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Navigating 'Waithood': The Socioeconomic Impact on Highly Skilled Chinese Emigrants in the Silicon Valley

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Abstract: This paper investigates the socioeconomic impacts of waithood on highly skilled Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley. Waithood is primarily characterized by underemployment and delayed career progression which leads to extended adulthood. In this regard, it was found that systematic barriers such as visa restrictions, along with discrimination and market competition, contribute to this global youth iss ue. The study uses a theoretical approach to examine the factors that influence waithood. In Silicon Valley, waithood manifests as prolonged periods of underemployment and financial instability. It also leads to delays in achieving life milestones that include buying a house, getting married, and forming a family. The findings also reveal that waithood hinders career advancement. It enhances economic instability and causes long-term psychological and social effects. It is therefore imperative for policymakers and industry leaders to formulate policies that enhance the integration and utilization of the talented Chinese workforce. Simultaneously, it is also essential to promote a more inclusive and equitable environment in Silicon Valley.

Keywords: Waithood, Chinese Emigrants, Silicon Valley, Socioeconomic Impact, Skilled Migration.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of waithood primarily entails a delayed transition into a stable role, or perhaps one that enhances career prospects. Inhorn and Smith-Hefner define waithood as the extended period of young adulthood as these young adults wait to marry and have children [1]. Honwana states that waithood demonstrates a period of waiting [2]. This period encompasses widespread implications for highly skilled Chinese emigrants, particularly in Silicon Valley. Dennis states that Silicon Valley, an industrial region around the southern shores of San Francisco Bay, is synonymous with the emergence of the digital economy and the Internet [3]. It attracts a large number of Chinese professionals as it offers lucrative opportunities and modern innovation. Silicon Valley Indicators (n.d.) show that as of 2011, 36% of the population in this region consisted of Asians alone, out of which 28% were Chinese. This Chinese population rose to 31% as of 2022, demonstrating a massive rise in emigrants (Figure 1&2) [4]. However, although the population share is large, and most of these emigrants are highly qualified, they often face systemic barriers that impede their socioeconomic advancement. Silicon Valley Indicators record an increase in unemployment rates from 3.4% in July to 3.7% in August 2023. Moreover, total employment was about 20,500 below the previously recorded figures in March

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of that year [5]. As Wong states, although the Chinese have made extraordinary efforts to ground themselves economically and politically in Silicon Valley by finding lucrative employment, their efforts often fall short due to factors such as waithood [6]. This results in a state of liminality between their educational attainment and full professional integration. This paper will utilize a theoretical approach alongside data insights to show how waithood manifests among Chinese emigrants and suggest policies that enhance integration.

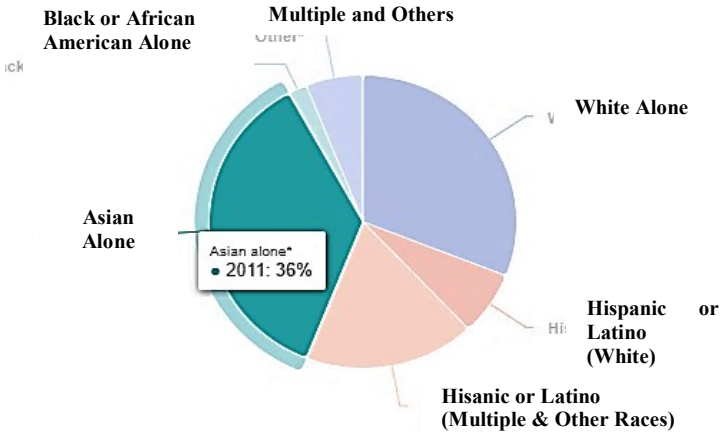

Figure 1: Population Share – 2011 [4].

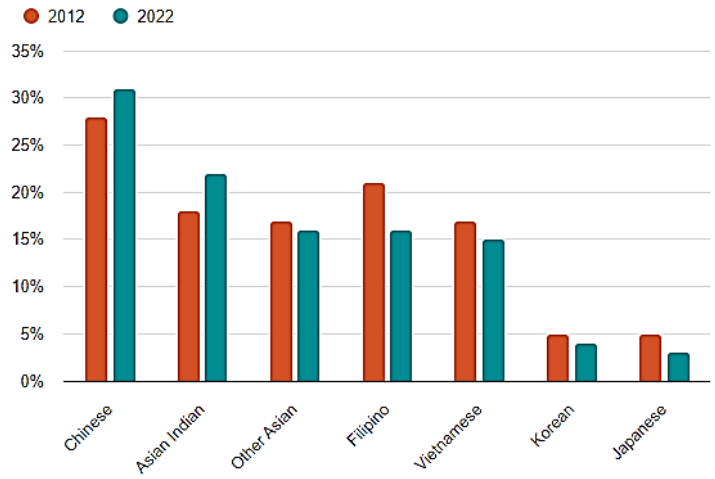

Figure 2: Asian Population Share Growth 2012-2022 [4].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Waithood: Definition and Context

Waithood is deeply rooted in sociological and economic theories of youth development and labor market transitions. Kremer states that Diane Singerman coined the corresponding term in the 1990s while researching familial dimensions and connections in Cairo [7]. Waithood was then defined as the long periods of limbo preceding marriage. This includes milestones associated with adulthood such as stable employment and marriage. Singerman, while living in Cairo in 1985, found that the process of marrying off one's children and gathering enough resources to do the same was a massive struggle across every city and village in Egypt through all economic and social strata [8]. Moreover, the low wages and economic challenges across communities in that particular town made the resource

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constraint for marriage extremely unachievable. Within the policy and academic circles, only a few gave attention to the cost of marriage and how it influenced other associated factors such as education, employment, migration, savings and investment, social networks, surveilled norms around intimacy that are highly sensitive, and family relations [8]. Moreover, additional obstacles such as finding an appropriate partner for marriage, obtaining a job, and securing the status of adulthood were also significant challenges posing individuals. Therefore, Singerman, during a youth project in the Middle East and African countries, introduced the term waithood [8]. This was a collective representation of the issues faced coherently by young adults. Ever since then, the context of Waithood has expanded to describe similar experiences among the youth population across the world particularly in the context of skilled migration and professional integration.

Waithood is thus characterized by prolonged underemployment, delayed career progression, and the postponement of other life milestones that include marriage. In the context of developed countries, this issue is primarily linked to structural economic challenges that often limit job creation and access to stable employment opportunities. According to Moore, young people who are not able to find sustainable employment are at risk of long-term social and economic exclusion [9]. This also stands in the way of career advancement and creates a prolonged period of uncertainty. It is interesting to note that for highly skilled individuals, the state of limbo is mostly due to systemic barriers that often prevent them from obtaining sustainable employment. As a result, these individuals are unable to efficiently utilize their skills. This is true for individuals with developmental disabilities too, who are included in the youth. Barriers to employment are multi-factorial, and policy solutions require stakeholder engagement and collaboration from several sectors, as pointed out by Khayatzadeh-Mahani [10]. Immigration policies, cultural and linguistic challenges, and competition in the job market are some barriers that require multiple stakeholder engagement to be addressed. These barriers often arise as markets tend to prioritize local experience over foreign qualifications. This issue is pertinent to Silicon Valley as well, which is why this paper will focus on this region to demonstrate the issues associated with waithood, given that Silicon Valley is where a digital world was initiated. Therefore, this historical perspective provides a foundation for understanding how waithood manifests in different contexts, including among skilled migrants in developed regions.

2.2. Skilled Migration Trends

Skilled migration has become a significant feature in the global market for labor. Previously, there was very little context available that addressed the migration of skilled labor within the classical canon of migration, as posited by Blitz [11]. It is basically defined as the movement of individuals with specialized knowledge and skills across nations. Interestingly, the demand for skilled labor over the last few decades has increased rapidly. Greenberg noted that within 2022 and 2032, annual hiring in the US itself was expected to increase 20-fold, which would cost companies over $5.3 billion every year in talent acquisition and training [12]. The problem posited in this regard is that the annual job hires exceed far more in number than the annual job creation. Li states that 50% of all employees across the world will need reskilling by 2025 due to the adoption of new technology, as estimated by the World Economic Forum [13]. This issue can thereby be attributed to technological advancements, globalization, and the competitive nature of industries. Competition is particularly prominent in the information technology, engineering, and healthcare industries. Bresnahan used a short-run factor demand framework and a production function framework to find considerable evidence regarding complementarity between IT and new organizations [14]. This establishes an increase in the demand for skilled workers. This aforementioned trend has resulted in significant flows of skilled migrants from developing countries to developed countries. The latter has an extremely high demand for skilled labor experts. The World Bank Group (n.d.) states that as the skills agenda of the World Bank is growing, governments and other corresponding authorities around the world are seeking advice and

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support on how to make their labor force more employable and productive [15]. McCarthy posits that as of 2015, the world's top countries for high-skilled employment have been shown in Figure 3, with Luxembourg accounting for about 59.5% of high-skilled employment [16]. Masterson records that as of 2023, Switzerland, Singapore, and the US are the top three countries in terms of talent competitiveness [17]. This in turn sets the stage for migration programs in order to support the need for a highly skilled workforce. In this regard, Chinese professionals constitute a notable fraction of the skilled laborers. These workers are drawn by the promise of better career opportunities, higher standards of living, and the potential for massive professional growth.

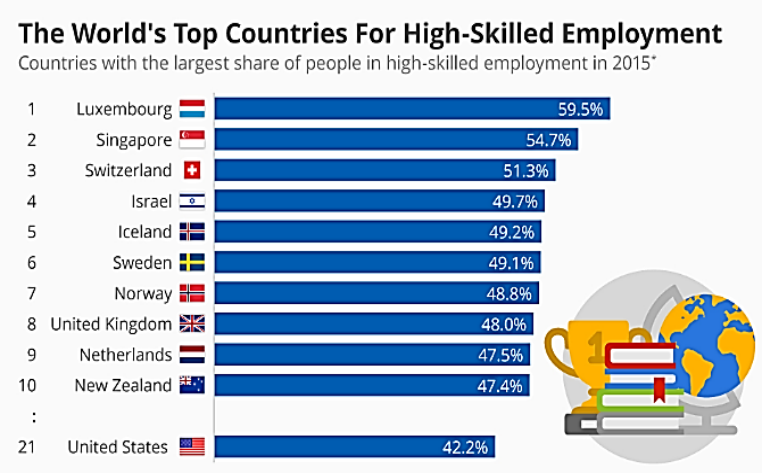

Figure 3: Top Countries with a Skilled Workforce as of 2015 [16].

According to the Migration Policy Institute (2023), the number of Chinese nationals who are living and working in the US has grown significantly over the last few decades. It was 370,000 in 1980 and grew to 2,380,000 in 2021 (Figure 4)[18]. On the other hand, Figure 5 shows the concentration of Chinese emigrants in the US. These Chinese individuals tend to be very highly educated. They often hold advanced degrees in computer science, engineering, and biotechnology. However, this transition to life is not without corresponding challenges. This phenomenon contributes to waithood among these highly skilled individuals. It significantly impedes their complete integration into the local labor market.

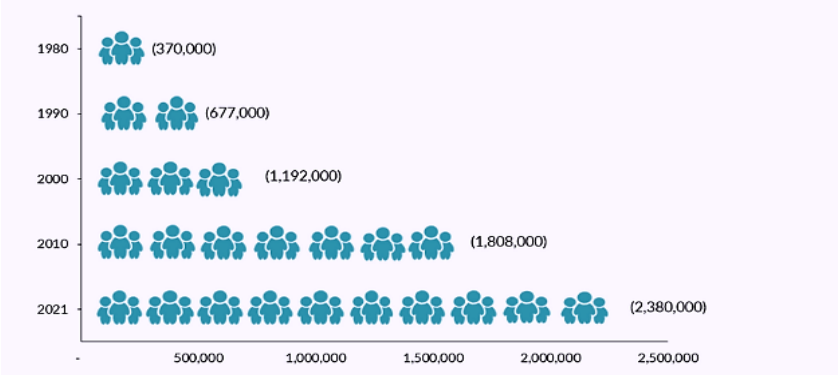

Figure 4: Chinese Emigrants in the US between 1980-2021 [18].

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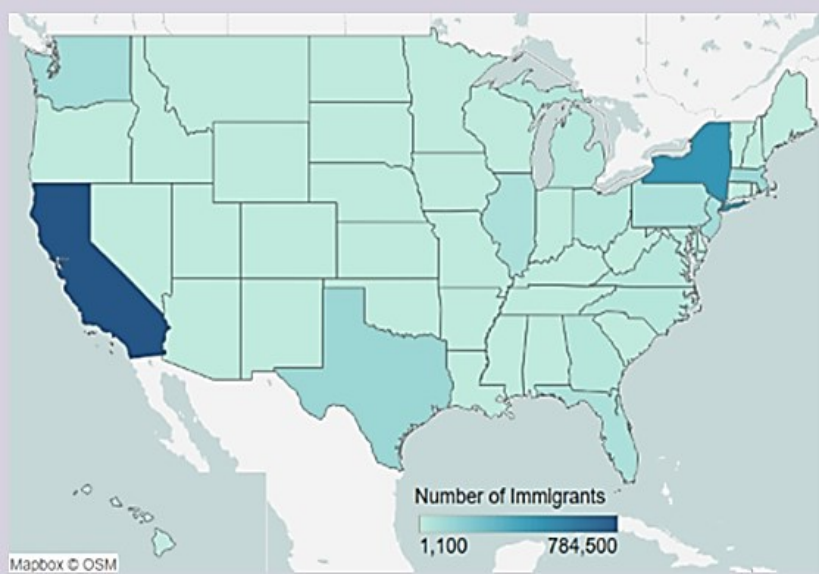

Figure 5: Concentration of the Chinese Immigrant population in China [18].

As discussed earlier, Chinese emigrants often suffer as local firms tend to prefer locals more as compared to foreigners. Moreover, several restrictive immigration policies also limit their opportunities. It creates uncertainty regarding their long-term status in the US which includes Silicon Valley. The H-1B Visa Cap as announced by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (n.d.) allows companies and other employers to hire foreign workers in certain occupations that require theoretical and practical application of specialized knowledge by professionals with a bachelor's, master's degree, or other equivalent degree. This includes hiring in sectors such as architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical and social sciences, medicine, health, education, and law among many others [19]. However, the number of hirings is limited. This gives rise to long periods of underemployment and instability in jobs. These factors collectively characterize waithood. Furthermore, several cultural and linguistic challenges also hinder the integration of Chinese emigrants into Silicon Valley networks. Chinese professionals may possess very strong technical skills however, they often lack language proficiencies. They might not be able to adapt to the American culture that in turn impacts their ability to participate completely in professional as well as social settings. Therefore, this exacerbates isolation and liminality that is associated with waithood. This analysis sets the stage for a discussion regarding a broader analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of waithood and the corresponding development strategies to enhance Chinese integration in the global economy.

3. Chinese Emigrants in the Silicon Valley

3.1. Significance of Demographic and Professional Profiles

In order to comprehend the challenges and opportunities faced by Chinese emigrants in the United States, it is crucial to understand the demographic and professional profiles of the respective individuals. Without the inclusion of demographic characteristics, researchers are often at risk of what is known as absolutism, as pointed out by Hammer [20]. Unless demographics are taken into account, the results of the findings might be biased towards a certain section of the population. This can cause several errors in the findings. To prevent such issues, this section of the paper aims to provide an overview of certain key characteristics of the demographic groups. It will also highlight the fields and industries in which the Chinese tend to be primarily involved.

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3.1.1. Demographic Characteristics

Silicon Valley entails a dynamic and diverse segment of the Chinese emigrant population. There are individuals who have migrated not only for employment but also for education and family reunification purposes. Textor reports that around 290,000 students in the US comprise Chinese emigrants as of 2022-23 academic year. Although the numbers were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese still constitute 27.4% of all incoming students in the US, making China the leading source of international students [21].

The figures of Chinese students over the years have been presented in Figure 6. This shows how popular US education is with the Chinese. Moreover, the US received around 723,000 family migrants in 2022, as recorded by the Migration Data Portal [22]. It is safe to say that a considerable fraction of these emigrants consisted of Chinese individuals. Furthermore, a significant portion of these individuals are estimated to be highly educated. They may hold degrees from prestigious universities in China, the US, or other countries.

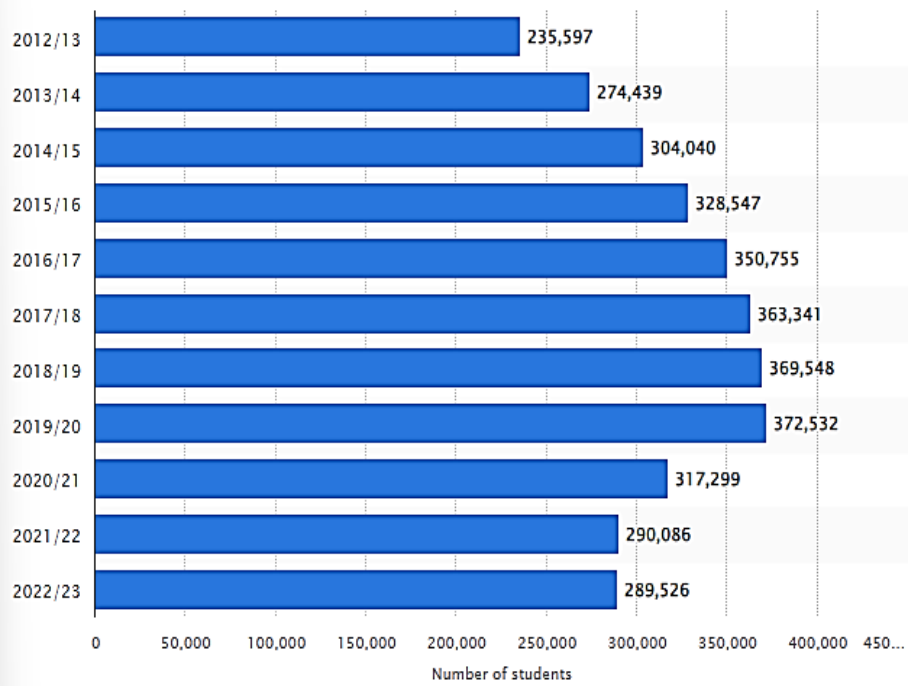

Figure 6: Chinese students in the US from 2012/13 to 2022/13 [21].

The Chinese in Silicon Valley mostly comprise a massive youth population. According to Silicon Valley Indicators (Table 1), around 56% of the population in the Silicon Valley lies between the ages of 18 and 34, out of which 1/5 of the population consists of foreigners including Chinese individuals [23]. Therefore, the workforce in Silicon Valley is quite vibrant and youthful. This age group is significant because it includes those who are in their early-career and mid-career stages. These stages are critical for professional development. The same source also mentioned that there is a slight male dominance in the population. 52% of the population comprises males, whereas 48% are females [23]. However, the number of females is increasing steadily, which is particularly true for sectors such as technology and academia. Some important Silicon Valley demographic indicators are recorded in Table 1. The demographic characteristics portray a population's social and economic priorities. The Silicon Valley population is estimated to be mostly concerned about securing stable employment and assessing the quality of education and healthcare.

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Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Silicon Valley Population [23].

Sex	Male: 52%; Female: 48%
Age	56% between the ages of 18 to 34 years
Race/ Ethnicity	Asians: 42%; White (Non-Hispanic): 33%; Hispanic or Latino: 15%; Black or African-American: 5%
Nativity	Natives: 54%; Foreigners: 46%
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's degree or higher: 73%
Marital Status	Never married: 48%; Married: 42% Married population -54% from abroad, 37% domestic migrants
Income	Median: $117,000

3.1.2. Professional Profiles

The Chinese in Silicon Valley are involved in several key industries. This includes the technology sector too. Huang in his report for Bloomberg, interviewed a Chinese professional named Guowei, who was in his forties. Guowei mentioned his job at a Fintech startup, which he had to let go of because of his cultural roots. However, he made a move to San Francisco as it entailed several opportunities in the tech industry [24]. Guowei, however, had to reduce his Chineseness to feel included in the population. This kind of animosity arose after the Trump-rule declared anti-Asian propaganda, causing several Chinese in Silicon Valley to be faced with several issues. This highlights a particular challenge that may also be associated with waithood. The tech sector includes several capacities. For instance, software development, data science, AI, cyber security, and hardware engineering all collectively require an excellent skillset that the Chinese possess. Therefore, the contribution of the Chinese to innovation and competitiveness in Silicon Valley is crucial to its tech industry. Apart from this, a few other sectors that may require certain skillsets that the Chinese possess include biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. This industry needs massive research and development procedures that Chinese emigrants can practice with ease. Academia and research institutes may also benefit from Chinese contributions. As their expertise spans a wide range of disciplines, their knowledge is bound to come in handy. Another sector in which Chinese emigrants dominate is entrepreneurship. A report published by PPIC in 1999 regarding Silicon Valley Immigrant Entrepreneurs notes that around 24% of all Silicon Valley firms are led by Chinese or Indian immigrants, as stated by Saxenian [25]. Several startups and small businesses that contribute to the corresponding region's dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem were founded by Chinese. These ventures tend to focus on technology, commerce, and biotech, which overall reflect broader trends in this region.

3.2. Motivation for Migration to the Silicon Valley: Analyzing Push and Pull Factors

It is important to note that global skilled migration patterns are shaped by both push and pull factors. The former may include economic instability, limited career opportunities, and political unrest in the home country. The latter consists of better job prospects, higher salaries, and more advanced infrastructure in the destination country. Iqbal carried out a survey in China in 2021 and used a logistic regression model to find that low wages within the mainland and higher wages outside are considered to be the top reasons for individuals to leave China [26]. Other factors, such as more opportunities, better lifestyles, and better education in host countries, are other push factors that force skilled Chinese individuals to emigrate to other nations, making these factors salient for the corresponding

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individuals. Hu and Khan identified sources of economic growth in China between 1952 and 1994 that quadrupled China's GDP. Capital accumulation, along with a sharp and sustained increase in total factor productivity (TFP), primarily accounted for the unprecedented growth observed in the country [27]. Moreover, Fleisher found that human capital formation positively affects output and TFP in cross-provincial studies [28]. This, in turn, was accompanied by an increase in job competition in China. This was particularly true for urban areas, as these regions entailed a high supply of educated individuals. This supply exceeded the demand. Additionally, several political factors and a need for a more stable and conducive environment that would enhance personal and professional growth also motivated Chinese professionals to seek better opportunities abroad. In this regard, Silicon Valley stands as a global epicenter for skilled emigrants. It encompasses rapid technological innovation and attracts a significant number of Chinese professionals as well. Chinese emigrants who come from a strong educational background and possess special skills are drawn to this region as it has potentially groundbreaking career opportunities. It is interesting to note that the influx of Chinese immigrants in Silicon Valley entails broader trends in skilled migration.

4. Socioeconomic Challenges in Silicon Valley Manifesting as Waithood

4.1. Structural and Systematic Barriers to Employment

As discussed in the former subsections, the highly skilled Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley face a myriad of challenges that contribute to their experience of waithood. These include several structural and systemic barriers. The most significant barrier among these includes restrictive immigration policies such as the H-1B visa program. This policy limits the number of skilled workers that can be employed by firms annually. The annual cap on H-1B visas for the financial years 1991-2023 is shown in Figure 7. The presence of immigrants in the US creates new job opportunities for the native-born, as these individuals differ in skill sets. Their skills complement each other instead of competing. The immigrants also spend and consume, thereby increasing overall consumer demand and creating new opportunities overseas, as pointed out by the American Immigration Council [29]. However, the nation cannot allow an unlimited influx of immigrants from China. Too much of anything can be harmful; hence, it is imperative to put a cap on the total number of emigrants, which in turn creates systemic barriers for the Chinese population. This may manifest as long periods of uncertainty in obtaining permanent citizenship, which also creates a precarious employment situation. This uncertainty gives rise to underemployment, or perhaps employment in roles that do not completely utilize the skills and expertise of the Chinese.

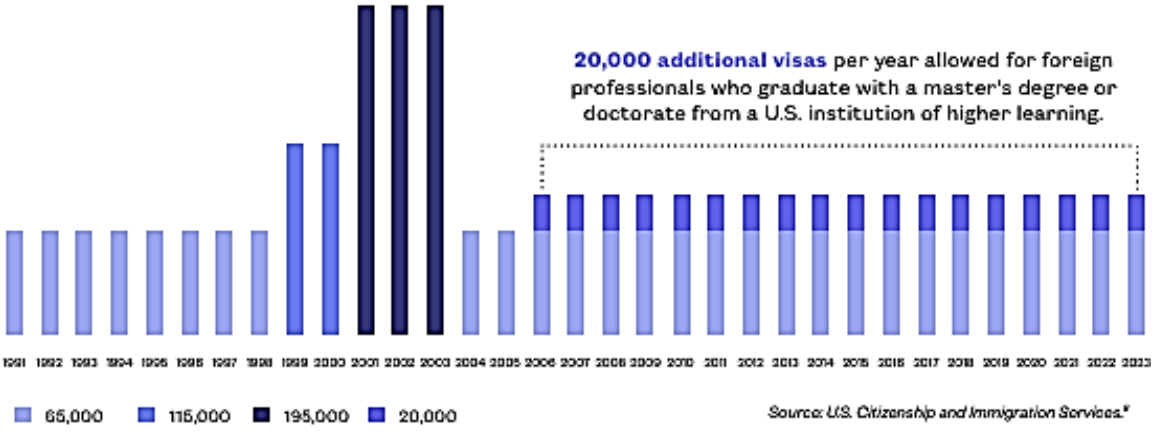

Figure 7: Annual Cap on H-1B [29].

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Moreover, several cultural and linguistic barriers also exist. Despite being skilled, the Chinese emigrants face issues in adapting, which deters effective communication and slows down the process of integration in professional settings. This also impairs their career advancement. Due to this development, several biases, or perhaps implicit discrimination, may also hinder employment prospects. The Chinese Exclusion Act, in fact, encompasses a dark chapter in the history of immigration in the United States, as posited by Zhang [30]. This demonstrates the struggle faced by those of Chinese origin in the US that hinders their employment prospects. Therefore, even though these individuals may have better qualifications, the stereotypes and prejudices in US society may prime hiring decisions and workplace dynamics that contribute to the challenges of waithood.

4.2. Assessment of Opportunities

Although the challenges are plentiful, the opportunities available for Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley are numerous as well. This region has a robust tech sector. It offers several positions in software development, data science, artificial intelligence, and other such fields. The excellent educational background that most Chinese emigrants possess comes in handy while obtaining jobs in this sector. Moreover, Chinese emigrants rely massively on networking. Saxenian states that immigrants from Greater China attend alumni associations in Silicon Valley, with almost 29% of them reporting regular attendance. The attendance at other meetings comprises a dozen ethnic and technical associations, such as the Silicon Valley Chinese Engineers Association: 23%; Monte Jade Science and Technology Association: 17%; Chinese Information and Networking Association: 15% etc. [25]. The Chinese use networking as a critical strategy as it helps them connect with potential employers and mentors who may successfully provide guidance and support. Furthermore, the Chinese may even pursue further education or other certification programs. This enhances their qualifications and aligns their skills with the demands of the local job market. This mindset that upholds continuous learning increases their competitiveness and secures their chances of obtaining a desirable position. Besides, entrepreneurial ventures also create enough opportunities for Chinese emigrants to thrive.

4.3. Pathways of Career Progression and Corresponding Issues

Although Silicon Valley entails massive potential for career progression, the challenges in the pathway of career progression for Chinese emigrants are plenty. This manifests as waithood. It is to be noted that Chinese professionals mostly enter the US workforce through entry-level positions. They may have extremely high qualifications that far exceed what the corresponding roles require; however, they remain underemployed. Batalova and Fix state that almost half of the recent immigrant population in the US has a bachelor's degree or higher from abroad. However, almost 21% of these professionals are employed in jobs that do not require qualifications higher than a high school diploma, leading to what is known as brain waste or underemployment [31]. This leads to serious questions regarding the lack of credibility of integration prospects in the US vis-a-vis Silicon Valley. Therefore, this region is failing to completely leverage the skills of the Chinese immigrant population. In turn, these individuals are not able to transfer their credentials and make sure their skills and experience are recognized. Over time, it might be possible for some of these Chinese professionals to gain some experience or perhaps build certain professional networks which may push them toward mid-level or perhaps senior positions. It is important to note that career progression involves navigating corporate hierarchies. It requires an adequate demonstration of technical expertise, along with leadership skills and communication methodologies. This is particularly relevant for Silicon Valley, which overflows with tech jobs. Competition in these sectors is high. This is also true for academic and research lines. However, those who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities witness a different trajectory. Their

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career progression tends to be tied to the success and growth of their ventures. Overall, the challenges discussed in this section lead to long periods of uncertainty and underemployment, causing liminalities that manifest as waithood.

4.4. Comparison with Natives

Several disparities become evident when the career trajectory of the natives is compared with that of the Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley. Waldinger studied the career trajectories of native white and Asian immigrant engineers in the US to find that some form of career market segmentation, which is common at the lower levels of the economy, is restricting the mobility of highly skilled foreign-born engineers [32]. This entails a significantly lower return on the experience of Chinese emigrants as compared to the native-born workers in the tech industry in particular. Therefore, the natives generally benefit from a career progression that is straightforward. It is supported by cultural familiarity, professional networks that are established, and fewer constraints pertaining to immigration. Locklear examined labor market returns on education and the effect on job match between degree and the field associated with Native Americans and their foreign counterparts. He found that the natives primarily comprise those whose jobs are matched perfectly with their qualifications thereby allowing them to make 126 times more than the immigrants in engineering roles. Similarly, matched natives make 117 times more in businesses as compared to their unmatched counterparts [33]. Therefore, the natives tend to start their careers in positions that better match their qualifications, thereby allowing them to advance more rapidly within their organization. In contrast, the Chinese emigrants face a much steeper climb. This is due to the other socioeconomic barriers that have been discussed above. The Chinese professionals are supposed to overcome certain cultural, linguistic, and systemic obstacles that the natives do not encounter. Therefore, this disparity is evident when Chinese professionals are underrepresented in senior leadership roles. This is true in terms of tech companies as well, despite their magnificent presence in the industry in Silicon Valley.

5. Navigating Waithood

One such way of solving waithood includes addressing the crucial issues of education and continuous learning. McLean states that one dies, lives, and moves with education, stating how necessary education is [34]. As a result, many individuals in Silicon Valley tend to pursue additional degrees, certifications, or certain specialized training programs to enhance their credentials. It allows them to stay competitive in the tech industry, which is rapidly evolving. Competition in this region is massive, which often results in several people leaving. The Silicon Valley Poll records that 63% of the residents surveyed aim to leave as they believe that the cost of living and housing in this region is high. Moreover, someone with a bachelor's degree or higher has a 50-50 chance of leaving, but those with a degree less than that are more likely to leave with figures around 62% [35]. Therefore, in order to continue staying in this region, emigrants are bound to pursue higher education to remain competent. This commitment to lifelong learning improves technical skills and also allows professionals to adapt to the local firm's market-specific demand. It in turn increases employability and creates opportunities for career advancement.

Other than education, the Chinese emigrants may also engage in several personal and professional strategies that allow them to cope with waithood. One such strategy can be involving oneself in freelance work or perhaps engaging in short-term contracts in order to gain local experience and build professional portfolios. In fact, Castrillon records an all-time increase in the number of freelancers, according to Upwork's 10th Annual Study, Freelance Forward: 2023. The U.S. workforce consists of 38% of freelancers, who contribute $1.27 trillion to the US economy. This entails a 78% increase from 2014, demonstrating the increased popularity of the remote format [36]. This also includes

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emigrants in Silicon Valley, as it has a tech industry that illustrates a corporate world that has evolved rapidly over the years and now supports freelancing.

Several other emigrants also seek mentorship and networking opportunities. They do so with the help of associations, as Saxenian states [25]. Alumni associations are quite beneficial in this regard. This may open doors for potential jobs and also provide valuable career guidance from individuals who have successfully navigated the wrath of waithood. It is also crucial for these immigrants to focus on improving their language and cultural competence. This will allow them to integrate better in the workplace. The community networks, as highlighted by Saxenian, include organizations such as CIE, SVCTBA, etc. that provide emigrants with the emotional support they require. These Chinese associations, professional groups, and alumni networks foster a sense of community and belonging. They also facilitate the exchange of information and resources, which helps individuals feel less isolated. It helps them connect better with the new environment.

6. Impact of Waithood on Personal and Social Life

From the above discussion, it is evident that waithood entails long periods of underemployment and career stagnation. It is therefore bound to have significant impacts on the mental health of those highly skilled professionals who suffer due to it in Silicon Valley. Waithood often results in structural inequalities that foster frustration among these Chinese emigrants and lead to stereotypical idle, dangerous, or violent behavior from the youth, as posited by Finn and Oldfield [37]. Moreover, waithood can also cause elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Iyer and Khan define major depression as a mood disorder that is often characterized by a sense of inadequacy, despondency, decreased activity, pessimism, anhedonia, and sadness, that disrupts a person's life [38]. Therefore, it can be posited that the inability to obtain a stable and secure job, alongside meaningful employment, despite being highly qualified, is bound to harm one's self-esteem. It exacerbates the feelings of inadequacy and helplessness. This chronic stress is supposed to have long-term mental health consequences that would affect overall well-being and productivity.

Additionally, waithood may also disrupt family dynamics and social roles. It is evident that for any Chinese emigrant, the pressure entailed in order to obtain professional success and provide financial stability for their families is intense. Therefore, waithood may end up straining marital relationships. Kara and Mullings studied young women in Turkey who are stuck in waithood to determine their attentiveness to intimate connections between space, time, and work offers. They found that waithood entails financial pressure to go above and beyond for family, which often ends up ruining marriages [39]. This is particularly true when expectations remain unmet. Moreover, waithood is also accompanied by social isolation. Emigrants are separated from their extended families and support networks, which can further compound the stress factors. Additionally, children in these families are also impacted. They experience instability and uncertainty, and their parents face the challenges pertaining to waithood. This adverse effect on children has been demonstrated by Kovacheva that demonstrates the inability of young adults to obtain sustainable employment and head new families, and form households [40]. Therefore, waithood affects individuals facing it alongside those who are present around them as well. It has broader social implications that alter family dynamics and community cohesion. It is crucial to address these mental health and social challenges to ensure the well-being of highly skilled Chinese emigrants and their families residing in Silicon Valley.

7. Discussion

This thesis primarily addresses two research questions. First, among Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley, waithood primarily manifests as underemployment. It also results in delayed career

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progression, despite the high qualifications and skills that most of these emigrants possess. The result is uncertainty and limited job opportunities that arise from structural barriers such as restrictive immigration policies, viz a viz H-1B visa cap. Moreover, cultural and linguistic issues further exacerbate the problems of integration into the local markets. This results in these individuals working in roles that do not efficiently utilize their expertise, as stated by Batalova and Fix [31]. This further leads to underemployment and career stagnation.

Besides, the socioeconomic impacts of waithood are multifaceted. Professionally, waithood can be felt when career advancement and economic stability are affected. The Chinese emigrants in Silicon Valley often find themselves in a state of economic limbo that leads to long-term financial insecurity. It also harms their ability to achieve significant milestones in their lives, such as home ownership and family formation as demonstrated by Kovacheva [40]. Furthermore, waithood manifests as increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression because of constant uncertainty and underutilization of skills, as posited by Iyer and Khan [38]. The pressure to succeed and provide financial stability often strains family dynamics and causes marital tension, affecting the well-being of children. Therefore, the instability and uncertainty experienced by Chinese professionals adversely impact their socioeconomic well-being.

8. Policy Recommendations

The current immigration policies, such as the H-1B visa cap, limit the number of skilled individuals who may be employed in certain firms across Silicon Valley. This policy gave rise to a precarious employment situation leading to waithood and underemployment. Moreover, several cultural and linguistic challenges are overlooked as well, which end up hindering integration. The experience of the natives is often prioritized, which causes several emigrants to feel insecure.

Therefore, it is crucial to address these challenges. First, increasing the cap on H-1B visas is necessary. The green-card process, as demonstrated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, should be streamlined [19]. This would reduce uncertainty and allow the emigrants to contribute effectively. It is also mandatory to undertake several support programs which enhance language and cultural integration. Furthermore, the government should undertake programs to promote diversity and inclusion within companies. As Tynes states, it allows companies to employ the best individuals from diverse backgrounds, causing the benefits to be mutual [41]. This should be facilitated via mentorship programs and diversity training, which would thus create a more supportive environment for skilled migrants. Encouraging collaboration would also ensure that these initiatives are well-coordinated and effective. Therefore, these policies will ultimately foster a more inclusive and equitable environment in Silicon Valley for Chinese emigrants as well as other minorities.

9. Conclusion

This paper concludes that among the skilled migrants in Silicon Valley, Waithood creates a sense of uncertainty and underemployment. It is worsened by several policies, such as the H-1B visa cap. It prevents the integration of the Chinese into the local job markets. Additionally, there are several language barriers as well as cultural barriers that exist. Due to this, highly skilled Chinese professionals end up in positions that do not let them use their skills to the fullest. So, there are long periods of zero growth in their careers and lives financially. Such things put off life milestones like getting a house, hence forming your family with marriage. Consequently, a sense of instability is generated, which harms the mental and career quality of Chinese immigrants in Silicon Valley. This, in turn, makes them feel frustrated and also pushes their levels of stress, anxiety, and depression upward. Moreover, they are also under pressure to provide support at home. Where these expectations are not met, and strained familial relations such as marriages. Sadly, children pay the price for that.

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Therefore, it is a necessity to have policies that will help overcome these problems. Such an advancement should consist of a decrease in the visa cap under H-1B. Additionally, the state should publicize language and cultural programs that would help minority groups become more fully integrated into society. However, this is strictly a thought experiment, and future studies should undertake surveys and use quantitative data to determine the socioeconomic impacts of waithood. A composite measure of waithood, alongside a regression analysis with factors that affect it, would greatly add to the content of this discussion and make its scope a lot more extensive.

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