continue to be the most accessible and most capable community service organisations at addressing social adjustment and community empowerment needs of immigrant populations, even given all their limitations.

In sum, the Chinese and Vietnamese CBOs' capacity to best serve immigrant populations depend on the development of a critical mass population and strong political voice to represent their respective ethnic communities, persistent human resource contributions from ethnic elite executives and self-sufficient ethnic staff to lift up the low income and newcomer ethnics and their ability to successfully build and sustain community service partnerships with American mainstream public and private institutions.

New immigrants are arriving in record numbers from non-European countries to the United States, especially from Asia and Latin America. Like the major European and African influx more than a century before, these new immigrants have critical roles to play in contributing to American's future and deserve the chance to fulfil American dreams. For ethnic CBOs, clearly they have represented central features of the American multicultural landscape that facilitating these immigrant transitions and incorporation can do without.

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