

The Growth and Sustainability of Chinese American Nonprofit Organizations in U.S. Metropolitan Areas

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Abstract

The proposed paper will examine the life cycle changes of Chinese American nonprofit organizations in the 10 largest US metropolitan areas during the first decade of the 21st century. Life cycle changes here include the pattern of formation, growth in numbers and capacity, and sustainability of these organizations. As a result of the combined effects of more accommodating policies and increased immigration, Chinese American nonprofit organizations, like other nonprofits, grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s to meet the diverse cultural, religious, economic, civic, and related needs of the Chinese American population. During the first decade of the 21st century, it is not known if this rapid growth continued, or if the large number of organizations formed in the 1980s and 1990s have flourished or perished, especially in light of the much less favorable economic conditions in this decade. Chinese American settlements have become more suburbanized. It is not known if Chinese American organizations have similarly become more dispersed or still concentrated in traditional central city Chinatowns. The proposed paper will help shed some light on these issues.

Organizations from businesses to nonprofits have their life cycles of rise and fall. Qualitative case studies and quantitative analysis have examined the sustainability and closure of nonprofit organizations in general. The proposed paper will investigate if the factors identified in the current literature, especially organization age, size, functional type, and formalization apply similarly to Chinese American organizations' sustainability as well.

Data will come from Form 990, which all tax-exempt nonprofit organizations with annual revenue in excess of \$25,000 are required to file with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, and related information available at www.guidestar.org as well as US Census. While not all nonprofits are included in the Form 990 and guidestar.org database, especially smaller organizations or religious organizations, this database still remains the single largest reliable source of US nonprofit data available. Newly formed Chinese American organizations in the top 10 metropolitan areas are identified primarily by their name bearing the Chinese American identity in different configurations. Baseline information of organizations formed prior to 2001 has been collected for previous studies. Survival status is determined by whether an organization's 2007 or earlier Form 990 is available as of 2010, with the assumption that not having completed Form 990 available for three consecutive years indicates inactivity – though not necessarily organization closure.

The findings from the proposed paper will provide an overview of the evolving development of a large number of Chinese American nonprofit organizations serving the most populated areas in the United States.