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Chinese Immigrants' Perceptions of Community Justice in the USA: An Exploratory Study[1]

Abstract: An increasing body of research has highlighted the significance of collaboration between criminal justice practitioners and residents to enhance the quality of life in communities. As an innovative practice model, this collaborative concept maximizes the effectiveness of three core factors of community justice (community policing, community courts, and community corrections) by maintaining community order and enhancing neighbourhood quality of life. However, as many cities and municipalities have invested time and resources into developing positive relationships with immigrants, little research has been focused on the nexus between immigrant communities within the community justice movement model. Using data collected from Chinese immigrants in the US, the current study is the first pilot investigation on perceptions of the new pattern of Chinese immigrants toward their communities and their collaboration with the criminal justice system. This study suggests positive attitudes of immigrants toward community justice, but criminal justice agencies must tailor their interaction to the unique characteristics of each immigrant community. What constitutes good community justice practices in one community may not be effective in another.

Keywords: Chinese immigrants, community relations, police

Introduction

Community justice, a 'meditation' between a community's ecosystem to counter crime and related issues, has rapidly developed in the past three decades in the

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1   Revised version of a poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, November 2021.

US. Both practitioners and scholars have explored community issues by coordinating the efforts of the community, community policing, community courts, and community corrections.[2] Although definitions vary, the core of the community justice model includes three elements: (a) community policing, (b) community courts, and (c) community corrections. A growing body of research has been conducted to explore and examine the effectiveness of this model of community crime prevention and crime control. Some researchers have suggested that community justice as innovative criminal processes or sanctions can combine many forms of community crime prevention efforts, such as (a) residential treatment programmes, (b) Neighbourhood Watch, (c) Weed and Seed,[3] (d) intensive probation, (e) fines, and (f) community service.[4] The strengths of community justice have been tested in reducing crime and fear directly and in increasing social interaction and control indirectly, relying on collective participation in crime prevention and neighbourhood revitalization efforts.[5] Similarly, community mediation programmes in the United States that have advanced the concepts of community justice have been instituted.[6]

Conversely, additional and more difficult problems arise in the process of implementation. Although community justice might create positive effects through shared community participation, empowerment, and development,[7] community justice may not be a realistic intervention because developing this relationship is a challenge. First, no consensus exists among the public on the role of the community, which causes low participation in community affairs.[8] Second, obvious and dramatic geographical distribution differences in establishing public joint crime prevention programmes persist. Scholars have reported that the lower the crime rate, the higher the enthusiasm of residents to participate in the fight against crime. In communities

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2   G.P. Alpert, A. Piquero, Community Policing: Contemporary Readings (2nd ed.), Long Grove 1998; R. Trojanowicz, V. Kappeler, L. Gaines, B. Bucqueroux, R. Sluder, Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective (2nd ed.), Cincinnati 1998.

3   Weed and Seed is a crime prevention program by the US Department of Justice that is designed to "weed out" criminals and "seed" neighbourhood revitalization services in their place.

4   E. Barajas, Moving toward Community Justice, (in:) Community Justice: Striving for Safe, Secure, and Just Communities, Washington, DC 1997; T. Clear, D. Karp, The Community Justice Ideal: Preventing Crime and Achieving Justice, Boulder, CO 1999; P.H. Hahn, Emerging Criminal Justice: Three Pillars for a Proactive Justice System, Thousand Oaks, CA 1998.

5   L. Kurki, Restorative and Community Justice in the United States, 'Crime and Justice' 2000, vol. 27, pp. 235–303.

6   C. B. Harrington, S. E. Merry, Ideological Production: The Making of Community Mediation, (in:) C. Menkel-Meadow (ed.), Mediation Theory, Policy, and Practice, London 2018, pp. 709–735.

7   L. Kurki, Restorative…, *op. cit.*

8   M. E. Buerger, A Tale of Two Targets: Limitations of Community Anticrime Actions, 'Crime & Delinquency' 1994, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 411–436; D. Masiloane, C. Marais, Community Involvement in the Criminal Justice System, 'South African Journal of Criminal Justice' 2009, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 391–402.

with high crime rates, residents' enthusiasm to participate tends to be low.[9] Hence researchers have indicated that community justice is a concept for business owners and wealthy residents.[10] Moreover, some scholars have stated that community justice efforts weaken community bonds and social capacity in inner-city neighbourhoods because of aggressive law enforcement.[11] Most community policing and prosecution efforts use community members as 'eyes and ears', symbolic supporters, or providers of funds.[12] Today, the problems of public participation and the unity of the police and communities are unresolved.

Furthermore, the issue of community *justice* versus community *policing* is prevalent. The relative success of community justice principles derives primarily from the success of community policing, a heritage that is recognized by justice professionals such as former Attorney General Janet Reno.[13] As McCold says, 'the goal of community justice is to strengthen neighborhoods and their moral order to prevent crime, seeking not just to handle cases, but also to create a collective experience of justice'.[14]

The current project aims to investigate the Chinese immigrant community and community justice from a community policing perspective. Although controversy in academic circles about the role of community justice in community safety exists, researchers from both sides pay little attention to immigrant minorities. Throughout the history of American criminal justice and criminology scholarship, immigrant groups, populations, and communities have been popular research subjects of crime control instead of crime prevention. As early as the 1930s, American researchers developed and used criminology theories to examine the causes of immigrant neighbourhoods in the United States suffering from high crime rates. Criminological theories, such as social control theory, social disorganization theory, and cultural conflict theory, collectively point to disorder, cultural conflict, and low social control

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9   A. Crawford, Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Politics, Policies, and Practices, London 1998; W. Skogan, Policing Immigrant Communities in the United States, 'Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance' 2009, vol. 13, pp. 189–203.

10   B. Boland, How Portland Does It. Final report submitted to US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC 1996; B. Boland, Community Prosecution: Portland's Experience, (in:) D.R. Karp (ed.), Community Justice: An Emerging Field, Lanham, MD 1998, pp. 253–278. D. Parent, B. Snyder, Police-Corrections Partnerships, US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC 1999; A. Lanni, The Future of Community Justice, 'Harvard Civil Rights–Civil Liberties Law Review' 2005, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 359–406.

11   S. Guarino-Ghezzi, A. Klein, Protecting Community: The Public Safety Role in a Restorative Juvenile Justice, (in:) G. Bazemore, L. Walgrave (eds.), Restorative Juvenile Justice: Repairing the Harm of Youth Crime, Washington, DC 1999, pp. 196–211.

12   M. E. Buerger, A Tale…, *op. cit.*; L. Kurki, Restorative…, *op. cit.*

13   E. Beck, Transforming Communities: Restorative Justice as a Community Building Strategy, 'Journal of Community Practice' 2012, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 380–401.

14   P. McCold, Paradigm Muddle: The Threat to Restorative Justice Posed by Its Merger with Community Justice, 'Contemporary Justice Review' 2004, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 16.

as explanations for immigrant communities being susceptible to criminal behaviour. Consequently, immigrant communities have been ignored by criminologists in explaining crime prevention and quality-of-life enhancement efforts. According to Wu and associates, 'scholars have long scrutinized relations between the police and minority and immigrant groups in the US, often documenting tensions, discrimination, and different treatment at the hands of local police'.[15]

In current American society, some immigrant communities enjoy low crime rates.[16] Some recently settled immigrants live in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of immigrants. Their neighbourhoods have provided emotional, social, and cultural support and social capital, which can help them adapt to the new environment. For example, Asian American communities have been recognized as the 'model minority' for having seemingly achieved socioeconomic success and being free of problems because they are known as hardworking, successful, and law-abiding ethnic minorities.[17] Research, though limited, has stated that immigrants' previous contact with the police, higher educational attainment, lower fear of crime, and little to no experience of victimization highly increase their engagement in working with criminal justice agencies.[18] Immigrants who display these features are more likely to think of the police and criminal justice practices as effective. Moreover, issues such as immigrants' assimilation into American society, their language proficiency, and their length of stay in the US have been tested as key factors that result in a better understanding of the operations and functions of the US criminal justice system, confidence when interacting with the police, responsiveness to neighbourhood problems, and a positive sense of collective efficacy.[19] Previous researchers have reflected that unlike the stereotypes of immigrants being troublemakers or reluctant to cooperate with the criminal justice system, law-abiding immigrants' perceptions of working with the criminal justice system may also vary. So how does the community justice model work in immigrant communities? What are the perceptions of immigrants toward community justice as a whole? Would a community justice partnership be more or less challenging to set up in an immigrant community in the US? What would be

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15   Y. Wu, I. Sun, B. Smith, Race, Immigration, and Policing: Chinese Immigrants' Satisfaction with Police, 'Justice Quarterly' 2011, vol. 28, no. 5, p. 746.

16   C. Kubrin, H. Ishizawa, Why Some Immigrant Neighborhoods Are Safer Than Others: Divergent Findings from Los Angeles and Chicago, 'The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science' 2012, vol. 641, no. 1, pp. 148–173; W. McCann, F. Boateng, An Examination of American Perceptions of the Immigrant–Crime Relationship, 'American Journal of Criminal Justice' 2020, vol. 45, no. 6, pp. 973–1002.

17   K. Shih, T. Chang, S. Chen, Impacts of the Model Minority Myth on Asian American Individuals and Families: Social Justice and Critical Race Feminist Perspectives, 'Journal of Family Theory & Review' 2019, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 412–428.

18   D. Chu, J. Song, J. Dombrink, Chinese Immigrants' Perceptions of the Police in New York City, 'International Criminal Justice Review' 2005, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 101–114.

19   Y. Wu, I. Sun, B. Smith, Race, Immigration…, op. cit.

the main barrier? Until recently, research exploring immigrants' perceptions of community justice has been insufficient, especially compared to their roles in US social life. Looking at immigrants and their perceptions of community justice may help us further explore the effectiveness of that approach.

As the US is a country of diverse immigrants, their engagement with and perceptions of community justice should be a focus of concern. Proponents of community justice argue that criminal justice agencies must tailor their interaction to the unique characteristics of 'communities' and community groups. What constitutes good police practices with one 'community' or community group may not be relevant with another 'community' or community group.[20] The purpose of this article is to examine the perceptions of New Chinese Immigrants (*xinyimin* in Chinese) in the US. *Xinyimin* refers to educated, upper-socioeconomic Chinese individuals who emigrated from mainland China after the official launching of new political reform mandates in 1978. Hooper and Batalova have stated that 'unlike the 19th-century immigrants, post-1965 Chinese immigrants are predominantly skilled: China is now the principal source of foreign students in US higher education, and the second-largest recipient of employer-sponsored temporary work visas, after India'.[21]

Our research goal is to partially fill the empirical void in research on community justice, focusing on Asian ethnic communities and especially Chinese communities. In this study, we focus on Chinese people and communities because this work is part of a larger research project that examines police officers' perceptions of Chinese migrants in China and the United States, as well as the perceptions of the police by migrants in the two countries. In a future project, we hope to expand our inquiries to other Asian migrant groups.

1. Chinese immigrants and the relevance of 'Chinatowns'

The initial history of Chinatowns cannot be separated from the gold rush in the 19th century in the US. The construction of the railway and the gold rush brought many Chinese workers. However, with the fading of the gold rush and competition for jobs and resources, excluded Chinese workers had to move to the East Coast to survive. Most of them gathered in New York City (NYC), which became the location of the first Chinatown. The original purpose of the Chinese settlement in NYC was to prevent the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act; with the abolition of this act, Chinatown became an 'enclave [that] provided a site for mobilization of social

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20 J. Gerber, D. Jia, Community Policing and Community Justice: Studying a Marginalized Population Segment in the People's Republic of China, (in:) E. W. Plywaczewski, E. M. Guzik-Makaruk (eds.), Current Problems of Penal Law and Criminology (8th ed.), Bialystok 2019, pp. 451–461.

21 K. Hooper, J. Batalova, Chinese Immigrants in the United States, 'Migration Policy Institute' 2015, vol. 28, pp. 1–13.

capital for immigrants in terms of connecting existing social networks, enabling the exchange of information and [financial] resources, and supporting the processes of legalization.[22] After 100 years of development, there are currently nine Chinese areas in NYC. Among them, the three largest are Manhattan Chinatown, Flushing Chinatown, and Sunset Park Chinatown; Manhattan Chinatown has the largest population of Chinese immigrants, at about 60,000. In addition to Chinese immigrants, there are also more and more other Asian immigrants, such as Vietnamese and Thai people, owning and operating businesses. Chinatowns in NYC are more than residential concentrations of Chinese immigrants; these enclaves include business districts for prosperous business communities and world tourists.

Compared with NYC, the history of Houston Chinatown New Town is much shorter; it was built in 1983, and has a total area of 6.1 km² (2.37 sq mi) and a total population of 29,993. It is located 12 miles from downtown Houston, and includes immigrants from China, Vietnam, and other Asian countries. Unlike Chinatown in New York, which was originally the residence of Chinese immigrants, it has been more like a business district since its completion, and includes a dozen banks, a mall, supermarkets, shopping centres, restaurants, and bakeries. Compared with the older, uniformly Chinese, pedestrian-oriented Chinatowns in NYC, Chinatown's immigrant businesses in Houston are not clustered together by an ethnic group but are more diversified as an 'Asia Town' and includes two police departments.[23]

Denver's Chinatown began in the 1870s, with the gold rush in the western United States. The number of Chinese immigrants in Denver increased from four to 238 in just a few years after Chinese workers first landed on the West Coast. They were concentrated in the Denver LoDo (Lower Downtown) area, the central area of the city, and gradually formed Chinatown. However, with an outbreak of anti-Chinese sentiments in Denver, many immigrants were killed in the notorious 1880 tragedy, the 'Bloody Riot'. Although this incident caused the United States to pay attention to discrimination and violence against Chinese immigrants, Chinatown ceased to exist in Denver. In the last few decades a large number of Chinese immigrants have relocated to the city; however, most of them have been integrated into the local communities instead of forming a concentrated Chinatown.[24]

In the next section, we examine the relationship between Chinese culture, crime, and crime prevention. We follow this discussion with the methodology employed in this exploratory study, followed by a discussion of findings and implications.

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22   A. Yong, Informality, Illegality, and Improvisation: Theological Reflections on Money, Migration, and Ministry in Chinatown, NYC, and Beyond, 'Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion' 2012, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 1–29.

23   Chinatown, Houston, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinatown,_Houston (31.01.2023).

24   N. Allyn, The Rise and Fall of Denver's Chinatown, 'History Colarado', https://www.historycolorado.org/story/colorado-voices/2019/04/11/rise-and-fall-denvers-chinatown (30.01.2023).

2. Chinese culture, crime, and crime prevention

Theories created and used to explain the causal crime mechanism in immigrant communities include those that explore cultural elements. Traditionally, scholars have focused on the negative impact of immigrants' original culture when they immigrated to a new country, and have believed that cultural conflicts might occur among immigrant communities, explaining their higher crime rates.[25] Sutherland maintained that 'a person whose associations were dominated by relationships with those in a less law-abiding segment of society would tend to learn criminal techniques and develop criminal orientations'. Sellin argued that the conflict relevant for criminological research is the dash between conduct norms brought about as by products of a cultural growth process and the migration of conduct norms from one culture complex or area to another. However produced, they are sometimes studied as mental conflicts and sometimes as the clash of cultural codes.[26] According to this explanation, cultural conflict includes the criminal tendencies of the immigrants' original culture and the antisocial behaviour caused by cultural differences. Therefore, when living in a new country with a different cultural orientation, immigrants may suffer from culture shock, which may lead to them being more involved in crime than the native population. Cultural conflict theory leads to the conclusion that because of the challenge of cultural conflict and the exclusions associated with living in a new country, immigrant neighbourhoods develop more criminological causal factors than prevention factors.

However, at the beginning of the new millennium, an increasing number of researchers concluded that high levels of crime do not characterize immigrant communities. Martinez and Lee showed that immigrant communities 'may simply be differentially organized and function in a manner that reduces the incidence of crime'.[27] Empirical evidence on immigrants and crime indicated that immigrant

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25 K. Aoki, 'Foreign-ness' and Asian American Identities: Yellowface, World War II Propaganda, and Bifurcated Racial Stereotypes, 'Asian Pacific American Law Journal' 1996, vol. 4, pp. 18–34; H. J. Albrecht, Ethnic Minorities, Culture Conflicts and Crime, 'Crime, Law and Social Change' 1995, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 19–36; K. Chin, T. Lai, M. Rouse, Social Adjustment and Alcoholism Among Chinese Immigrants in New York City, 'Substance Use and Misuse' 1991, vol. 25, no. 5, pp. 709–730; S. H. Decker, F. Van Gemert, D. C. Pyrooz, Gangs, Migration, and Crime: The Changing Landscape in Europe and the USA, 'Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration international' 2009, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 393–408; S. Shoham, The Application of the Culture-Conflict Hypothesis to the Criminality of Immigrants in Israel, 'Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science' 1962, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 207–214.

26 T. Sellin, Culture Conflict and Crime, 'American Journal of Sociology' 1938, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 97–103.

27 R. Martinez, M. Lee, On Immigration and Crime, 'Criminal Justice' 2000, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 485–524.

neighbourhoods have characteristics that reduce the level of crime, but these characteristics are often overlooked. Utilizing empirical analysis, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade suggested that a theory focusing on the opportunity structure of immigrants, immigrant subcultures, and social disorganization is 'at least partially inaccurate'.[28] Sampson argued that 'if immigration leads to the penetration into America of diverse and formerly external cultures, then this diffusion may contribute to less crime if these cultures don't carry the same meanings with respect to violence and crime'.[29] Wortley and Thomas have both concurred, reporting that culture as a sociological concept may have a 'parallel' impact on immigrant communities.[30] Culture may not only induce crime in immigrant communities but also prevent and reduce crime. Wortley and Thomas have called for more research in the future to explore the positive role of culture in crime prevention and community management. The trend explored since the start of the 21st century adds conflict to traditional culture-conflict theory. It is reasonable to assume that the culture of crime prevention or the legal norms immigrants bring to new countries should be effective in preventing crime in immigrant neighbourhoods.

To address this assumption, we examine in this study Chinese immigrants and their cultural beliefs and practices. In a review of previous literature, we postulate that three Chinese values may shed light on why Chinese immigrant neighbourhoods have lower crime rates than other districts. These values are important because they are shared with individuals who are embedded in networks of social relationships with family, friends, and neighbours.

Chinese conceptions of law and criminal justice originate from a culture that has existed for over 5,000 years and is based on the philosopher Confucius. Three concepts in Chinese culture are crucial in understanding how it limits crime: (a) *ren* (benevolence), (b) *mianzi* (face), and (c) *renqing* (human sympathy). *Ren* is the most significant feature of Chinese culture that has been identified; it emphasizes collectivism, a harmonious society, and the appropriate arrangement of interpersonal relationships. It originates in the dominant Chinese religious and philosophical traditions – Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.[31] As the main element of Chinese collectivist culture, *ren* is achieved through controlling feelings, appearing humble,

28   S. Ramakrishnan, T. Espenshade, Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States, 'International Migration Review' 2001, vol. 35, no. 3, p. 872.
29   R. Sampson, Rethinking Crime and Immigration, 'Contexts' 2008, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 33.
30   S. Wortley, Introduction. The Immigration–Crime Connection: Competing Theoretical Perspectives, 'Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration international' 2009, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 349–358; P. Thomas, Theoretical Articulation on Immigration and Crime, 'Homicide Studies' 2011, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 382–403.
31   R. Westwood, Harmony and Patriarchy: The Cultural Basis for Paternalistic Headship among the Overseas Chinese, 'Organization Studies' 1997, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 445–480.

avoiding conflict, and hiding a competitive spirit.[32] Berthel states that the concept of *ren* coincides with community engagement and community diversity, which are respected in western social values.[33] Advocating benevolence and community engagement has been the cultural basis for China to prevent crime and maintain community stability for thousands of years.[34] According to Rozi, *ren* is also the basis of self-cultivation that contributes to diversity and creates a positive relationship with family and society.[35] According to an old Chinese saying, 'Distant relatives are not as good as close neighbours', which means that community residents with *ren* have a stronger sense of responsibility, are active participants in public affairs, are tolerant of each other, and live in harmony. In Chinese culture a saying of the utmost importance is: In "neighbourhoods, benevolence is the most beautiful. How can the person be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence?'[36]

Mianzi (face) is another important cultural value for Chinese people.[37] Hu introduces the concept as follows: 'face stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in this country: a reputation that is achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation'.[38] In terms of law and social justice, *mianzi* accounts for the respect of the group for an individual who has good moral standards, who is law-abiding, and who engages in public affairs, indicating the confidence and trust of society in the integrity of the person's moral character.[39] Ho believes that *mianzi* relates to social relationship factors, maintaining that it 'ties together a number of separate sociological concepts, such as status, authority, prestige, and standards of behavior'.[40] In China, owing to the police's role and authority and the public's trust in the police, cooperat-

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32   C. Fang, Z.Wang, H. Liu, Beautiful China Initiative: Human–Nature Harmony Theory, Evaluation Index System and Application, 'Journal of Geographical Sciences' 2020, vol. 30, no. 5, pp. 691–704.

33   K. Berthel, Creating Harmony from Diversity: What Confucianism Reveals about the True Value of Liberal Education for the 21st Century, 'ASIA Network Exchange: A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts' 2017, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 6–26.

34   D. Lau, The Analects, London 1979.

35   F. Rozi, Confucian Concept of Self-Cultivation and Social Harmony, 'International Journal of Language and Linguistics' 2020, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 129–136.

36   Berthel, Creating Harmony…, *op. cit.*

37   A. Smith, Chinese Characteristics, Ada, MI 1894; Y. Luo, Analysis of Culture and Buyer Behavior in Chinese Market, 'Asian Culture and History' 2009, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 25–30.

38   H.C. Hu, The Chinese Concepts of 'Face', 'American Anthropologist' 1944, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 45–64.

39   P.J. Buckley, J. Clegg, H. Tan, Cultural Awareness in Knowledge Transfer to China – The Role of *Guanxi* and *Mianzi*, 'Foreign Direct Investment, China and the World Economy' 2010, pp. 165–191; H.C. Hu, Chinese Concepts…, *op. cit.*; W. Jia, Facework as a Chinese Conflict-Preventive Mechanism: A Cultural/Discourse Analysis, 'Intercultural Communication Studies' 1998, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 43–62.

40   D. Ho, On the Concept of Face, 'American Journal of Sociology' 1976, vol. 81, no. 4, pp. 867–884.

ing with the police or having a family member or friend who is a police officer is seen as maintaining *mianzi*.

Studying data from 34,039 episodes of live Chinese radio broadcasts and TV programmes from 2008 to 2013, Zhou and Zhang suggested that individuals should 'choose not to argue with one's neighbour' (integrity) and to 'conceal one's negative or abnormal conduct' (harmony), two sensitive factors involved in *mianzi* representations.[41] In China, good neighbourliness, friendship, mutual understanding, and assistance between neighbours have always been regarded as fine traditions of Chinese values. Living in a harmonious neighbourhood and being involved in the community are manifestations of personal culture and are considered as showing decent behaviour. If a person enthusiastically participates in neighbourhood affairs and is recognized by the neighbours, they are demonstrating *mianzi-* or face-saving behaviours. On the contrary, if a person is indifferent to the community, the neighbourhood is tense, and if they cannot get respect and support from the neighbourhood, they will be considered as 'losing *mianzi*'.

Moreover, a loss of *mianzi* results if any of the following issues occur: a person (a) breaks the law, (b) is exposed in a crime, (c) displays meanness or poor judgement, (d) tells lies for their own profit, (e) displays unfaithfulness while in office, (f) breaks a promise, or (g) cheats a customer. Any of these conditions results in a loss of *mianzi* and makes it impossible for the person to function properly within the community.[42]

In China, where individuals' prestige is admired, losing *mianzi* sometimes has the same impact on the individual as a legal punishment. Moreover, a person does not simply 'lose his own face', but losing face also 'damages' the reputation of the family.[43] In this sense, the culture of maintaining face among community acquaintances is a factor in restricting the motivation for crime and deviant behaviour in Chinese communities and in enhancing community engagement and cooperation with law enforcement.

Lastly, *renqing* (social sympathy/connections) is a cultural element whose counterpart can be explored in the US. In America, criminologists have considered the effects of social connections on crime. According to social control theory, people commit less crime and delinquency if they have strong social bonds with family, school, and social networks.[44] Collective efficacy theory predicts that neighbourhoods have lower crime rates if they have generated high levels of social capital or

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41   L. Zhou, S. Zhang, How Face as a System of Value-Constructs Operates Through the Interplay of *Mianzi* and *Lian* in Chinese: A Corpus-Based Study, 'Language Sciences' 2017, vol. 64, pp. 152–166.

42   L. Lin, Cultural and Organizational Antecedents of *Guanxi*: The Chinese Cases, 'Journal of Business Ethics' 2011, vol. 99, no. 3, pp. 441–451.

43   L. Zhou, S. Zhang, How Face…, *op cit.*

44   T. Hirschi, Causes of Delinquency, Oakland, CA 1969.

social cohesion.[45] Like these findings in American criminological theories, Chinese culture not only addresses attachments to the family, school, and society, but also the collectivism in social networks and neighbourhoods. These cultural norms also focus on individuals' social bonds to family, school, and neighbourhood, which contribute to the creation of social capital. In Chinese society, when an individual either enjoys happy occasions or faces difficulties, all acquaintances are supposed to offer a gift or render some assistance. Ordinarily, an individual should keep in contact with acquaintances in their social network, exchanging gifts, greetings, or visits with them. When a member of a social network experiences difficulties, someone should sympathize, offer help, and 'do a *renqing*' for that person. Fang et al. have argued that 'maintaining relationships is an integral part of Chinese communication and the primary functions of (Chinese) communication are to maintain existing relationships among individuals, reinforce the status difference, and to preserve harmony within the group'.[46] Family bonds, social bonds, and school/education bonds are the three most important social relationships that are emphasized in Chinese traditional culture and maintained through doing *renqing*.[47]

The extent to which Chinese culture still influences the behaviour of Chinese immigrants in the United States is an empirical question. Although Westwood has suggested that harmony, along with other Chinese cultural norms including human-heartedness, mutual dependence, and *mianzi* is prevalent among overseas Chinese communities, little literature is available about whether these cultural concepts still exist among the immigrants.[48] To fill this void and further examine the impact on immigrants' neighbourhood crime rates, researchers should measure the Chinese culture that immigrants display and then explore their association with neighbourhood engagement and one of the community justice components – the police and policing programmes in crime prevention.

3. Methods

To explore immigrants' perception of community justice, develop a methodology, and provide a tentative answer to the research questions, we implemented an exploratory study in three US cities: New York, Houston, and Denver. These cities were selected because they have a disproportionate number of Chinese immigrants that are economically successful. Data from 11 interviewees were collected through struc-

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45 R. Sampson, Raudenbush, S., Earls, F. Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy, 'Science' 1997, vol. 277, issue 5328, pp. 918–924.

46 T. Fang, & G.O. Faure, Chinese communication characteristics: A Yin Yang perspective, 'International Journal of Intercultural Relations' 2011, vol. 35, no. 3, 2011, p. 322.

47 C. Fang, Z. Wang, H. Liu, Beautiful China Initiative…, *op cit.*

48 R. Westwood, Harmony and Patriarchy…, *op cit.*

tured interviews, either online or in person. As part of a larger project, we developed a list of discussion topics that guided our interview procedures.[49] We included four areas of questions:

1) Perceptions of the Chinese immigrants of themselves

2) Perceptions of Chinese immigrants of the police

3) Police programmes for and about Chinese immigrants

4) Other issues not previously covered

Examples of questions included, among many others, (1) what is the Chinese immigrant community in the United States? (2) Do you believe that you are treated fairly by the police? (3) Are there any police programmes directed toward Chinese immigrants that you are aware of? (4) Are there any issues that we did not address that are important in understanding the relationship between the police and Chinese immigrants? To contribute to future studies in community justice, we targeted the immigrants' perception of community justice. However, we were more interested in exploring the immigrants' attitudes towards the essential elements that highly impact the community justice model in the neighbourhood, such as their perceptions of an immigrant community, neighbourhood interaction, community policing, and victimization. We presume that the culture of immigrants taken to the new country will positively affect neighbourhood crime prevention. For instance, cultural conflict theory aims to explore the cause of crime based on cultural conflicts. In this case, we want to explore the possibility that the immigrants' culture may be an asset in explaining low crime rates. These two kinds of arguments are unified by emphasizing the influence of the original culture on immigrants' criminal behaviour.

The sample consists of 11 Chinese immigrants who are economically successful. Interviews were conducted in September and October 2021; six interviews were conducted face to face and five interviews were conducted remotely. The duration of each interview was 45 to 60 minutes. A few of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, with one of the researchers serving as a translator, but most of the interviews were conducted in English. One interview yielded little useful information and was eliminated, limiting our final sample to ten participants. We are aware that ten interviews cannot provide a representative sample of an entire generation of immigrants; however, we made a concerted effort to have some diversity in our sample (age, education, and economic well-being). We know this study can only provide tentative conclusions and answers; for more definite results, future research should be conducted with a larger sample.

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49   J. Gerber, D. Jia, Perceptions of Police Officers on the Floating Population: A Pilot Study of Community Justice Initiatives in China, (in:) J. Eterno, B. Stickle, D. Peterson, D. Das (eds.), Police Behavior, Hiring, and Crime Fighting, New York 2022, pp. 56–65.

The sample was a non-probability sample that was purposive. We selected participants that were (1) Chinese immigrants, (2) economically successful (seven of them have earned master's or terminal degrees in the US), and (3) could be interviewed either in person or remotely. Findings can therefore not be generalized to all Chinese immigrants in the US, but we believe they are typical of the segment of immigrants that we were interested in – i.e. economically successful Chinese immigrants with most of them having earned advanced degrees in the US, reflecting the demographical changes of the Chinese immigrant population in the new century. The research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university of one of the authors.

Using principles of grounded theory, we analysed our data in an inductive manner.[50] We began with themes suggested by the four areas of questions included in the questionnaire (open coding): (a) perceptions of the Chinese immigrants of themselves, (b) perceptions of Chinese immigrants of the police, (c) police programmes for and about Chinese immigrants, and (d) other issues not previously covered. In a second round of coding (axial coding), we developed themes that were suggested by the first-round themes. We will discuss our findings using this second set of themes or axial codes.

4. Findings

Our analysis of the data generated five axial codes: (1) Chinatown as a symbol for Chinese immigrants, (2) the existence of a Chinatown as a facilitator between the police and the Chinese Immigrant Community (CIC), (3) Chinese immigrants and their routine interactions with the police, (4) previous interaction with the police affecting immigrants' attitudes, and (5) Covid-19 and hate crime as challenges for Chinese immigrants.

5. Chinatown as a symbol for Chinese immigrants

Traditionally, the areas in American cities known as Chinatowns served as ideal settlements for Chinese immigrants in the US. However, this tradition has been reported to change recently as more Chinese immigrants choose to leave a Chinatown to work and live outside of it.[51] According to our interviews, heterogeneity exists

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50   B. Glaser, A. Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, Aldine 1967.

51   Y. Wu, J. Wen, Fear of Crime among Chinese Immigrants in Metro-Detroit, 'Crime, Law and Social Change' 2014, vol. 61, no. 5, pp. 495–515; J. Liu, The Roots of Restorative Justice: Universal Process or from the West to the East, 'Acta Crimologiae et Medicinae Legalis Japonica' 2015, vol. 81, no. 2, pp. 1–14; H.-S. Chen, Chinatown No More: Taiwan Immigrants in Contemporary New

in the three cities with respect to this issue. The Houston and New York City inter-viewees stated that Chinatown areas still have a significant concentration of Chinese immigrants. However, the interviewees in Denver reflected that the Chinese community was not a geographic concept to them because they all chose to work and live outside of an identifiable Chinatown. According to these interviewees, because there is no Chinatown in Denver, the Chinese community has become a virtual social community to them, the impact of which is limited in terms of inclusion and integration.

Of the interviewees in Denver, Interviewee 3 stated she was not very involved in the CIC. Interviewee 4 reflected that she was unfamiliar with the term CIC and stated that the city did not have any identifiable Chinese community. Interviewee 5 said she participates in WeChat discussion groups in China; however, these groups are not based on geographic residency in the US but on being from the same school/university or the same area of China. Interviewee 6 said that there were no CICs in Denver, and she spent more time with American associates than Chinese immigrants.

6. The existence of Chinatown as a facilitator between the police and the CIC

Previous research has concluded that Chinese immigrants were more likely to have negative perceptions of law enforcement and were reluctant to report to or seek help from the police, as was the case with other Asian communities.[52] However, our respondents stated that American police officers treat Chinese immigrants fairly. The immigrants concurred that police officers see them as law-abiding. They attributed good treatment by American police to the Chinese cultural tradition of cooperating with the police. For example, Interviewee 1 (in NYC) indicated that members of the CIC are treated fairly by the police for two main reasons: Chinese immigrants are un-likely to break the law, and the Chinese have a cultural tradition of cooperating with the police. This tradition of public cooperation in policing can be traced back to the Baojia system in the Song dynasty.[53] The Chinese cultural tradition of cooperating with the police in the maintenance of social order is suggested by the public security committees created to maintain public order; the earliest of such committees was set up by the public on their own initiative in 1949.[54] Over a million such organizations have been established all over China, and they collaborate with local police depart-ments to educate the public on matters of public security and the legal system and

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York, Ithaca, NY 2018; M. Zhou, Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave, Philadelphia 1992.

52   R. Weitzer, S. Tuch, Race and Policing in America: Conflict and Reform, Cambridge 2006.

53   L. Lin, Cultural and Organizational…, *op. cit.*

54   L. Y. Zhong, Community Policing in China: Old Wine in New Bottles, 'Police Practice and Research: An International Journal' 2009, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 157–169.

organizations. In addition, these committees guard their own districts and patrol the streets to prevent crimes. The tradition of community cooperation with the police relies fully on the public in their work of maintaining public order. Also, making full use of the traditional culture of police–civil society cooperation has become an important way for the Chinese police department to solve policing staffing issues, which has plagued the world's police community. In Beijing, the capital of China, the community public security joint defence team (治安联防队) and community volunteers are effective complements to community policing. They are organized by communities spontaneously to assist the police with public security patrols, legal publicity, dispute mediation, and other community policing issues. For example, 1.1 million people directly participated in community security work during the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.[55] These organizations and volunteers effectively alleviate the problem of insufficient police forces and further strengthen the relationship between the police and the community to ensure the historical and cultural tradition of public participation in community crime prevention.

Interviewee 2 (in Houston) stated that, in his experience, Chinese immigrants are treated well in the city because most immigrants obey the law and are willing to cooperate with police officers. Interviewee 5 (in Denver) stated she would not hesitate to call the police if she had problems. She has applied for a firearms concealed carrying permit, and had good interaction with the police on that occasion.

Meanwhile, the perceptions of police programmes in the CIC revealed patterns of heterogeneity among the interviewees in NYC, Houston, and Denver. The interviewees in both NYC and Houston reflected that police programmes related to community justice are offered mainly in Chinatown. The police routinely ask about CIC concerns and requests and introduce them to the main security issues in their areas and how to protect themselves. Police in NYC have regular meetings (every 3–4 months) with CIC community groups to exchange information, which helps increase neighbourhood satisfaction and reduce fear of crime. The police participated in cultural festivals in Houston's Chinatown before Covid-19.

In Denver, however, interviewees were unaware of any police programme focusing on Chinese immigrants or the Chinese community. Interviewees who live in diverse neighbourhoods with Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics lacked any information on police programmes focusing on crime prevention. These facts implied that without a centralized Chinatown as a platform and facilitator, the local police department may have less interaction with Chinese immigrants. Immigrants living in neighbourhoods with multiple cultures have limited chances to involve themselves in community policing or justice programmes. Interviewee 11, a resident of Denver, said he felt

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55 L. N. Yu, Community Security Management Strategy from the Perspective of Beijing Olympic Security, 从北京奥运安保看社区治安管理方略, 'Legal System and Society' 2010, vol. 2, pp. 195–196.

disconnected from the news of the day. He tried to engage in steps to mitigate the consequences of this fact, but it was made clear to us that he perceived the absence of an identifiable Chinese community as an obstacle in that quest.

7. Chinese immigrants and their routine interactions with police

Scholars have suggested that as immigrant groups, CICs are expected to have fewer positive attitudes toward social control institutions, including the police, than members of dominant groups.[56] In our study, we found this suggestion might be a stereotype that needs more examination; in general, our interviewees' evaluations of the police are positive. They commonly reported that their past contacts with the police were satisfactory, and reflected that they had been treated fairly in the past. They understood that the police are also ordinary people and concurred that the police are professional in their work. All interviewees stated that English was not an obstacle to communicating with the police or affecting law enforcement. Chinese-speaking police officers are integral members of police departments in New York and Houston. Although no respondents had ever met police officers in Denver who could speak Chinese, their personal English proficiency was sufficient to communicate. Alternatively, they could find friends and neighbours who can speak English to help. Interviewee 2 said that, according to his experience, in Houston they are not treated differently (by the police) from other residents. Interviewee 3 stated that she sees police officers near the university she works and that she likes the police presence in this location and in neighbourhoods generally. She stated that the police prevent crimes and support the community. Interviewee 8 reflected that she had received a traffic ticket, but she stated that race had not had an impact; she felt she was treated fairly by the police. Three interviewees pointed out that the quality of interaction varies (by individual officers).

8. Previous interactions with the police affect Chinese immigrants' engagement in community justice programmes

We explored the idea that Chinese immigrants are more willing to participate in community activities if the police give them the impression of treating them fairly. For example, Interviewee 3 received a speeding ticket, but she stated that she was not treated unfairly because the police explained the reasons professionally and politely. The experience did not change her positive perception of the police. She said that police programmes such as crime prevention programmes would be good for the community. Even if police work is not performed perfectly, police officers' demeanour of

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56   R. Weitzer, S. Tuch, Race and Policing…, *op cit.*

politeness will result in a positive perception of police programmes amongst Chinese immigrants. When Interviewee 4's house was burgled, she had good interaction with the police; she stated that the police work was routine but that the investigation process included what should have been included, although the police did not explain things clearly. She perceived a social distance between the police and citizens – partly caused by lack of contact. She was willing to participate in some activities, such as the police open house, to fill this gap.[57] Interviewee 11 interacted with the police when he was stopped for speeding and failing to turn his lights on. He stated that race did not matter in all his interactions with the police. Although the immigrant perceived himself to be an outsider, his positive experience with the police allowed him to have the incentive to communicate with police officers at gun ranges and shops, based on common interests.

Although the ten Chinese immigrants reflected limited experiences of being involved in any community justice programme, they to some degree acknowledged the importance of community justice. None of the participants expressed unwillingness for community engagement. The responses of the immigrants, in addition to the traditional culture of collaborating with the police and English fluency, indicated that the respect, politeness, and professional conduct of the police are significant factors that influence immigrants' willingness to be involved in community justice. Interviewees who spoke positively of police communication expressed their desire to join community policing programmes if needed.

9. Covid-19 and hate crime as challenges for Chinese immigrants

Although interviewees primarily reported positive interactions with the police, they expressed deep concern about rising hate crimes against Asians. Our respondents stated that a potential for anti-Chinese and anti-Asian hate crimes became an issue partly because of Covid-19. It remains to be seen if this perception continues to be of relevance, if or when concern about Covid-19 lessens. Nevertheless, our respondents stated that in addition to the influence of the original Chinese culture of crime prevention and victimization, American life has increased their knowledge and experience of self-protection. However, in view of the current situation, participants continue to worry about possible risks and sincerely hope to get more police help and community support. Interviewee 7 stated that social coherence is most important in the US to reduce crime, followed by individual responsibility, with police help being least important, whereas in China the rank is social coherence, followed by police help, and lastly individual responsibility. Interviewee 10 stated that the police play an

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57   Police departments sometimes invite the public to visit police stations during so-called open house. The objective is to inform citizens of police services in a non-confrontational setting and therefore to reduce the social distance between the police and community members.

important role in society – order and justice are important for the well-being of society: 'We still need them [the police] to protect us and maintain the social order and generally, they are good. We can't imagine a society without police. Law and order are the foundation of a country, and police is a power to get it.'

10. Discussion

This article is part of a larger project that focused on the reciprocal relationships of Chinese migrants in China and the Chinese police, and the corresponding relationships between Chinese immigrants in the US and American police.[58] We began this stage of our research with the vague notion that the traditional theoretical models of the relationships between immigrant communities and crime are at least dated, if not outright wrong, in at least some instances. Consider, for instance, the social disorganization theory of the Chicago School. Theorists such as Shaw and McKay saw immigrants as uneducated and having lower socioeconomic status, possessing limited English-language skills and few occupational skills.[59] They were forced to live in Zone 2 of the concentric circles of the City of Chicago, the Zone of Transition between the business sector and the more desirable residential areas. It was only the second generation of immigrant groups who were able to leave the immigrant slums behind because of their cultural transformation from being immigrants to becoming Americans. For many of the immigrants who arrived in America early in the 20th century, this model may have been correct; they arrived by boat at Ellis Island and were subsequently absorbed into American society at its margins.

Chinese immigrants who arrived in the 19th century fit this pattern as well. They were primarily manual labourers who worked in railway construction, mining, and agriculture.[60] Unlike the Europeans who immigrated on the East Coast, the Chinese immigrated on the West Coast. Furthermore, while the Europeans could blend in racially with the dominant group, Chinese immigrants were racially different and had to deal with racial stereotypes, prejudices, and legal forms of discrimination. However, the experiences of European and Chinese immigrants in the US were essentially similar up to the middle of the 20th century.[61] Because of economic limitations

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58   J. Gerber, D. Jia, Community policing…, *op. cit.*
59   C. Shaw, H. McKay, Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas (rev. ed.), Chicago 1972.
60   N. Aarim-Heriot, Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, Urbana, IL 2003; P. Cloud, D. W. Galenson, Chinese Immigration and Contract Labor in the Late Nineteenth Century, 'Explorations in Economic History', vol. 24, no. 1, 1987, pp. 22–42.
61   One of the reviewers for this journal pointed out that there was an important legal difference between European and Chinese immigrants to the US: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. While this act mandated legal discrimination, in a form not experienced by European immigrants, it does not change the fact that European and Chinese immigrants up to about the middle of the 20th century were mostly relatively uneducated members of the working class. As we discuss be-

combined with ethnic and racial prejudices from the dominant majority, immigrants were isolated in ethnically homogeneous districts. For the Chinese, these situations meant the creation of Chinatowns. Immigrants flocked to these communities because they contained the comforts of the homeland, but they impeded their Americanization. It was theoretically possible to spend most of one's life in Chinatown and not become a member of the larger society in any meaningful way.

However, such a portrayal is not accurate for some Chinese immigrants and only true to a limited extent for others. The respondents that participated in our research are representative of a new segment of Chinese immigrants. They are well educated, have many occupational skills, and possess advanced English-language skills. In other words, they have a socioeconomic background that is fundamentally different from that of their immigrant predecessors and thus have economic and social options that are equally different. While the earlier immigrants arrived by boat in America, the new generation of Chinese immigrants arrived by plane. A difference manifests itself with other ethnic immigrants as well.

All the Chinese immigrant respondents are more integrated into American society than the traditional theoretical models would predict. As a result, they have more positive views of the police, and the criminal justice system in general, than what might be expected. Furthermore, racial stereotyping works to their advantage, as Asians are seen as law-abiding by the police and the public alike. They have had very few adverse experiences with the police or any other criminal justice agencies.

There was a difference in the answers of respondents from Houston and New York City versus Denver; both the former two cities have vibrant Chinatowns while the latter does not. Respondents from New York City and Houston perceived the existence of Chinatowns as positive in general, and with respect to police–community relations in particular. For instance, none of the Denver interviewees could name a police activity or programme that catered to the Chinese Immigrant Community (or had ever encountered Chinese-speaking police officers), while several of the respondents from Houston and New York City were able to name at least one activity. Furthermore, respondents credited the fact of cities having a Chinatown with increased awareness of the police by Chinese immigrants. Alternatively, the absence of a Chinatown in Denver forced respondents to live in racially and ethnically heterogeneous neighbourhoods, a fact that sped up American enculturation. It seems, therefore, that the presence of a Chinatown is not as crucial as in earlier times but is still beneficial to Chinese immigrants and their understanding of, participation in, and collaborations with community justice in the US. Reviewing both the literature on Chinese culture and the findings from the current study suggests that the immigrant culture contains positive factors of crime prevention, community service, and

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low, these trends changed for Chinese immigrants late in the 20th century, and these changes had important ramifications for more recent Chinese immigrants.

police–people cooperation. Work and education in the new country will promote them to more actively study and integrate into the country's social life and to have the enthusiasm to fulfil their social responsibilities, participate in community services, maintain community safety, and improve the quality of community life.

The design of police programmes for developing police–immigrant relations and improving community crime prevention and quality of life may pay equal attention to understanding and using a positive perspective of immigrants' culture. For example, the mayors and police chiefs in Houston and New York City actively took advantage of Chinatown as a cultural centre to strengthen cooperation between the police and the people, using the situation for publicity against crime. Their positive experiences with community outreach suggest offering Chinese immigrants more opportunities to learn about the police and participate in police programmes, which won our interviewees' unanimous support and praise.

11. Limitations

As we only interviewed 11 Chinese immigrants (and used the answers of ten respondents), we can only suggest partial answers. In fact, the nature of grounded theory is that we can reach tentative conclusions that can be developed into hypotheses for quantitative research:

H1: Chinese immigrants who live in cities with Chinatowns see these areas as more symbolic than Chinese immigrants who live in cities without Chinatowns.

H2: The existence of Chinatowns leads to more police programmes catering to Chinese immigrants in those cities than in cities without them.

H3: Recent Chinese immigrants, regardless of where they live, have a positive image of the police and the criminal justice system.

H4: Chinese immigrants who have a positive experience with the police are more likely to be involved in community justice programmes.

H5: The existence of Covid-19 may have an adverse effect on the relations between the police and the Chinese immigrant community.

Concluding remarks

We have provided qualitative research for a reexamination of the relationship between Chinese immigrants, police and criminal justice officials, and crime in the US. To establish whether we are correct in our hypotheses, two lines of research should be pursued: (a) a quantitative replication of our study using a representative sample of Chinese immigrants, and (b) research on immigrants from other ethnicities should be conducted to see if our findings are specific to Chinese immigrants or have transferability to other groups. For instance, Chicago was the focus of research

on immigrants in the early 20th century; it would be interesting to examine if more recent immigrants follow the patterns predicted by the Chicago School or if they follow the patterns suggested here. Our guess (hypothesis) is that recent Polish and Italian immigrants, for instance, display patterns like the Chinese immigrants that we observed rather than the patterns observed by their ethnic ancestors 100 years ago. However, this is an empirical question and will need to be answered empirically in the future.

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