

OUTLETS MATTER
AN ENTHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AN ORGANIZED
CLANDESTINE CHINESE IMMIGRANT SOCIAL NETWORK IN
THE UNITED STATES

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By

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Abstract

Recent government statistics shows an astonishing figure of illegal Chinese workers coming into the US every year. Reportedly, it represents only a portion of the Chinese illegally residing in the United States. There exist multiple layers of barriers, such as the Pacific Ocean and other cultural and language obstacles. The question would be why, how, and who kept coming?

The ethnographic study of Chinese workers is to reveal the patterns of social network that has been operating well in the process. The network is a broader sense network from societal level, including three dimensions: nodes, ties and outlets. The network must also be treated as the mediator for economic incentive in order to fully understand illegal Chinese immigration in the US.

The study also finds that cultural and network patterns are the most important determinant of the illegal Chinese Immigrant to US. A social network analysis exhibits that the network structure is so special and encompasses at least four key outlets in the system.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. The research contributes to the theoretical development in light of discovering a unique three dimensional network pattern within Chinese ethnic immigrants' culture, different from the universally accepted traditional two elements network analysis-either in a "whole ecological network", or an "egocentric network". In practice, the study findings strongly suggest the significance of such network as to immigration culture. It provides the bedrock for the whole system and gives rise to the issue of illegal immigration. Namely, if the criminal justice system cuts the sustainable network off at any level, there would be no more illegal Chinese immigrants. The findings show specifics of the type of social network that is the fount and matrix of Chinese clandestine immigration systems.

*"I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government, I have nothing to offer but **blood, toil, tears and sweat**. ... We have before us many long months of **toil and struggle**.*

-Winston Churchill May 1940

I. Introduction.

Statement of the Problem

This dissertation will analyze the network patterns of illegal Chinese immigrants primarily in the last twenty years. In particular, it will be an attempt to present not only who are the major players in the network, but how, and why illegal Chinese have kept coming to the US in the last two decades based on it. From a sociological perspective, it will serve as an endeavor of comprehensive investigation into the complex issue of illegal immigration, social networking, and ethnic culture.

My analyses are premised on three types of data sources. Two are primary sources, and one is secondary source. The primaries include in-depth interviews with sixteen Chinese immigrants currently living in the US. They all came to the States without proper documentation, namely they entered the states illegally, but have all obtained legal status after going through successful immigration legal proceeding. The other primary data come out of my participant observation of several labor markets inside Chinatown at the cities where I focused my research. I paid several visits to these fields specifically to collect the data. The secondary data are “mass media” sources. They include numerous newspaper articles about Chinese illegal immigration in New York Times dated during the last two decades.

The basic research question is: what is it that is special about illegal Chinese immigration, who are the major players in the network, and why and how have they kept coming to the US?

In researching the primary data I intend to track individual's life experience as to what has to be told and what can be discovered. Through their narratives and my observation in the field my primary goal is to flesh out cultural patterns of illegal Chinese immigration in the last twenty years. The time period was chosen because it is the span in which most Chinese illegal immigrations occur.¹ The year 1989 was a landmark year for China, as well as to the western world. It was in the year that Tiananmen Square Protest² for democracy was bloodily cracked down by the Party. However, it did echo the call for reformative policy and tear open the gate to a period of time when the Chinese people escaped "the Caged Era"³ (1949-1978), broke through "the Gated Era"⁴ (1978-1989), and entered into "the Open-Door Era"⁵ (1989-2009) with gradual but steady increase of

¹ Statistics from previous researchers estimated around 300,000 Chinese were smuggled into US from 1991-2000, among which about half entered during one three-year period in 1991, 1992, and 1993. Other sources, including those in the US intelligence community put the estimate at around 30,000 a year.

² Tiananmen Square protest for democracy erupted in 1989 and created a period of political confrontation between the Party and the public. The movement was rapidly cracked down by the Party. But it did gradually change the political and economic culture in China since then. For details please see: *Tiananmen Square in 1989-The Declassified History*.

See more info at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16/documents/index.html>

³ This is a time I call "the Caged Era" (1949-1978), which features the fact that social control was so tight and the propaganda for communist dominance was so pervasive. It was a time when Chairman Mao and his followers invented many forms of social control apparatuses such as the national resident registration system, neighborhood community committee, local police outreach stations surveillance system, and etc. to keep a close watch on everything in the society. As a result of it, individual freedom was nearly zero, not to mention the idea of going abroad through underground channels. I call it "the Caged Era".

⁴ This is a time I call "the Gated Era" (1978-1989), which features the fact that social control was not as tight and visibly ridiculous as the previous phase. The propaganda for communist dominance was less pervasive. People did enjoy more economic freedom.

⁵ This is a time I call "the Open-door Era", (1989-2009) which features an individual lived domain in almost all aspects of social life. This is a time I call "the Open-Door Era" because the Chinese people started in a real sense to undergo the changes closer to the standards of western industrialization and modernization. As to the economic sector, the "Open Door Policy" in China was an important milestone for China to enter the world economic market. It is during this time that China has the most illegal immigrants to the US.

individualism and information. This is a time span I define as “the Open-Door Era” because the Chinese people underwent in a real sense the changes necessary for industrialization and modernization. As to the economic sector, the “Open Door Policy” represents an important milestone for China to enter the world economic market. The periphery result of it would be the international human labor flow into more developed western countries for economic incentive. The flowing trend eventually culminated in the year 1994 with the incident of “Golden Venture”.⁶

Background

Prior to the 1989 democratic movement, there was only small number of Chinese people coming to US because the government was still very repressive in controlling the people and ideology. Relative few people would have the idea as to what the outside world looks like and know much about the channels of network due to information blockade and intensive censorship. Nevertheless, it was a chaotic anomie in the late 80s to early 90s in China. Numerous domestic social problems inevitably emerged with the massive social reform and capitalist transformation. Corruption⁷, inequality⁸, poverty⁹, HIV/AIDS¹⁰, population explosion¹¹, floating population¹², environmental pollution¹³,

⁶ A Panama-registered freighter with 286 illegal Chinese immigrants on board ran aground on Now York offshore and ten immigrants drowned while trying to swim shore. See details in chapter II. Section 3.

⁷ Andrew Wederman, “The Intensification of Corruption in China,” *The China Quarterly* (2004), 180: 895-921. And Feng Jiahua, “Anti-Corruption Crusade: A five-year plan for dealing a blow to corrupt officials,” *Beijing Review*, Feb. 24, 2005, 48.8: 22-23.

⁸ James E. Nickum, “Review Broken Eggs in the Market: The Rise of Inequality in China,” *The China Journal*, NO.49, Jan., 2003, pp. 119-126. And Shujie Yao, Zongyi Zhang and Lucia Hanme, “Growing inequality and poverty in China,” *China Economic Review*, Volume 15, Issue 2, 2004, pp. 145-163.”

⁹ Retrieve from: http://www.unchina.org/about_china/html/poverty.shtml

¹⁰ “A Joint Assessment of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care in China ” (2004), Jointly prepared by PRC State Council AIDS Working Committee Office and UN theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China. And Joan Kaufman, “AIDS in China: The Time to Act is Now,” *Science Magazine*, June 28, 2002.

increased crimes rate¹⁴, religious freedom¹⁵, increased aspiration for civil rights¹⁶, rising unemployment,¹⁷ income inequality and wealth disparity¹⁸ were coupled with the risk of the Party losing legitimacy and power. In order to moderate the increasing tension between the government and the people with regard to the desire for better lives, the Chinese communist adopted new policy of open-door reform towards a market-oriented socialist regime after the major protest in 1989. The side-product of it was that the tight control and ideology curfew were lifted, while all kinds of information flooded in. The impact had resulted in the increased desire among Chinese to migrate to more well off western world countries for better job chances. Gradually, within several years since the Tiananmen incident, more and more Chinese took the risk of illegally entering into wealthy western countries throughout the world. The US remained one of them on the top

¹¹ Wang Feng, "Can China Afford to Continue Its One-Child Policy?" Asia Pacific Issues, NO. 77, East-West Center, March 2005. And Isabelle Attane, "China's Family Planning Policy: An Overview of Its Past and Future," Studies in Family Planning, Vol. 33, No. 1 March., 2002, pp. 103-113.

¹² Zai Liang, Zhongdong Ma. "China's Floating Population: New Evidence From the 2000 Census," Population and Development Review, Sep. 2004, Vol. 30, i3, pp. 467-488.

¹³ Jasper Becker, "China's Growing Pains," National Geographic, March 2004.

¹⁴ An Chen, "Secret Societies and Organized Crime in Contemporary China," Modern Asian Studies, 2005, 39: 1: 77-107. And Xin Ren, "Violence Against Women Under China's Economic Modernization: Resurgence of Women Trafficking in China," World Justice Information Network, Feb, 2002.

¹⁵ Amnesty International, "China: Religious Freedom Rhetoric Fails to Translate into Reality," Dec. 21, 2004. And Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," The China Quarterly, Vol. 174, June 2003, pp. 317-337.

¹⁶ "China: Police Shut Down Gay, Lesbian Event," and "Government Persecutes Civil Society Groups That Address HIV/AIDS," Human Rights Watch at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/12/20/china12328.htm> Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch: "China continues to talk about political reform, but closing down a cultural event is a crude reminder of the limits on openness. This police raid was an effort to drive China's gay and lesbian communities underground and to silence open discussions about sexuality throughout the country." And "China: Rampant Violence and Intimidation Against Petitioners: Government Officials Block Citizens' Complaints" Human Rights Watch at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/12/20/china12328.htm> Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch: "Petitioners open a window into the myriad human rights and social problems in China. If one wants to understand unrest in China, just look at what petitioners complain about and what they go through to find justice."

¹⁷ Zhang Kai, "Unemployment in China is worsening" October Review (Hong Kong), Vol.22 i4, 31 Oct. 1995. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/55/369.html>

¹⁸ Clay Chandler, "In China, the Rich Keep Getting Richer: New Forbes List Points Up Growing Wealth Disparity." Washington Post Foreign Service, Nov. 1, 2001, pp. E14 at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A21307-2001Oct31>

list. With more success stories from the fore-comers getting spread and popular among the people not only left behind but somewhat stranded in the worst life situation in China, the trend of illegal immigration promptly reached beyond reasonable level. According to a 1994 New York Times reports ¹⁹ “CIA Director James Woolsey, in testimony to Congress, has confirmed that some 100,000 Chinese are being smuggled into America each year”.

The mass media also played a role in promoting the tendency. American Hollywood movies²⁰ introduced the astonishing scenes of Capitalist prosperity, the abundance of material production, and extravagant lifestyle. Several popular movies produced by some prominent and pioneering Chinese directors also glamorized the adventures of such endeavor.²¹ All of the exposure, not available previously in the time of suppression, were to stimulate the mentality of Chinese to come to wealthy countries by all means. The open-door reform and flux of information changed the landscape and mindset towards the western world, which directly resulted in the explosion of number of Chinese who take on this kind of “Golden Venture”.

The number of Chinese smuggled into the United States remains unknown, but some estimates about 50,000-100,000 arrivals each year.²² When the Golden Venture ran aground off New York's coast in 1993 and ten of the 260 Chinese on board drowned, the public outcry about human smuggling became front-page news. Some interviews with those people revealed a flourishing industry in which smugglers—big and little

¹⁹ Paul J. Smith. *Illegal Chinese Immigrants Everywhere, and No Letup in Sight*. New York Times, May 26, 1994.

²⁰ Watching American movies in the early 90s was a trend among common Chinese people since many movies were introduced for the first time in Chinese TV programs.

²¹ Several representative movies directed by Chinese directors are “A Native of Beijing in New York”, “New York, I love you!”, “纽约上空的夜莺”, and “Chinese Women in Manhattan”.

²² Willard H. Myers III, Testimony on April 21, 1994, before the Senate Foreign Relations, U.S. Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy, Federal Document Clearing House, 1994.

snakeheads²³—command fees as high as \$40k-70k to move desperate but hopeful men and women around the world into the US. For these immigrants, metaphorically I intend to use blood as the hardship and life risk of coming; toil as the yearly hard and continuous exhausting labor or relentless effort; tears as to the endurance and separation from family for years and difficulties to survive; and sweat as partial realization of their American dream.

It is estimated by recent data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security²⁴ that 220,000 unauthorized Chinese immigrants²⁵ population is currently residing in the US. However, with the hosting of 2008 Olympics and economic success in recent years, the number is not increasing at the rate of previous years. But some people who are willing to come illegally still pay a large sum of money like 70,000 US dollars. Credible estimates put the number at 50,000 arrivals each year. Astonishing as this figure is, it represents only a portion of the Chinese illegally residing in the United States. (Interagency Report, 1995) The US DHS estimates that the unauthorized immigrant population in the US increased 24% from 2000-2005.²⁶ The annual average increase was 408k. (Homeland

²³ The exact origin of the term “Snakehead” remains uncertain, although it has been widely used in China and Chinese communities overseas since the late 80s to define someone in organizing or coordinating the transportation of people into another country without going through legal channels. The general understanding is that “Snakehead” may be coined by the Chinese media as slang used to indicate the figurative description of the clandestine process of human smuggling, as a correspondent term to “human snake” which is used to brand illegal immigrants in the process.

²⁴ See table I. 1. for details.

²⁵ The unauthorized resident immigrant population is defined as “all foreign-born persons who entered the US without inspection or were admitted temporarily and overstayed. Unauthorized immigrants applying for adjustment to lawful permanent residence under the INA are authorized until they have been granted LPR status, even though they may have been authorized to work. Similarly, unauthorized immigrants who have applied for asylum or temporary protected status are considered to be unauthorized residents. Persons who are beneficiaries of TPS are technically not unauthorized but were excluded from the legally resident immigrant population because data are unavailable in sufficient detail to estimate this population.” (Definition from US DHS)

²⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.ilw.com/immigdaily/news/2009.0304-estimates.pdf>

Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, August 2006)²⁷ The number of illegal immigrants in the US reached a historic high of 12.5 million in August 2007. (NY Times July 31, 2008 Report)²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/>

Table 1.1²⁹

Country of Birth of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population: January 2008 and 2000						
Country of Birth	Estimated Population in January		Percent of total		Percent change	average annual change
	2008	2000	2008	2000	2000 to 2008	2000 to 2008
All countries	11,600,000	8,460,000	100	100	37	390,000
Mexico	7,030,000	4,680,000	61	55	50	290,000
El Salvador	570,000	430,000	5	5	35	20,000
Guatemala	430,000	290,000	4	3	48	20,000
Philippines	300,000	200,000	3	2	51	10,000
Honduras.	300,000	160,000	3	2	81	20,000
Korea	240,000	180,000	2	2	37	10,000
China	220,000	190,000	2	2	14	—
Brazil	180,000	100,000	2	1	72	10,000
Ecuador	170,000	110,000	1	1	50	10,000
India	160,000	120,000	1	1	29	—
Other countries ...	2,000,000	2,000,000	17	24	0	—
Represents less than 5,000.						
Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.						
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.						

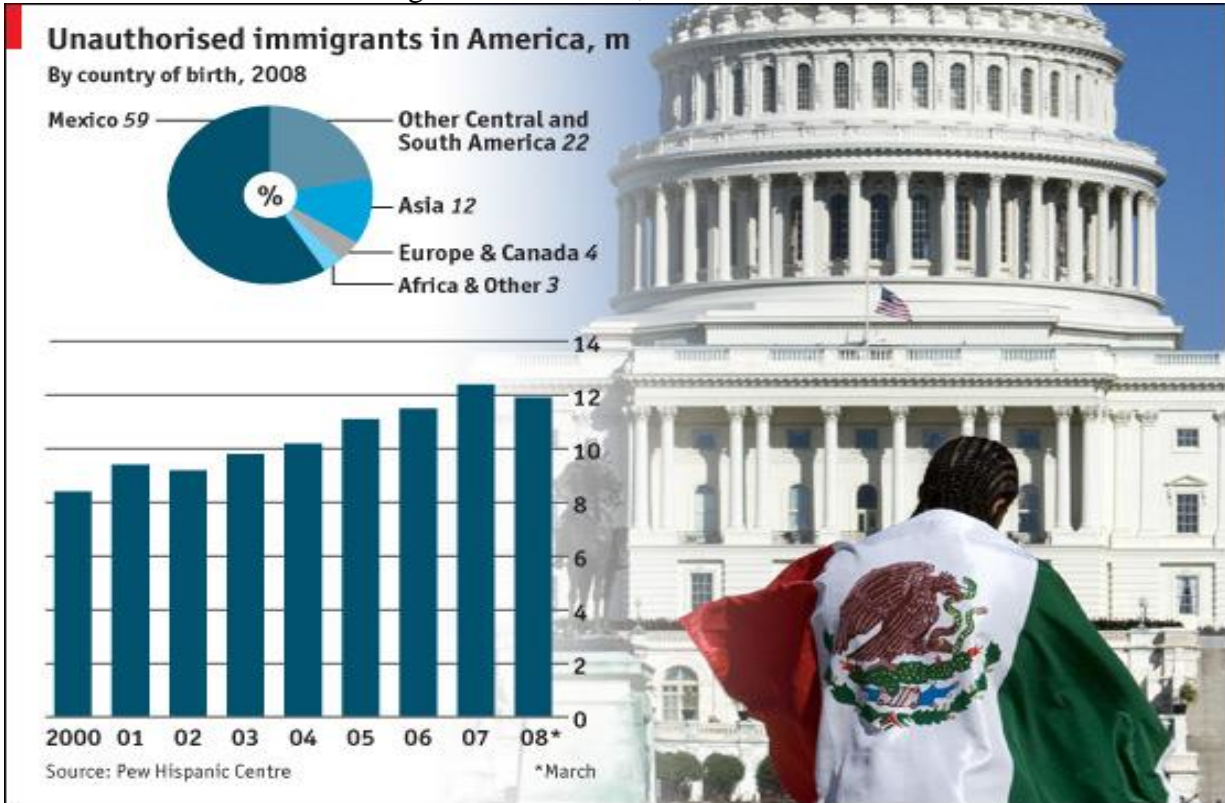
Table 1.2³⁰

State of Residence of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population: January 2008 and 2000						
State of residence	estimated population in January		Percent of total		Percent change	Average annual change
	2008	2000	2008	2000	2000 to 2008	2000 to 2008
All states	11,600,000	8,460,000	100	100	37	390,000
California	2,850,000	2,510,000	25	30	14	40,000
Texas	1,680,000	1,090,000	14	13	55	70,000
Florida	840,000	800,000	7	9	6	10,000
New York	640,000	540,000	6	6	19	10,000
Arizona	560,000	330,000	5	4	70	30,000
Illinois	550,000	440,000	5	5	26	10,000
Georgia	460,000	220,000	4	3	105	30,000
New Jersey	400,000	350,000	3	4	12	10,000
North Carolina ...	380,000	260,000	3	3	46	10,000
Nevada	280,000	170,000	2	2	70	10,000
Other states	2,950,000	1,760,000	25	21	68	150,000
Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.						
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.						

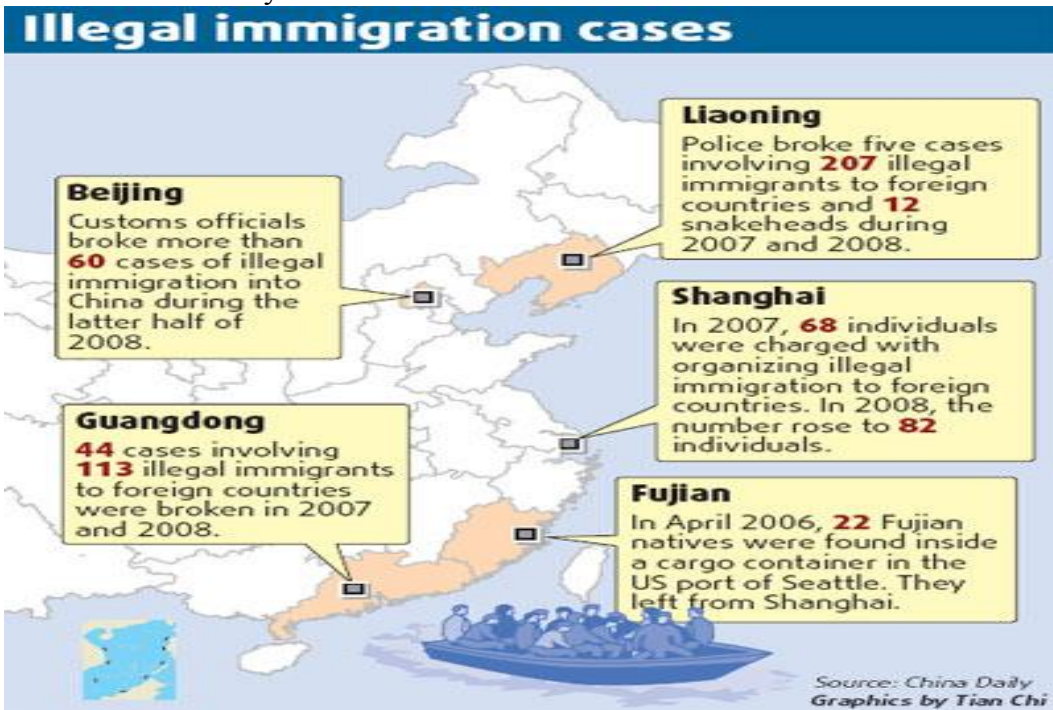
²⁹ *Supra.* Note 26.

³⁰ *Ibid*

Exhibit 1.3-Unauthorized Immigrants in America, Millions



Source: Pew Hispanic Center
Source: "China Daily"³¹



³¹ China Daily is the largest and the most authoritative newspaper published in English.
<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/>

Previous Studies on Illegal Chinese Immigrants

Research into Chinese illegal immigrants' life story is still in its infancy. The literature on the life story is limited primarily because Chinese illegal immigrants are still a small portion of illegal immigrant population, which causes far less social and economic problems than other ethnic group. Also, until recently, Asian Americans were underrepresented among sociologist and criminologists so that few insiders were available to conduct community oriented research. Finally, the very characteristics of close and geographical concentration among illegal Chinese immigrant community have made them invisible and sociologically unimportant.

However, research on the characteristics of smuggling trafficking is on the rise in recent years. Many scholars have previously explored the topic, either from a scholastic or a journalistic perspective. Due to the complexity of illegal Chinese immigration not a single research in these endeavors presented the comprehensive picture of the issue, instead that most of the existing literature are fragmental and partially case-specific due to their approaches. Although there are increasing interest among scholars, mass media, and the general public as to overall illegal immigration, the knowledge and analysis of structural practice in relation to Chinese ethnic groups are limited. Some researchers studied the motive of immigrants, while others had centered on the smuggling operations, "the Snakehead"³². Some journalists write about the life stories of Chinese illegal immigrant at Chinatown in those major cities, such as New York, LA, and Chicago. A glimpse into the existing literature would induce some thoughts and ideas.

³² Chinese human smugglers are called "snakeheads" both in China and in overseas Chinese communities. (People who leave China illegally are often called "human snakes"; thus, those who lead them across the borders are called snakeheads.

One of the most established studies is by Ko-lin Chin, a professor from the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, in his book “Smuggled Chinese-Clandestine Immigration to the United States”³³. Chin’s research presents a detailed account of how human smuggling traffic is conducted and what happens to the people who risk their lives to reach the Promised Land (Chin, 1999). By mainly interviewing the smugglers Chin discovered “a flourishing industry in which smugglers-big and little snakeheads command fees as high as \$30,000 to move desperate but hopeful men and women around the world.”³⁴ Chin’s research disclosed the unique feature of smuggling organization and discussed what happens to the people who risk their lives to reach “Gold Mountain”(Chin, 1999). However, Chin’s effort didn’t cover the significance of overarching network structure embedded within the Chinese ethnic culture, which is the key attributing factor in the process.

Another study is by John Wang in his book “Illegal Chinese Immigration into the United States: A Preliminary Factor Analysis”.³⁵ Wang examines the social effects of the influx of illegal Chinese immigrants entering the United States and other nations, suggesting that the trend is the direct result from the demand for cheap labor in Chinatowns in the United States, the abundant labor supply in China’s coastal regions, and the huge profit from such smuggling activities. (Wang, 2001) As conservative as he was, Wang concluded that “illegal Chinese immigration has caused an increase in social problems such as substandard housing, unauthorized employment, gang violence, and prostitution”. Wang also defined the issue as “this new crime phenomenon involving

³³ Ko-lin Chin, 1999. *Smuggled Chinese: Clandestine Immigration to the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Preface.

³⁵ John Z Wang. 2001. *Illegal Chinese immigration into the United States: a preliminary factor analysis*. International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology. Sage Publications, Inc.

transnational criminal groups.” Although Wang’s perspective is only one-sided, his research was an important scholarly endeavor, looking into the factors that lead to illegal Chinese immigration and studied on it.

Also noticeable research by Paul Smith in his article “Chinese Migrant Trafficking: A Global Challenge” looked into the trafficking patterns of Chinese emigration and suggested that “whenever smuggling syndicates are facilitating illegal migration from China, the United States in most cases is the preferred destination, even if immigrants must first pass through Southeast Asia or Western Europe on their way to the ‘Beautiful Country’, the Chinese word of America,”³⁶

More of such studies by Marlowe Hood in his research “Sourcing the Problem: Why Fuzhou?” surveyed and highlighted aspects of Fuzhou’s past and present relevant to the extraordinary flow of clandestine migrants to the US since the mid 70s, and especially after 1989.³⁷ Hood’s study was focused on the reasons of why most illegal Chinese immigrants all come from “Fuzhou”, a “region that has produced what is certainly among the most concentrated flows both geographically and over time, of transcontinental clandestine migration in history”.³⁸ In conclusion, he offered an “impressionistic scheme of how the variables might be assembled to answer the question: why Fuzhou”, based on his comparison and review of the region’s physical and economic environment, and several dozen interviews conducted there within the year of 1996. Therefore, his study probed the question of who and why.

³⁶ Paul J. Smith. 1997, Chinese Migrant Trafficking: A Global Challenge. Human Smuggling-Chinese Migrant Trafficking and the Challenge to America’s Immigration Tradition, Ed. Paul Smith. 1997.p. 17.

³⁷ Marlowe Hood. Sourcing the Problem: Why Fuzhou? Human Smuggling-Chinese Migrant Trafficking and the Challenge to America’s Immigration Tradition, Ed. Paul Smith. 1997.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 76.

Some scholars think the question of illegal Chinese immigration is within the scope of Asian organized crime. As such, Finckenauer examined the organizational structure of Chinese organized crime in the United States. He concluded in his analysis that “broadly defined, there is a great variety of Chinese criminal organizations. These include gangs, secret societies, triads, tongs, Taiwanese organized crime groups, and strictly US-based tongs and gangs.”(Finckenauer, 2007)³⁹ Similar study by the Ko-lin Chin, accordingly the foremost academic expert in the U.S. on Chinese organized crime, “there is no empirical support for the belief that there is a well-organized, monolithic, hierarchical criminal cartel called the Chinese Mafia.” Chin says: “My findings...do not support the notion that a chain of command exists among these various crime groups or that they coordinate with one another routinely in international crimes such as heroin trafficking, money laundering, and the smuggling of aliens”⁴⁰ (Chin, 1996:123). Their endeavors still show different or even conflicting accounts with respect to the real nature of such operations.

Among studies on illegal Chinese immigration, ethnography-centered approaches and journalistic approaches provide strong explanations for many aspects in the whole process that have determined what kind of pattern it is the in the history of Chinese immigration.

There have been many other similar influential studies that have contributed to the studies of either smuggling, trafficking and/or the lives and identity of the Chinese immigrant after they enter the land (see Zhang⁴¹, Lai⁴², Lyman⁴³, Chin⁴⁴, Lee⁴⁵, Ling⁴⁶,

³⁹ James O. Finckenauer. 2007. Chinese Transnational Organized Crime: The Fuk Ching. United Nations Activities, Participating in the U.N.'s crime prevention program.

⁴⁰ Ko-lin Chin, 1999. Smuggled Chinese: Clandestine Immigration to the United States. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

⁴¹ Sheldon X. Zhang. 2008. Chinese Human Smuggling Organizations: Families, Social Networks, and Cultural Imperatives. Stanford University Press.

and Zinzius⁴⁷). These studies capture the complexity of the issue and state various accounts to explain it. Studies focusing on Chinese ethnic culture, identity, community, institution, and the role of the structural and systematic network are particularly important for understanding the problem that has perplexed the general public.

Deficiencies of the Prior Research and the Current Study's Unique Contributions

Many previous studies covered some important aspects of the issue. More or less they ranged over the specific area that may be unclear to the general public at the time. However, most of the previous studies neither provide a comprehensive report, nor present an entirely comprehensible and systematical explanation as to “why, how and who”. What is needed is a structural investigation into the real cause of issues. The current study takes on the challenge.

The issue of network patterns and ethnic cultural traits of illegal Chinese immigration has remained an important subject that until now has not been investigated fully by scholars. The current study is to serve this goal so as to contribute to the literature. The analysis is grounded in interviews with real life Chinese immigrants, all of whom had come or been smuggled into the US between 1989 and 2009, and already successfully obtained legal status or in the process. The analysis also derives from a thorough study and participation observation at labor places of Chinatown in several major US cities. In addition, news media reports have been used as data for a content

⁴² Him Mark Lai. 2004. *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions*. Altmira Press.

⁴³ Stanford Morris Lyman. 1986. *Chinatown and Little Tokyo: Power, Conflict, and Community Among Chinese and Japanese Immigrants in America*. Associated Faculty Press.

⁴⁴ Ko-lin Chin. 1996. *Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity*. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁵ Erika Lee. 2003. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era*. The University of North Carolina Press.

⁴⁶ Huping Ling. 1998. *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives*. State University of New York Press.

⁴⁷ Birgit Zinzius. 2005. *Chinese America: Stereotype and Reality*. Peter Lang.

analysis to corroborate with narratives. This multifaceted research strategy is designed to endow a high degree of credibility.

The current study is different from others in many ways. The most unique contribution of the study is the discovery of unique patterns of social network that has been operating well in the process. The network is three dimensional: nodes, ties and outlets. The network must be treated as the mediator for economic incentive in order to fully understand illegal Chinese immigration in the US. The study exhibits that the network structure is of special characteristics and encompasses at least four key outlets in the system.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. The research contributes to the theoretical development in light of discovering a unique three dimensional network pattern within Chinese ethnic immigrants' culture, different from the universally accepted traditional two elements network analysis-either in a "whole network"⁴⁸, or an "egocentric network"⁴⁹. In practice, the study findings strongly suggest the significance of such network as to immigration culture. It provides the bedrock for the whole system and gives rise to the issue of illegal immigration. Namely, if the criminal justice system cuts the sustainable network off at any level, there would be no more illegal Chinese immigrants. The findings show the very uniqueness of the type of social network that is the fount and matrix of clandestine immigration systems.

Purpose of the Study

This study contributes to the discourse on the theories of social network. The development of three dimensions of nodes, ties, and outlets in Chinese ethnic community

⁴⁸ The macro level perspective to look into network structure as a whole ecological system.

⁴⁹ The micro level perspective to look into network structure as a individual centered system.

is instrumental in bringing sociology theory to the forefront of criminology. Although different types of social network theories can be applied to varied social systems, a search into the type of ethnic community among Chinese would lead to further development of existing theories to explain social phenomena based on traditional paradigm-the two elements system.⁵⁰ This study will add to the discourse by applying the three elements theory to the social network structure in Chinese ethnic culture.

This study recognizes network patterns embedded in the Chinese ethnic community in the US society. Instead of two elements traditional network, the study is to discover different network pattern with respect to Chinese people. Accordingly, there are at least four major outlets in the network: underground labor markets, small business owner chains, “Snakehead” networks like the “Tong” or “堂口”⁵¹, and underground banking business.

The study emphasizes the importance of such network in the whole system. Network is so important that it must be treated as the mediator for economic incentive. Unique network is formed historically and still functioning in Chinese community. This network is the incentive for Chinese to come. The existing network is operating well throughout the process.

Research Questions

⁵⁰ Referring to the traditional “Nodes and Ties” network system.

⁵¹ Tong or “堂口” literally means “hall” or “gathering place”. It refers to groups and organizations formed by the earliest Chinese immigrants in the US to better fend for themselves and to provide support and assistance to each other. The first Tong was established in San Francisco in the 1850s and expanded rapidly since then. Like family and district associations, Tongs provide many benefits, including job referrals, housing assistance, mediating conflict within the community. Tongs are roots for Chinese organizations that developed gradually into different forms in China nowadays.

The issue of illegal immigration has incurred a heated debate in recent years. There are two sides story. Proponents claim that all illegal workers are simply hard working contributors to American society and are only doing the jobs Americans won't do. While opponents denounce illegal immigration and exaggerate that illegal immigrants bring about numerous social problems such as terrorism, crime, gangs, and a lot of others.⁵² When the story of “Golden Venture” filled the evening news and left the American public bewildered for answers as to why so many Chinese would risk their lives for a chance to come to America, there must be some interesting research questions.

First, given the fact that there exist multiple layers of barriers, such as the Pacific Ocean and other cultural and language obstacles, how can these people come? Who are these people, why do they keep coming? Previous relevant studies had revealed a very lucrative and profitable business of smuggling Chinese into the US.⁵³

Second, what are the mechanisms that support the process? Considering the facts that these people have to be able to get entry, to find job once they are in the US, to pay off the 60-70k fee, and to send money back to home to build up a house or present something as success. There must be some arrangements as for maintaining the systematic operation.

With all the puzzles in mind, I have to raise some important research questions. Why do illegal Chinese immigrants keep coming here in US? How do they come through so many barriers? How does the smuggling network operate? How do they survive after coming and what are the possible supporting networks that sustain their living? What are the key determinants of illegal Chinese immigration? Who are these people? What types

⁵² P.F. Wagner. *The Dark Side of Illegal Immigration*. Retrieved from: <http://www.usillegalaliens.com/>.

⁵³ *Supra*. Chin, Clandestine Immigration.

of organizational arrangements are commonly found in this business/process? What is the cultural uniqueness of a network? What kinds of connections do they have with one another to have the “job” done?

Through a detailed ethnographic study premised on interviews and participant observation with some immigrants in Chinese ethnical enclaves, in combination with examination and analysis of the NY Times reports from 1989-2009 and other secondary data in relevant literature, I intend to answer these research questions.

Significance of the Study

The study finds that cultural and network patterns are the most important determinant of the illegal Chinese Immigrant to US. A social network analysis exhibits that outlet matter. The network structure encompasses at least four key outlets in the system. The study presents a thorough and comprehensive understanding of social network.

These findings have not only important theoretical significant, but also practical implications in criminal justice system.

1. Theoretical Significance

The research contributes to the theoretical development in light of discovering a new three dimensional network pattern within Chinese ethnic immigrants’ culture, different from the universally accepted traditional two elements network analysis—either in a “whole ecological network”, or an “egocentric network”. Detailed analysis will be discussed in the theoretical framework section of chapter II.

2. Practical Significance

In practice, the study findings strongly suggest significance of such network to immigration culture. It provides the bedrock for the whole system and gives rise to the issue of illegal immigration. Namely, if the criminal justice system cuts the sustainable network off at any level, there would be no more illegal Chinese immigrants. The findings show the very uniqueness of the type of social network that is the fount and matrix of clandestine immigration systems.

Moreover, there are important policy implications for criminal justice to combat illegal Chinese immigration. Given the fact that such a social network is so effective in the process, U.S. law enforcement's efforts to combat illegal Chinese immigration mostly failed to achieve their goal. It is true partly attributable to insufficient information from empirical research and institutional inability to fight with a clear picture of what is exactly going on in the process. As such, the biggest challenge is not only to simply crack down on illegal entry, but to recognize that illegal immigration is no unitary act. Instead it consists of a whole unique network system of multilevel structural elements. It is only through combating practices covering a wide range of areas with the insightful knowledge of the social network as a whole system in the process that law enforcement's efforts and strategies would be effective.

Previous researches by Chin (Chin, 1999) and Sheldon Zhang (Zhang, 2008) promoted the same notion that "Armed with a knowledge of the inner workings of human smuggling groups and their operational characteristics, policy makers perhaps can devise new strategies or improve the existing ones"⁵⁴ Zhang (2008) advocated a few possibly effective strategies as "stop searching for the big fish, focus in disrupting smuggling networks, improve international collaboration, monitoring and control legitimate

⁵⁴ *Supra.* Note 42. p. 231

businesses, and be wary of traditional triad societies.”⁵⁵ All of these are well functioning measures that would hit the target of effective control. However, without the knowledge of the social network, they are bound to fail. The current study examines and presents the patterns of such network out of empirical data, thus accomplishes the purpose of practical significance.

Research Methodology

This dissertation is mainly an ethnographic study, corroborated with content analysis of reports from a major news media. I explore the network features and operational processes of the illegal Chinese immigration in the U.S.

Primary data of the study have been collected in different sites with multiple subjects including restaurant works, owners, small retail business owners, and labor market organizers, and owners of financial institutions. Secondary sources are data from the reports by New York Times in the last two decades about illegal Chinese immigration. Participation observation was conducted twice in the labor market at China town located in two major Midwest cities. Interviews following the observation with key organizers were also conducted. The current study uses these sources to analyze how Chinese immigrants participated in the whole processes of networking and to conceptualize the patterns of such networks.

Here is a brief introduction of the methodology:

1. Empirical primary data gathered from 16 subjects (Chinese immigrants).
2. Interview & Participation Observation at two underground labor markets
3. Analyzing all NY time reports on Chinese Illegal Immigrants. (1989-2009)
4. Analyzing secondary data from other relevant literature sources.

⁵⁵ *Supra.* Note 42. p. 233

Detailed discussion is laid out in Chapter III.

Chapter Summary

In summary, there are several key points of the study: First, the origin of the research topic is from the researcher's participatory observation and personal interaction with many Chinese immigrants living and working in several Midwest cities of the US. Their life stories are well representative of ordinary new Chinese immigrants at any average location throughout the US. In other words, to understand their narratives, you should be able to know the true living reality of an average illegal Chinese immigrant nowadays.

Second, in order to present accurate and useful information, the study aims to discover and reveal the living reality of illegal Chinese immigrants, to find out why they keep coming into the US and what factors affect their choice, and how resources, networks, and special cultural characteristics affect their pathways.

Third, this study uses the Theory of Networks as the theoretical framework.

Fourth, based on the life story of research subject and newspaper media content analysis, this study classifies the unique network patterns into four categories: “underground labor markets, the chain of small business owners, the snakehead networks of ‘Tong’ or ‘堂’, an underground banking business”. The networks provide incentives for Chinese to keep coming into the US. Without the network, there won't be so many illegal immigrants.

Fifth, sixteen Chinese immigrants in three Midwestern cities are the study subjects. All of them came to the US illegally, with a span of staying from three years to 20 years.

All of them have either obtained legal permanent residence or are in the processing legal proceedings to adjusting status.

Sixth, in-depth interviews and participation observation were mainly used to collect the data. Interviews were conducted informally at venues like restaurants, bars, vineyards, grocery stores, other business places, and homes. Field trips were also taken in several Chinatowns in the Midwest cities. In addition, content analysis of New York Times reports on Illegal Chinese immigrants also corroborates findings of pattern in relation to the primary data. The purpose of combination of different qualitative methods was to ensure the validity and credibility of the study.

The following chapters are arranged as:

Chapter II: A review of the literature, which briefs the short history of Chinese immigration in the US, and details the current status of Chinese immigrants. The landmark case of Golden Venture culminated the trend of illegal immigration in the 90s and the story filled the evening news and left the American public hungry for answers as to why so many would risk their lives for a chance to come to America. Previous studies by scholars revealed important insider information. Also, theoretical frameworks are explored as to what traditional or new paradigm serves the best interest to decode the phenomena.

Chapter III. Data and research methodology, which include interesting research statements, overall research design, research methods, study context, data collection procedures, ethnographic interview design, and data analysis methods and process.

Chapter IV. An ethnographic Study of Chicago's Labor Places

Chapter V. Study findings and analysis of narratives.

Chapter VI. Conclusion.

Chapter VII: Implications, study limitations, and suggestions of further studies.

II. Literature Review

Overview

The immigration settlement patterns are entrenched in the history of this country, because the history of the United States is actually the history of immigration to certain extent. The objective of this chapter is to provide a general introduction to different historical phases about specific Chinese Immigration throughout the US history, with an emphasis on the modern trend.

1. The short history of Chinese immigration in the US. (From 1820 to 1989)

The trend of immigration by Chinese to the US has experienced ups and downs in the short history of Chinese immigration. The United States Office of Immigration recorded the first Chinese immigrant in 1820 and there were only eleven until 1840. Only three Chinese students who had studied at the Monson Academy in Massachusetts were noted in the official archive. (Kim, 1986, 579)⁵⁶ As some scholars had put it: “Chinese emigration to North America in the first half of the nineteenth century-the period of the ‘old emigration’-represents only a marginal portion of the mass Chinese exodus of millions of emigrants to the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, South America and the Caribbean”. (Mangiafica, 1988, 11; Pan, 2000, 60-71; Zinzius, 9) The earliest large scale Chinese migration can be traced back to the California “Gold Rush” era. Since 1852, ships full of large numbers of Chinese immigrants to San Francisco arrived from Hong Kong at a regular base. “In 1860, the Chinese quarter of San

⁵⁶ Hyuang-Chan Kim. 1986. ed. Dictionary of Asian American History. New York: Greenwood Press.

Francisco already had 2,719 inhabitants; by 1880 it had grown to 21,745". (Zinzius, 15)⁵⁷ there was a period of time from 1848-1882 for free immigration when the immigration laws were relax allowing various immigration options such as pleasure, business, and permanent residency. However, Exclusion Acts specifically targeted at Chinese immigrants were enacted in 1882 to end the growing flow of immigrants as a result of bad economic cycle from 1870 to 1910. The 1924 Second Exclusion Act almost landmarked a stop sign for Chinese immigrants by introducing the principle of quota, which reduced to only 2% of the existing population for Chinese. (Kim, 1986, 309) Immigration laws from 1924 until 1965 systematically cut off Chinese immigrants by imposing restrictions. For example, the National Origin Act of 1924 tightened the quota ruling in such a way that Asians and in particular Chinese were discriminated against. From 1965 to 1989 at the height of the Cold War, the numbers of Chinese immigrants from the communist regime still remained low because of the domestic and external control of Chinese government as well as conflicting ideological battle between the two countries.

Looking into the short Chinese immigration history, we find that Chinese immigrants in the US, legal or illegal, have all endured tremendous hardship and discrimination. From the early labors as railroad construction worker or miner of Gold Rush, to later cultural exchange program alien or other occupation, they all somehow have to fight their way to the dream of better life through exceptionally unfavorable conditions. According to the study by B. Zinzius, there were total 75 Anti-Chinese Legislations, 39 from the federal level, 18 from regional level, 9 from local government,

⁵⁷ Birgit Zinzius. 2005 Chinese America: Stereotype and Reality-History, Present, and Future of the Chinese Americans. Peter Lang Publishing.

and 9 major court decisions in Chinese Immigration history.⁵⁸ As Churchill had famously said "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. ... We have before us many long months of toil and struggle." Chinese immigrants have undergone toil and struggle almost for the full time in the short US immigration history.

2. The recent trend and status of Chinese immigrants. (After 1989)

The year 1989 was a remarkable year because the Tiananmen Square democratic movement⁵⁹ prologued tremendous social changes in China. Before these changes, relatively only a small number of Chinese people had access to the idea of coming to US because the government was still very repressive in controlling the people and ideology. The stated controlled propaganda machine constantly promoting bad images of American Imperialism was still prevalent among society. It resulted that few people would have the true idea as to what the outside world looks like and know much about the channels of network due to extensive information filtering and blockade. Nevertheless, the Tananmen Movement changed the landscape in many aspects.

It was a chaotic anomie in the late 80s to early 90s China. Aspiration for better life eventually exploded in term of massive social movements and turmoil. In order to moderate the increasing tension between the government and the people with regard to the desire for better lives, the Chinese communist adopted new policy of open-door reform towards a market-oriented socialist regime after the major protest in 1989. The side-product of it was that the tight control and ideology curfew were lifted, while all kinds of information flooded in. The impact had resulted in the increased desire among Chinese to migrate to more well off western world countries for better job chances.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 90-91.

⁵⁹ *Supra.* Note 2. "Tananmen Square Movement".

Gradually, within several years since the Tiananmen incident, more and more Chinese took the risk of illegally entering into wealthy western countries throughout the world. The US remained one of them on the top list. With more success stories from the fore comers getting spread and popular among the people not only left behind but somewhat stranded in the worst life situation in China, the trend of illegal immigration promptly reached beyond a reasonable level. According to a 1994 New York Times reports ⁶⁰ “CIA Director James Woolsey, in testimony to Congress, has confirmed that some 100,000 Chinese are being smuggled into America each year”. The mass media also played a role in promoting the tendency. American Hollywood movies⁶¹ introduced the astonishing scenes of Capitalist prosperity, the abundance of material production, and extravagant lifestyle. Several popular movies produced by some prominent and pioneering Chinese directors also glamorized the adventures of such endeavor.⁶² All of the exposure, not available previously in the time of suppression, were to stimulate the mentality of Chinese to come to wealthy countries by all means. The open-door reform and influx of information changed the landscape and mindset towards the western world, which directly resulted in the explosion of number of Chinese who take on this kind of “Golden Venture”⁶³ in the early 90s.

Later with the process and progress of globalization led by multinational corporations and the diffusion of culture, the trend has been on a rise. This increase is even more obvious through numerous media coverage, journalistic, and scholarly investigation into illegal immigration issue.

⁶⁰ Paul J. Smith. *Illegal Chinese Immigrants Everywhere, and No Letup in Sight*. New York Times, May 26, 1994.

⁶¹ *Supra*. Note 20.

⁶² *Supra*. Note. 21

⁶³ See Chapter II. 3 for detailed explanation.

Why do Chinese people want to come to the US? According to many anecdote evidences⁶⁴, immigrants chose to come for various reasons, such as to live in freedom⁶⁵, to practice their religions freely⁶⁶, to escape poverty or oppression, and generally to make better lives for themselves and their children. Some people already have members of their family residing in this country, and desire a reunification. Through family sponsored immigration, a U.S. citizen can sponsor his or her foreign-born spouse, parent, minor, and adult married and unmarried children, and brothers and sisters. Some immigrants come to the U.S. because of employment opportunities. Through employment-based immigration, a U.S. employer can sponsor an individual for a specific position where there is a demonstrated absence of U.S. workers. But the real reason is for prosperity. For decades, economic growth has easily surpassed population growth, giving the U.S., and much of the rest of the world, both more people and more prosperity. Simply put, the desire for a better life lies somewhere other than the current residence. And the US offers that better life immigrants wish for. “After they get here, immigrants start contributing to the economy of this country. They wear many hats in American society. They are family members, students, workers, business owners, investors, clergymen, and members of the armed services, to name just a few of their roles. Actually, according to a very recent study found that in all their combined roles, immigrants make indispensable contributions to the economy. They compose an increasingly essential proportion of the workforce.”⁶⁷ Just exactly as many people put it: “For the most part, the mosaic of ethnic patterns in

⁶⁴ Originated from conversions with many Chinese immigrants, both legal and illegal.

⁶⁵ Originated from many pro-democracy professor and student leaders who organized the Tananmen. Later they were released from prison and escaped to the US.

⁶⁶ Originated from Falong Gong practitioners, and their websites.

⁶⁷ A study presented by National Immigration Forum. Retrieved from <http://www.immigrationforum.org/research/display/immigrants-and-the-economy/>

America is the result of a movement toward opportunity--opportunity first found most often on the agricultural settlement frontier and then in the cities, and finally a blending melting pot.”

With respect to illegal immigrants, there are significant differences even within the category of illegal immigrants from different parts of the world. The cultural elements of immigrant settlement and network patterns are very unique for people from different regions to come and survive here in US. For example, Latino and Mexican’s common pattern of kinship⁶⁸ walking through the border and reunite with relatives. (Rodriguez-Scott, 2002)⁶⁹; Korean’s coming as ways to go to a new land for the services they provided to American in the Korean War; Vietnamese coming as people who provided service to Americans in the Vietnam War; Vietnam and other Asian origins-also Refugees as Immigrants,⁷⁰(Halpern, 1991); Philippines’ culture of migration-legally entry to domestic servants or nurse. Chinese immigrants both legal and illegal increased dramatically, mainly for economic incentives. Illegal Chinese is known by public to come through different ways. Credible estimates put the number at 50,000 arrivals each year. Astonishing as this figure is, it represents only a portion of the Chinese illegally residing in the United States. (Interagency Report, 1995) There exist multiple layers of barriers, such as the Pacific Ocean and other cultural and language obstacles, the life stories of illegal Chinese immigrants captured much attention from the American general public and left them confused often time as to why and how and who kept coming? As illustrated by many previous studies, a very lucrative and profitable business of

⁶⁸ Kinship-A relation between two or more persons that is based on common ancestry (descent) or marriage (affinity)

⁶⁹ Rodriguez-Scott, E. (2002). *Patterns of Mexican migration to the United States*. The 82nd annual meeting of the Southwestern Social Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 27-30.

⁷⁰ Halpern. 1991, *Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese in America*. The Journal of Asian Studies.

smuggling organizations functions well in the process. Although the argument of the current study is that it's impossible for illegal immigrants to come without this unique existing social network, let me still start with introduction of the "Golden Venture"

3. The Golden Venture and Sister Ping-the Godmother of Snakehead

"Illegal entry into the US by Chinese nationals is not new, organized Chinese human smuggling activities, however, began to emerge only two decades ago."⁷¹ The Golden Venture episode provides a glimpse of the panorama. Golden Venture, a small Panamanian vessel, ran aground in New York Harbor in June 1993, revealing a cargo of almost 300 Chinese illegal immigrants. They are mostly malnourished and mistreated, having been waiting to be smuggled on shore -- a privilege for which each passenger had paid between \$15,000 and \$35,000.⁷² As the ship crashed against the beach, ten of the immigrants drowned while trying to swim to safety. They died thousands of dollars in debt, only steps away from the "promised land". For many who survive the hunger, poor conditions, physical or sexual abuse, and other perils of the arduous journey, life in the United States isn't easy. It is a disappointment if not a curse. Few will return to China, though, because their families depend on the money and status gained by having a relative in the States.

The Sister Ping, a Chinese human smuggler gets 35 years in prison on June 22, 2005. She was once one of the most powerful underworld figures in New York. To her associates and followers, she was "the Mother of all Snakeheads"⁷³. For more than a

⁷¹ *Supra*. Note 42. p. xi.

⁷² The amount was average price for early 90s. Now it has risen up to \$70k-\$80K trafficking fees.

⁷³ Snakehead is the popular word used as a criminal slang for human smugglers. Retrieved from: <http://www.thesnakehead.com/>

See also: *Patrick Radden Keefe. July 21, 2009. The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream. Doubleday.*

decade, Sister Ping smuggled as many as 3,000 illegal immigrants from her native China into the U.S.—collecting more than \$40 million from immigrants by charging upwards of \$40,000.⁷⁴

The landmark case of Golden Venture culminated the trend of illegal immigration in the 90s and the story filled the evening news and left the American public hungry for answers as to why so many Chinese would risk their lives for a chance to come to America. China is geographically far away from the US. Chinese illegal immigrants have to overcome more difficulties in term of culture and language. The obstacles increase impossibility to success in the US, even though they can barely make it into the country. The American general public is often time bewildered with a series of questions: Why, who, and how are they risking all their lives for coming into the US on a large sum of debt? What motives them, and what are the rationales behind the scene?

4. Theoretical Frameworks

One of the primary goals of this dissertation is to provide a distinct theoretical framework to account for the network pattern. This section explores the theoretical frameworks as to what traditional or new paradigm serves the best interest to decode the Chinese illegal immigration settlement and network pattern. Premised on analysis of the data, the study develops a new paradigm build upon on traditional network theories, to the study of illegal Chinese immigration networks. I will explain how a three dimensions or elements structural framework would better fit into theorizing the understanding of such pattern.

⁷⁴ Alan Feuer June 23, 2005 *Businesswoman Known as Sister Ping Is Found Guilty on Federal Conspiracy Charges*, New York Times. Retrieved from: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9900E2D81E3BF930A15755C0A9639C8B63&scp=7&sq=sister%20ping%20human%20smuggling&st=cse>

Before doing this, however, I will discuss the traditional theoretical alternatives in the social network studies. The discussion will shift from micro egocentric to macro ecological whole network theories that have been used to account for explaining social network patterns. I will try to determine the extent to which each of these theories can be used to account for the Chinese network. This will help the readers understand better my new paradigm for Chinese network.

I will begin by discussing traditional network theories and then analyze Mark Granovetter's theory of "the strength of weak tie and cultural embeddedness", and finally conclude with a discussion of three dimensions or elements network system that I develop to best serve the purpose of theorizing the Chinese pattern.

A. Traditional Network Theories

Traditional network theorists (Berkowitz⁷⁵, Wasserman, Stanley, and Katherine Faust⁷⁶, Burt⁷⁷, White, Harrison, Scott Boorman and Ronald Breiger⁷⁸, Freeman⁷⁹, Granovetter⁸⁰) define social network in term of nodes and ties, a two dimensional or elements system. Accordingly, a social network is a social structure or system made of individuals and organizations call nodes, and ties that connect nodes with various social relationships and interdependency such as family, friendship, kinship, financial exchange, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge and prestige. Social relationships are full of nodes and ties created within a specific social network. Social network analysis has shown that

⁷⁵ Wellman, Barry and S.D. Berkowitz, eds., 1988. *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁶ Wasserman, Stanley, and Katherine Faust. 1994. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁷ Burt, Ronald S. (1992). *Structural Holes: The Structure of Competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

⁷⁸ White, Harrison, Scott Boorman and Ronald Breiger. 1976. "Social Structure from Multiple Networks: I Blockmodels of Roles and Positions." *American Journal of Sociology* 81: 730-80.

⁷⁹ Freeman, Linton. 2006. *The Development of Social Network Analysis*. Vancouver: Empirical Pres, 2006

⁸⁰ Mark Granovetter. 1974. *Getting A Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University.

social networks operate on many levels, from families up to the level of nations, and play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organizations are run, and the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals.

In its simplest form, a social network is a map of all of the relevant nodes connected by ties. These relationships and complexity of a social network are often displayed in a social network diagram, where nodes are the points and ties are the lines. See Figure II.4.1 and Figure II.4.2

Scholars of traditional network theory have used the idea of social network to connote complex sets of relationships in social world. They either study complete networks with all of the ties containing specified relations in a defined population from a macro perspective, or look into personal networks with the ties that specified people have, such as their "personal communities", in so called egocentric networks from a micro level.

Social network analysis

No matter what scholars center researches on, the consensus is that the shape and structure of a social network help determine the network's usefulness to its individuals. "Smaller, tighter networks can be less useful to their members than networks with lots of loose connections the so called 'weak tie' to individuals outside the main network." (Granovetter, 1998)⁸¹ It is better for individual success to have connections to a variety of networks rather than many connections within a single network. Social network analysis produces a view, where the attributes of individuals are less important than their relationships and ties with other actors within the network. This approach has turned out to be useful for explaining many real world phenomena, but leaves less room for

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

individual agency, the ability for individuals to influence their success, because so much of it rests within the structure of their network.

However, building up on traditional social network theory of the two elements nodes and ties to the analysis, I develop a more pertinent three dimensions network theory to explain the Chinese social network. As such, there has been something more than nodes and ties that functions to bridge nodes and ties. Individual players such as immigrants and snakeheads form various ties to achieve goals. Often times there are organizations and institutional setups between nodes and ties to help facilitate the functioning of the whole network. To better understand the Chinese network, I have to develop a specific network paradigm that is more relevant and pertinent based on the traditional theories. I will explore the type later in the chapter.

Figure II.4.1⁸²

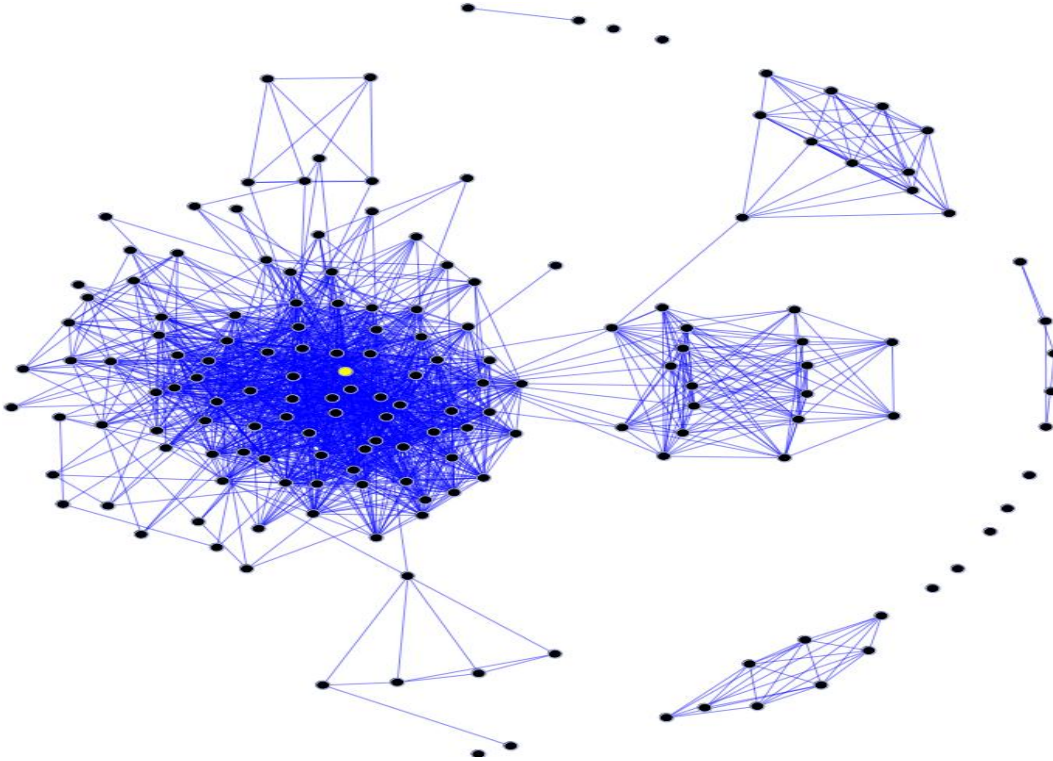
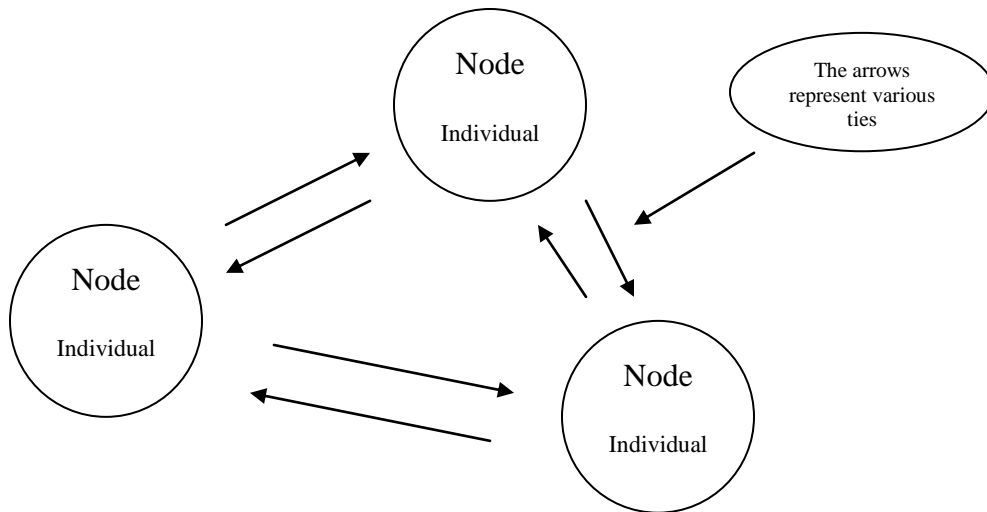


Figure II.4.2 Traditional Network Structure



⁸² Source: retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network

B. Mark Granovetter's Theory of "the Strength of the Weak Tie"

Mark Granovetter was one of the traditional social network theorists whose work was best known for its contribution in creating the theory on the spread of information in social networks. Premised on the traditional paradigm, Granovetter's elaborates in his paper "The Strength of Weak Ties"⁸³ the significance of weak ties in human networking. He argues that "the analysis of the processes in interpersonal networks provides the most fruitful micro-macro bridge. In one way or another, it is through these networks that small-scale interaction becomes translated into large-scale patterns, and that these, in turn feed back into small groups."⁸⁴ According to him, "weak ties, often denounced as generative of alienation, are seen as indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities; strong ties, breeding local cohesion, lead to overall fragmentation."⁸⁵ He concludes that "the personal experience of individuals is closely bound up with large-scale aspects of social structure, well beyond the purview or control of particular individuals. Linkage of micro and macro levels is thus no luxury but of central importance to the development of sociological theory."⁸⁶ As such, in many fields like marketing, politics, or immigration networking, the weak ties are more functional in reaching populations and people that are not usually accessible via strong ties.

Although the concept of "the strength of the weak ties" is not directly applicable in explanation of illegal Chinese immigrants' social contacts and network pattern, it is still significant to apply to this issue with his argument of the analysis of processes in

⁸³ Mark Granovetter. 1973. *The strength of Weak Ties*. American Journal of Sociology 78 (6): 1360-1380.

⁸⁴ Mark Granovetter. 1974. *Getting A Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University.

⁸⁵ Mark Granovetter. 1978. *Threshold Models of Collective Behavior*. American Journal of Sociology, 83 (6): 1420-1443.

⁸⁶ Mark Granovetter. 1983. *The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited*. Sociological Theory 1: 201-233.

interpersonal networks providing the most fruitful micro-macro bridge. It is through this unique network full of cultural embeddedness that small scale interaction between “human snakes” and “snakeheads” becomes translated into large scale community patterns, and these in turn feed back into the formation of such social phenomena.

In addition, Granovetter’s concept of Embeddedness,⁸⁷ the idea that economic relations between individuals or firms are embedded in actual social networks and do not exist in an abstract idealized market, is pertinent here to explain the real cause of why illegal Chinese come to the US. Surely, economic incentives bring them onto this type of ventures. However, to put it in a more understandable sense, their decisions are motivated and mediated by the unique network in which their relationships and ties are embedded. The network provides supports through the whole process.

However, Granovetter’s paradigm is not adequate in applying to explain the structure of the unique Chinese network, which I discovered and define an additional level of institutional or organizational setup as outlet to denote patterns of ties, encompassing concepts of institutional setups traditionally regarded as “Tong” in the Chinese immigration history.

C. My Theoretical Paradigm: Three Dimensions or Elements Analysis.

Applying the traditional two elements “nodes and ties” into probing illegal Chinese immigration network, I develop some theoretical explorations. First, the definition of nodes is vague as to who should be categorized in and who should not. Certainly, immigrants and smugglers are major players concerned in the process. But there are many network institutional and organizational setups which also hold important stakes in

⁸⁷ Mark Granovetter. 1985. *Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness*. American Journal of Sociology 91 (3): 481-510.

the process. I find it sometimes entangled to fit them into the very definition of nodes because they are institutionalized mechanisms derived from and embedded within Chinese immigration network. Second, throughout my study I feel there must be a micro-macro bridge that serves the interest of nodes and connects them with ties so that small-scale interaction between illegal immigrants and all other relevant stakeholders becomes translated into large-scale community patterns, and these in turn feed back into the formation of the embeddedness of illegal Chinese immigration.

Thus, to be more pertinent and specific about Chinese networks, I created the term outlet to denote patterns of ties, encompassing concepts of institutional setups traditionally regarded as “Tong” in the Chinese immigration history. Outlets are different from nodes and ties. They exist separately with special functions within the network. See Figure II.4.3 for details. Outlets are not nodes because they are not individuals or simple organizations, they are institutional or organizational setups originally derived from the traditional forms “Tong”. Through many years of development, they have been institutionalized into the major landscape of Chinese ethnic community and culture in the US. They are significant and special featured institutions for specific functions in the whole process.

In summary, my contribution in theory here is mainly interpretive and exploratory, towards the purpose of presenting a new paradigm to understanding of the unique network pattern. The paradigm interprets dimension of network patterns in reality, decodes a clearer account of the immigrants’ social world with a fundamentally understanding of normative component, and also serves as an approach to explain how social reality is constructed in the historical process. When Americans are often

perplexed and find themselves unprepared to fight the elusive and impenetrable Chinese organized networks, the framework will provide some clues. Through field observations and face-to-face interviews with Chinese immigrants in cultural enclaves, I find the unique social networks providing the necessary connections and resources throughout the whole process.

D. Theoretical Contour and Summary

In this section I explain exactly how I extend the traditional concept of nodes, ties, and develop a new three elements approach including nodes, ties, and outlets.

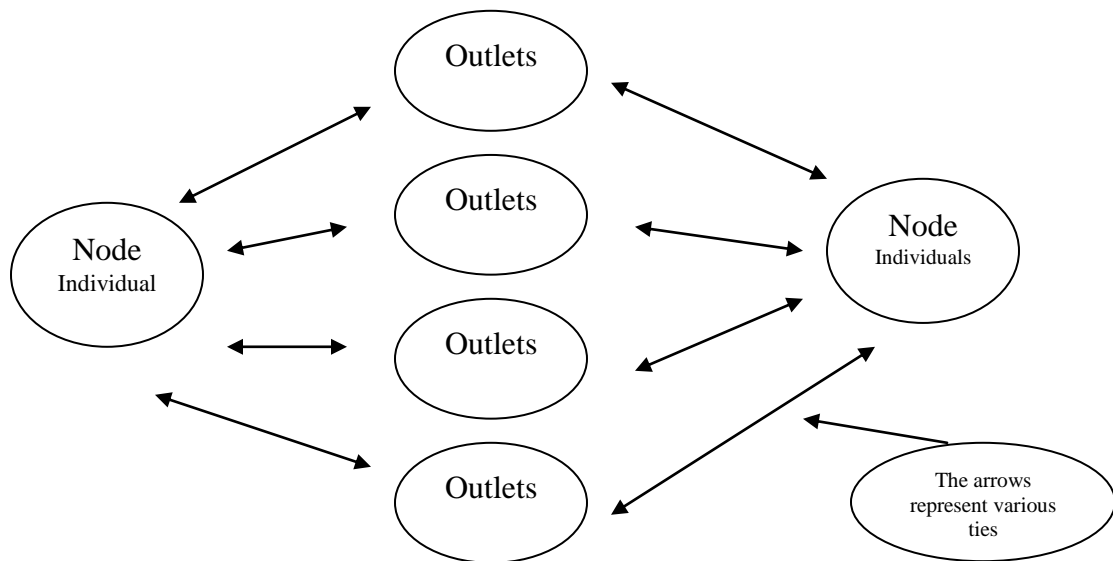
First, the definition of nodes in traditional sense refers to individuals and organizations with a specific social structure or system. I apply the notion of node to conceptualize immigrants, smugglers, groups, organizations, and various stakeholders in the Chinese context. Although the definition of nodes can be vague as to who should be categorized in and who should not, I found it clear applying it in the explanation of Chinese network.

Second, the definition of ties in traditional sense refers to various social relationships and interdependency such as family, friendship, kinship, financial exchange, or relationship of beliefs, knowledge and prestige. Relationship bounds individual together. Ties connect nodes. I apply the notion of ties and relationships coherently from traditional sense to the Chinese context. Immigrants form all kinds of relationship throughout the process, based on their day to day interactions with other role players. The same is true to other stakeholders, groups, or organizations as nodes within the network. It is clear that the notion of tie fit well into explanation of the Chinese context.

Third, applying only two elements is not adequate for understanding the unique Chinese network accordingly to my study. The very fabric of a special feature developed through Chinese immigration history to the US has to be engraved in the panorama in order to present a more truthful picture. Therefore, I coined the notion outlet to represent a special feature in the Chinese context. Outlet entails institutional and organizational setups in the process. Outlet denotes certain congregate patterns of ties. However, outlets are different from nodes and ties. Outlets are institutions or congregated organizations, while nodes are just individual or single organization in the context. Outlets are different from ties in that outlets represent massive patterns of ties in the meso level. They combine ties together and evolve into a pattern of embeddedness. They create ties between nodes and mediate the interactions. They are informal institutions significant for specific functions in the overall process. It is the outlets that translate the small-scale micro level interactions into large-scale community patterns and network embeddedness.

See Figure II.4.3 for details.

Figure II.4.3 A Conceptual Diagram of Chinese Illegal Immigration Network



III. Research Data, Method Design, and Methodology

Overview

This dissertation is mainly based on an ethnographic study corroborated with a analysis of reports from major media newspaper “New York Times”. Data collection from this study took place from early 2007 through 2009, using a variety of collection strategies: face-to-face in-depth interviews, field observations, and the gathering of relevant documents and press reports.

The interviews were conducted based on the same set of core questions with the subjects I randomly selected from familiar local Chinese community. Then snowball technique was utilized to develop more connections for additional interviewees. I interviewed a total of 16 individuals located at three Midwest cities in the United States. These were people who directly involved in real life experience of illegally entering the US and have all obtained legal status through legal proceedings. Field observations

happened in the underground labor markets specifically aimed to locate jobs for Chinese immigrants located in the major city in the US. Additional sources of data were from many New York Times reports about Chinese illegal immigration and extensive review of empirical studies and papers on Chinese migration by other researchers. Also, data are collected from relevant news stories, feature articles, and reports from government agencies and non-government organizations from both English and Chinese language sources

This chapter consists of two main sections. The first section introduces interviews and field trips. The second section provides in detail an overall introduction of the research design and the rationale of the design, as well as the detailed accounts on the data collection procedures, analysis methods and process.

A. Interviews and Field Trips

1. Interviews

The study is mainly done with interviews with my subjects. The subjects in the current study are sixteen self-identified new Chinese immigrants residing in cities of the US. I conducted two types of interviews with them: formal and informal. Formal interviews involved one-on-one conversations around a predetermined set of open-ended and structured questions. Informal interviews usually took place in restaurants, grocery stores, or at other social gathering places, where formal inquiries were neither feasible nor socially acceptable.

Because the illegal elements involved in some of the process my subjects might have been engaged in previously, I sometime came across significant difficulties in recruiting subjects who would agree to be interviewed. Interview attempt will

immediately be dropped at either the subject refusal to proceed, or my finding of still illegal status on the subject person to protect the subject and the researcher. However, I was eventually successful in gaining access to proposed sixteen subjects necessary to complete the interview. During the course of data collection and field observation, I made numerous time-consuming and sometimes costly efforts to cultivate personal relationships and connections with prospective subjects, such as taking them to dinner. Once my subject agreed for an interview and I found out they either have or are in the process of obtaining legal status, I would proceed to interview them. They always provided useful information, sometimes even with respect to very sensitive topics like getting contact with possible smuggling snakeheads. Then they would introduce their friends and other networks for possible further interviews. It was through snowball technique and some personal connections within Chinese ethnic communities in the three research sites that I eventually found all my 16 subjects. Overcoming many obstacles, I have collected enough data to provide an explorative peek into the secretive life experience of illegal Chinese immigrants and to provide an understanding of the social networks.

2. Field Trips

As an ethnographic study, the study is also premised on the data collected through participation observation in the labor places⁸⁸ of Chicago Chinatown. I personally paid two visits to conduct the field research. I made two trips to conduct field observation in the Chinatown of Chicago and observed daily operations and interactions inside two open

⁸⁸ Labor places refer to the so-called “labor markets” (literal translation from slang Chinese used in the enclave communities to denote places where Chinese immigrants can find jobs). They are informal institutional setups located almost in every big city Chinatown, to provide long or short term job opportunities.

underground labor markets. In the field trips I also engaged in brief interactions and informal interviews with job seekers and organizers. Detailed descriptions can be found in Chapter IV, “An Ethnographic Study of Chicago’s Labor Places”.

B. Research Data, Method Design, and Methodology

Methodology includes examination of interview data from 16 subjects; field observation at two underground labor markets; a analysis of the New York Times reports on Chinese Illegal Immigrants. (1989-2009); and analyzing secondary data from other relevant literature sources. All these data collection process was accomplished through a delicate, time consuming, and specifically designed research method within two years.

1. Site Selection

The research took place in three primary locations: Chicago IL, Saint Louis, and Columbia MO. Chicago was chosen because many undocumented Chinese eventually settled in that city’s Chinatown. The community is a well-established social and commercial center for newly arrived Chinese immigrants due to its central location, convenient transportation, very well developed community. Saint Louis is another major midwest city for Chinese immigrants and communities. Finally, the city of Columbia in Missouri is where I generated research interest and initiated some preliminary findings that lead to the formation of the current study.

For smuggled Chinese who enter to the US, New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, the entry points will serve as hosting cities for them to temporarily settle. Then within a short period of time, they will be dispensed into different cities all over the states.

Therefore, I intentionally chose a major entry port, a major city, and a mall city as my

research sites so as to collect the representative data to the characteristics of the networking process.

2. Subject Selection

Illegal immigrants, commonly known as “human snakes” in China and in overseas Chinese communities, are defined in this study as those who entered the United States illegally and started to live without legal documentation. Because of their undocumented status and random sampling was not feasible, I adopted an ethnographic approach to my subject population. Considering their illegal status would affect the interaction with me and the protection of both my subjects and me, I purposely selected 16 subjects who all have obtained legal status, though they entered in illegally at the first place.

3. Data Collection

Ethnographic Interviews and Participation Observation

The subjects in the current study are all self-identified new Chinese immigrants residing in cities of the US. I conducted two types of interviews with them: formal and informal. Formal interviews involved one-on-one conversations around a predetermined set of open-ended and structured questions. Informal interviews usually took place in restaurants, grocery stores, or at other social gathering places, where formal inquiries were neither feasible nor socially acceptable. I made two trips to conduct field observation in the Chinatown of Chicago and observed daily operations and interactions inside the open underground labor market.

Because the illegal elements involved in some of the process my subjects might have been engaged in, I sometime came across significant difficulties in recruiting subjects who would agree to be interviewed. Interview attempt will immediately be

dropped at either the subject refusal to proceed, or my finding of still illegal status on the subject person to protect the subject and the researcher. During the course of data collection and field observation, I made numerous time-consuming and sometimes costly efforts to cultivate personal relationships and connections with prospective subjects, such as taking them to dinner. Once my subject agreed for an interview and I found out they either have or are in the process of obtaining legal status, I would proceed to interview them. They always provided useful information, sometimes even with regard to very sensitive topics like getting contact with possible smuggling snakeheads. And they would introduce their friends and other networks for possible further interviews. It was through snowball technique and some personal connections within Chinese ethnic communities in the three research sites that I eventually found all my 16 subjects. Overcoming many obstacles, I have collected enough data to provide a explorative peek into the secretive life experience of illegal Chinese immigrants and to provide an understanding of the unique social networks.

4. Subject Protection

I recruited subjects in this study through multiple methods. Some were my acquaintances in the local community where I live, while others were part of my Chinese friends' social circles. Still others were referred to me through the snowballing technique. I was able to successfully recruit all my 16 subjects necessary to complete this project. Due to the complexity of the issue in question, I take several measures to ensure the comfortability, safety, and protection of all my subjects, which in turn protects me the principle investigator as well.

- a) Potential subjects were screened to ensure that only immigrants with legal status or in the process of obtaining legal status⁸⁹ were recruited.
- b) A convenient compensation was provided as an incentive to my subjects for their participation. It usually took the form of a fee dinner or some kind of help for them.
- c) All interviews recorded anonymously, and no identifiable information was collected. All of them were given code names for research purpose.
- d) All the interviews were conducted in the subjects' own language, Chinese.
- e) The subjects were assured repeatedly that all the information gathered from interaction with them would not be disclosed to any other person other than the researcher himself and that it would no lead to investigation of any kind by any government authority.

These procedures worked well in the interview process without any interruption from the subjects' sides, once they agreed to take on these research activities. In all case, the subjects were informed of the participation in an ongoing research project aimed at studying Chinese cultural and ethnic network patterns. For this project, proper documentation from IRB was obtained in compliance with the code the ethics in academic research and the researcher assumes the responsibility to guarantee the safety and protection of all participant subjects.

5. Representativeness and Reliability

A study of this nature has potential weakness with regard to validity and reliability. The subject pool is only 16 people, how could it represent the thousands of illegal immigrants residing in the country? All the subjects have little to gain by providing their information and sharing life stories with me, while they may be wary

⁸⁹ As long as the immigrants are in the process of adjusting immigration status, they are ok to be interviewed since they are not afraid of legal prosecution or deportation.

about the potential harm if the information could be used against them by law enforcement. How do I know whether they are telling the truth?

While, to address this issue from upfront, I intentionally employed some preventative strategies to increase the validity and reliability of the data. First, I selected all my subjects randomly from a large population pool. Their original locations from China represent all of the hot regions in China where most illegal Chinese immigrants come from, such as Fujian province, Northeast region, and Guangdong province. Most illegal immigrants in the US originated from these three localities. My subjects represent all three locations. Second, I adopt a strategy to extend the careers of my subjects to a wide spectrum of fields. They cover the walks of restaurant workers (the most popular job for illegal immigrants), owners, grocery laborers and owners, garment or textile factories workers, labor market organizers, etc. The diversity of jobs of my subjects would at least rule out the potential bias if they are all from the same field. Third, much effort has been focused on building trust and confidence among my subjects. I spent much time hanging out with my subjects, meeting and talking to them, sometime offer my help or take them to dinner. Skeptical at first, many become good friends with me after this study. Guaranteed with anonymity and confidentiality throughout the whole data collection process, they all eventually showed their trust and respect for my project. Using social resources within Chinese communities and speaking the native language are easy fix to develop intimate and trustful personal connections with all my subjects Simple put, by tapping into the ethnic cultural practice, I was able to gain trust and confidence of all my subjects.

The issue of validity was further strengthened through cross-examination between the interviews and my participant observations, also corroborated with the reports in relevant newspaper coverage. Although the possibility that some of the subjects lied to me or distorted certain facts about their life stories can never be ruled out, I felt confident that the combination of the methods I employed in the study was probably very viable in gaining the insider information about the cultural and network structure and patterns in Chinese community.

6. Secondary Sources of Data

There are many limitations in the use of personal contacts and the snowball sampling technique. Recognizing the limitation, I also used data from secondary sources to corroborate with the primary data. The additional phase of the data collection involved gathering relevant literature, including published books and articles on illegal Chinese immigration and immigrants life stories afterwards, government documents, news reports and feature articles published in English and Chinese language media around the world. A thorough and detailed analysis of the contents from these secondary sources also affirms the findings fleshed out from the primary data.

IV. An Ethnographic Study of Chicago's Labor Places

As an ethnographic study, the study is also premised on the data collected through participation observation in the labor places⁹⁰ of Chicago Chinatown. I personally paid two visits to conduct the field research. I made two trips to conduct field observation in the Chinatown of Chicago and observed daily operations and interactions inside two open

⁹⁰ Labor places refer to the so-called "labor markets" (literal translation from slang Chinese used in the enclave communities to denote places where Chinese immigrants can find jobs). They are informal institutional setups located almost in every big city Chinatown, to provide long or short term job opportunities.

underground labor markets. In the field I was also engaged in brief interactions and informal interviews with job seekers and organizers.

I went to Chicago Chinatown labor places twice. The first time was about a half day visit. The second time was one whole day. My activities included observing activities, talking to the organizer, pretending to seek a job, and interacting with over 20 different immigrants. The experience was eye-opening, revealing much real life information.

There are many labor places located within large city Chinatowns. In both visits I went to two same markets. There is about half year between my two visits. To my surprise, the labor places were organized so efficiently. Two places have almost same features in term of locality, personnel, resources, and style. Labor places or “labor market” (literal translation from Chinese language, a slang popularly used among new immigrants) are one of modern forms of “Tong”, set up inside Chinatown to help new immigrant find job. These jobs are not short term like a couple days temporary laborer jobs, which may be available within other ethnic community or society at large. These jobs are specifically targeted for Chinese immigrants, with paper or without paper. They are mostly long term jobs, as opposed to the many common laborer jobs at other labor markets. Such labor places are especially important to new immigrants because they can easily find jobs to sustain a living. They are also unique and significant in a sense to not only provide jobs, but also housing new immigrants at separate residence or rental properties with cheap housing, food, transportation, etc. Without labor places chain of survival collapses.

Underground labor markets are the market place organized by informal

institutionalized organizations inside Chinatown of the major US cities, such as NY, Chicago, or LA. It is a modern derivative form of “Tong, 堂” in the Chinese immigration history. “Tong” was the society or association created by the early Chinese settlers in the US in the mid of 19th century. Within 5 years after the first Chinese immigrant came in 1842, 50k more came in or were imported into the US as poor labors, coal miners to help negate the labor shortage. They were ghettoized and discriminated. In order to protect themselves, the early settlers gradually formed informal organizations or associations called “Tong” in Chinese communities to protect, negotiate, or communicate with outside communities. “Tong” evolved into many derivatives within different historical periods to function for various purposes. Some modern forms of it developed into criminal organizations that run human trafficking, prostitution, brothels. However, most of modern forms of it are not concerned with illegal activities. They offer all kind of social support to ethnic community such as benevolent charity, lending money, and dispute resolution, etc. The labor market inside Chinatown is one of the modern forms. When new comers come they first seek support from the various modern social organizations, especially the labor markets. The markets help channel them out. For example, any business owners who need this type of undocumented labor can just make a phone call to the labor market. Within a couple of days, their needs are met. The labor markets help new comers find a job and blend into US society as well. Many critics call the continuing practice of hiring unauthorized workers “the magnet for illegal immigration”. Undoubtedly, underground labor market institutionalizes it.

Let me describe both of my visits to the two labor places.

I decided to visit one large Chicago Chinese labor place. But, I have no idea where it is within the Chinatown for the first time. I went to a famous Chinese restaurant to solicit information about it. The restaurant waiter unhesitatingly told the location during my lunch. It's not far from the restaurant since they are all located in Chinatown. I walked over to the location and found it still relatively difficult to discover the entrance because there is no visible sign indicating any kind of such business in a two stories building. I walked around and couldn't figure out where it was. As I was passing the side of the building, I noticed a small door with stairs leading to an underground level. There wasn't any sign either. I wondered for a minute as to what might be downstairs before proceeding to the stairs out of my curiosity. I didn't see anybody coming in or out so I was kind of uncertain and concerned about what I was doing since I might turn out to be an unwanted trespasser to some point.

Once stepping inside, I was stunned. As a clear contrast to "tranquility" outside upstairs, there was a "clamorous market". About at least twenty or thirty Chinese job seekers congested two small rooms. People were talking, laughing, playing cards, and walking around. I could instantly smell the vigor in the air. As nobody was paying attention to me, being another new Chinese of seeking job, I approached the inside of the room. There were just a couple tables with phones on them. The organizer was sitting behind the tables and constantly talking on the phone. There were many stickers with notes hanging on the wall behind the organizer or on the table. Once finished with a call, the organizer would loudly announce a job to the "mob", detailing the job condition, location, and salary. Then one specific person would usually pick up the note and accept,

which would complete the deal and send the person on the trip to a new job. During my short stay at the specific place, I saw at least three people find job there.

My second visit was kind of more adventurous. It came at about several months later after my first visit. I pretended to be a job seeker myself and spent a whole day in a job market. I went to the same places as the first time. I approached the organizer telling her that I was looking for a restaurant job. She asked me to wait in the line for the opportunity. I talked with many other job seekers while waiting for the chance. I was offered several jobs during that day, including a waiter job from Indiana, one as cashier from Kentucky, one as a cook from Illinois. I refused all of them since my intention was to test the efficiency and effectiveness of the labor places. Eventually, the organizer became suspicious about me. I exited his place before he could question my motive and take further action.

Throughout my both visits, I also did some informal interviews with random job seekers. Let's look into their narratives and experiences to flesh out the unique aspect of the labor places.

One job seeker explained while being asked about his experience at the labor place:

“I come to Chicago, you know, for jobs. Here are lots of jobs and it's pretty easy to get one. Chicago is like my hometown in the US. ‘Labor market’ is the place. I usually stay here for a couple months before I decide to work elsewhere. It's kind of rest. But if you want to find a job quickly, of course you can. It usually takes one or two days to locate a job, depending on your luck. The jobs are all for long term when they are offered. But I constantly change my jobs, you know, working without paper is very unstable. Either you don't like the heavy labor, or the bosses want to get rid of you. I change job very often. Every time I came back to Chicago. They have houses and apartments close by the market. You just pay \$10 dollars to stay. It's cheap and convenient.”

Another responded to the question on where he stayed while looking for job:

“I stay with many people a couple blocks away from here. They are residential places provided by labor market organizers. This is the way they make their money. See, I don’t speak English, I don’t have special skills, and I know nobody here in the US. You see, I made it through all by myself in those years. I guarantee you these labor markets are of great help to land a job, as well as providing shelter temporarily for you. Throughout these years, I constantly was traveling between the labor markets and various jobs. Put it simple way, I would have starved to death without them in place”

One more subject indicated:

“Oh, it’s great here at Chicago. I live not far from here the labor market. All of us live there. There are apartments operated by the organizer here. I pay \$10 every day and can live as long as I want. But you know nobody wants to stay here long because we have to work somewhere to make money. That’s why we are here. You can stay there as long as you want, before you make your decision to come down or up to make the money. I always go back to Chicago if I am tired of what I am doing or I want to relax. They have everything here.”

During my field trip to these labor places, I found myself very fascinated about the mechanisms of Chinese labor places. The labor places entail several key features in support to Chinese immigrants. First, labor markets provide long term jobs. When new comers or older immigrants for various reasons need new jobs, they come to the labor places and seek support from them. The markets help channel them out. Second, they provide other functions associated with sustaining a living when immigrants are out of jobs. For example, they provide food, apartment, and other related service at a low and acceptable price, long enough to make the process working. Third, they serve as social network connection outlets and information sharing places. Small business owners who need this type of undocumented labor can just make a phone call to the labor market and have their needs met. The labor places also help socially isolated immigrants get access to different resources materialistically and psychologically, at least providing venues for them to share experience with each other. Finally, undoubtedly there is a cluster effect with the overall operation of such mechanism.

V. Findings and Discussions

Overview

This chapter discusses findings of the study. Subjects introduction and demographic description of the study participants are reported first. Then I will elaborate and answer the hypotheses presented in the method chapter based on the analysis of data. Detailed discussions of the findings are followed to explain the network structure and patterns, corroborated with representative narratives from all the subjects. Finally, I present clear framework praxis of the Chinese network paradigm.

Subjects Description

The ethnographic study included 16 Chinese immigrants located within three Midwest cities. They all came to the US through illegal ways, namely without proper paper documentation within the last twenty years. However, they have obtained legal status for permanent resident or are in the process of legal proceedings to adjust status. They come from different walks of social life, covering many job positions or occupations necessary and common inside in the local Chinese ethnic communities.

Gender is an issue for the study since most illegal Chinese immigrants are male. They left behind their families and are suffering long separation with them. On the other hand, young and female immigrants are brought into the countries for various reasons, including some engaging in commercial sex industry. Among all subjects, there were three females. The rest are males. Nevertheless, gender is an issue as many female immigrants are involved in the underground sex industry. Thus, they become the victims in the process. Details are discussed in the latter section of this chapter. Subject ages are

between 26 and 50, representing the age distribution of most illegal immigrants coming into the US, which is the population of the study.

Major Findings

1. A special social network exists in the Chinese ethnic communities, consisting of various elements such as nodes, ties and outlets embedded in cultural, social, and economic structures.

2. The cultural and social network patterns shape the ways of how mass humans flow from China to US.

Outlet matters. Network serves as the real incentive to illegal Chinese immigration. Network must be treated as the mediator for economic incentive. The network is formed historically and still functioning in Chinese community. Network boasts special characteristics with different outlets.

In sum, my study shows how networks with featured cultural traits are structured and how those structures and processes affect the way of immigrant's influx. According to my theory, illegal Chinese immigration exists primarily because a network is in place and well functional.

Discussions of Findings

Nodes, Ties, and Outlets: "A Grammar of Social Networks of Illegal Chinese Immigration" in Contemporary US Society

Figure II.4.3 A Conceptual Diagram of Chinese Illegal Immigration Network

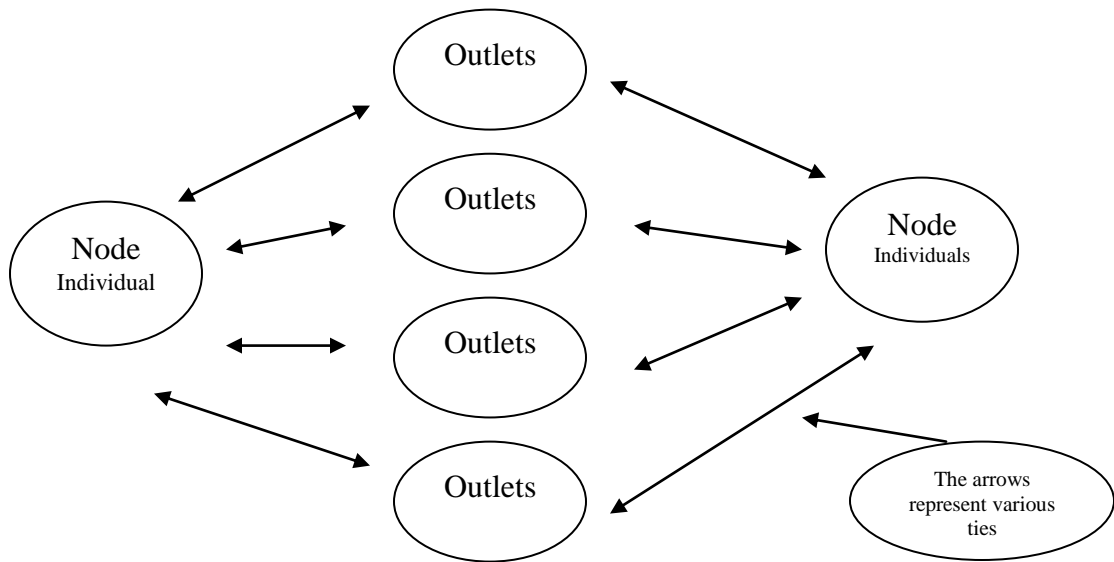
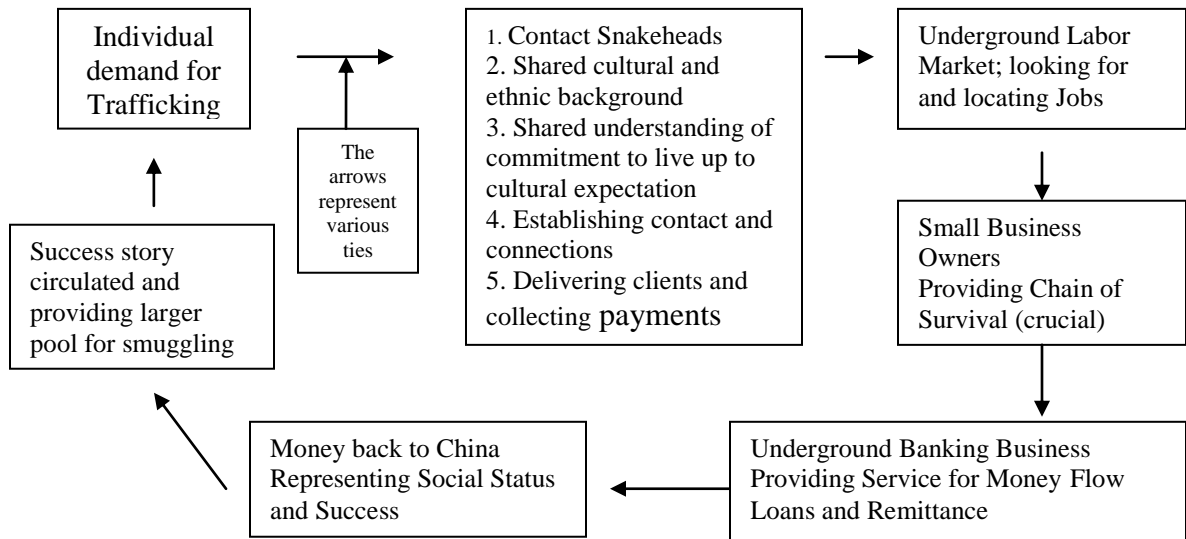


Figure IV.1. Network Features and Process of Operations



The above two charts blueprint the special characteristics of the network and flesh out the framework of immigration process. The chart “A Conceptual Diagram of Chinese Illegal Immigration Network” (Figure II.4.3) details the features of the network that presents three dimensions in the system, as opposed to the traditional two elements one. The chart “Network Features and Process of Operations” (Figure IV.1.) showcases the overall pattern of operation within the network and exhibits its features. All of the details are premised on and extracted from the data. Analysis is strongly supported by the data. The narratives also corroborated the paradigms.

To conceptualize the network’s unique feature, I create a new notion “outlet”. Outlets denote aggregated groups, or formal and informal institutional setups within the network, which play key important roles in the whole process. Special patterns are largely derived from the operation of network outlets, dependent of their successful interaction with nodes to bridge various ties. Networks are mediator for economic incentive, while outlets are mediator for the network.

Scholars of traditional network theory have used the idea of social network to connote complex sets of relationships in social world. They either study complete networks with all of the ties containing specified relations in a defined population from a macro perspective, or look into personal networks with the ties that specified people have, such as their "personal communities", in so called egocentric networks from a micro level. However, building upon traditional social network theory of the two elements nodes and ties to the analysis, I develop further a new framework to explain the Chinese network. First, the definition of nodes is vague as to who should be categorized in and who should not. Certainly, immigrants and smugglers are major players concerned in the process. But

there are many network institutional and organizational setups which also hold important stakes in the process. I find it entangled to fit them into the very definition of nodes because they are institutionalized organisms derived from Chinese immigration history. Second, throughout my study I feel there must be a macro-micro bridge that serves the interest of nodes and connects them with ties so that small-scale interaction between illegal immigrants and all other relevant stakeholders becomes translated into large-scale community patterns, and these in turn feed back into the formation of the embeddedness of illegal Chinese immigration.

As such, there has been something more than nodes and ties that functions as bridging nodes and ties, since the network is of special characteristics. Individual players such as immigrants and snakeheads form various ties to achieve goals. Often times there are organizations and institutional setups between nodes and ties to help facilitate the functioning of the whole network. To better understand the Chinese network, I created the notion of outlet.

The development of three dimensions of nodes, ties, and outlets in Chinese ethnic community is instrumental in bringing sociology theory to the forefront of criminology. The specific network is three dimensional: nodes, ties and outlets, instead of traditional two elements paradigm. Nodes represent various individuals involved in the whole process, such as clandestine immigrants, snakeheads, family members, labor market organizers, small business owners, banking businessmen, etc. All of the stakeholders play different roles and constantly interact with ties, which are major activities carried out by players to fulfill objectives and goals. Outlets refer to the organizational and institutional setups that promote and facilitate establishment of ties between nodes. They mediate

interaction among game players and provide necessary institutionalized mechanism to bridge and create ties. Outlets are the most significant feature in the network and make the Chinese pattern unique.

The creation of notion of outlet is to denote patterns of ties, encompassing concepts of institutional setups traditionally regarded as “Tong” in the Chinese immigration history. Outlets are different from nodes and ties. They exist separately with special functions within the network. See Figure II.4.3 for details. Outlets are not nodes because they are not individuals or simple organizations, they are institutional or organizational setups originally derived from the traditional forms “Tong”. Through many years of development, they have been institutionalized into the major landscape of Chinese ethnic community and culture in the US. They are significant and special featured institutions for specific functions in the whole process.

In summary, my contribution in theory here is mainly interpretive and exploratory, towards the purpose of presenting a new paradigm to understanding of the Chinese network pattern. The paradigm interprets dimension of network patterns in reality, decodes a clearer account of the immigrants’ social world with a fundamentally understanding of normative component, and also serves as an approach to explain how social reality is constructed in the historical process. When Americans are often perplexed and find themselves unprepared to fight the elusive and impenetrable Chinese organized networks, the framework will provide some clues. Through field observations and face-to-face interviews with Chinese immigrants in cultural enclaves, I find outlets in the social networks providing the necessary connections and resources throughout the whole process.

Then the key points stand out themselves. What matters in the network are the outlets. Outlets encompasses at least four key outlets in the system: underground labor markets, small business owner chains, “Snakehead” networks derived from the “Tong” or “堂”⁹¹, and underground banking business. All of the outlets are very important aspects and very much pronounced by the research data.

1. Underground labor markets

Underground labor markets are the market place organized by informal institutionalized organizations inside Chinatown of the major US cities, such as NY, Chicago, or LA. It is a modern derivative form of “Tong, 堂” in the Chinese immigration history. “Tong” was the society or association created by the early Chinese settlers in the US in the mid of 19th century. Within 5 years after the first Chinese immigrant came in 1842, 50k more came in or were imported into the US as poor labors, coal miners to help negate the labor shortage. They were ghettoized and discriminated. In order to protect themselves, the early settlers gradually formed informal organizations or associations called “Tong” in Chinese communities to protect, negotiate, or communicate with outside communities. “Tong” evolved into many derivatives within different historical periods to function for various purposes. Some modern forms of it developed into criminal organizations that run human trafficking, prostitution, brothels. However, most of modern forms of it are not concerned with illegal activities. They offer all kind of

⁹¹ Tong or “堂口” literally means “hall” or “gathering place”. It refers to groups and organizations formed by the earliest Chinese immigrants in the US to better fend for themselves and to provide support and assistance to each other. The first Tong was established in San Francisco in the 1850s and expanded rapidly since then. Like family and district associations, Tongs provide many benefits, including job referrals, housing assistance, mediating conflict within the community. Tongs are roots for Chinese organizations that developed gradually into different forms in China nowadays.

social support to ethnic community such as benevolent charity, lending money, and dispute resolution, etc. The labor market inside Chinatown is one of the modern forms. When new comers come they first seek support from the various modern social organizations, especially the labor markets. The markets help channel them out. For example, any business owners who need this type of undocumented labor can just make a phone call to the labor market. Within a couple of days, their needs are met. The labor markets help new comers find a job and blend into US society as well. Many critics call the continuing practice of hiring unauthorized workers “the magnet for illegal immigration”. Undoubtedly, underground labor market institutionalizes it. Let’s look into some subjects’ descriptions to flesh out the process.

One subject explained:

“I go to Chicago. There are lots of jobs and it’s pretty easy to get one. Two largest places I constantly go if I need help are located inside the Chinatown. It usually takes one or two days to locate a job, depending on your luck. I constantly change my jobs, you know, working without paper is very unstable. Either you don’t like the heavy labor, or the bosses want to get rid of you. We change job very often. That’s part of the nature to work like us. And it’s not easy to keep a job for long, nor is it hard to find a new one, given the fact that there is always big help from the labor institutes.”

Another responded to the question how he found the current job:

“I don’t speak English, I don’t have special skills, and I know nobody here in the US. You see, I made it through all by myself in those years. I guarantee you these labor markets are of great help to land a job for you. Throughout these years, I constantly was traveling between the labor markets and various jobs. Put it simple way, I would have starved to death without them in place”

One more subject indicated:

“Oh, well to find a job. It’s easy. Just go to Chicago. They have markets there with all kinds of jobs. You don’t need documentations, no language skill, as long as you have labor, that’s enough. Tell you what, all businesses run by Chinese in the Midwest call there to request people if they need any. You should go and check it out. A lot of people there, you just pay 10 dollars a day, they will provide food,

board, and transportation for you. You can stay there as long as you want, before you make your decision to come down or up to make the money. I always go back to Chicago if I am tired of what I am doing or I want to relax. They have everything there, trust me!”

Still, a fourth of the subjects in this study made it clear the importance of underground labor market:

“Oh...yeah... my ex girlfriend (the Chinese lady he is temporarily with before the interview) just went back to Chicago two month ago. We broke up. You know I have a wife in China and she has a husband there. We stayed together just because we can help each other out sometimes. Life is not easy here. She called me a couple days ago and told me she found another job at a Chinese restaurant somewhere in Wisconsin. She stayed at Chicago for a month to have a rest, and then she moved there. I guess she’s with another guy right now. You know, that’s just the way our lives are. Like a feather floating to anywhere with the wind. For sure, the labor market helps a lot.”

“Boss Wong” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1996, who is now an owner of a large Chinatown grocery wholesale store providing raw material to a large amount of restaurants in mid-west. He explained:

“I have very good business, you know, I buy most Chinese products transported from NY or LA and wholesale distribute to the local restaurants in the region. I have many guys working for me and am making money everyday. Of course, you know, it’s big investment too, I constantly have an inventory worth of half a million dollars and I have to keep circulation pretty fast, or it could go really bad.”

2. Small business owners provide chain of survival, like restaurants, garment or textile factories.

It is easy to understand the significance of the very many small businesses run by Chinese entrepreneurs throughout the US in the network. Underground labor market channels out immigrants on the one side. On the other side the chain of small businesses absorbs them, provides havens for them, as well as exploits them to make profits. The chain’s consistent and frequent demand for labor and its preference to cheap, low cost labor are fed off by the supplies of desperate clandestine immigrants in the job market.

The chain also provides plenty of job opportunities to guarantee the illegal can pay off the trafficking fee and make some money for their goals. Examination into the narratives of the subject leads to the revelation of such outlet in the whole network:

One subject explained:

“I brought my younger brother with me here 12 years ago when he was only 22. We took the hard way. It took us eight months to get here. We both find restaurant jobs quickly at our relative’s businesses. Through 5 years, we worked our way to pay off the trafficking debt and become small business owners now. We like to provide job opportunities for new comers. We went through the same path and can see our past on the new workers right now.”

Another responded to the question how he found the current job:

“I have been working at my cousin’s restaurant for 10 years. This is my first job, which I took for 10 years. Before I came, my cousin who had immigrated here with his parents told me that he needed me here for his business. He asked me to take whatever it takes to get here. It took me a long way and 9 month before I stepped on this land. But the fortunate thing was that I knew I was going to get a job and what kind of life I would be expecting before I made my decision. It is not too risky to me. As long as I could get here, I know everything would be fine.”

One more subject indicated:

“I had several jobs. I was a cook, a helper for grocery store, and a construction worker for internal decoration of houses and buildings. It was easy for me to find a job. Most people would work in a restaurant when they first got here. Once being here for a little bit longer, they began to build up connections and to know more people. They would have other chances. After all, we have ethnic community everywhere, which providing numerous opportunities for new comers to survive.”

One subject, who owned a successful trading business in the US, explained how he got involved in the process:

“I own a grocery store here in Town. You know it’s not big business, but I have stable clients. My wife and I came about 20 years ago without documents. It was really difficult at the first few years. We had nothing, but our labor, toil, and tear. I cannot afford medical treatment for my wife’s infection at one time, which eventually led to her deaf on both ears. We have gone through too much. Now our two sons are graduating from colleges and we have our own grocery business. We are content about our lives now and we would like to hire new comers and to help them settle down and blend into our community here in town.”

3. Snakehead networks responsible for smuggling Chinese into the US.

There is a lot of previous research done by other sociologists or criminologists with respect to the smuggling networks. What are the snakehead networks? Some scholars call the groups “the Chinese Mafia”, others name them “China Town Triads”, or “organized gangs”. Several distinguished scholars investigated thoroughly through in-depth interviews with real snakeheads to disclose the unique features of Chinese human smuggling groups. (Zhang 2008, Qin 1999) Chinese immigrant network and smuggling group are not gangs. Their scholarships comprehensively present the real nature of such networks. Accordingly, there are distinctive features characteristic of the groups in the network. They espouse:

“Non-hierarchical, task force orientation, more collaborative than command driven in organizational structure; membership based on ability to provide specific services, no formalized rituals, and no articulated organizational rules or group identity in identity and membership; transnational entrepreneurial cooperation of individuals with dyadic connection with service providers and based on fortuitous personal contacts in term of organizational characteristics; and instrumental to enforce contact, payment collection, to maintain control during smuggling operations in the use of violence”⁹²

Snakehead networks are the most notorious partially due to the intensive coverage of mass media. They originated from the “Tong” or “堂口” traditional social network or organization to provide support for Chinese immigrants here in the US and become one modern form of “Tong”. “Tong” or “堂口” existed in Chinatown from mid 19th century, providing assistance and channels for Chinese immigrant, connecting them with the underground labor market or small business owners to land a job to survive immediately

⁹² Sheldon X. Zhang. 2008. Chinese Human Smuggling Organizations: Families, Social Networks, and Cultural Imperatives. Stanford University Press. P. 170.

after they get to the US. Much of “Tong” culture has continued today and traditional “Tong” has developed into a variety of modern forms. Most Tong members have jobs or their own business. They congregate occasionally at the group meetings to meet friends, socialize, or to exchange information. The leaders of the tongs make important decisions and control the groups’ daily affairs. Most modern human smuggling organizations or groups derived from the traditional Tongs and developed into different forms with sophisticated structural and organizational characteristics.

Regardless of what characteristics Chinese human trafficking groups may possess, they are one major as well as important outlet within the networks of Chinese communities. They derived from the historical “Tong”, developed more adaptively to cater the modern trend and function well for that purpose in the process.

As nearly all my subjects corroborated the importance of such organization, here are some representative narratives:

Elderly Lee:

“It took me altogether 9 month to get here. The connection I had organized the trip for me. I used all false passports throughout. I was taken to Hong Kong first and stayed there for a week. Then some other connection took me to Cambodia and I had to stay there for about 6 month, waiting for channels. The situation in Cambodia was very dangerous then. Armed militias were everywhere. We had to stay in a hotel protected by one group of militia. My routine outing was to pick up living cost money from a local bank every week and it was super dangerous. You know, if I was caught by locals that I was taking a large amount of money out of banks, I would be shot out of a robbery. The hotel sent a security guy with me every time and we had to keep real low profile on the street and be very cautious of not being spotted by suspicious local militia members. After six month came the chance. We were flown to France and another European country, then to South America, then to Cuba. There we were picked up by local people who sent three of us to somewhere close to Miami shore. Then we changed boats, I guess, the one eventually took us to Miami shore was run by Americans. We were very excited but also nervous about our trips, until we landed on America. There was another guy who accompanied us to New York by greyhound. We were locked up somewhere in NY Chinatown later, until my relative fulfilled the ransom to them. I mean, looking

back upon my trip to America, it was exciting as well as assuring. I knew I had high chance to get in and I would be able to survive once I arrived, even before I made my decision to come.”

Another subject explained:

“I got in about 4 years ago. My way of getting here was not easy. My first attempt failed midway when I was rejected for using other people’s passport. I was sent back midway and was fined by the government and lost some money for partial trafficking. I joined a business trip one year later and I managed to get a visa for the trip. Then I flew to the US and joined my two siblings here. They have been here for over 10 years and both have their own businesses. My wife also came a year later than me. And now we are fighting our case at immigration court with the help of attorney. We have got initial approval to stay pending on the result on the process.”

Big Brother responded:

“Everything was pre-arranged and kind of scripted. I was disguised as a Japanese businessman. I pretended to be on a multiple destinations business trip. I toured several European countries first, then the US. Believe me, they are very efficient, collaborative, and organized. I paid 70k dollars for the operation. Man, it’s expensive. And tell you what. If you don’t pay them after you are successfully delivered. They will hunt you down. I don’t want to mess with them.”

One more subject explained:

“Of course you have to have contacts to get here. It’s kind of privilege to most of us to be able to catch the ride. In our village, most people had come here. Only those elderly women and children are left behind. This is the way we make our lives. You have to either have a relative in the US, or have connection with snakehead. They have their contacts and ability to bring us here, you know, they charge a high fee for the service. It is fair.”

“Young Brother” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1999, who is now an owner of a local carry-out restaurant. On being asked about why he came and the life experience afterwards, responded:

“Back hometown, we had nothing to do because the situation was bad. I tried to make money by smuggling controlled goods, and didn’t work. I saw friends all leaving for America and send money home quickly. I decided to come. My cousin had come before me. The snakehead told me I didn’t have to pay the \$30k upfront, and I could pay after I got here. I worked for three years to step flat (pay off) that

hole and now I own my own restaurant. I built a big house for my wife and kids home, and people think I got a windfall.”

4. Underground banking business.

Underground banking business serves to provide loans and money remittances to the home country and charge a sharking fee. It is also a modern derivative form of the “Tong”, providing financial service for those who need it. A glimpse into the narratives presents some clues.

As one subject in Saint Louis explained:

“Yeah, one of the issues I had was sending money back to China; people are too suspicious about sending money international right now, especially after 911. I can’t send through the normal channel because I didn’t have a bank account. You know Sister Ping, right? She has some banking business before and you just call ‘her branch’ at New York and they’ll arrange everything for you. The only drawback was that it took long time sometimes for your family to get the money cause’ the branch has to get from you first”

Another subject responded:

“My wife has to take care of my paralyzed mom and two young kids. The only income for my whole family is my salary. I don’t waste any unnecessary money here. You know, I don’t pay for food and rent. I only need 50 dollars a month for basic expense. Within the first several years, I constantly had difficulties in sending them the money they need. Eventually, I heard from a friend that people help you in that. They will collect the money here from you and your family can claim the same amount instantly in China. I mostly send money through them. And of course, they charge a high fee.”

Elder Lee explained:

“Now I use Western Union, 16 dollars for every 25 hundreds (because he has legal status right now and he opens bank accounts and owns some forms of ID). It’s fast, safe, and convenient. But you know... I had to pay almost double fees for the same amounts transfer several years ago through the underground banking system in New York. Then, I didn’t have bank account, I didn’t pay taxes, I didn’t want to keep the cash either. So I sent money first to ‘them’⁹³ with money order. Once they got the cash, it was instantly available for my family in China. I know they charge a sharking fee, but I don’t have other choice. I am happy that I don’t have to go through them no more.”

⁹³ Referring to the underground banking system in Chinatown.

One more subject stated:

“Well, they have everything you need, money, connections, Id, driver licenses. See this is my previous driver license I got for two thousands. I don’t need it right now because I got my status already. This was from a connection at Minnesota and was cut off later on... The underground banks, oh yeah! They will lend you money to pay for your trafficking debt, and emergency issues. Of course they charge a high fee. You can also send money back to China through them. I know most undocumented immigrants have to go through them Cause’ they don’t have other choices. They are good, at least in helping handling your money. They are like banks, real banks, I mean, lots of things they can do...”

The four outlets are effective mechanisms within the network. They provide an advantageous position to the Chinese immigrants. Other illegal immigrants have no such advantages. With the Chinese network in place, it’s almost like a guaranteed success to an individual clandestine immigrant since the beginning of the whole process.

Culture uniqueness and social network patterns do matter. Culturally, the decision to go to the U.S. is rarely an individual decision. The Chinese view having a family member in the U.S. as conferring of social status, additional respect, and economic gain for those left behind, given the huge amount of remittances sent back to China (a new house can be purchased in Fujian for \$12,000).The network also reinforces the cycle of clandestine immigration. As for the overall operation of the network, the patterns are clearly demonstrated in the narratives of my subjects. The network is very instrumental, efficient, and well-established. It provides comprehensive support for Chinese immigration and serves as the real cause to facilitate economic incentives. Every clandestine immigrant knows almost for sure from the beginning of their journey that they will succeed based on the network support, if they work hard enough. This is some advantage Chinese immigrants have, while others don’t. Looking into several subjects’ narratives, the cycle is obvious.

“Big Brother” from Shenyang, Liaoning, gained entry in 2000, who is now an owner of a city buffet restaurant. On being asked about the whole process, he responded:

“My hometown Shenyang, a lot of people came to America. After they came, everybody envied them and you would see they built a house not long. Everybody’s saying they lived a great life. I always dreamed of coming and making money. I didn’t have the money needed for snakehead then, so I had to borrow \$30k from relatives. Although I was afraid not being able to pay back, I saw other people pay back quickly. So I decided to come. I knew I could pay back as long as I work hard. Now I own a buffet restaurant.”

In one case, a subject described the legendary stories circulated among the villagers in his hometown region, Fuzhou⁹⁴:

“Well, in the villages there are not many males left. They are either going to the big cities for jobs, or figure out a way to come to the US. Those who are the most able can come to the US and it’s viewed as a privilege by the general public. You have to either have family members in the US or you have some sum of money to initiate the process. In either case, you must establish some contacts first, i.e. get to know snakeheads, who may have ‘effective lines’ to facilitate the process. Remember, not everyone has such access. You have to be an insider to some groups that have established fame in that regard. You must know the informal rules and norms as to what to ask and what not, what are expected from you and what not. Those smugglers are sometime well known in the locality and they have the resource you need. However, you have to live up with their requirement and play the rule they set up. They can help you achieve what you want. Otherwise, you will be screwed.”

In another case, a subject introduced how he established connections with the snakehead to substantiate his dream of getting here:

“Once you make the decision, it was not hard to locate a snakehead. There are plenty of them. But you have to be really careful because many of them are shams. I was faked a couple of times. They took some initial payment (very small amount) and never show up again. Or, you will be wasting your time and money for their failed attempt if they are not mature and sophisticated enough to carry out their plans. Finally I find a group of snakeheads who have successfully run the operation for many years. And they eventually made me through.”

On subject, who claimed to be a very successful businessman now, depicted his business and life experience:

⁹⁴ Fuzhou region is where the most clandestine immigrants have come from.

“Right after I got here, I was locked up somewhere at Chicago as a hostage for payment collection. My relatives here were able to cover portion of the fee, and they provide assurance for me to borrow some money from the underground banking business to cover the rest of fee. Then I came to join my cousin’s business at another Midwest city. I stayed there for a little bit, and then I decided to go somewhere else because the business was not doing so well. I went to Chicago again and easily blended into many job seekers in Chinatown. I found another restaurant job right away there. Many people found their job pretty easily. I worked at another city for some years and my wife came afterwards. We now have our own restaurant. We’ve built up a mansion at hometown village for my parents and two children to live. Our story gets circulated and represents some sort of success model to many neighbors. We are applying for our children to come and hopefully they can come soon.”

Another subject explained how he finds job, pays back trafficking debt, and send money to families at home:

“You know, before I come here I had heard legendary stories of people getting smuggled in and made a success. I have the notion that I would be able to do the same. I followed the pattern and I know I can be successful if I try hard. I got contact with smugglers with established routes, I got job through the network at New York, I work for small restaurants and other businesses, I paid back my trafficking debt, I sent money to my family back in China and my income can support all my family, I’ve got my immigration application approved and waiting for adjusting permanent status, I am hope to bring my wife and kids here soon. You know by accomplishing all of these, I am writing my own life legend, I have set up a model for other follower who may not doing well in the villages and want to take on such adventures like me. I think this is a way out for them.”

In sum, one clear and consistent finding of this study remains: that Chinese clandestine immigration is well established based on the thorough and functional networks. Other illegal immigrants have no such advantages. It’s almost like a guaranteed success from the beginning of the whole process. A specific person would know the clear pathways or expect to pursue the same “success legend” articulated by the predecessor and circulated in the local villages.

Undoubtedly, most immigrants come for money, better economic opportunities. It is not difficult to find the pattern through investigation and examination of what has bee

said and what has been implied. If economic motivation is obvious and manifest incentives, the networks would be the latent incentives serving as crucial mediator for Chinese to keep coming. To simply put, without the network, there won't be so many illegal immigrants. The networks exist in Chinese communities and show similar patterns in other countries such Holland, Britain, and Australia.

Gender Issues

Two groups of women were involved in the process. According to Zhang, who surveyed Chinese Human Smuggling Organizations: "The first is the many women whose husbands were smuggled out of China. These women stayed behind, looking after the elderly, rearing the young, and living off the remittances sent by their husbands. There were so many of these women left behind in the region that a male prostitute industry emerged to cater to them. Nowadays, term Wanbasao (万八嫂) was coined to refer to women with husbands overseas who are looking for sexual adventures."⁹⁵ This claim was corroborated by the narrative from the subject elderly Lee about his family in China.

"I feel so bad about my Mom's passing. (His mom passed away a month before I interviewed him; 9 years after he had come to the US and he wasn't able to make it back) (He looked so sad at the moment) I have been here for 9 years, the second year after I came, my mom was paralyzed. My wife had to take care of my mom on the bed and raise our two children by her own. Of course I send money back to support the family. It has been tremendous hardship for my wife and my family in China. I own my wife too much. Now we bought a large condo at Fuzhou, which is something I feel good about after so long."

The second group consists of many female illegal immigrants who come to US for sex industry. Trafficking in young women for the purpose of commercial sex and

⁹⁵ Sheldon X. Zhang. 2008. Chinese Human Smuggling Organizations: Families, Social Networks, and Cultural Imperatives. Stanford University Press. P. 254

brokered marriages has become an integral part of the landscape. The females are usually young and idealistic. Many hope to come to the United States for a better life, and in the process, they are lured or forced into sex industry. It is commonly known that there are many brothels in the Chinatown of major cities. On the one side, illegal immigrants who left their families behind have desperate need for commercial sex. On the other hand, young female immigrants are willing to trade their bodies for money to pay back the trafficking debt. This is why nearly all Chinatowns have presence of brothels full of Chinese young girls. Several subjects confirmed the operation of such brothels. And one of my subjects was the victim of such operation.

“Lily Zhao”, one of the victims trafficked in for sex service from Shanxi Province, China, has already become US citizen. She is a business owner right now and constantly traveling back and forth from China to the US. She agreed to be my subject on the condition of anonymity. My conversation with her was not easy at the beginning because she was skeptical about my goal and might have felt embarrassed or shameful for her past. Under constant assurance from me that I was to keep her identity secret and no harm to her at any level, she told me her story.

“I came to the US in the year 1997. I was a waitress at my uncle’s restaurant in Beijing then. One day one of my acquaintances asked whether I wanted to come to the US. You know, everybody was so crazy about going to America. The acquaintance told me I had to marry a medium-aged American guy to come here, plus I have to pay him some money. I decided to come since I had dreamed of coming to America. So I paid some money and married a truck driver... Thanks God! I finally got away from him and still able to stay and get my citizenship. I heard a lot of girls are trafficked into America and get abused in so many ways. They had to tolerate for being afraid of deportation. I finally made it, of course, I paid my price too”

Another subject named “Yong Ye” confirmed with the presence of brothels in the big city Chinatown when talking about his bi-monthly trip going to New York for prostitution.

“I liked going to New York, Saint Louis, and Chicago, you know, there are a lot of girls from China, pretty and young. Whenever I go, I just call my contacts and they will drive me free to the Chinese brothels. Everything is arranged. You can do whatever you want for about 120 dollars. Sometimes I feel so lonely, being separate from my family for more than 10 years. Ah... my wife had remarried for long.”

Another subject with code name “Little Computer” elaborated on the issue with a more direct perspective and tone:

“I have been here for 7 years and I miss my family so much. Although my wife had “remarried” to another guy, I don’t hate her. The separation has been too long. You know, sometimes you go to New York, man! There are plenty of beautiful chicks in the house (brothels). For 120 dollars you can get whatever you want. Those chicks are young and pretty. You know, a lot of us go there on a regular basis just to have some fun. Hehe, there is something we always dream to do.”

One more subject whom I call “Old Dongbei”

“I just went to a local brothel full of Vietnam chicks; oh they are so pretty and only cost 100 dollars. Sometimes you can even take the girl out to a motel and it is fun.”

Gender is an inevitable issue in international migration, as many scholars disclosed that international criminal organizations constantly transport women and children for purpose of commercial sex. (Zhang 2008, Chin 1999, Richard 1999)⁹⁶ It is empirically evident that at least some of the subjects in the study were victimized or engaged in commercial sex industry.

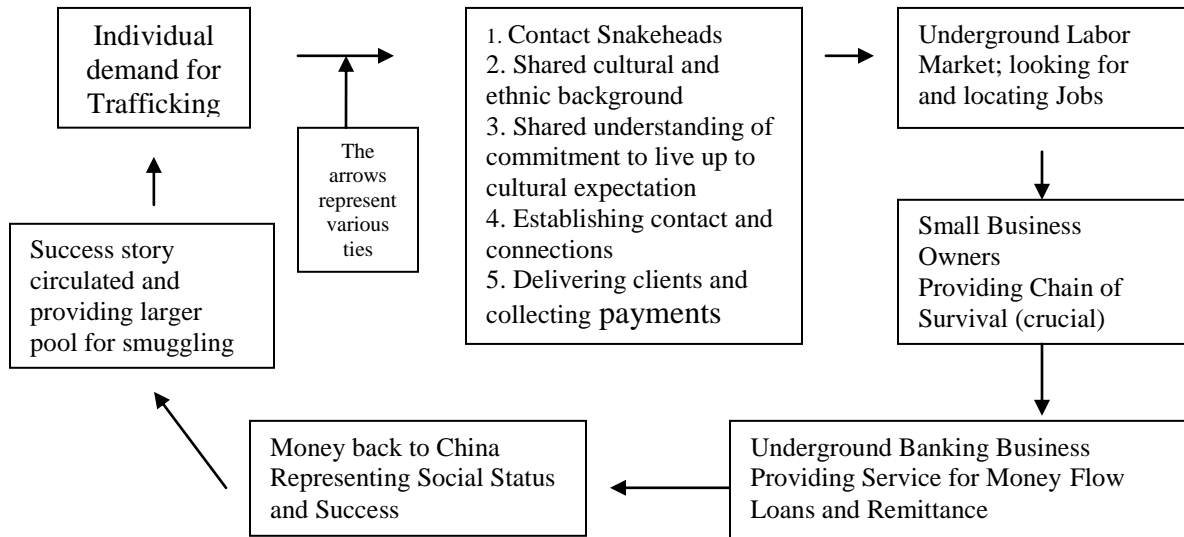
⁹⁶ Scholars claim that 70 percent of females trafficked are for commercial sex. Many organized Asian criminal organizations (mainly Chinese, Vietnamese, and Koreans) have played a major role in trafficking Asian females and running brothels in the US.

Summary of Study Findings

Cultural and Network Patterns are the most important determinants of illegal Chinese immigration to the US. Unique Network is so distinct that no other ethnic communities show similar and comparable patterns. The social network facilitates individual membership and provides links between groups and stakeholders. My research indicates that illegal immigrants get smuggled into US, find jobs, survive here, and earn money, sending money back their home country only via the unique social network. My research also reveals that a closely knit network is crucially important in the whole operation of the process, and predicates or dictates the life course of illegal immigrants once they step on the journey.

Through a detailed examination of the narratives by many representative clandestine Chinese immigrants, this chapter analyzed nodes, ties, and outlets and their interactions in the process. As such, the grammar of social networks of illegal Chinese immigration in Contemporary US Society is clearly presented.

Figure IV.1. Network Features and Process of Operations



VI. Conclusion

In summary, my study is on how unique networks-including cultural traits-are structured and how those affect the way of immigrants' influx. According to my theory, illegal Chinese immigration exists primarily because the unique network is in place and functional well.

As such, network matters. The application of the lens of network leads naturally into the reconceptualization of the influx of illegal immigration not only as a production of economic incentive, but also as a network structure. The move from economic

incentive to network is attended by three crucial moves. First, illegal immigrants are described in more truthful ways in both cognitive and self-interestedness respects. Second, network matters. The governance of the unique network relations takes seriously the conceptual function posed by the four dimensions of outlets. Third, network is accessible to analysis. The last is accomplished by focusing on the outlet as the basic unit of analysis, identifying unique network structures (which differ in discrete cultural and structural ways) as the means by which to mediate immigration. Specifically, immigration patterns, which differ in their attributes, are aligned with network structures embedded within the ethnic cultures and communities. Studying the network entails working out of the logic of this type of alignment.

A recurrent theme is that recourse to the lens of cultural network frequently deepens our understanding of bewilderingly complex social world-the multifaceted issue of illegal immigration, with a suggestion that this strategy can inform applied knowledge and the continuous sciences more generally.

The research findings reveal that cultural and network patterns are the most important determinants of the illegal Chinese Immigrant to US. In other words, if you cut the sustainable network off at any layer, there would be no more illegal Chinese immigrants. Unique network is the fount and matrix of the systems, which give rise to the issue of Chinese Clandestine immigration.

VII. Limitation of the study

Sample size and Representativeness

Sample size of the research is sixteen subjects. Although the subjects cover a very wide spectrum of careers, they are by no means exhaustive in term of what illegal Chinese immigrants are doing in the US. There are a lot more other professions that are pertinent to look into and more individual life stories to tell, so as to gain a comprehensive and truthful understanding of the reality.

However, the researcher had tried to make the sample more representative to the population in different ways, as discussed and indicated from the method section, from site selection, subject selection, data collection process, subject protection, to the overall control and evaluation of representativeness and reliability. Generally speaking, the sample size has been large enough to represent the population. The data collected suffice to reveal patterns of Chinese illegal immigration to the US.

While the study has been delicately and thoroughly designed to cater to specific research goal, there are still limitations that require further studies of the kind in the future.

Study Limitations and Future Studies

The researcher acknowledges several limitations in the data collection process.

First, the problem of access exists due to the obvious ethical and safety reasons in relation to IRB requirement. In order to get IRB approval, I have to narrow down the subject pool to immigrants who have successfully obtained legal status or at least in the process of legal proceedings for that purpose, even though they all entered illegally at the first place. The restriction on informed consent and protection of the subject as well as

researcher itself has actually limited the access to a large population of illegal Chinese immigrants, who are otherwise perfectly pertinent to the research topic. So the access to a sampled subject pool was largely through a network of the researcher's personal connections. Despite delicate, extensive, and deliberate efforts to locate a wide spectrum of key players in the process, the researcher was still limited in the selection of the subjects. Therefore, access limitation may have caused some issues as to the representativeness of the sample to the population.

Second, another limitation was that the organizational and cultural features of the social network patterns were built upon data gathered from different individuals who may render fragmented descriptions about their respective life experience, although they are all part of the same social network embedded in the Chinese community. It is up to the researcher to piece them together and make sense of it.

Third, regardless of what strategies the researcher employed to gain confidence and to assure the subjects of confidentiality of their identity, it is still uncertain of the extent to which these immigrants gave completely honest narratives. As all researchers of sensitive topics must do, the current study relied on multiple sources of information and the researcher's intuitive understanding from direct field observations. Much more research is needed to substantiate the findings in the current study and to improve the understanding of true reality.

Finally, the researcher was not able to gain entrance into an entire smuggling group, a real smuggling operation, some underground business operations, and certain longitudinal immigrants' actual life experiences, due to various causes with respect to time, money, safety, and access. Therefore, the descriptions of a prototypical life story of

“illegal immigration” are an amalgam of different accounts, as most of such researches done by other established scholars fall into the same fallacy. Still, this research project represents and explores a very detailed examination of the illegal Chinese immigration patterns and cultural networks in US from 1989 to 2009, thus make its theoretical and practical contributions to the literature.

Future longitudinal studies of illegal Chinese immigrants’ lives here in the US in combination with ethnographic examination into the ethnic culture, network, and communities are especially pertinent and necessary to draw sociological imagination in a more truthful and empirical perspective.

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APPENDIX

A: In-depth Interview Core Questions

All interviews are conducted on the condition of anonymity

You are free to answer or not answer any questions during the course of the interview:

- I. Why did you make the decision of coming to the US through illegal channels?
- II. Once you made up your mind, how did you figure out a way to get here, was it easy?
- III. How did you find a job, given that you don't know anybody here in the US and you don't speak English?
- III. How do you think about coming to the US, such as the whole process?
- IV. Do you like the job you have right now?
- V. Where are your families now? What's your current relationship with them now?
- VI. How do you send money back to China?
- VII. Reckoning the adventure of your American dream now, do you still appreciate the idea of coming or regret that you have endured many years of hardships by coming here?
In other word, would you still make the decision if you were to choose right now?
- VIII. Ho would you describe your job, life, and identity right now? are you content about them?
- IX. What do you think about the Chinatown, Chinese community, and American society as a whole?
- X. Do you think you have realized your American dream or not, as you have hoped?
- XI. Any additional opinions and comments you'd like to make regarding to your life story as a whole?

Thanks for your participation!

B: Cast of Characters

With Code Names

- 1) Dongbei Na (Female) - from the northeastern region in China. “Dongbei” is the Chinese term referring to the region, which knowingly is one of the several places with most clandestine immigrants.
- 2) Dongbei Wang – also from the northeastern region in China. Boyfriend of Dongbei Na.
- 3) Elder Lee -“Elder Lee” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1999. Owner of a local carry-out restaurant.
- 4) Yan – From Fuzhou province. An owner of a small restaurant in the local community
- 5) Yan’s wife (female) - works with Yan for years.
- 6) Boss Yan (Lee’s boss) – owner of three chain Chinese carryout restaurants, drives a BMW and lives in the most expensive and upscale neighbor in the city
- 7) Hong Kong Owner-owner of a local Chinese buffet
- 8) Big Brother-“Big Brother” from Shenyang, Liaoning province, gained entry in 2000. Owner of a city buffet restaurant.
- 9) Young Brother-Big Brother’s younger protégé from Shenyang, Liaoning province, coming with big brother in the same smuggling boat in 2000. Owner of another carry-out Chinese restaurant
- 10) Painter Li-a Chinese artist from Tianjing city in China. Working for many years in the street of New York as a painter to make a living. Now owns a small drawing shop in the local mall
- 11) Yong Ye – a cook in a local Chinese restaurant
- 12) Lao Cui-Manager of a local city buffet, already a US citizen

13) Boss Wong-“Boss Wong” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1996, who is now an owner of a large Chinatown grocery wholesale store providing raw material to a large amount of restaurants in mid-west.

14) “Lily Zhao”-one of the victims trafficked in for sex service from Shanxi Province, China, has already become US citizen. She is a business owner right now and constantly traveling back and forth from China to the US. She agreed to be my subject on the condition of anonymity. My conversation with her was not easy at the beginning because she was skeptical about my goal and might have felt embarrassed or shameful for her past. Under constant assurance from me that I was to keep her identity secret and no harm to her at any level, she told me her story.

15) Little Computer-a guy wearing glasses with a Chinese college degree. Working as a dish washer for many years.

16) Old Dongbei- come from Dongbei, the northeastern region in China, and owns a housing decoration operation now.

C: Representative Narratives from the Transcript of Interviews (16 subjects)

All interviews are conducted on the condition of anonymity during a period of two years. Here are representative narratives from the transcript of interview. All interviewees are asked most of the key questions or to that effect. Hereunder is a synopsis of all the interviewees' response to various key questions I had asked in the course of many interviews. Please reference to Appendix section A-an in-depth interview key questions for detailed questions.

1. Dongbei Na (Female)

“Well, in the villages there are not many males left. They are either going to the big cities for jobs, or figure out a way to come to the US. Those who are the most able can come to the US and it's viewed as a privilege by the general public. You have to either have family members in the US or you have some sum of money to initiate the process. In either case, you must establish some contacts first, i.e. get to know snakeheads, who may have 'effective lines' to facilitate the process. Remember, not everyone has such access. You have to be an insider to some groups that have established fame in that regard. You must know the informal rules and norms as to what to ask and what not, what are expected from you and what not. Those smugglers are sometime well known in the locality and they have the resource you need. However, you have to live up with their requirement and play the rule they set up. They can help you achieve what you want. Otherwise, you will be screwed.”

2. Dongbei Wang

“I go to Chicago. There are lots of jobs and it's pretty easy to get one. Two largest places I constantly go if I need help are located inside the Chinatown. It usually takes one or two days to locate a job, depending on your luck. I constantly change my jobs, you know, working without paper is very unstable. Either you don't like the heavy labor, or the bosses want to get rid of you. We change job very often. That's part of the nature to work like us. And it's not easy to keep a job for long, neither is it hard to find a new one, given the fact that there is always big help from the labor institutes.”

“You know, before I come here I had heard legendary stories of people getting smuggled in and made a success. I have the notion that I would be able to do the same. I followed the pattern and I know I can be successful if I try hard. I got contact with smugglers with established routes, I got job through the network at New York, I work for small restaurants and other businesses, I paid back my trafficking debt, I sent money to my family back in China and my income can support all my family, I've got my immigration

application approved and waiting for adjusting permanent status, I am hope to bring my wife and kids here soon. You know by accomplishing all of these, I am writing my own life legend, I have set up a model for other follower who may not doing well in the villages and want to take on such adventures like me. I think this is a way out for them.”

“I feel so bad about my Mom’s passing. (His mom passed away a month before I interviewed him; 9 years after he had come to the US and he wasn’t able to make it back) (He looked so sad at the moment) I have been here for 9 years, the second year after I came, my mom was paralyzed. My wife had to take care of my mom on the bed and raise our two children by her own. Of course I send money back to support the family. It has been tremendous hardship for my wife and my family in China. I own my wife too much. Now we bought a large condo at Fuzhou, which is something I feel good about after so long.”

3. Elder Lee,

Code Name: “Elder Lee” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1999. Owner of a local carry-out restaurant. On being asked about why he came and the life experience afterwards, responded:

“I have been working at my cousin’s restaurant for 10 years. This is my first job, which I took for 10 years. Before I came, my cousin who had immigrated here with his parents told me that he needed me here for his business. He asked me to take whatever it takes to get here. It took me a long way and 9 month before I stepped on this land. But the fortunate thing was that I knew I was going to get a job and what kind of life I would be expecting before I made my decision. It is not too risky to me. As long as I could get here, I know everything would be fine.”

“It took me altogether 9 month to get here. The connection I had organized the trip for me. I used all false passports throughout. I was taken to Hong Kong first and stayed there for a week. Then some other connection took me to Cambodia and I had to stay there for about 6 month, waiting for channels. The situation in Cambodia was very dangerous then. Armed militias were everywhere. We had to stay in a hotel protected by one group of militia. My routine outing was to pick up living cost money from a local bank every week and it was super dangerous. You know, if I was caught by locals that I was taking a large amount of money out of banks, I would be shot out of a robbery. The hotel sent a security guy with me every time and we had to keep real low profile on the street and be very cautious of not being spotted by suspicious local militia members. After six month came the chance. We were flown to France and another European country, then to South America, then to Cuba. There we were picked up by local people who sent three of us to somewhere close to Miami shore. Then we changed boats, I guess, the one eventually took us to Miami shore was run by Americans. We were very excited but also nervous about our trips, until we landed on America. There was another guy who accompanied us to New York by greyhound. We were locked up somewhere in NY Chinatown later, until my relative fulfilled the ransom to them. I mean, looking back upon my trip to America, it was exciting as well as assuring. I knew I had high chance to

get in and I would be able to survive once I arrived, even before I made my decision to come.”

4. Yan,

“I got in about 4 years ago. My way of getting here was not easy. My first attempt failed midway when I was rejected for using other people’s passport. I was sent back midway and was fined by the government and lost some money for partial trafficking. I joined a business trip one year later and I managed to get a visa for the trip. Then I flew to the US and joined my two siblings here. They have been here for over 10 years and both have their own businesses. My wife also came a year later than me. And now we are fighting our case at immigration court with the help of attorney. We have got initial approval to stay pending on the result on the process.”

“Back hometown, we had nothing to do because the situation was bad. I tried to make money by smuggling controlled goods, and didn’t work. I saw friends all leaving for America and send money home quickly. I decided to come. My cousin had come before me. The snakehead told me I didn’t have to pay the \$30k upfront, and I could pay after I got here. I worked for three years to step flat (pay off) that hole and now I own my own restaurant. I built a big house for my wife and kids home, and people think I got a windfall.”

5. Yan’s wife (female)

“Now I use Western Union, 16 dollars for every 25 hundreds (because he has legal status right now and he opens bank accounts and owns some forms of ID). It’s fast, safe, and convenient. But you know... I had to pay almost double fees for the same amounts transfer several years ago through the underground banking system in New York. Then, I didn’t have bank account, I didn’t pay taxes, I didn’t want to keep the cash either. So I sent money first to ‘them’ with money order. Once they got the cash, it was instantly available for my family in China. I know they charge a sharking fee, but I don’t have other choice. I am happy that I don’t have to go through them no more.”

6. Boss Yan (Lee’s boss)

“Oh...yeah... my ex girlfriend (the Chinese lady he is temporarily with before the interview) just went back to Chicago two month ago. We broke up. You know I have a wife in China and she has a husband there. We stayed together just because we can help each other out sometimes. Life is not easy here. She called me a couple days ago and told me she found another job at a Chinese restaurant somewhere in Wisconsin. She stayed at Chicago for a month to have a rest, and then she moved there. I guess she’s with another guy right now. You know, that’s just the way our lives are. Like a feather floating to anywhere with the wind. For sure, the labor market helps a lot.”

7. Hong Kong Owner

“I own a grocery store here in Town. You know it’s not big business, but I have stable clients. My wife and I came about 20 years ago without documents. It was really difficult at the first few years. We had nothing, but our labor, toil, and tear. I cannot afford medical treatment for my wife’s infection at one time, which eventually led to her

deaf on both ears. We have gone through too much. Now our two sons are graduating from colleges and we have our own grocery business. We are content about our lives now and we would like to hire new comers and to help them settle down and blend into our community here in town.”

“Once you make the decision, it was not hard to locate a snakehead. There are plenty of them. But you have to be really careful because many of them are shams. I was faked a couple of times. They took some initial payment (very small amount) and never show up again. Or, you will be wasting your time and money for their failed attempt if they are not mature and sophisticated enough to carry out their plans. Finally I find a group of snakeheads who have successfully run the operation for many years. And they eventually made me through.”

8. Big Brother

Code Name: “Big Brother” from Shenyang, Liaoning, gained entry in 2000. Owner of a city buffet restaurant. On being asked about the same question, responded:

“My hometown Shenyang, a lot of people came to America. After they came, everybody envied them and you would see they built a house not long. Everybody’s saying they lived a great life. I always dreamed of coming and making money. I didn’t have the money needed for snakehead then, so I had to borrow \$30k from relatives. Although I was afraid not being able to pay back, I saw other people pay back quickly. So I decided to come. I knew I could pay back as long as I work hard. Now I own a buffet restaurant.”

“I brought my younger brother with me here 12 years ago when he was only 22. We took the hard way. It took us eight months to get here. We both find restaurant jobs quickly at our relative’s businesses. Through 5 years, we worked our way to pay off the trafficking debt and become small business owners now. We like to provide job opportunities for new comers. We went through the same path and can see our past on the new workers right now.”

9. Young Brother

Code Name: “Young Brother” from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1999, who is now an owner of a local carry-out restaurant. On being asked about why he came and the life experience afterwards, responded:

“Back hometown, we had nothing to do because the situation was bad. I tried to make money by smuggling controlled goods, and didn’t work. I saw friends all leaving for America and send money home quickly. I decided to come. My cousin had come before me. The snakehead told me I didn’t have to pay the \$30k upfront, and I could pay after I got here. I worked for three years to step flat (pay off) that hole and now I own my own restaurant. I built a big house for my wife and kids home, and people think I got a windfall.”

“I don’t speak English, I don’t have special skills, and I know nobody here in the US. You see, I made it through all by myself in those years. I guarantee you these labor markets are of great help to land a job for you. Throughout these years, I constantly was

traveling between the labor markets and various jobs. Put it simple way, I would have starved to death without them in place”

10. Painter Li

“Everything was pre-arranged and kind of scripted. I was disguised as a Japanese businessman. I pretended to be on a multiple destinations business trip. I toured several European countries first, then the US. Believe me, they are very efficient, collaborative, and organized. I paid 70k dollars for the operation. Man, it’s expensive. And tell you what. If you don’t pay them after you are successfully delivered. They will hunt you down. I don’t want to mess with them.”

11. Yong Ye

“I had several jobs. I was a cook, a helper for grocery store, and a construction worker for internal decoration of houses and buildings. It was easy for me to find a job. Most people would work in a restaurant when they first got here. Once being here for a little bit longer, they began to build up connections and to know more people. They would have other chances. After all, we have ethnic community everywhere, which providing numerous opportunities for new comers to survive.”

On Going to NY for prostitution and going to stripper clubs

“I liked going to New York, Saint Louis, and Chicago, you know, there are a lot of girls from China, pretty and young. Whenever I go, I just call my contacts and they will drivme free to the Chinese brothels. Everything is arranged. You can do whatever you want for about 120 dollars. Sometimes I feel so lonely, being separate from my family for more 10 years. Ah... my wife had remarried for long.”

12. Lao Cui (Manager of a buffet in the Capital city)

“Oh, well to find a job. It’s easy. Just go to Chicago. They have markets there with all kinds of jobs. You don’t need documentations, no language skill, as long as you have labor, that’s enough. I constantly called there to recruit new workers. Tell you what, all businesses run by Chinese in the Midwest call there to request people if they need any. You should go and check it out. A lot of people there, you just pay 10 dollars a day, they will provide food, board, and transportation for you. You can stay there as long as you want, before you make your decision to come down or up to make the money. I always go back to Chicago if I am tired of what I am doing or I want to relax. They have everything there, trust me!”

“My wife has to take care of my paralyzed mom and two young kids. The only income for my whole family is my salary. I don’t waste any unnecessary money here. You know, I don’t pay for food and rent. I only need 50 dollars a month for basic expense. Within the first several years, I constantly had difficulties in sending them the money they need. Eventually, I heard from a friend that people help you in that. They will collect the money here from you and your family can claim the same amount instantly in China. I mostly send money through them. And of course, they charge a high fee.”

13. Boss Wong

Code Name: "Boss Wong" from Fuzhou, Fujian, gained entry in 1996. Owner of a large Chinatown grocery wholesale store providing raw material to a large amount of restaurants in mid-west.

"I have very good business, you know, I buy most Chinese products transported from NY or LA and wholesale distribute to the local restaurants in the region. I have many guys working for me and am making money everyday. Of course, you know, it's big investment too, I constantly have an inventory worth of half a million dollars and I have to keep circulation pretty fast, or it could go really bad."

"Well, they have everything you need, money, connections, Id, driver licenses. See this is my previous driver license I got for two thousands. I don't need right now because I got my status already. This was from a connection at Minnesota and was cut off later on... The underground banks, oh yeah! They will lend you money to pay for your trafficking debt, and emergency issues. Of course they charge a high fee. You can also send money back to China through them. I know most undocumented immigrants have to go through them Cause' they don't have other choices. They are good, at least in helping handling your money. They are like banks, real banks, I mean, lots of things they can do..."

14. Little Computer

I have been here for 7 years and I miss my family so much. Although my wife had "remarried" to another guy, I don't hate her. The separation has been too long. You know, sometimes you go to New York, man! There are plenty of beautiful chicks in the house (brothels). For 120 dollars you can get whatever you want. Those chicks are young and pretty. You know, a lot of us go there on regular bases just to have some fun. Hehe, there is something we always dream to do.

"Yeah, one of the issues I had was sending money back to China; people are too suspicious about sending money international right now, especially after 911. I can't send through the normal channel because I didn't have a bank account. You know Sister Ping, right? She has some banking business before and you just call 'her branch' at New York and they'll arrange everything for you. The only drawback was that it took long time sometimes for your family to get the money cause' the branch has to get from you first"

15. Old Dongbei (Dongbei is the northeastern region in China. The subject comes from there)

"Right after I got here, I was locked up somewhere at Chicago as a hostage for payment collection. My relatives here were able to cover portion of the fee, and they provide assurance for me to borrow some money from the underground banking business to cover the rest of fee. Then I came to join my cousin's business at another Midwest city. I stayed there for a little bit, and then I decided to go somewhere else because the business was not doing so well. I went to Chicago again and easily blended into many job seekers in Chinatown. I found another restaurant job right away there. Many people found their job pretty easily. I worked at another city for some years and my wife came

afterwards. We now have our own restaurant. We've built up a mansion at hometown village for my parents and two children to live. Our story gets circulated and represents some sort of success model to many neighbors. We are applying for our children to come and hopefully they can come soon."

I just went to a local brothel full of Vietnam chicks; oh they are so pretty and only cost 100 dollars. Sometimes you can even take the girl out to a motel and it is fun.

"Of course you have to have contacts to get here. It's kind of privilege to most of us to be able to catch the ride. In our village, most people had come here. Only those elderly women and children are left behind. This is the way we make our lives. You have to either have a relative in the US, or have connection with snakehead. They have their contacts and ability to bring us here, you know, they charge a high fee for the service. It is fair."

16. Lily Zhao-one of the victims trafficked in for sex service from Shanxi Province, has already become US citizen. She is a business owner right now and constantly traveling back and forth from China to the US. She agreed to be my subject on the condition of anonymity:

"I came to the US in the year 1997. I was a waitress at my uncle's restaurant in Beijing then. One day one of my acquaintances asked whether I wanted to come to the US. You know, everybody was so crazy about going to America. The acquaintance told me I had to marry a medium-aged American guy to come here, plus I have to pay him some money. I decided to come since I had dreamed of coming to America. So I paid some money and married a truck driver... Thanks God! I finally got away from him and still able to stay and get my citizenship. I heard a lot of girls are trafficked into America and get abused in so many ways. They had to tolerate for being afraid of deportation. I finally made it, of course, I paid my price too"

17. Informal interviews with job seekers in Chicago Labor Places

"I come to Chicago, you know for jobs. Here are lots of jobs and it's pretty easy to get one. Chicago is like my hometown in the US. 'Labor market' is the place. I usually stay here for a couple months before I decide to work elsewhere. It's kind of rest. But if you want to find a job quickly, of course you can. It usually takes one or two days to locate a job, depending on your luck. The jobs are all for long term when they are offered. But I constantly change my jobs, you know, working without paper is very unstable. Either you don't like the heavy labor, or the bosses want to get rid of you. I change job very often. Every time I came back to Chicago. They have houses and apartments close by the market. You just pay \$10 dollars to stay. It's cheap and convenient."

"I stay with many people a couple blocks away from here. They are residential places provided by labor places organizers. This is the way they make their money. See, I don't speak English, I don't have special skills, and I know nobody here in the US. You

see, I made it through all by myself in those years. I guarantee you these labor markets are of great help to land a job, as well as providing shelter temporarily for you. Throughout these years, I constantly was traveling between the labor markets and various jobs. Put it simple way, I would have starved to death without them in place”

“Oh, it’s great here at Chicago. I live not far from here the labor market. All of us live there. There are apartments operated by the organizer here. I pay \$10 every day and can live as long as I want. But you know nobody wants to stay here long because we have to work somewhere to make money. That’s why we are here. You can stay there as long as you want, before you make your decision to come down or up to make the money. I always go back to Chicago if I am tired of what I am doing or I want to relax. They have everything here.”

VITA

Shudong Zhang was born in Taiyuan, the capital city of Shanxi Province in China. He graduated from Fudan University law school with a LL.B. law degree in 2000 and then worked as an attorney at Shanghai China for two years. In 2002, Shudong entered the law school at University of Missouri-Columbia to pursue a LL.M. degree in dispute resolution and graduated with a master of law degree. He then took his M.A. in sociology and his Ph.D. in sociology at University of Missouri-Columbia in 2009. Now, Shudong works as an assistant professor in the Criminal Justice Program at Texas A & M International University in Texas, USA.