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Small Pond Migration: Chinese migrant shopkeepers in South Africa

By

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Committee in charge:

Professor Irene Bloemraad, Chair

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Abstract

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Professor Irene Bloemraad, Chair

The steady growth of Chinese migrants to South Africa in the past decade provides an opportunity to use Amartya Sen's (2001) capabilities approach in the field of immigration. This theoretical framing along with qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews and participant observation in three South African cities, Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein, reveals that the Chinese employ, what I call, a small pond migration strategy—utilizing mobility to maximize their social, economic, and human capital. I argue that mainland Chinese migrants move to South Africa because of a desire to adventure out of China and pursue freedoms associated with being one's own boss. Once in South Africa, they choose to stay because of comfortable weather and a slower pace of life, despite losing freedoms associated with high crime in Johannesburg. As a contrast to these mainland Chinese migrants, Chinese migrants from the province of Fujian embrace a hyper-small pond migration strategy where they move year to year searching out the best places to make money. This is because rather than valuing long-term development and quality of life concerns, Fujianese migrants value short-term money-making above all. These findings suggest alternative ways of understanding factors of migration, a way to utilize Sen's capabilities framework in immigration studies, a model that explains migration from more developed countries to less developed ones, and a potentially predictive model of what may happen throughout the African continent as China invests more in Africa.

This dissertation is dedicated to God, my wife,
and the many other people in my life who have shaped
my mind and heart.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Shan zhong wu lao hu, hao zi cheng da wang.
“In a mountain with no tigers, the monkey becomes king”
– Chinese proverb

In February 2012 I arrived in Johannesburg, South Africa to begin a six-month research stint conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation with Chinese shopkeepers in South Africa. Each morning I drove to various Chinese malls to spend several hours observing and conducting interviews. The driving to and fro itself was quite an adventure, as I was quickly forced to adjust to the lack of enforced rule of law when it came to the traffic in Johannesburg. Cars would go before the light turned green, bus lanes would appear out of nowhere and disappear just as suddenly, unclearly marked roads gave way to drivers creating their own lanes, and local mini-bus taxis would stop in the middle of high speed roads to pick up and drop off passengers without warning. These regularly occurring traffic infractions were not a result of a lack of police patrolling the streets—on the contrary, many infractions happened in plain view of police officers on duty. If anything it felt as if the police in Johannesburg were everywhere. Nearly every day that I went to visit a Chinese mall I saw at least one police car on my way there and on my way back.

During the course of my ten-week stay in Johannesburg the police stopped me three separate times. You might assume that I am simply a horrible driver, but when driving in South Africa I was extra careful to follow all road signs and laws, specifically for fear of encountering the ubiquitous police. Still I was pulled over at random checkpoints littered throughout the city. Each time I was pulled over I was told something different about the proper paperwork I needed to drive in South Africa. First, I was told that I needed an international driver’s license to drive legally in South Africa. Second, when I had that I was told that they needed to see my actual driver’s license as well as a copy of my passport. Third, after I showed them all of these documents they said I needed my actual passport, and not just a copy of it. Each time, after some argument and discussion, the police let me go without paying any fines or fees. Later, during my fieldwork, Chinese migrants told me that the police often do this and are really looking for some kind of bribe at these checkpoints.

Despite the plethora of police in Johannesburg, the city is still riddled with crime. Chinese respondents were consistently telling me that “If you have not yet experienced crime or been robbed in South Africa, then you haven’t really (*zhen zhen de*) lived here! We all accept that this will happen to us eventually.” Crime and the fear of crime was a regular part of life in Johannesburg. Many stores close early, around sundown, because few customers venture out after dark. Resident’s lives were restricted due to fear of crime and Chinese migrants experienced this regularly: “Chinese people live simple lives here. We wake up, go to work, and then go back home. Every day it is like this—seven days a week. We’re too scared of the crime to go out and do anything at night, so we hide in our homes like mice in little holes.” My experience of the streets of Johannesburg was no different, where walking around even in daytime never felt safe. Although I enjoy walking and exploring on my own, my South African friends and colleagues would always warn me, even going out of their way to provide a ride for me for fear I would get robbed on the streets of Johannesburg.

I begin with the description of traffic, police, and crime in Johannesburg to show that this was a city with little enforced rule of law. It is a bit like the wild west of the American frontier,

where on the one hand, jobs and opportunities abound, yet on the other hand, risks and a lack of established law make it a precarious place to set up shop. As with the American gold rush in the mid-1800s that saw thousands of Chinese migrants head to the “Gold Mountain” (the Chinese name for San Francisco) with dreams of striking it rich, recent Chinese migrants in Johannesburg have come to this southern frontier to navigate through the difficulties of a lack of rule of law while at the same time taking advantage of nonexistent red tape surrounding migrating to South Africa and setting up one’s own business. As one Chinese business owner put it, “All you need is 10,000 Rand¹ and you can be your own boss here!”

Much like the American frontier held promises of becoming instantly rich, so too do the stories of early, first-mover Chinese migrants to South Africa. Those arriving over ten years ago and especially those coming to South Africa in the 1990s have made fortunes with very little education or marketable skills, opening wholesale shops and importing cheap but quality goods from China. These stories have lured more and more Chinese people to Johannesburg with the aspirations of striking gold in this southern frontier. Similar to that of the American West, late-arriving Chinese migrants (who arrived in the last decade or so) have encountered various difficulties in making good money. Many in the past two years are unable to make enough money to start their own businesses and must work as wage laborers for someone else’s shop. When I asked one respondent how the money was in South Africa, she told me, “No, money is not good to make here (*bu hao zhuan*). Look around. It is so quiet and it is like this most of the day. How can we make money? Some months, when it is really bad, we even lose money!” With money making becoming increasingly difficult over the years, why do new Chinese migrants continue to move to South Africa and why do many choose to stay instead of returning back to their homelands?

In this dissertation, I investigate the lives of recent Chinese migrants to South Africa who venture out to the southern frontier to set up shops and become self-employed small business owners. I seek to explain why Chinese people choose to move to South Africa, what are the subjective costs and benefits of their journey, and how do they continue to make decisions about where to live. In seeking to understand the narrative of their journeys, I argue that Chinese migrants move to South Africa, a less developed and less competitive country, not only as a comparative advantage strategy, but more significantly to increase desired freedoms and capabilities in their daily lives. In the end, South African historical connections with Taiwan, transnational Chinese social networks, dreams of self-employment, a desire to venture outside of China, daily lifestyle differences in South Africa, and patterns in migrants’ attitude towards the costs and benefits of moving come together to explain the structure and nature of the migration pattern of Chinese migrants moving throughout the nation of South Africa. This case study provides an alternative framework for understanding migration patterns, shifting the focus of migration theory from a solely place-focused understanding to a more migrant-focused approach. Additionally, it serves as an important empirical case because over the last decade, as China builds more ties to Sub-Saharan Africa, the nation of South Africa provides a predictive model for what may take place throughout the rest of the continent.

A Capabilities Approach for Migration Theory

Recent literature around the migration-development nexus focuses mostly on questions of remittances and brain drain. The great majority of this research centers around economic aspects of migration and development, specifically how money from immigrants can transform their less

¹ This was approximately \$1,000 to \$1,250 at the time of the interview.

developed home countries (Lopez 2009; Ratha and Mohapatra 2007), the effects of migration on education (Ratha and Mohapatra 2007; McKenzie and Rapoport 2006; Yang 2003), and the validity of brain drain and brain circulation theories (Kapur and McHale 2005; Saxenian 2005). Typically, these studies take economically-centered variables that represent migration (e.g. amount of remittances received, number of emigrants) and development (e.g. highest level of education attained, roads built, buildings constructed, water availability) and look at the relationship between these variables. Although some models have argued that migration is an endogenous variable existing between macro- and micro-economic variables (Haas 2010), these approaches in practice remain confined to an economic outlook.

In contrast to an economic lens on migration and development, Peggy Levitt (1999) interrogates how overseas contact between emigrants and those left behind results in significant cultural transfers and changing social attitudes. The concept of social remittances pushes the migration-development nexus beyond strict economic understandings towards the importance of cultural and social values as well. However, no framework exists to unite these two sets of literature, as economic viewpoints of migration and development remain separate from work on social remittances. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, both frameworks focus on place as the site for development. In other words, migration is the catalyst that provokes development which takes place in a particular location: the country of origin of the immigrants. Although Levitt comes the closest to arguing that change occurs on the individual level, the change in social remittances is not so much seen as ‘development’ rather than a change in attitude that then causes some economic, social, or political progress (Jones-Correa 1998; Levitt 1999).

Amartya Sen provides a framework for understanding development that shifts the focus away from sending/receiving countries towards the individuals themselves as the place where development occurs. This framework is an alternative to the aforementioned models of the migration-development nexus that see migration and development as acting upon one another, rather than embedded in each other (Haas 2010). In his book, *Development as Freedom*, Sen (2001) shows the end goal of development is increasing an individual’s capability to live a better life. Development should not be confined to national projects enhancing infrastructure or employing fiscal and monetary policies to generate higher gross national product, but development includes any action where the end goal is to increase the capabilities, freedoms, and choices that individuals have to choose from so that they can live the way they want to live. In other words, Sen provides an alternative view that sees increasing political freedoms, economic facilities, and social opportunities as all important parts of development and this process is situated in individuals’ ability to pursue better lives (Sen 2001: 36- 40). Additionally, instead of the typical place-based development framework, where the implied ends of development is improving a place (e.g. industrialization of a city or country), Sen shifts the focus onto the individuals of that place and how the individuals benefit and gain freedoms and capabilities as a result of development.

Sen defines these capabilities as “a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)” (Sen 2001:75). A capability set, then, is all the choices and potential life trajectories that an individual can choose and Sen’s capabilities approach seeks to evaluate not only what life path the individual takes but also what potential options the individual has open to him or her. Poverty, human rights violations, dictatorships all represent potential barriers to a person’s capability set. Sen also recognizes importantly that in many cases, development projects may empirically result in increasing one set of capabilities at the expense of another (for example:

suspending rights to promote a transition to capitalism); however he contends that in theory and ideally, all capabilities can increase together (making democratic and education based development the most ideal development path).

This capabilities approach provides two major contributions to understanding migration and development. First, it shifts the focus away from place as a static site for development to occur—a view with deep roots in traditional understandings of development (Rapley 2007)—and instead focuses on individuals as the terminal site or goal of development. Second, it pushes development and migration literature to go beyond a narrow focus on economic effects to understanding social effects not only as intervening variables, but also as part of the goal of development. For example, the possibility of migration changing education levels or social remittances changing family dynamics is not only important because it has an effect on economic outcome variables, but also because education and gender equality themselves have intrinsic value in increasing a person's capabilities set and therefore should be understood as an important ends of development (Sen 2001: 38).

Two weaknesses of Sen, however, are that he does not consider migration as a strategy to improve one's capabilities and he still proposes a rather economistic way of understanding an individual's choices. The first weakness is where taken-for-granted ideas in basic migration theory have much to offer. All competing migration theories that explain why people migrate assume that individuals are acting out of their best interests to improve their capabilities set (Massey 1999). This is even true in cases of forced migration where although the migrant feels less choice in the matter, the act of migration is still in some way in their best interest. While this idea is far from anything new and has become a foundational assumption in all migration discussions, it is an idea that importantly extends Sen's development framework. Situating Sen in the context of migration theory reveals that perhaps the best way for agentic migrants to experience the greatest and most immediate increase in their capabilities is to simply exit their current environment and enter a new one—in other words, to migrate. An individual moving from one place to another can, in significant ways, instantly change their political freedoms, economic facilities, and social opportunities. Ultimately, without knowing it, Sen has created a development framework well-suited for interrogating the ideas of the migration and development.

The second weakness of Sen's capabilities approach is although he acknowledges that individuals value different capabilities differently, Sen portrays the desires (and goals) of individuals as commonly identifiable and rarely in conflict—especially in his discussion around the importance of democracy (Sen 2001:153, 158). This proposition could lead to the economistic idea that individuals always clearly express and choose what is best for his or her most important needs. Indeed, many attempts to apply the capabilities approach often strictly use national statistical data, not taking into account how individuals have different preferences (Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009; Klasen 2006; Nussbaum 2000). Research in the field of happiness, however, depicts a different reality—one that shows how people have varying and changing preference structures (Frederick and Loewenstein 1999; Easterlin 2001) and that the very act of achieving one's goals (such as increasing one's income) can cause preference changes towards other capabilities (Easterlin 2001; Stutzer 2003). This implies that national aggregate data on outcome variables may not represent what the individual actually wants. For example, one could observe immigrants experiencing large increases in their income as a result of moving yet that might not be the actual value that most migrants are seeking to experience as a result of their immigration. Sen's theory needs to provide room for the differences between

individuals' preferences and the changing nature of preference structures as a result of experiences such as achieving an increase in their capabilities. Although Sen acknowledges that individuals may have different desires and may weigh certain capabilities differently than other individuals, he does not interrogate this further, and instead uses this as evidence for why democracy is an important tool to reconciling and understanding what people want from development (Sen 2001:70).

Still, Sen's capabilities approach, taking into consideration the contributions of taken-for-granted ideas in migration and research in the field of happiness studies, provides a foundation for understanding the importance of a migrants' subjective quality of life. Ultimately the framework I propose here seeks to understand how migrants use mobility as a means to increasing their capabilities, but these freedoms are not random or economically predetermined. Nor are these capabilities universally regarded as equally desirable to all migrants. Instead, migrants must weigh the benefits of the freedoms they gain against the costs of the capabilities they lose to decide where they should go and how to utilize mobility to maximize their most desirable capabilities. Because of differing preference structures in individuals, the decision-making process of migrants is subjective, yet at the same time, patterns can be noticed across individuals because of social structures and cultural influences that play a major role in explaining how individuals come to prefer some capabilities over others. This framework provides deeper and more accurate insight into explaining why people migrate because it reveals patterns amongst the migrants' decision-making process, highlighting the freedoms that they value (or are willing to give up) to utilize mobility as a way to improve their quality of life. In other words, subjectivity in the migrants' preference structures does not result in each migrant having a different narrative of their migration journey. Instead, migrants end up having many similar ways of talking and thinking about their decisions to move and how they hope to improve their lives.

These patterns emerge despite individual differences because of what Durkheim (1895) calls "social facts." "A social fact is every way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations (Durkheim 1895:147)." In other words while the use of narratives uncovers the individual's personal and subjective values regarding different capabilities and their overall idea of what is a good life, because social facts exist that guide the individuals and their belief system, patterns emerge to help explain why people migrate from China to South Africa. Although the scope of this project is unable to isolate and determine every social fact involved in explaining the patterns across Chinese migrants, I point to some of these social facts in Chapter 2 when looking at the history and trajectory of Fujianese migrants and comparing them with other mainland Chinese migrants.

In order to capture the complex nature of capability sets in the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, I rely on participant observation as well as the narratives of the migrants themselves and their stories of life in China, life in South Africa, and their decision-making process in journeying from one place to another. The use of in-depth interviewing and migration narratives are the only way to capture the depth and complexities that come along with applying the capabilities approach to migration (Vandsemb 1995; Roth 1989; Richardson 1990; Czarniawska 2004). Explanatory factors for migration are complex and multiple, almost always including some level of trade off, where the migrant loses some capabilities to gain others. Relying on narrative data instead of quantitative data provides a different approach to explaining

motivations for migration—one that, in some cases, pinpoints more accurately which freedoms the migrants are trying to increase through their act of migration. One of the problems with qualitative narratives, especially when the subject is speaking about him or herself, is that the data is inherently biased. While this might be a weakness to a qualitative capabilities approach, it is at the same time its greatest strength, since those narratives are our only access point to the rhetorical strategies and meanings that the migrants themselves attach to their mobility. Because migrant narratives are inevitably told after the fact, it is always possible that the data is biased because of the passage of time. But this does not undercut the importance of narrative data revealing factors of migration, since migrants' evolving understanding of their own migration experiences influences their future decisions regarding mobility. This is not to say that qualitative data is better than quantitative data, but rather that these migrant narratives can get at specific information which statistical data is simply unable to uncover (Vandsemb 1995; Roth 1989; Richardson 1990; Czarniawska 2004). Migrant narratives, then, are not objective and are not necessarily accurate portrayals of reality, but reveal insight into the migrant's thought-process regarding migration, uncovering important patterns and social structures that can help explain their motivations for migration.

Common models of migration isolate three sets of factors: economic, social, and political. Economic models focus on individuals and wages (Hatten and Williamson 1998), household risk minimization (Massey et al. 1998), businesses, and a bifurcated labor market (Sassen 1998). Sassen in particular provides a political economic model that emphasizes capital venture flows and historical connections (Sassen 1988; Sassen 1998). Social models pay special attention to social capital and social ties (Menjivar 2000) as well as social networks which snowball and accelerate migration flows (Massey 1999). Finally, political and legal constraints can channel migration by making some destinations more difficult or easier to enter than others, influencing the countries that migrants target (Massey 1999; Torpey 2000; Zolberg 1999). Adding in a capabilities approach does not reject these commonly understood factors for migration, but instead, comes along side existing theories to contribute another dimension to understanding why people migrate.

Using Sen's capabilities approach suggests other important factors to consider. Although this approach is not commonly applied to migration as a development strategy, scholars have tried to create measures to assess capabilities in the context of development. Capabilities-approach advocates have focused on a wide-range of indicators including gender equality (Klasen 2006), human rights (Sen 2005), physical and mental health, relationship with the environment, social affiliations, opportunities (Nussbaum 2000), poverty, vulnerability, violence (Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009), and aggregate index measures such as the Human Development Index (Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009), Gender-related Development Index, and the Gender Empowerment Measure (Klasen 2006). While this laundry list of factors is impressive work that helps to operationalize the capabilities framework, it does so only on a national level, using exclusively measurable aggregate data. This limits the scope of the capabilities framework, especially in applying it to understand why people migrate, because it cannot get at the slippery nature of the migrants' preferences and their decision-making process as they consider the freedoms that they gain and lose in the process of migration.

Additionally, using national aggregate statistical data to investigate motivations for migration would force the researcher to analyze these factors out of convenience (because the data already exists) or out of presumption that the migrants care about these capabilities and only these capabilities. In other words, a method using aggregate data would actually test what the

researcher *presumes* is why migrants migrate rather than allowing the migrants to speak for themselves. Even testing many different aggregate statistics would still yield the problem of not knowing how large of an impact each independent variable had on the migrants' decision to migrate while still begging the question of whether other untested independent variables had an effect. I use interviews, participant observation, and narrative data, asking questions about economic opportunities, political freedoms, environment and weather, health, social communities, and crime, to establish to what extent do Chinese migrants gain or lose these freedoms. While this method is more subject to some level of respondent bias, it ambitiously focuses on understanding the migrant's own thought-process and preference structure which is critical to employing capabilities approach in migration and development.

Applying the idea of freedoms and capabilities to the field of immigration is not a new idea, as nearly all competing migration theories that explain why people migrate assume that individuals are acting out of their best interests to improve their lives (and capability sets) (Massey 1999). The capabilities approach, however, has been applied to the field of immigration in an explicit manner in a far lesser degree. The United Nations Development Program in its 2009 report on human development and migration chose to adopt a capabilities approach to immigration, stating that mobility is one of the fundamental freedoms that the global poor have (United Nations Development Report Team 2009:15). Unfortunately, the report goes no further in applying Sen's framework, choosing to focus on aggregate, national statistics in discussing the motivations and barriers to potential migrants, instead of focusing on the individual narrative and how migrants use mobility to increase other (quantitatively measurable and non-measurable) capabilities. In Vanessa Fong's work on Chinese students, Fong uses Sen's framework to explain a dramatic increase in Chinese students wanting to study abroad in developed countries, arguing that a key explanatory factor is a desire to obtain freedoms only available to developed countries (Fong 2011:142-144). I employ a similar framework to the way Fong applies Sen, but to the field of immigration more generally. Furthermore, while Fong uses Sen only peripherally in her framing of her case, I use Sen as the foundation for understanding Chinese migration to South Africa.

To conclude this section, applying Sen's capabilities approach to immigration means migration is about increasing freedoms, or one's ability to act in a way they find meaningful and valuable. This pushes migration theory to go beyond economic and quantitative explanatory factors (such as national income statistics) towards a more narrative approach to understanding the migrant's experience as a journey increasing one's freedoms. Explanatory factors for migration are complex and multiple, almost always including some level of trade off, where the migrant loses some capabilities to gain others. Relying on narrative data instead of primarily quantitative data provides a unique approach to explaining motivations for migration—one that gets at the migrant's decision-making process and their tastes, preferences, and values for different freedoms and capabilities which they gain through migration. This framework avoids assumptions about the migrant's preferences in a way that national aggregate statistics simply cannot get away from.

Bridging the South-South and South-North Divide

Using this capabilities-based framework will not only provide a deeper theory that pushes the migration-development literature beyond solely place-focused and economic understandings, but can also help deconstruct a dualism that persists in both development and migration theory between the global north and global south. These terms come out of the Cold

War and have since been a way to understand the global system (Reuveny and Thompson 2007), categorizing rich, developed countries as the global north and poor, developing countries as the global south. Like other dualisms, the discussion around the global north and global south carries with it ideas of power and domination—the north is the aggressive, dominant actor while the south is the powerless and passive submissive. The problem is not only a question of accurate portrayal of reality, but also a question of overemphasizing differences between the dualism rather than emphasizing the relationships and connections within the dualism (Massey 1994). In other words the dualism produces understandings of the north and the south as homogenous areas completely different from one another and that are produced independently of each other, instead of focusing on the important connections between how both are simultaneously produced.

Although these ideas originated from questions of development, development theorists have critiqued dualistic language, attempting to interrogate the interconnected nature of the global north and south (Frank 1966; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Escobar 1995; Hall 1996; Hart 2002). In the field of immigration, however, theorists have more or less readily accepted the use of north-south language. This is perhaps because the field focuses on people traversing north-south boundaries, and therefore is already focused on the interconnected nature of the global north and south; this interconnectedness is most apparent in immigration's world-systems theory which focuses on geographies of centrality and marginality across the north-south divide (Robinson 2009; Sassen 2001). Beyond this, another way that immigration theory employs the north-south language is through separating the field into a binary: research that focuses on either south-to-north or south-to-south migration patterns. In general, south-to-north migration encompasses a majority of immigration research including theories of migration and integration, while south-to-south migration research focuses on refugees and other forms of forced migration. Although recently, some researchers have tried to go beyond this division (Ratha and Shaw 2007; Gindling 2009; Melde 2010), the field of immigration remains split into two separate spheres dealing with what has become to be seen as two separate phenomena.²

Furthermore, dualistic north-south assumptions involve essentializing much about the so-called global north and global south. Immigrants are assumed to see the global north as always and in all places desirable and generally either want out of the global south because the global south has so many sociopolitical problems (including problems with responding to natural disasters and famines), they are forced out, or their economic situation is so poor and their living standards are so low that any shot at even the worst paying jobs (such as manual labor and domestic work) in a developed country is far better than their lives in the global south. Much like in development rhetoric, the north and the south are essentialized to be internally homogenous, while at the same time completely distinct and different from one another—they are opposites such that the north is a desirable place to live while the south is a place to escape from.

The facts, however, seem to tell a different story. The United Nations Human Development Report (2009) reveals that only 37 percent of international migration in the world is from south to north (21-22). This means that while the discourse of immigration literature often paints the picture of overwhelmingly desirable characteristics in the global north and undesirable living conditions in the global south, the reality is that only 37 percent of all

² Interestingly, the dualism also obscures north-north and north-south migration patterns. In particular, research around south-north migration assumes that the incoming migrants face great integration challenges that immigrants coming from the north would not face. Although I do not discuss north-north or north-south migration, presumptions such as this parallels the misunderstandings of south-south migration scholarship.

international migration is from south to north. This suggests that the north-south dichotomy creates a discourse that in some way misrepresents reality. At the same time, 75 percent of all international migrants move to a country with a higher Human Development Index (HDI) than their country of origin (22-23). In other words, while north-south discourse tends to exaggerate south-to-north migration, it still has some truth to it—that migrants are moving to improve their circumstances and livelihood, and that in general the strategy they use is to move to a richer country. What this implies, however, is that the division in migration research between south-north migration and south-south migration is a mistake because movement within the global south resembles movement from south to north in that the majority of both cases involve going from a lower-HDI country to a higher one. Although this does not in any way definitively prove that research assumptions about questions of choice, political pressure, and socioeconomic motivations are not different between south-south migration and south-north migration, it does show that there may indeed be more (ignored) similarities than (over-emphasized) differences. This case of Chinese-South African migration falls into the minority of global cases where migrants travel from a higher-HDI country to a lower one, yet I argue that their decisions and goals resemble that of most migrants moving from a poor country to a richer one. The difference, however, lies in large part in the way Chinese migrants employ mobility as a strategy for increasing their capabilities and to a lesser degree their values and preferences of what a better life looks like.

While I do not find the north-south language used in the field of immigration generally problematic, I do find the way the field is divided into separate theories of south-north migration and south-south migration deeply problematic. A sense of choice seems to separate the two types of migration. In south-north migration, researchers focus on the choice migrants have to migrate, usually surrounding questions of improving socioeconomic and political conditions. In south-south migration cases, however, research often depicts the migrants as having a lack of choice, taking activity and agency away from these migrants. Much of this research therefore centers on refugees, but even those dealing with socioeconomic reasons for migration imply that the migrants have no other choice (for example, the evolution of “economic refugees” globally and in South Africa **Invalid source specified.**). In south-north migration cases emigrants are seen as active while in south-south migration cases migrants are seen as passive. Recent research begins to acknowledge the active role southern migrants can play in developing their own standard of living, showing how they utilize stepwise migration strategies to achieve some level of development, as in the case of Filipino domestic workers in Asia (Paul 2011). This represents an important step forward, but a step that requires a stronger theoretical framing to permeate beyond south-south migration studies in a way that breaks down the separation of theories and literature between the two categories of research.

Theories of why people migrate serve as an example of how migration literature is bifurcated along south-north and south-south lines; this example is particularly pertinent to this dissertation’s research question of why the Chinese migrate to South Africa. Typical explanations of why people migrate come from examples of south-to-north migration, and so focus on the aforementioned motivation factors of wages (Hatten and Williamson 1998), bifurcated labor markets (Sassen 1998), household risk minimization (Massey et al. 1998), immigration policies (Zolberg 1999; Torpey 2000), cumulative causation (Massey 1999), and social capital and familial ties (Menjívar 2000). While south-to-south migration cases also take into account these explanatory factors, south-south theories pay additional attention to other factors such as proximity, seasonal migration, powerful push factors, historical and cultural

linkages, and a country's income category (such as moving from an extremely poor country to a low-income country or moving from a low-income country to a middle-income country) (Ratha and Shaw 2007). The divided nature of literature on motivational factors for migration implies that there are important differences between south-north migration patterns and south-south migration patterns.

While I do not argue that theories should treat all cases equally, regardless of geographic locations, I instead argue that a capabilities approach to migration theory would help bridge the gap between two literatures that otherwise have very little conversation with one another. Instead of thinking in terms of sending and receiving countries and what categories these locations fit into, a capabilities approach focuses on the migrants themselves and how they employ mobility as a strategy to achieve development (or increase their capabilities and freedoms improving their subjective quality of life). This would reveal that some migrants traversing south-north boundaries are employing similar strategies to those traversing south-south boundaries. Certainly, geographic specificities would change their experiences, but the individual migrants and their motivations may be so similar with one another, despite south-south and south-north differences, that researchers could draw interesting comparisons between seemingly completely different migration patterns. While the small pond migration strategy in particular might not describe many cases of south-to-north migration (because of the nature of the strategy), one could imagine cases where the strategy is used in internal migration as well as south-south or north-north cases.³

China and South Africa: Global South or Global North?

Chinese-South African migration is an ideal example of a migration pattern that does not neatly fit into south-north or south-south categories. Existing theories would not only have difficulty categorizing the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, but would also provide incomplete explanations for this migration pattern. According to conventional standards, the case of Chinese immigrants in South Africa would fall under the category of south-to-south migration. One indication of this is through the Human Development Index, which looks at health, education, and standard of living as key indicators of development. Using this standard, typical countries of the north (Western European countries and the United States, Canada, and Australia) all score at least a 0.8 on a zero to one scale, while China comes in at 0.663 (ranked 89th out of 185) and South Africa at 0.597 (ranked 110th out of 185) (United Nations Development Programme 2010). While few would disagree that South Africa is part of the global south, many recognize China's uniqueness in contrast to other poor countries. This is because China has some of the world's largest and developed cities as well as a burgeoning economy that some predict will be the world's largest economy by 2016 (OECD 2013). In spite of its growing global economy, scholars still consider China as a developing country, and thereby part of the global south (Arrighi 2007; Jacques 2009; Rodrik 2010). This separation between China and the rest of the global south, however, reveals that indeed the south contains within it crucial differences that make generalization difficult, if not, in the case of China, impossible.

³ While I can only speculate about other examples of small pond migration, the Chinese in Latin America as well as senior retirement strategies in the U.S. seem to at least in part resemble a small pond migration strategy. This leads me to believe that even mobility strategies that depend on characteristics of place transcend the north-south dichotomy (even more evident in the heterogeneous reality that rich countries have areas with low standards of living and poor countries have areas with high standards of living).

Of all the countries of the global south, South Africa might be the other peculiar outlier. Again using the HDI, South Africa is only one of four countries in all of Sub-Saharan Africa to post a HDI above 0.5 (United Nations Development Programme 2010). The country is further distinguished from its southern counterparts because of its leadership role in establishing regional institutions and holding international conferences around issues from development and poverty to health and environment (Pahad 2002; Okumu 2002). Finally, because of its long-standing colonial history, development of industry, current ties to the Britain and the Netherlands, and democratic transition from apartheid, South Africa's uniqueness makes it difficult to easily lump in with other countries in the global south.

Furthermore, looking back at typical theories that help explain why people migrate across borders in the global south (Ratha and Shaw 2007), each south-south explanation raises questions for the case of Chinese-South African migration. Chinese migrants in South Africa are not seasonal migrants and are also not political or economic refugees. In terms of proximity, 80 percent of all south-south migration happens between countries that share a border (Ratha and Shaw 2007), yet China is nearly halfway around the world from South Africa, resulting in higher migration costs than migration between bordering countries. In part because of these large geographic differences, these two places are culturally distinct—their cultural influences not having much overlap making the growing migration stream even more unlikely and unable to predict using existing south-south migration theories.

Finally, the majority of south to south migration cases are migrants moving from low income countries to nearby middle income countries or from countries with extreme poverty to low income countries. Available data indicates that excluding cases related to the breakup of the Soviet Union, only about 19 percent of south to south migrants move from a country with higher overall income to a country with lower income, with an indeterminate portion of these migrants being refugees and asylum seekers (Ratha and Shaw 2007). The movement from China to South Africa could fall within this 19 percent, and certainly does not reflect a move from a low income country to a middle income country or from a country with extreme poverty to a low income country.

Although Chinese-South African migration represents a unique case, one might still insist that employing a place-based theoretical framework (such as south-south and south-north literatures imply) would helpfully result in hypotheses based in the differences between China and South Africa. In other words, classic migration theory would focus on national statistical data that show the differences between China and South Africa and would use these differences as a basis for understanding why the Chinese move to South Africa. One can even expand this comparison beyond the classic factors (e.g. income, employment) to include some of the capabilities that Sen talks about in his understanding of economic opportunities, social facilities, and political freedoms. These aforementioned indicators include gender equality (Klasen 2006), human rights (Sen 2005), physical and mental health, relationship with the environment, social affiliations, opportunities (Nussbaum 2000), poverty, vulnerability, violence (Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009), and aggregate index measures such as the Human Development Index (Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009), Gender-related Development Index, and the Gender Empowerment Measure (Klasen 2006).

Using a framework based on aggregate statistical data would employ these capability measures along with aforementioned ones associated with traditional models of migration as potential explanations for why the Chinese migrate to South Africa. Comparing China and South Africa, China has a higher HDI (as stated earlier), Gender Inequality Index (rank 38 to 82),

perception of happiness (6.4 to 5.0 on a ten point scale), safety (74% to 20% feeling safe), and employment-to-population ratio (71% to 41.1%). The two countries have a similar Multidimensional Poverty Index (China has a slightly higher poverty index with .056 to .014 on a 0 to 1 scale). And finally, South Africa has higher empowerment statistics (based on satisfaction with voting, press freedom, and democratic governance) (Klugman 2010). Applying a place-based approach, then, suggests that migrants have little reason to move out of China and into South Africa (as opposed to moving to a different part of China). Of course, these macro-statistics do not account for important geographic inequalities, but this means either one would expect the great majority of Chinese coming from only underprivileged parts of China or the framework suggests that political freedoms are so highly preferred that migrants are willing to sacrifice many capabilities for increasing political freedom.

Table 1 – Comparing China and South Africa

	China	South Africa
Population	1,351 million (2012)	51.19 million (2012)
Gross Domestic Product	8,221 billion USD (2012)	384.3 billion USD (2012)
GINI Index⁴	42.1 (2009)	63.1 (2009)
Human Development Index⁵	0.663 (2010)	0.597 (2010)
Gender Inequality Index⁶	.213 (2012)	.462 (2012)
Perception of Happiness	6.4 (2010)	5.0 (2010)
Safety	74% feel safe (2010)	20% feel safe (2010)
Employment-to-Population Ratio	71% (2010)	41.1% (2010)
Multidimensional Poverty Index⁷	.056 (2010)	.014 (2010)

Sources: Data from World Bank/World DataBank (accessed November 30, 2013). <http://data.worldbank.org>; Klugman (2010).

In the end, however, I reject these hypotheses showing that in the case of Johannesburg where most of the Chinese immigration occurs, the Chinese come from all over China, including cities, suburbs, and rural areas. I also show that political freedom is not a salient issue in the migrants' narrative of their experience and many Chinese migrants are unable to articulate any difference in their political freedoms. Although classic explanatory factors of why people migrate, such as income, social ties, and immigration policies, do play a role in explaining Chinese-South African migration, many other factors, such as venturing out, pursuing the dream of self-employment, environment, and a slower pace of life, are far more influential in explaining why Chinese migrants choose to remain in South Africa.

It is not enough to apply Sen's capabilities approach to immigration if the operationalization of capabilities remains focused on national aggregate statistics. Part of the problem of the south-south and south-north dichotomy is that both focus on geographic place as the key determinant that separates two spheres of understanding. While I can understand how

⁴ Measures inequality between rich and poor in a society with higher scores representing greater inequality

⁵ Composite statistic that measures life expectancy, education, and income on a 0 to 1 scale where higher values indicate higher human development

⁶ UNDP measure that composites reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation where higher values indicate better gender equality

⁷ Measures poverty in terms of health, education, and living standards (instead of income) where higher numbers indicate higher deprivation

these dichotomies seem natural, convenient, and useful, I argue that thinking about migration patterns in terms of the migrants themselves, as opposed to sending and receiving countries, provide a more fruitful framework to understand the motivations of migration. This does not mean that place does not matter; on the contrary, place matters a great deal, yet it is not the characteristics of the place that matters, but rather the migrants and their experience of the place as well as how social structures of the place become ingrained in the individual that are important to consider. Using a solely place-based framework, one would look at the case of Chinese and South African migration as a pattern that is so unique and peculiar that it likely has no meaningful contribution or comparison with other migration patterns. Focusing instead on the migrants themselves, their experience of both China and South Africa, and their decision-making narratives reveals important ways that these migrants think about mobility as a tool to improve their lives, leading to fruitful understandings that an over-emphasis on place instead of people would otherwise obscure.

Place matters, but not because places are easily definable containers with static characteristics that are measurable and quantifiable—instead, place matters because people are an integral part of the place, and in particular, migrants derive and ascribe meaning to the places from which they leave and go to (Massey 1994). The use of national, aggregate statistical data to understand motivations of migration understands place in terms of the former, whereas a capabilities approach that focuses on the migrants themselves understands the role of place in terms of the latter. As mentioned earlier, the former framework can only assume that the difference in national statistics is the primary motivators for migration, but if the migrants themselves do not ascribe meaning to these national differences, then the data is unable to show what actually motivates the migrants and their decision to move.

As an alternative to a framework that thinks of place as static and disconnected from the migrants themselves, I argue that what is important is not simply where the migrants come from and go to, but instead, *how they use mobility from one place to another as a strategy to improve their capabilities*. In this way, understanding mobility as a development strategy can serve as a basis for grounding comparisons between south-north and south-south migration cases. Immigration research has long investigated the different ways that migrants use mobility as a development strategy to improve their lives. Perhaps one of the most basic and widespread examples is that of unskilled labor migration. Some of the most common migration patterns of unskilled labor include Filipino domestic workers in East and Southeast Asia and Mexican immigrants in the Southwest United States. The migration streams of unskilled labor migration could be further subdivided based on industry, region, race, or prevalence, but across most examples, the basic strategy will remain the same: migrants utilize mobility to increase their chances of finding a higher paying job in a more developed country. This mobility strategy relies heavily on remittances, or sending money to families back home, either to help diversify their household income or to support other household financial endeavors. In addition, receiving countries of this kind of immigration often have a structural need for unskilled labor in these industries and so create demand for unskilled labor migration.

Although not every case of unskilled labor migration is the same, applying a capabilities approach to understand these cases might reveal similarities amongst these migration patterns. This means that south-south unskilled labor migration and south-north unskilled labor migration has more in common than general immigration theories suggest. The decision-making process of immigrants who migrate into unskilled labor markets may have similar goals and utilize mobility in a similar manner to achieve key increases in their capabilities and freedoms, especially

freedoms based on economic gains. It is likely that these gains in economic capabilities are at the cost of losses in other freedoms, such as leaving behind family and social networks. A capabilities approach, then, may reveal interesting comparisons between different migration patterns showing that despite cultural and regional differences, similarities exist in the way migrants employ mobility to improve their quality of life. For example, Mexican migrants moving to California (south-to-north migration) and Mozambican immigrants moving to South Africa (south-to-south migration) may have far more in common than general immigration theory would suggest.

One such example of framing migration patterns in terms of development strategies is Anju Mary Paul's work with stepwise migration (Paul 2011). Paul uncovers the process of how Filipinos migrate to Gulf States, Singapore, and other intermediate countries as stepping stone countries with plans to eventually move on to a highly developed, westernized country. Paul effectively adopts a framework that focuses not necessarily on specific migration patterns between two (or more) countries, but instead, approaches the case of Filipino immigrants in terms of how they utilize mobility as a way to achieve their stated goals. In this case, stepwise migration consists of navigating through stepping stone countries as a way to increase their education, work experience, and income so that they can overcome high barriers to entry that exist in First World, highly developed countries. Not only does Paul reveal a specific way of utilizing mobility to improve one's life, but it also shows how migrants are consciously engaging with manipulating mobility to their advantage, being aware of and planning the use of immigration as a development strategy with the end goal of increasing their capabilities and freedoms. One could further analyze Paul's case, finding what key freedoms are most important in this mobility strategy and what capabilities are lost in the process.

In a Mountain with No Tigers: Small Pond Migration

Unlike the Filipinos that Paul studied, the case of Chinese migrants to South Africa is not a case of employing the stepwise migration strategy, but instead employing what I term a "small pond migration" strategy. There is a Chinese proverb which says, *shan zhong wu lao hu, hou zi cheng da wang*, which means, "In a mountain with no tigers, the monkey becomes king." The proverb expresses the idea that in a place without a clear leader or dominant figure, even weaker, less prominent individuals can become the dominant ones. This Chinese saying is similar to that of the American idiom, "Big fish in a small pond," which expresses the notion that someone is only important not because he or she has inherent value, but rather because the person is in a small environment where competition is sparse. Because of this lack of competition, he or she is able to become an important and necessary part of the setting. Applying these sayings to the fields of immigration and development, the mountain with no tiger or the small pond, on a global scale represents those places in the world that have difficulty competing with the rest of the world. These places are less competitive globally because they have several disadvantages such as education, infrastructure, functioning government, economic strength and stability, military power, technology, and often a history of exploitation (via colonialism or imperialism). In other words, the so-called developing world, the Third World, or the global south resembles such places that one might consider small ponds. Because of these internal difficulties, countries in the global south tend to produce populations who have a comparative disadvantage in human capital when competing against those who were raised in more privileged countries.

Staying with this analogy, the Third World's status as a small pond is not only because of internal difficulties, but their comparative disadvantage are importantly tied to the First World;

rich countries with more resources that can produce some of the most skillful and productive people in terms of education and experience. Naturally, most of these First World individuals, having been raised and trained in their home countries, continue to live in the places that they are most comfortable with. And while immigration is a massive and increasingly common phenomenon, dominant and skillful people (tigers) with a comparative advantage over most of the world's population, will tend to migrate within the developed world, choosing to live in countries that exhibit the ideals and comforts that they have grown accustomed to. This includes everything from paved streets, high-speed Internet, and diverse food choices, to rule of law, democracy, and health and hygiene awareness.

What continues to polarize the world into mountains without tigers and mountains with tigers is that big fish living in small ponds tend to want to move up into bigger ponds. In other words, skilled and educated people that find themselves in less developed places want to move into the First World to take advantage of the aforementioned comforts available in developed countries but harder to find and are generally more expensive in developing countries (Feliciano 2006). Additionally, more jobs and businesses that pay well and offer higher salaries and benefits often exist in developed countries, and so poorer countries have difficulty competing with developed countries in keeping their homegrown, exceptional talent at home (Carrington and Detragiache 1998; Adams Jr. 2004). Although this is an over-simplified explanation, it serves to provide a basis for the global phenomenon of brain drain. Interestingly enough, even the American idiom of big fish in a small pond has a derogatory implication that conveys it is in fact meaningless to be an important and powerful person in a place without the most important and powerful people. You are not really important if you are a big fish in a small pond. You should rather move to a bigger pond (or the ocean) and see if you can compete in that environment. The global system of immigration and development seems to also follow this logic.

The Chinese proverb, however, does not include this derogatory implication, which is perhaps suggestive of a more positive Chinese cultural attitude towards becoming a monkey king. It instead implies that the monkey is cunning for its ability to ascend to a powerful position because of the lack of competitors in its environment. In other words, instead of looking down on becoming a big fish in a small pond, Chinese people commend those who take advantage of the lack of another dominate presence and rise to the top. Chinese migrants in South Africa go there in part to become a big fish in a smaller pond.

Taken from these sayings, the idea of a small pond migration strategy is one where *migrants move to a lesser developed country or region to take advantage of less competition and/or characteristics of the receiving place which effectively increases the value of their existing social, economic, and human capital*. In other words, rather than improving their socioeconomic status through traditional means such as education or work experience, Chinese migrants use mobility to seek out geographic spaces where they experience an increase in the effectiveness of their existing capital. Through the use of small pond migration, Chinese migrants who move to South Africa experience an almost immediate increase in the value of their capital which enables them to gain more freedoms. In China, these migrants did not have many relationships with those of higher socioeconomic class, but once they arrive in South Africa, they gain social capital through being able to more directly utilize relationships with family and friends who arrived earlier in South Africa and have had economic success. In terms of economic capital, although Chinese migrants do not necessarily have more money, because of exchange rate differences and cheaper land, resources, and a lower cost of living in South Africa,

individuals experience more freedom and capability with the money they already have. Finally, because of extreme competition in China's growing economy, the rural poor and low-educated Chinese people have difficulty utilizing their human capital and experiencing the benefits of economic growth. Moving to the smaller pond of South Africa, then, allows them to better compete against local small-scale entrepreneurs. Additionally, because of their ability to speak Chinese, they are able to utilize social networks with Chinese businesspeople in China to help import more competitive and cheaper goods to South Africa. Speaking Chinese becomes a valuable asset in terms of their human capital which enables them to succeed in the South African market. Chinese migrants in South Africa look to take advantage of these new found capabilities as means to further add to and expand their freedoms.

Although I provide more examples of small pond migration in the subsequent chapters, before concluding this chapter, I lay out some key examples in the case of Chinese immigrants in South Africa as a way to clarify and articulate the mobility strategy of small pond migration. As stated earlier, small pond migration is one form of utilizing mobility to increase one's capabilities set. While this strategy was not always intentional or deliberate, several Chinese migrants seem to express this idea of wanting to be a big fish in a small pond. When asked where they would consider moving to, one respondent said, "We aren't considering going to any developed place, like the U.S. or Europe. Instead, the only places besides China we're thinking about are even more backward (*luo hou*) places, like Mozambique or Zimbabwe." The most common places that Chinese migrants considered moving to besides China were areas outside Johannesburg, which they called "*shan xia*" which literally translated means the foot of a mountain. This refers to rural villages between 50 and 300 kilometers away from major cities, like Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. Chinese migrants frequently talked about how if the business continued to deteriorate in Johannesburg, they would consider moving to *shan xia* locations to do business, where they hear from relatives that business is good, despite poor infrastructure, housing, and safety. This way of thinking reveals the Chinese and their desire to employ a small pond migration strategy, where they consider moving to a lesser developed area to increase their capital, thereby helping them to achieve their goals.

Small pond migration provides Chinese people with rather immediate increases in effective capital. In terms of social capital, Chinese migrants moved to South Africa because of connections with family and friends who have already started their own businesses. This allows them have social connections with those who have already succeeded in achieving the goal of stable self-employment. While migrants lived in China, these connections were only useful insofar as they received remittances from South African family and friends. Arriving in South Africa, however, Chinese migrants are now able to utilize these connections for job opportunities and to start their own business. Nearly every respondent described their migration narrative as beginning with a family member in South Africa asking them to come over to help them with their business. These relatives helped plan visas and even pay for Chinese migrants to come to South Africa. Not only would these earlier arriving relatives provide newly arriving Chinese migrants with jobs in their shops, but they would also provide housing and the support needed to transition into a new country. From these early stages, Chinese migrants further utilize familial ties to make more business connections with suppliers and mall owners and after typically a year or two, they use these connections to venture out and open their own stores. While potential Chinese migrants have always had these social ties to relatives in South Africa, coming to South Africa expands the effective use of their social capital, enabling more ways for them to use this capital and to build on it. Here, the characteristic that allows for this expansion in social capital is

not anything to do with the geographic place of South Africa, but instead, a growing Chinese population as well as a specific history of Chinese immigrants successfully doing business in South Africa (Hart 2002; Park 2012).

Chinese migrants also experience an increase in their economic capital. One way this occurs immediately is because of exchange rates and lower costs of living. Migrants, even those who had under high school education, were acutely aware of the exchange rate between China and South Africa, saying things like “business is not as good now, because the exchange rate is not as good. When we first came, it was something like 1.5 or 1.6, but now it’s more like 1.3.” Also, when asked about how their economic situation compared since arriving in South Africa, most migrants talked about lower living costs using it to evaluate their real incomes. Migrants would discuss, in detail, the costs of rent, food, and transport and explain how things are cheaper across the board in South Africa. Most importantly, South Africa was understood as a good place for migrants’ quest for self-employment because South Africa had such low investment costs. Self-employment was not only about earning more money, but also about the freedoms associated with being one’s own boss, such as setting one’s own hours, not having anyone to answer to, and being able to move whenever and wherever a shop owner wanted. Overall, Chinese migrants approximated the cost of opening a shop in South Africa as about four times cheaper than in China because of cheaper rent and lack of government regulations. The smaller and less developed economy of South Africa worked in the Chinese’s favor, providing lower costs and effectively increasing the migrants’ economic capital.

Finally, in terms of human capital, although moving to South Africa does not actually alter one’s human capital (education and skills), it does allow for one’s existing education and skills to be, in some ways, more competitive and, thereby, more effective and valuable. Migrants talked about how competition in China was so difficult that one has to be an extremely successful student to have access to the new opportunities available in China’s growing economy. As an example of this, one migrant remarked, “Because I did not do well in school, I cannot compete in China’s economy.” Although in the migrants’ narratives, this was not the main self-expressed reason why they decided to move, migrants still felt that despite their low education they had far more opportunities in South Africa. Chinese self-made entrepreneurs had no official education or background in business, yet had no problems opening shops because of their social networks and ability to speak Chinese to import cheap goods from China. Respondents felt that they could not compete in China, especially with little to no experience in business (prior to coming to South Africa), and several migrants explicitly said that they came to South Africa to gain that experience so that they would have a better chance doing business in China when they went back. Additionally, in South Africa because very few shopkeepers and small-scale entrepreneurs could speak Chinese, Chinese immigrants had an advantage over their competition. By utilizing their ability to speak Chinese, recent Chinese migrants quickly fostered connections with Chinese businesspeople in China and local South African Chinese wholesalers, enabling them to get competitive imports of cheap Chinese-made goods into South Africa. Being able to speak Chinese, then, becomes a huge advantage in their human capital when compared with the local competition.⁸

⁸ On the flip side, however, being unable to speak English worked against the Chinese migrants. I will discuss this more thoroughly in the chapter on losses in capabilities, but simply put, Chinese migrants felt that they really did not need much English to conduct their businesses and that the advantage of speaking Chinese far outweighed the disadvantage of not being able to speak English.

Method

To understand the narrative of Chinese migrants in South Africa, I spent a total of six months in South Africa conducting in-depth interviews and participant observation in three major cities: Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. Prior to this six-month research endeavor, five summer trips were made spread out across seven years (since 2006) to work with the Chinese community in South Africa. These trips included academic projects, such as working with the University of Witwatersrand as a research intern, and more informal interactions, such as working with Chinese missionaries and churches, while learning about the Chinese community through immersion and regular interaction. This dissertation utilizes previously established relationships with the Chinese in South Africa to gain access to the community. Rather than starting from scratch, I was able to quickly immerse myself in the Chinese shop-keeping community and take advantage of a full six months of research.

Through the use of in-depth interviewing and participant observation, a deep narrative of the lives of Chinese migrants was obtained and insight into their perspective on their life decisions became clear, especially those regarding migration. Interviews were conducted with people from the most recent group of Chinese immigrants, as defined by Park (2009), those who have arrived in South Africa over the last decade with the goal of becoming self-employed small-scale shopkeepers. I chose to focus on recent Chinese shopkeepers because they represent the largest growing group of Chinese people in South Africa.

Each chosen location serves to reveal different stages of Chinese shop-keeping in South Africa. Johannesburg is the most established of the three cities, but the Chinese population in Durban is quickly growing, attempting to become a large wholesale center for the southeastern part of South Africa. Although Durban is unlikely to ever reach the Chinese shop saturation levels of Johannesburg, it represents an alternative to life in Johannesburg for Chinese migrants. Do Chinese people who are fed up with crime or busy urban life choose to move to the southeast coast to do business there? Do Chinese move from Johannesburg to Durban because of oversaturation in Johannesburg? These are some of the key questions I asked myself and my respondents in Durban. Bloemfontein is a smaller, more rural location for Chinese shopkeepers. It stands in stark contrast to both Johannesburg and Durban because of its lack of diversity and rural, traditional Afrikaans atmosphere. Bloemfontein seemed a peculiar place for any Chinese people to go there to start a business. The benefits of such a place seem lower in almost every regard: economically with less business opportunities and a smaller consumer base as well as socially with fewer Chinese migrants there. Has the oversaturation of Chinese shopkeepers reached such a height in South Africa that Bloemfontein was the only viable option for migrants to achieve their goals?

Before locating sites for in-depth interviewing and participant observation, a geographical profile of each city was created, identifying key Chinese shopping areas, living spaces, and social communities. This was done not only as a way to understand the Chinese community in these three cities but also as a way to ensure that the research covered the diversity of different Chinese migrants. Because Chinese migrants have different experiences depending on when they arrived in South Africa and from what parts of China they came from, shopping centers chosen for research needed to be diverse (from upscale to rundown and from newly opened to well-established), increasing the odds of interacting with different Chinese migrants arriving in South Africa at different times from different places. In the next chapter, I explain in great detail what each location was like and the structure of the Chinese community in Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein.

Once these Chinese communities were identified, I started spending time in each of these locations and speaking informally to some Chinese shopkeepers to develop a profile of each shopping area, including the extent of wholesale versus retail shops, the year the place first opened, and an estimate of the amount of business that came through. Chinese malls were selected covering the full range of different Chinese shopping spaces, especially in terms of length of time opened, size of the mall, and amount of customer traffic. This was done to ensure that the research would not result in bias where all the respondents were only representative of a subgroup of Chinese shopkeepers (such as only those who arrived early and were successful or only those who arrived recently and have struggled). Variation in Chinese shopping scene was sought to obtain a broad representation over the entire Chinese shop-keeping population.

To maximize representativeness and minimize selection bias, shops in each shopping center were randomly sampled using stall numbers and a random number generator. I conducted interviews in the morning, when the stalls first opened and customer traffic was still low, to maximize my response rate. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and most were recorded.⁹ Being of my Chinese heritage, many shopkeepers were open towards me, and because I also conducted participant observation in the Chinese malls, other shopkeepers noticed me talking with their neighbors so felt comfortable engaging with me in an in-depth interview. Over two-thirds of all migrants asked for an interview agreed to participate in some capacity. Because some conversations were interrupted and did not last long (less than 15 minutes), they were excluded from the final total of 42 in-depth interviews. In accordance with a narrative approach that seeks to understand the thought process behind migrants' decision-making, interview questions focused on encouraging respondents to tell stories about their experience of life in China, their decision to move to South Africa, and their experience of South Africa so far. This would help get at the salient issues for Chinese migrants and why they chose to migrate without explicitly asking the question.

In addition to asking migrants to compare their lives before and after migration, interviews explicitly asked them to evaluate different capabilities and freedoms to see if any of them added value to their migration experience. Based on Sen's capabilities approach (2001) and the way it has been operationalized in past research (Klasen 2006; Nussbaum 2000; Anand, Santos, and Smith 2009), I asked about their daily work environment, their social life, their interactions with migrants and local South Africans, their knowledge and experience of political freedoms, their health and access to health services, their access to any government services, and their experience of gender or racial discrimination. Interviews also asked open-ended questions about the best and worst parts of living in South Africa and living in China. This allowed respondents to talk more about whatever they felt was most important in their decision-making process and provided a space for the respondents to verbalize any other capabilities that my questions may not have brought up. Finally, interviews covered migrants' future plans—whether they planned to move back to China, stay in South Africa, or move somewhere else. This was to further interrogate their way of understanding mobility and how they employed it as a tool to improve their lives. I would sometimes revisit interviewees and have follow-up conversations with them, although these conversations were not recorded.

In the end, of the 42 total interviews, 16 respondents arrived in South Africa within the last three years, 18 arrived between three years and eight years ago, and eight respondents have

⁹ Of the 42 interviewees, six respondents requested not to be recorded. Interviews were on average 35 minutes and conducted while the respondents were watching their shops. Because these interviews were done in the morning, there were few interruptions.

been in South Africa for more than eight years. I interviewed 23 males and 19 females whose ages ranged from 17 to 55, with nine respondents between 17 and 29, 15 respondents in their 30s, 14 respondents in their 40s, and four respondents over 50. While overall the gender of my respondents were quite evenly split, I found this to accurately reflect the Chinese shopkeepers in Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, but in Durban I noticed that many shopkeepers were young men in their early or mid-20s. 26 interviewees had some high school or only middle school education, 12 interviewees had completed high school, and four interviewees had some form of higher education, either a university degree or attended technical school. All but two of my respondents came from coastal provinces in China. With the exception of the group from Fujian, these provinces were fairly evenly distributed all along the eastern coast of China from Liaoning in the north to Guangdong in the south.

Table 2 – Respondents’ Demographic Information

Gender	# of Respondents	% of All Respondents
Male	23	54.76%
Female	19	45.24%
Number of Years in South Africa		
Less Than 3	16	38.10%
3 to 8	18	42.86%
More Than 8	8	19.05%
Ages		
19-29	9	21.43%
30-39	15	35.71%
40-49	14	33.33%
Over 50	4	9.52%
Education		
Some High School or Lower	26	61.90%
Completed High School	12	28.57%
Post-High School	4	9.52%

Interview data was analyzed not only in terms of the respondents and their characteristics, but more important in terms of their responses to the key questions discussed above. After translating all the interviews, each interview was reviewed and coded so that each respondent’s answer to key questions could be categorized and sorted. Once all the interviews were coded, I looked for patterns amongst the responses to key questions to see how often respondents brought up certain themes. I then went back to read through the interview transcripts to get a sense at the nuances of these patterned responses. Although the stories of each respondent were different, the experiences and salient issues for Chinese migrants were similar.

The participant observation portion of my research design focused on understanding not only the way migrants conducted business in South Africa but also Chinese social life in each of the three locations. Beyond the shopping areas I spent days observing and interacting with the Chinese community in Chinatown including eating with local Chinese migrants at hot pot restaurants and shopping in their markets. In the case of Durban and Bloemfontein where there is no real Chinatown, I had established personal connections with several key Chinese community members and so with the help of these individuals I conducted my participant observation in Chinese churches, schools, and home communities as well as the Chinese shopping malls. In the shopping malls I observed social interactions between shopkeepers as well as helped out with some of my interviewees' shops. This usually took the form of helping translate from English to Chinese, watching the shop while they ran errands, or moving boxes and stock. In Durban and Bloemfontein while I participated in churches, school activities, and the Chinese community living areas, I established relationships with many young members in the Chinese community and asked them questions in casual conversations about the Chinese shopkeepers and what their community and lives were like. In addition, through participant observation, I engaged in many smaller conversations with shopkeepers and asked similar questions as in my in-depth interviews. These conversations were often in a small group context, gaining group perspectives on interview topics, especially those regarding life in South Africa and the Chinese community in each location.

Dissertation Outline

In analyzing the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, I argue that the majority of recent mainland Chinese migrants were not primarily motivated to stay in South Africa because of expected wage gains, but instead, more subtle benefits and freedoms played an important role in explaining the increasing Chinese population in South Africa. These key factors include the freedoms that are tied to self-employment (such as control over their own hours and not having a boss), exercising mobility itself and the freedom to explore the world outside of China, and overall experiencing an improvement in their daily quality of life in terms of environment and pace of life. They help explain why Chinese people move to South Africa and choose to stay. While these factors explain the experience of recent mainland Chinese migrants, the Fuqing Chinese, on the other hand, tend to employ a more comparative advantage-based nomadic migration strategy—a sort of hyper-small pond migration strategy. Instead of valuing the same freedoms and benefits as the mainland Chinese do, they focus on maximizing their capital through a small pond migration strategy, valuing an increase in wages over increasing freedoms and capabilities. As a result, they go wherever there is business to be had, even if it is for a very short time frame. They still employ a small pond migration strategy (rather than employing a stepwise migration strategy or trying to migrate to a developed country), but because of their different value systems and attitude towards their own subjective quality of life, they do so in a completely different manner than the mainland Chinese migrants in South Africa. Instead of valuing what freedoms a life in South Africa potentially has to offer, they constantly look for new places in and out of South Africa where they can maximize their income and so live nomadic lifestyles valuing short-run earnings over long-run freedoms. This reveals the importance of preference structures in explaining differences in migration patterns and migration strategies.

In this chapter, I have laid out the way I approach the case of Chinese immigrants in South Africa. I began with the introduction of a capabilities approach from development

literature to immigration literature, adding in considerations from the field of happiness research as well as general, taken-for-granted ideas in migration theory. I argue that applying a capabilities approach to immigration not only provides deeper and more accurate insights into motivations for migration, but also shifts the focus away from place-based understandings to migrant-based understandings of immigration patterns. This provides a common ground between south-north and south-south migration theories and has the potential to produce fruitful discussions, comparisons, and understandings in both fields.

From here, I show how the case of Chinese-to-South Africa migration is a prime example of how existing theories (of both south-north and south-south literatures) are unable to accurately explain. Additionally, instead of framing theory around sending and receiving countries as key determinants, I propose to frame migration patterns around the way migrants utilize mobility as a development strategy, or a plan to improve their quality of life. In line with this perspective, I propose the idea of small pond migration as a way to explain what Chinese immigrants are doing when they choose to move to South Africa and more generally the way that Chinese immigrants think about mobility as a tool to gain more freedoms and ultimately improve their lives. In small pond migration, immigrants do not focus on improving their human or economic capital through traditional means (education or work experience), but instead, immigrants seek out geographic spaces where they can take advantage of characteristics of the new place that effectively increases the value of their existing economic, social, and human capital. These characteristics include comparatively lower standards of living, lower competition, favorable exchange rates, more fruitful social networks, and even language advantages for doing business. Small pond migration is a mobility-development strategy where migrants, instead of trying to become a bigger, more competitive fish, look for a smaller pond as a pathway to improving their capabilities and, in so doing, their quality of life.

In Chapter 2, I establish the history, context, and setting for the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa. I do this on several levels: first, how this case fits in the greater history of Chinese emigration, second, specifically looking at the history of Chinese people in South Africa, and third, describing the contemporary setting of current Chinese communities in Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. The subsequent two chapters focus primarily on the decision-making process of the recent mainland Chinese migrants, while Chapter 5 deals with Fuqing people as a counter-case. In Chapter 3, I deal with the economic side of mainland Chinese migrants, paying special attention to Johannesburg as the economic center. While the descriptions of the Chinese shopkeepers and their plans for becoming their own boss applies to all Chinese shopkeepers in South Africa, mainland and Fuqing, the chapter concentrates more on the mindset of the mainland Chinese migrants, talking about how their focus is not on pure moneymaking, but rather on becoming self-employed and increasing their capabilities. In Chapter 4, I turn away from economic freedoms to address several more important and powerful social factors that affect the lives of mainland Chinese migrants in South Africa. In particular, I show that gaining the experience of venturing outside of China is immensely important to the migrants' decision to go abroad. I also discuss the costs and benefits around various factors such as crime, language, and environment and how these factors affect the decision making process of mainland Chinese migrants. In Chapter 5, I turn to the case of Fuqing Chinese migrants in South Africa and explain how their way of employing small pond migration is radically different because of their different values and preferences. I also specifically contrast their interviews and data with that of mainland Chinese respondents. Finally, I conclude my dissertation discussing some of the main contributions of the case study, including arguing that because of new

immigration policy developments in South Africa and increasing investment in the past decade between the Chinese government and the African continent, Chinese-African migration patterns will spread increasingly rapidly to other parts of Africa.

Chapter 2: Context and History

The case of Chinese migrants to South Africa has a complex and important history that not only affects the current setting of Chinese communities in South Africa, but also changes the way one understands this case in comparison to other Chinese migration cases. Historical trajectories show that not all Chinese migrants are the same in South Africa and therefore should be treated differently. Mainland Chinese migrants and Fujianese Chinese migrants in South Africa have different roots and origins that help explain who they are as a community and why they find themselves in South Africa. These historical and structural differences help explain the difference in their preferences for certain capabilities over others (which I discuss in detail in Chapter 5). Furthermore, on face value, it is easy to assume that Chinese migration to South Africa is much like all other Chinese emigration to other places in the global south. But situating the case of Chinese-South African migration in the greater historical context of Chinese emigration distinguishes this case from other Chinese migration patterns, especially the difference between forced migration, low skilled labor migration, and small pond migration. This chapter aims to reveal key historical moments important for the purpose of this dissertation through describing a selective history of Chinese migration with special emphasis on South Africa. I begin with a brief overview history of Chinese emigration then move to talk specifically about the historical trajectory of Chinese migrants to South Africa, and finally end with explaining and providing the setting of Chinese communities in contemporary South Africa.

Chinese Emigration: A Brief Overview

Chinese emigration has a long history dating all the way back to before the Common Era. The early Chinese connections to the outside world were through merchants and traders. Dynastic rulers would commission traders to discover, establish, and maintain trade routes to the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. As the years progressed, eventually Chinese merchants began to settle down, especially in Southeast Asia during the 14th century. During the Ming dynasty in the 15th century, the Ming emperor sent out Chinese traders and envoys, mostly Cantonese and Fujianese people from southeast China, to explore the South China Sea and Indian Ocean regions. In 1405, a Liang Daoming, an absconder in the Ming dynasty from Guangdong province, led thousands of followers and armies to hide away in Indonesia where many of the Chinese ended up staying. Also during this century the famous Zheng He engaged in his seven voyages that began in Nanjing and Fuzhou and covered Indonesia, India, Brunei, Thailand, northeastern Africa, and the Arabian Middle East (Chun Hing 2010). It was during this dynasty that the roots of many overseas Chinese communities were established. At the end of the Ming dynasty in the mid-1600s, many Chinese went south into Cambodia and settled there.

During the Ming dynastic period, Chinese connections to other parts of the Asian world were established and some settlement began to occur, but it was not until the 1800s when mass migrations began to take place. This had to do with the age of imperialism moving into Africa and Asia, as well as domestic changes happening within China's Qing dynasty. The Taiping Rebellion taking place in 1850 to 1864 resulted in war and civil unrest that pushed many Chinese people abroad. Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the rebellion, believed he was the younger brother of Jesus and established his own kingdom in Nanjing. The wars and insurrection caused civil unrest such that labor emigrated along the previously established connections between Nanjing and Fuzhou and much of Southeast Asia. In addition, the Qing dynasty changed its policies that before restricted the movement of individuals. Because these emigration restrictions were lifted

in 1860, which was the first time emigration was actively encouraged (Skeldon 1996), many Chinese moved to take part in the Gold Rush in California as well as in Australia and Canada in the mid-1800s. Some of these migrants paid their own way while others contracted out their labor in dangerous mining jobs or railroad construction as a way to buy transportation out of China. Finally, British colonialism in Southeast Asia was another major factor resulting in mass migrations during the 19th century. After the 1870s, when the United States, Canada, and Australia began to shut the door on Chinese immigration, the Chinese switched to Malaysia, Singapore, and other Southeast Asian countries because of British colonial developments generating high demand for labor in these regions. Some Chinese emigrants also chose to go to Latin America during this period, but mostly as a secondary option and through contract labor (Skeldon 1996). The majority of the Chinese leaving China during this period came from the southeast region of China, particularly Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Fujian.

After the world war period, China went through their Communist revolution in 1949. This resulted in a period of restricted Chinese migration between 1950 and 1978. During this period, some migrants and refugees fled to Taiwan and Hong Kong, increasing ties with these historically internationally connected regions to other parts of mainland China, especially southeast China. It was not until the opening of the Chinese economy, however, in December 1978 that increased Chinese contact with international foreigners. With Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, open-door policy, and Four Modernization plan, China was quickly opened up and emigration began to take place again. During this period still, increasingly more and more Chinese were moving to Taiwan and Hong Kong in part because of economic successes experienced in these regions in the 1980s. Furthermore, part of the increased openness in political economy included plans to send more students and scholars abroad to learn from other countries, especially the United States and Canada. Alongside such programs of emigration, China began to see its labor as a kind of foreign exchange resulting in hundreds of thousands of Chinese engaging in contract labor to Japan, Singapore, Russia, the Middle East, and Africa (Skeldon 1996). Much of this happened through Hong Kong but many came from all over mainland China including provinces in the north like Shandong and interior provinces like Hunan. Although before 1978, the overseas Chinese were thought of as traitors to the Chinese motherland and the idea of "*hua qiao*" (or overseas Chinese) was considered a dirty, derogatory word, by 1999 the president of China said that the overseas Chinese were now a "mine of resources," creating a new identity and perception of the overseas Chinese population (Pieke et al. 2004).

This incredibly truncated history of Chinese emigration helps provide minimal background to situating the case of Chinese migrants to South Africa amidst the greater history of Chinese emigration. As described above, most communities of overseas Chinese began through some combination of historical trade route connections, changes in internal emigration policies and political economy, and demand for labor in the receiving country. Although each individual case is distinct and has its own unique connection to China, this provides a broad understanding of the evolution of Chinese overseas communities in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and First World countries such as Canada, the United States, and Australia. After discussing more about the history and evolution of Chinese migration to Africa and South Africa, I will later compare and contrast the general trend of overseas Chinese emigration to that of the case of recent Chinese migrants in South Africa.

Fujianese Emigration: A Uniquely Overseas People

Before delving into a more specific history of Chinese emigration to South Africa, I want to first look more closely at the Fujian population to establish that indeed Fujianese people have a particular and distinct historical trajectory that is different from other Chinese mainlanders. I have already mentioned above that much of the migration happened through southeast China and particularly through Fujian Province. While this is not the case when it came to migration programs such as labor contracts and student or scholar exchange programs, a history of port trading connecting Fujian with other parts of the world anchors the population as one that has for a long time been exposed and connected to the world outside of China. This has resulted in a contemporary situation where in 1995, Fujian ranked first in emigration in China and that the socioeconomic status of those emigrating has also shifted away from urban dwellers to increasingly rural migrants (Liang 2001). Fujianese emigration is a major part of the region's culture and is not restricted purely to upper-middle class migrants but has disseminated to lower class uneducated rural peasants as well.

The historical roots for emigration from Fujian lie in the Ming dynasty in the mid-1400s through traders exploring the Indian Ocean and continued to gain momentum through the 1600s with the Qing dynasty (Zhu 1991). As discussed earlier, this happened through emperors sending out traders and explorers as well as famous voyages like that of Zheng He. Because of the mountainous geography of Fujian province, increasing population booms throughout the period from the 1600s to the early 1800s resulted in more population pressure pushing Fujianese people to either migrate or to move out of the mountainous regions (Liang and Ye 2011:209). In more recent history, one of the major influences that resulted in Fujian becoming more open than the rest of China was the Opium Wars with Britain. After the First Opium War that ended in 1842, the Treaty of Nanking was drafted that forced China to open up five ports; two of these ports, Xiamen and Fuzhou, were located in the Fujian province (Liang and Ye 2011). These ports, which existed as early as the 7th century Tang dynasty, were an important part of the Fujian province economy and history (Pieke et al. 2004). This long history of maritime tradition meant that because the Opium Wars kept these ports opened until the world war period, migration connections would continually be established and strengthened throughout the 1800s (Chu 2010). These opened ports resulted in Fujianese emigration to British colonies, especially those in Southeast Asia.

After the Communist Revolution in 1949, when the Nationalists fled to Taiwan, Fuzhou, the capital city in Fujian province, was marginalized because of its proximity to Taiwan. Because of the region's mountainous terrain, Mao's regime feared that revolution would happen in Fuzhou and they would be unable to stop it. Once the 1978 open door policy reforms took place, however, the province was quickly modernized due to having one of the first special economic zones which led to foreign direct investment. These two forces at play in the Fujian province during the 20th century help explain why Fujian is both on the periphery and on the cutting edge of Chinese modernization (Chu 2010:26). On one hand, its marginalization in Mao's Communist regime set the region behind as well as created an understanding that the place was outside of mainstream China. But on the other hand, Deng Xiaoping's reforms focused on opening up the Chinese economy, and because of the region's history of ports and openness with the rest of the world, Fujian was a natural place to start foreign investments.

These dual forces begin to explain some of the motivating factors causing Fujian migrants to move abroad. With the influx of foreign direct investment, new jobs begin to open up in Fujian. The problem, however, is that most of these jobs required skilled labor. This conflicted

with the local population because the Fujianese people were mostly farmers and traders and did not have the skills to fulfill these new job openings. Overall, with the influx of these skilled labor jobs, the job opportunities afforded to Fujianese people actually decreased. But at the same time, these unemployed laborers were watching foreign direct investments get rich off of their entrepreneurial endeavors. Seeing the success of these businesses, local Fujianese people also wanted to get rich off their business investments and began to focus on lucrative already set up investment opportunities that connected with their history of overseas migration and their social networks (Pieke et al. 2004:44-45).

Because of investments from foreigners and from Taiwanese businesspeople, Fujian was not a generally poor province and therefore typical migration push factors associated with south-south migration patterns do not accurately explain the migration connections between Fujianese migrants and many other developing countries. Instead, inequality was a major factor that led those in the local labor force who could not take advantage of the investments happening in Fujian to seek opportunities abroad. As some of the Chinese got rich off these investments, relative deprivation and inequality increased, especially when comparing farmers and traders with businesspeople and those nearby in Guangdong and Taiwan. Also, some causal data indicates that overseas remittances were also generating some of the inequality seen in Fujian because the remittances were reinvested into housing and agriculture (Liang and Ye 2011:213-214). In addition, overseas Chinese people would come back during the Chinese New Year and perceptually seem richer and more well off than the local labor force (Liang and Ye 2011:215).

Because these images of success existed all around the Fujianese population, social classifications began to emerge splitting the population into *nongmin* (farmers) and *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) (Chu 2010:62). The farmers represented the unskilled labor force that had trouble finding any social mobility in Fujian. Moving to the city of Fuzhou also was difficult for peasants. During Mao's Communist Regime, the government leaned on the *hukou* population control system to control labor in a command economy. After the 1990s, when the system was relaxed, peasants were stuck with a label of being backwards in part due to the state's identification of the peasants in the *hukou* system (Chu 2010:68). This further disadvantaged the Fujianese peasants from succeeding in the atmosphere of a modern Fuzhou, one that left many old Communist ideas behind and was opening itself up to the rest of the world. At the same time, on the other side of the farmers and peasants were the overseas Chinese, who had moved into small businesses in different parts of the world, especially Southeast Asia. Because overseas Chinese migrants were similarly engaged with entrepreneurial endeavors much like the highly successful foreign direct investment and Chinese businesspeople in Fujian, the overseas Fujianese population became quickly associated with the modern world. They were moving forward, advancing and gaining socioeconomic mobility and were seen as tremendously successful regardless of how successful they actually were because of their ascribed association with the other entrepreneurs in Fujian.

The situation in Fujian evolves to become part of the local culture, creating a culture of migration (Kandel and Massey 2002). The next generation of Fujianese people sees overseas Chinese migrants as modern, having good hygiene and as "developed" individuals when they return (Chu 2010:73). They have become cosmopolitan. With this, there begins a strong emphasis for the younger generation to step out, go abroad, and venture out to the *guowai* (world abroad, outside of China) where opportunities for social mobility exist and where one can find economic success, higher wages, and live the life of a rich entrepreneur. The developing cultural mindset of Fujianese people was to make money and get rich (Li 1999). Applying Pierre

Bourdieu's theory of habitus and theory of practice, Mette Thuno (1999) argues that the development of such cultural mindsets and practices helps explain why some villages and regions have high levels of emigration in China whereas others, even those geographically nearby, do not. She argues, in particular, that people develop their habitus and practice over time strongly tied to history and geography (Thuno 1999:179). In the case of the Fujian Province, the historical ties to trade routes, ports, and explorers set up the basis for extended connections to places all over the world. British colonialism and the Gold Rush also encouraged the travel of Fujianese people. As these practices of emigrating unfold, they begin to work themselves into the habitus of Fujianese people until it becomes commonplace and normal to look abroad for opportunities to make more money with the hopes of becoming rich. The Fujianese people now have significant populations in every continent in the world. Communities in Southeast Asia were established as early as the 1600s, but communities in Europe and the Americas were established in the period between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s. With the established habitus of emigration, these communities have continued to grow and spread to new regions as the opportunities arise.

The habitus of emigration not only exists in Fujian, but also in other provinces throughout mainland China. As explained above, mainland China as a whole has had a vibrant history of venturing abroad. Shandong Province has a history of sending migrant labor to South Africa because of British labor recruitment to get cheap contract labor to work the South African gold mines in the late 19th and early 20th century (Lary 1999). Also, Wenzhou in Zhejiang province has ties to Europe, with some villages having as many as 60-80 percent of the population going abroad (Li 1999:184). The historical trajectories of mainland emigrating regions in mainland China and in Fujian share many commonalities, but some key differences makes Fujian Province unique. First, their history has many more connections and ties to the world abroad including the famous explorer Zheng He as well as the Treaty of Nanking forcing two Fujian ports to remain open to outsiders. This helps explain a deeper and more ingrained habitus found in Fujian, making it the province with the highest emigration rates in all of China (Liang 2001). Second, a mountainous geography results in population booms pressuring Fujianese peasants out of the rural farm lands and into urban, coastal, port cities, resulting in more connections to the *guowai* as well as increased competition in Fujian causing push factors to explore opportunities abroad. Third, harsh open-door economic policies in Fujian have resulted in foreign direct investment and Taiwanese businessmen establishing businesses that require skilled labor that rural peasants do not have. This creates a difficult labor market for Fujianese people as well as a stronger sense of relative deprivation as they encounter successful businessmen and seemingly well-off migrant entrepreneurs. Because of the established historical connections to the world abroad, Fujianese peasants look outside of China for opportunities to improve their lives. Finally, the nature of the Fujianese emigration habitus is different from that of most mainland Chinese emigrants. Because of the aforementioned exposure to rich entrepreneurs, Fujianese migrants are money-oriented, seeking to make as much money as possible and typically through business endeavors. They see mobility as an investment and hope to get the most out of it. As a result, Fujianese migrants tend to focus on already lucrative investment opportunities abroad, choosing to go places where previous Chinese migrants have already established markets and infrastructure for making a profit (Pieke et al. 2004). This stands in stark contrast to mainland Chinese migrants who often consider settling in their destination countries and have a more holistic understanding of their migration journey, rather than seeing it primarily through economic terms. Because of these major differences between the historical

trajectories and habitus of mainland Chinese migrants and Fujianese migrants, I treat the two populations as separate cases in South Africa.

Chinese in South Africa: A Short, But Momentous History

I now turn to specifically discuss the context of Chinese migration to South Africa. In the case of the African continent, northern and eastern parts of Africa have historically had more contact with the Chinese, because of geographic closeness and trade routes running from the Horn of Africa to China. Evidence suggests that these connections run all the way back to the Tang dynasty which existed from the 600s to the early 900s (Li 2012:21-28). In the specific case of South Africa, the earliest evidence of Chinese contact comes from a small group of people north of Cape Town who claim to be descendants from Chinese sailors during the 1200s exhibiting similar physical features to the Chinese as well as having a language that is tonal and seem to have some connections to Mandarin (Yap and Man 1996). In addition, a mapmaker named Chu Ssu-pen in 1320 had southern Africa drawn and mapped out suggesting that indeed China had early contact with southern Africa. These are some of the early historical encounters between China and South Africa, but in this section, I choose to focus on more contemporary connections that help set the tone and setting for my research. Melanie Yap and Daniel Leong Man in their book *Colour, Confusions and Concessions* (1996) provide an excellent and comprehensive look at the Chinese history in South Africa. Rather than rehashing their work, I selectively begin in the 20th century, setting the stage for Chinese entrepreneurship in South Africa.

In the 1800s, Britain begins to colonize South Africa and take power away from the Dutch. This took place slowly over the course of the 19th century as at first, Britain was only interested in setting up coastal ports in South Africa, but as they pushed inland, they continued to push out previous Dutch settlers. This culminates in the Anglo-Boer Wars occurring at the end of the century, concluding with Dutch surrender in 1902 giving Britain sole control over South Africa. During this period of war between British and Dutch, Chinese migrants began arriving as early as the 1870s. Most of these Chinese migrants came from Guangdong province and were looking to make their fortune in the gold mines in Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) and the diamond mines in Kimberly (located near Bloemfontein) (Park 2012). This time frame coincides with the United States, Canada, and Australia beginning to close their doors to Chinese immigrants who were looking to participate in the gold rush in those countries. South Africa became an alternative destination for Chinese hoping to make their fortune through mining. Unfortunately, due to anti-Chinese sentiments and discrimination in South Africa, these Cantonese migrants could not gain legal documentation to mine and were left in South Africa unable to pursue their dream.

This was rather ironic because in the early 20th century, the British were importing Chinese labor to work in the mines in South Africa. After the Second Boer War, wages for White and African labor in the mining industry were constantly increasing. For African labor, wages increased because the war had caused labor shortages amongst the African communities. For White labor, wages increased because the white-to-non-white labor ratio was also increasing making White labor in higher demand (Richardson 1977). As a result, the Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency (CMLIA) was created to deal with indentured labor and over the course of 33 months of recruiting from China, they contracted and shipped 63,296 men to work the South African mines between 1904 and 1906 (Richardson 1977:86). Similar to the case of Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia, British colonialism, especially the need for labor in British

colonialism, was an integral part in bringing the first Chinese laborers to South Africa. These indentured laborers, however, would mostly return to China after their work on the gold mines (Park 2012), but connections to north and south mainland China began during the early 20th century.

During the early apartheid era, from 1949 to the late 1970s, Chinese immigration to South Africa was essentially stagnant. On the one hand, 1949 Communist take-over in China shut down out-migration from China while on the other hand, apartheid legislation in South Africa shut down in-migration to South Africa. This latter portion was especially expressed through the Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act of 1953 which blocked immigration from China and established racist apartheid constraints on migration (Park 2012). With migration being restricted on both sides, Chinese migration to South Africa stalled until the late 1970s. Additionally, relations between South Africa and Taiwan remained tentative throughout early apartheid because the apartheid South African government feared that if the relationship with Taiwan grew too close, Communist China would support the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, which was a liberation movement that already had ties to Communist China (Pickles and Woods 1989). After 1971, when the United Nations officially recognized the People's Republic of China and as tensions between Chinese nationalists and Chinese Communists eased, South Africa became more comfortable with the notion of increasing relations with Taiwan.

In the late '70s and early '80s, a South African-Taiwanese partnership began to emerge. Taiwanese small-scale industrialists were extremely successful in Taiwan resulting in rapid industrialization and investment as well as a powerful export driven economy. Ironically, this fast-paced success also caused rising wages, increasingly unfavorable exchange rates, and high rents in Taiwan (Hart 2002). These pressures pushed Taiwanese industrialists to seek opportunities outside of Taiwan to invest. On the other hand, South Africa's apartheid regime was trying to prevent the movement of black labor to white urban city centers. During apartheid, because white cities were where most of the labor was needed and because transportation and infrastructure was not particularly sophisticated, black labor who worked in the white cities often moved to places surrounding white cities. This created townships and squatter settlements around white cities, which created a lot of fear for the apartheid government, who worried about blacks rising up against the whites because the black majority population was literally surrounding whites and their homes. As a result, the apartheid government decided that they needed to invest in jobs in more rural areas in South Africa as an attempt to decentralize and deconcentration where black labor would relocate to (Pickles and Woods 1989).

Taiwanese foreign investment in the form of factories located in smaller towns was a perfect solution for this. Taiwanese businesses received numerous incentives to invest in South Africa including the government paying for relocation costs, subsidizing wages, providing cheap transportation costs, and giving favorable exchange rates (Park 2012). The government would primarily approve foreign investment that was located away from white urban city centers, in places such as Newcastle, Ladysmith, and towns outside Bloemfontein (Hart 2002). The strategy of decentralization and deconcentration was to create jobs in these other locations so that blacks would move to these places, dispersing the population away from white cities and allowing the apartheid government to feel safer and maintain their control. While at first, the jobs created by Taiwanese factories were supposed to go to blacks, communication and cultural problems between Taiwanese business owners and black labor resulted in increasingly more Chinese migrants being brought to South Africa as indentured labor (Hart 2002). These Chinese migrant workers mostly filled managerial positions, but also filled some factory-floor positions. They

obtained their jobs through social connections and *guanxi* business relationships. At the height of Taiwanese business migration, there were approximately 30,000 Taiwanese in South Africa (Park 2012).

These immigrants did not fit nicely into any of the apartheid regime's racial classifications (White, Black, Coloured, and Indian). Chinese indentured labor were considered "non-white," which meant that they did not gain any of the full benefits the government would offer its white citizens, such as voting, education, and free movement. Many of the Chinese workers that came along with Taiwanese investment were often in this category as well. On the other hand, because of their part in investing in the South African economy, Taiwanese managers were often considered honorary whites in government policies and were granted some of the white's privileges. In a court case in 2008, the Chinese Association of South Africa (CASA) argued that the Chinese experienced discrimination from the apartheid government and should benefit from South Africa's affirmative action programs. The court ruled in favor of CASA and classified Chinese South African citizens before 1994 and their descendants as black, thereby giving them eligibility to affirmative action policies.

As the country transitioned out of apartheid in the 1990s, increasingly more Taiwanese returned to Taiwan for a myriad of reasons, including difficulties with South African labor laws, harsh competition with Chinese goods imported directly from China, the rise of crime and violence, and the depreciation of the South African Rand to all-time lows (Park and Chen 2009:27-28). As this was occurring, however, a second wave of Chinese migrants started coming into South Africa in the early '90s. They came from Taiwan and Hong Kong and came as either students or entrepreneurs opening import/export businesses, restaurants, and other small shops (Park and Chen 2009). Instead of settling in the same rural areas as the Taiwanese factories, these Chinese immigrants went primarily to the urban cities. This is considered the second wave of Chinese immigration to South Africa.

The third wave of Chinese immigration overlaps with the second wave of immigration starting as early as the late 1980s and is still ongoing. This third group comes from all over mainland China, but in progressive waves starting first with mainland Chinese from Lesotho employed in Taiwanese factories, then Chinese businessmen who managed and set up factories from mainland China,¹⁰ then Chinese migrants from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces (rich regions that benefitted from China's open door policies), and finally the most recent and ongoing wave of poor, rural peasants from Fujian province (Park and Chen 2009). Overall, this group of Chinese immigrants starting in the late 1980s overwhelms all previous Chinese immigrants. The current estimate of Chinese migrants living in South Africa is over 500,000 (Park 2012). These Chinese migrants have overwhelmingly chosen to set up shop in Johannesburg. Due to rapidly increasing saturation of Chinese shopkeepers in Johannesburg, however, the most recent immigrants have begun to move out to more rural areas and neighboring provinces.

Chinese small-scale entrepreneurs can be subdivided into three categories: the first-movers who emigrated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, immigrants who came during the mid-to late-1990s from business connections, and the ongoing immigration of traders and peasants increasingly coming from all over China (Park 2009). First-movers have had large success in establishing wholesale businesses and importing goods from China. They sell everything from everyday household items such as kitchen utensils and stationary to clothing, jewelry (especially made from gold), fashion accessories, and games for children. Some Chinese shops would sell

¹⁰ This followed the first democratic election in 1994 which led to formally ending South Africa's relationship with Taiwan and beginning their diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China.

larger items such as furniture and curtains. Large wholesale businesses are mostly found in Johannesburg which has over ten Chinese wholesale markets and centers with hundreds of Chinese wholesale stalls (Park 2009), but new wholesale distribution centers have recently opened in both Cape Town and Durban, two major coastal cities in South Africa, as well as Bloemfontein, located in the rural center of South Africa. Many of these entrepreneurs have either returned to China or migrated to more developed countries employing a step-wise migration strategy (Paul 2011). The second group of immigrants from the 1990s has built extensive business networks and has become involved in industries such as mining, manufacturing, property development, as well as expanding wholesale and importing to neighboring countries in southern Africa. The final group of ongoing migrants is the largest and has spread throughout South Africa, searching for holes in the retail and wholesale market where their small shops can survive selling Chinese imported goods. This research project focuses on this last and largest group of ongoing Chinese migrants to South Africa.

Table 3 – Waves of Chinese Migration to South Africa

	Gold Rush Migrants	British Labor Importing	Taiwanese Entrepreneurs
Time Period	1870s	1900s	1970s and 80s
Place of Origin	Guangdong Province	Southeast China	Taiwan
Place of Destination	Johannesburg and Kimberly	Johannesburg and Kimberly	Rural areas several hundred km from cities (e.g. Ladysmith)
Background	Uneducated labor	Uneducated labor	Business owners
Way of Migration	Informal/Contract labor	Indentured/Contract labor	Government contracts/subsidies
Main Activity in South Africa	Work gold mines	Mining	Manufacturing factories

	Early Apartheid Migrants	Contemporary First-Movers	Contemporary 1990s Migrants	On-Going Migration
Time Period	Early 1990s	Late 1980s to early 1990s	1990s	Late 1990s to present
Place of Origin	Taiwan and Hong Kong	Southeast China	Southeast China and Zhejiang Province	Mostly coastal provinces, but all over China
Place of Destination	Cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town	Johannesburg	Mostly Johannesburg, but South African cities	Mainly Johannesburg and Durban, but spreading throughout South Africa
Background	Students and entrepreneurs	Some business experience	Some small scale entrepreneurial experience	Uneducated peasants
Way of Migration	Travel via study or work	Social networks	Social networks and business connections	Social networks
Main Activity in South Africa	Study or small business	Wholesale business and import/export	Mining, manufacturing, property, wholesale, import/exports	Wholesale and retail small-scale entrepreneurship

Sources: Information from Park (2009), Park and Chen (2009), and Park (2012).

Johannesburg: Longstanding Chinese in a Diverse City

Johannesburg is one of the most diverse places in all of South Africa in terms of both South African and immigrant populations. It is the largest city in Gauteng Province which is also the area which receives the most number of cross-border immigrants (Polzer 2010). Because Johannesburg is the main business hub for the entirety of southern Africa, South African citizens of different ethnic descent and immigrants from all over the world migrate to Johannesburg looking for jobs and financial opportunities. The most recent census data has Gauteng as the province with the most in-migration over the last ten years at 1.4 million people, more than three times that of any other province (Statistics South Africa 2012). Gauteng also has the most non-citizens of any province in South Africa at over 8% of the population (Statistics South Africa 2012). This 2011 census data puts the estimated count of households self-reporting as non-South African citizens living in Gauteng at 960,000. Immigrant groups include the Chinese, Zimbabweans, Ethiopians, Congolese, Nigerians, Mozambicans, and Indians. Each group has its own small enclaves and neighborhoods. Johannesburg is not a “melting pot” of diversity, but rather a “salad bowl” where each group has retained its cultural heritage and characteristics. Although these ethnic groups do interact with each other, they still keep to themselves in social and living settings resulting in circumstances where researchers conducting surveys would find that in one apartment complex, one floor is a Zimbabwean floor and another floor is where

Nigerians live. In other words, despite a history of diversity, a nationalism that emphasizes the “rainbow nation,” and a society that frequently deals with cross-cultural interactions, Johannesburg is not in any way a racially integrated place.

This is no different when looking at the Chinese community in Johannesburg. Johannesburg is the city with the most Chinese inhabitants in all of South Africa. Although the great majority of the Chinese in Johannesburg work in the retail or wholesale industry, a handful of Chinese migrants live in the suburbs or an hour away from Johannesburg’s city center and work for Chinese factories. The Chinese in Johannesburg come from all over China and have stayed in South Africa in varying lengths of time. Many of the earliest Taiwanese and Cantonese immigrants have moved back to Taiwan or Hong Kong, and so these migrants are harder to find in Johannesburg. Instead, migrants from Jiangsu (and Shanghai), Zhejiang, and Fujian are some of the most popular sending provinces, but I also had numerous encounters and interviews with migrants from Shandong, Liaoning, and Beijing.

Although many Chinese immigrants live in Johannesburg, new Chinatown is the only substantial Chinese enclave that exists throughout the city. There used to be an old Chinatown located in Newtown, Johannesburg in the center of the city near the business district and just south of the railroad tracks and black taxi stands. Second and third generation Chinese immigrants lived on a small strip of about three blocks on the western end of Commissioner Street. This is where one might find Cantonese inhabitants but most other Chinese residents have moved out in favor of new places to open shops and to be closer to Chinese shopping areas and the new and larger incoming Chinese community. This has led to a new Chinatown located in Cyrildene which used to be a Jewish neighborhood until around 2000 when first generation Chinese immigrants moved in. Cyrildene is located in the northeast side of Johannesburg a ways out from the Johannesburg city center. It is a quieter suburban area with mostly residential housing and a few shopping areas located in an area called Burma. Currently, Derrick Street is known for being the main Chinatown area with three blocks of Chinese shops, markets, restaurants, street vendors, and hair salons. This street is located right in the midst of residential housing rather than in a business district or a large shopping area. Chinese migrants living here are mostly first generation immigrants. New Chinatown is just around the corner from one of the longer-standing Chinese shopping areas, Burma Shopping Mall, and ten to fifteen minutes away from the oldest Chinese shopping mall, China City, located in Ellis Park just northeast of central downtown Johannesburg.

The Chinese migrants who do not live in Chinatown are relative spread out throughout the Johannesburg area. Johannesburg and its surrounding suburbs cover a wide geographic space because of the city’s urban sprawl. The city itself is measured at 635 square miles, but this does not include important suburbs that are often considered part of Johannesburg, such as Sandton, Randburg, Roodepoort, Edenvale, and Johannesburg South. These suburbs are thought of as part of Johannesburg because of their connections to the city—most residents living in these suburbs will commute to Johannesburg for work or school. These residents choose to live in the quieter and safer suburban environment rather than the urban city center. This is much like the urban sprawl found in U.S. cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles where many suburban towns and neighboring spaces are considered part of the city even though they are not directly in the boundary lines of the city itself. In part because of over congested roads and sometimes poor road maintenance, it can take well over an hour to travel from one side of Johannesburg to another.

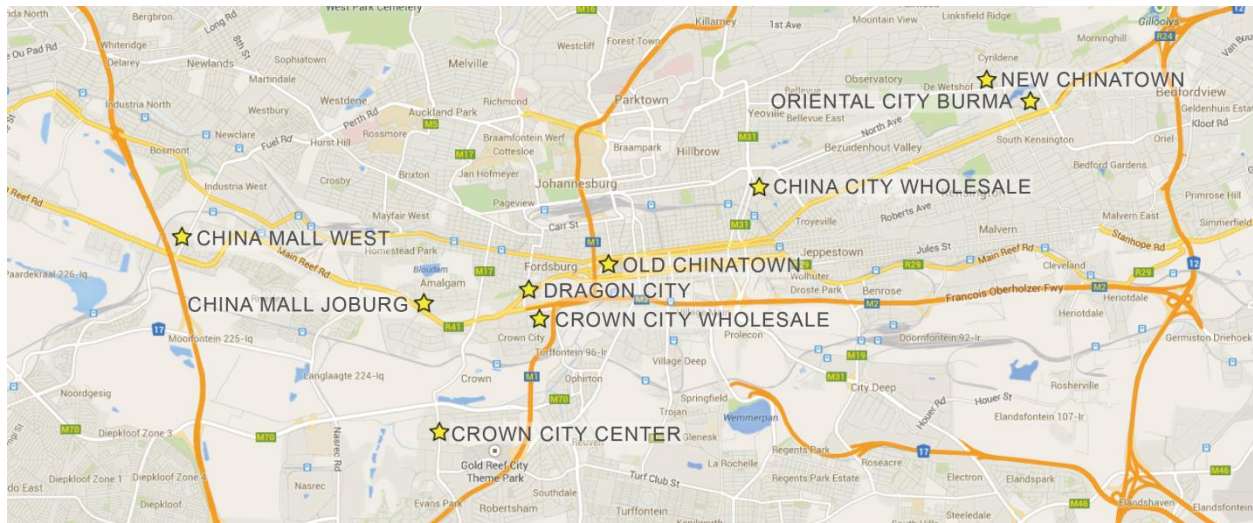


Figure 1 – Map of Johannesburg Highlighting Chinese Shopping Centers and Chinatowns

Some Chinese migrants tried to live near their place of work, making Chinese shopping centers focal points for Chinese communities. In Johannesburg, there were over ten Chinese shopping centers throughout the city, many of which had opened in the last two to three years. Two of them in particular, China City in Ellis Park located in central Johannesburg and China Mall Johannesburg on Main Reef Road near Johannesburg South, were considered the oldest and most well-known Chinese shopping malls in Johannesburg. Chinese migrants often compared their shops to the ones in these malls, using them as a standard for business traffic, size of shopping center, and overall success. The two shopping areas represented the “typical” Chinese shopping mall, at least in the minds of those in the business. These shopping centers were not like local South African malls that had clean, regularly swept floors, indoor temperature control, places to sit throughout the mall, a food court, and décor and music to set shopping mood. Instead, Chinese shopping malls were large converted warehouses where each shop was a stall or storage space converted into a store. Some spaces were larger than others and would have glass windows at the front of the store for displays, but most stalls were simple cubical rooms with brick walls and little else to distinguish it from a storage unit. While some stalls made signs telling people its name, these store names were generic and often overlooked in favor for stall numbers as the primary way to identify the shop. When setting up appointments for interviews with Chinese migrants, they frequently used the stall number to let me know where to find them, rather than their store’s name. While China Mall Johannesburg has one main building with multiple floors and hundreds of stalls (some used by Chinese shopkeepers strictly for storing their goods), China City has expanded from one primary warehouse to neighboring buildings, creating a shopping area comprised of two main structures (each with three floors) and an outside area where Chinese migrants have set up shops. These spaces became the common image South Africans had of Chinese shopping centers.



Figure 2- China Mall Johannesburg



Figure 3- A stall with clothing display in China City, Johannesburg

However, not all Chinese shopping areas looked the same. As the Chinese shop-keeping scene became increasingly saturated, Chinese shopping malls branched out to reach different parts of Johannesburg as well as different people groups. This meant creating smaller Chinese shopping centers in the surrounding suburban areas of Johannesburg. These shopping centers were often local South African shopping centers that were converted into Chinese owned shops selling Chinese imported goods. As a result, they look embedded in the local South African shopping scene, no different from any local South African shopping center. These Chinese shopping areas were typically smaller, outdoor shopping centers with no more than ten stores adjoining one parking lot. Besides these Chinese shopping centers, China Mall Johannesburg recently expanded into a new location just a few minutes west called China Mall West. The mall opened in 2011 and converted a huge local South African shopping mall into one housing mainly Chinese shops. This mall has everything a local South African mall has from glass display cases, clean bathrooms, and indoor décor to a shopping directory, a food court, and indoor seating areas. When I was there in 2012, the mall held two special events, an indoor fashion show and a car drifting show in its parking lot, to promote itself to the local South African population. I spoke with the manager of the mall and she told me that the vision of China Mall West was to change the way South Africans saw Chinese shopping malls. She told me, “Most people have a negative perception of Chinese shopping malls. They think they are just dirty, rundown warehouses. We want to change people’s perspective on the way they think about Chinese shopping—that these are quality goods in a nice environment.”

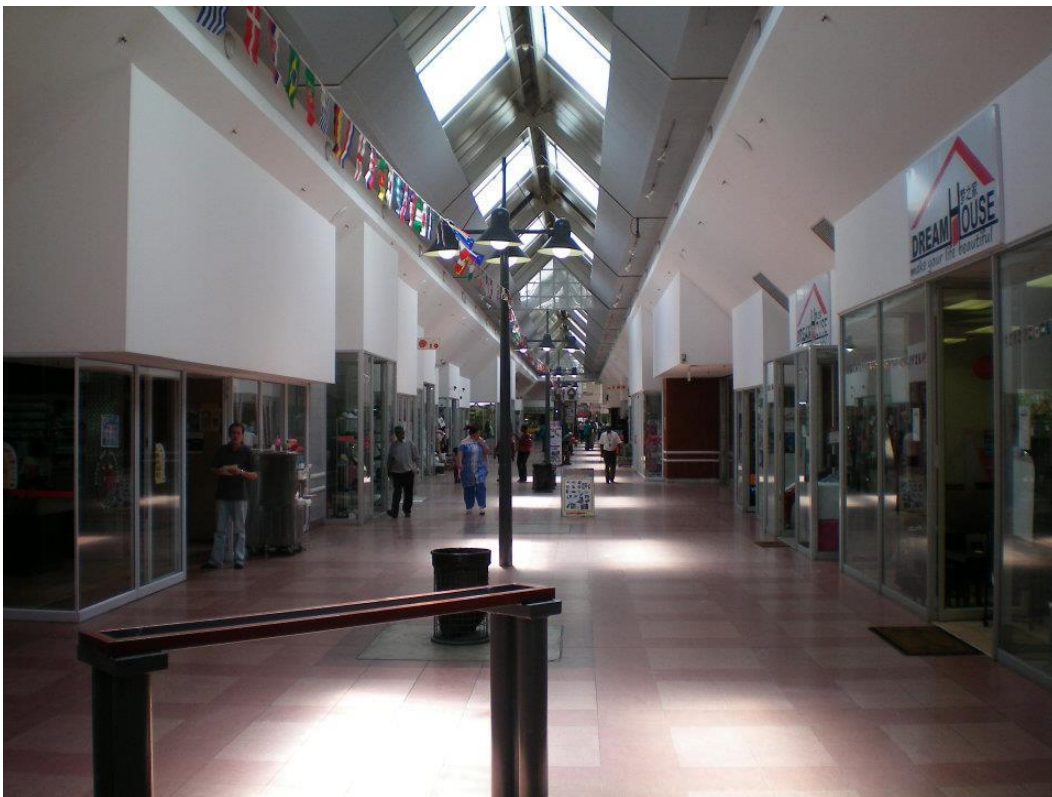


Figure 4 – China Mall West, a more upscale Chinese shopping mall



Figure 5 – China Mall West, fashion show to promote and attract customers

Chinese Migrant Communities in Johannesburg's Shop-keeping Scene

I make note of the geographic space of Chinese shopping malls in Johannesburg to provide a clear understanding for the setting of the Chinese community and its disconnectedness. Although as previously mentioned a strong Chinese community exists in Cyrildene, Chinese communities are otherwise fragmented without much common space to flourish and develop. Instead of one or two large Chinese communities, Johannesburg has many smaller Chinese circles that are spread throughout the city and its surrounding areas. This is in part because Chinese shopping malls are so diverse and spread out. Furthermore, because of the differences in scale and cost of renting space in these Chinese shopping malls, the Chinese community tends to divide itself along class lines, separating those migrants who arrived earlier and made a fortune from those who are arriving now and struggling to survive. Additionally, the Chinese community itself in Johannesburg is extremely diverse. From what I observed, Johannesburg has several different types of overlapping yet distinct Chinese communities. I will highlight a few of the most important Chinese migrant communities for the purpose of this research and their relationship with one another.

One Chinese migrant community in Johannesburg is made up of early-comers who have lived in the city for around fifteen years, coming to Johannesburg in the late 1990s. These migrants were amongst the first movers in the wholesale market and have thus experienced an enormous amount of financial success. Although many of these migrants returned to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Guangdong, the few who stayed make up this Chinese community. These early-comers have now moved to nice houses in rich suburbs not having to worry much about spending money and are trying to minimize the threat of crime. Many have brought their families and children with the intention of settling in South Africa. These early-comers send their

children to private schools with the hope that an English education will help them become more competitive in the international job market. They also have plans to send their children to colleges in First World countries using their children's educational path as a stepping stone to live in a more developed country. They are often deeply connected to the Chinese community in Johannesburg and have no problem navigating around the city to interact with multiple Chinese communities. Early-comers experience the full array of freedoms that the South African upper class has to offer. This community, as stated before, is still fragmented and spread out, often living amongst local South Africans (and often preferring to live in white South African communities). Because of their immense success, they are able to own more high scale shops located in suburban, local South African malls, as opposed to the typical dingier and dirtier Chinese shopping malls.

A second Chinese community in Johannesburg is the Fujianese Chinese community made up of the Chinese migrants that come from the province of Fujian. These Chinese migrants have arrived in South Africa more recently and as a result have had much less success making money in the shop-keeping field. Many of the younger Fujianese migrants work for other shop owners, watching the store, keeping inventory, and working with customers. A few who have had experience opening stores in other locations have the capital to start their own shops right away and therefore own their own shops in Johannesburg. Fujianese migrants often live together and preferably near their place of work. This Chinese community is one of the more tight knit communities in Johannesburg, helping each other out whenever possible and keeping up social connections when working in the same mall. Their shops would not necessarily be next to each other or officially affiliated with one another, but the Fujianese workers would still visit and meet together during their free time and Fujianese children were allowed to wander to stores across the Chinese malls where their Fujianese "older brother" or "older sister" was working. When communicating, Fujianese migrants use their local dialect and express a familial commonality with one another, even if they are not blood-related or do not come from similar backgrounds or villages. Many of the Fujian migrants were able to come to Johannesburg in the first place through international connections with the Fujianese community—the majority of the Fujianese I met in Johannesburg got their current job through a family member (usually not immediate family), friend from Fujian, or a friend of a family member who was also Fujianese. Through these social connections, the Fujianese community has been growing rapidly in Johannesburg, and this sometimes threatens other Chinese migrants who have been in the Johannesburg retail and wholesale market longer than the Fujianese. As I talk about in the next chapter, an overwhelming majority of Chinese shopkeepers blame the oversaturation of Chinese migrants in Johannesburg for their decreasing profits and financial difficulties.

While many of my respondents had this attitude towards the Fujianese migrants, as I spent time with the early-arriving Chinese community, they did not seem to express any fear about the Fujianese coming to South Africa to take their jobs or their profits. In fact, several early-comers told me that there was more than enough profit to be had in Johannesburg that could be spread amongst all the incoming migrant Chinese. One in particular told me, "I think all Chinese people should come here. It is great living in South Africa and there is plenty of money to make." This perspective, however, was clearly not shared among the general Chinese shop-keeping population and reveals that the early-comers have strong, established businesses that make so much money that they are relatively impervious to much of the oversaturation of Chinese immigrants opening shops in Johannesburg. While there were a couple early-arriving Chinese migrations who mentioned oversaturation causing a dip in their profits, this was not a

salient problem to them, and therefore they generally held no qualms with the Fujianese, unlike many other Chinese migrants arriving in the past decade. One concern that a couple of my respondents expressed was that many of the Fujianese migrants were uneducated peasants, and their lifestyle and way of doing business sometimes left a bad impression on the local South African population. A man who had been in South Africa 15 years remarked:

I get along with the Fujianese people here, but we don't run in the same circles much. Many of them have very low education because they lived in the countryside as poor peasants... White South Africans think all the Chinese here are the same, so when they meet Fujianese shopkeepers, they assume they are just like us—uneducated and poor—so they are surprised to see our family living with them in rich white neighborhoods... It doesn't affect our family too much, but [local South Africans] used to think very highly of Chinese people here—that we work hard, make good money, and had very good education. Now, their perspective on Chinese immigrants is totally different.

Their attitude that the Fujianese would “bring down” the overall status of the Chinese in South Africa is similar to tensions that exist between Taiwanese South Africans and migrant Chinese shopkeepers. The Taiwanese would see how the media negatively portrayed and reported on recent Chinese immigrants and blamed them for tarnishing the reputation of Chinese South Africans (Park 2012).

Another distinct but overlapping group within the Chinese community in Johannesburg is the group of younger migrants (age 17 to 25) that have recently started to migrate to Johannesburg as an alternative to finishing high school or continuing on to college or university in China. I am especially referring to migrants who migrate to Johannesburg at an age when they are already expecting to work in the retail and wholesale industry. While some children of shop-keeping parents grow up from a young age in South Africa and then follow in their parents' footsteps once they are of working age, the Chinese people I refer to here are those who did not grow up in South Africa, but recently arrived and immediately started working in retail or wholesale. This community of young Chinese migrants acts as a distinct community in Johannesburg because they have different interests and attitudes towards the city and their migration experience when compared to most Chinese shop-keeping migrants. Because they see themselves as different from their parents' generation and those older than them, they naturally seek out the company of those in the same age range. This Chinese young adult community is also separate from the Chinese of similar age who spent their childhood growing up in South Africa. There are a growing number of Chinese young adults who are the children of early Taiwanese entrepreneurs and have now graduated from college and are finding jobs in Johannesburg. Although they are the same age as the young adult Chinese migrants, they do not associate with each other simply because they run in completely different circles—the South African Chinese professionals are often involved in finance or engineering, whereas the young adult Chinese migrants are exclusively involved in retail and wholesale shops. I must also point out that this group of younger migrant shopkeepers is not a large portion of the Chinese migrants in Johannesburg. In every Chinese shopping mall, one can typically find several younger shopkeepers working in stalls around the mall, but in general, this community represents no more than one in five Chinese shopkeepers in Johannesburg.¹¹

¹¹ Out of the 24 interviews conducted in Johannesburg, four respondents were of the age range between 17 and 25, with two of the respondents being 25 years of age.

The community of young adult Chinese migrants is spread throughout different Chinese shopping malls in Johannesburg. In other words, Johannesburg does not have any one mall that has a conglomerate of young adult Chinese workers. At the same time, these Chinese young adults are more adventurous, wanting to explore South Africa, meet new friends, and do more than just go to work every day. As a result, they create and sustain their own network of relationships across various malls using Chinatown as a central hangout spot for after work hours. Friends introduce themselves to other friends and slowly, newly arriving young adult migrants expand their social networks. While older Chinese shopkeepers tend to stay indoors after dark, the younger crowd is more willing to explore, going out every week or so and planning trips during the few vacations that they have available. The migrants of this community do not go out in very large groups because their numbers and circles are usually tight-knit and relatively small because of the low density of young adult Chinese migrants and how spread out many of them are in Johannesburg—I observed groups with between four and seven people and most of the young adult migrants told me that this was typical. Also, groups would fluctuate relatively frequently as each year some migrants would come and be added to the groups while others would leave either going back to China or moving to another part of South Africa. During the day, young Chinese migrants would communicate through constant use of their cell phones, taking advantage of free chat and text messaging programs. At night, they would sometimes get together and go out to karaoke, to a bar, or have dinner, all typically in Chinatown, although some of the youthful Chinese migrants I interacted with told me that they sometimes go to local malls that opened late near their house if they lived far from Chinatown.

Aside from these three unique Chinese communities, the majority of the Chinese in Johannesburg organize themselves into smaller circles based on their shopping mall location and their living areas. Each Chinese shopping mall functioned as a sort of community location for the Chinese migrants. Shops that were neighbors would quickly get to know each other and help each other out on a near daily basis—this included helping watch each other's stores while one of the shopkeepers took a break, had to run an errand, or went to the restroom as well as helping out with moving and restocking inventory. One respondent told me, "We are all friends here. We help each other out. Neighbors are always friendly and we treat each other like family." During down time, when stores had no customers, the shopkeepers would stand together outside and talk, listen to music, or even watch a movie or television series together. Babies and children were a magnet for pulling Chinese migrants together as shopkeepers would all help out watching the children and happily take care of them. This was one common way that strangers in the same Chinese shopping mall got acquainted with one another. Similar to other Chinese communities in Johannesburg, friends would introduce each other to friends in the malls and slowly, each migrant's social circle would expand until most of them knew all their neighboring store owners. Because some of these malls are huge, having 200 or more stalls, the Chinese shopping mall itself would be informally segmented into overlapping social circles where location would be the most influential factor in determining the geography of these circles. Fujianese communities and young adult migrant communities would often transcend the social geography of the Chinese shopping malls, but the malls themselves provided common ground for relationships to strengthen and deepen.

Chinese Migrant Communities outside Johannesburg's Shopping Malls

Beyond the Chinese shopping malls, a few other Chinese social circles exist in Johannesburg. This includes several Chinese churches that Chinese missionaries from Taiwan,

Singapore, and Hong Kong have started in Johannesburg. These churches are mostly kept separate from local South African churches with different histories and communities. Most Chinese churches rent out space from local South African churches, meeting at the same place but keeping their ministry distinct and separate with little overlap. As the Chinese population in Johannesburg keeps growing, however, increasingly local churches are getting more involved in supporting these Chinese ministries. The Chinese congregations are comprised mostly of a mix of early-comers, Taiwanese, Cantonese, and generally earlier arriving Chinese who have now settled in Johannesburg. This means the congregation is almost all immigrants and their children who were either born in South Africa or came to South Africa at a very young age. In the past five years, as more Chinese migrant shopkeepers come to Johannesburg, the Chinese church has increasingly tried to reach out to these populations. Because Chinese shopkeepers work seven days a week and during the mornings and afternoons, Chinese churches have started bible study groups meeting at night in the homes of these migrants, making church more accessible to them. When I visited several of these churches, members of the church told me stories about how most of the time, the shopkeepers use churches as a social circle to start building some connections, get information, and receive help with visas or getting settled in Johannesburg. Although some stay with the church long term and come to believe in Christianity, many others end up leaving the church as their initial interaction with the community was not for religious reason.

On top of Christian Chinese churches, Buddhist circles have established some Chinese activities. Although Buddhist organizations exist in Johannesburg, most are involved with community service type outreaches to the poor black community with a minority of organizations that work to help with Chinese immigrants. In general, the Chinese people I spoke with, even those who identified as being a Buddhist, did not regularly interact with a community of Buddhist Chinese. Instead, once a year, they travel to the Buddhist temple north of Johannesburg in Bronkhorstspuit. The temple, called Nan Hua Temple, is the largest Buddhist temple in all of Africa. Many Chinese migrants go during the few holidays they have around Christmas and New Years to visit and honor their ancestors. They told me that when they make their journey, they see thousands of Chinese at the temple. Aside from these yearly visits, Buddhist organizations also hold camps during the school's winter break for children and youth to learn about their Buddhist beliefs. Again, recent migrant Chinese do not attend these events, as their children are either too young for these activities or are still in China with grandparents, especially if they are not yet of working age. As a result, most of these Buddhist activities are attended by earlier arriving Chinese immigrants who have lived in South Africa for over ten years and have chosen to settle down and raise their family in Johannesburg.

A common social circle for recent Chinese migrants is the gambling scene in Johannesburg. This social activity seems to include mostly migrants that have had a decent amount of success as shop owners in Johannesburg. This means most of them have lived in South Africa for at least seven years and came early enough that they had an advantage over those who are arriving in Johannesburg in the past two years. Chinese migrants I spoke with often told me about this "dirty" habit that many Chinese migrants became addicted to. Many reasons were given as to why the Chinese got involved in gambling. Some said that it was because there was not much for the Chinese to do in Johannesburg and many of the migrants had left their friends and family in China and so needed a way to make new friends in Johannesburg. Others told me that it was because some Chinese migrants grew up with gambling as a part of their upbringing and now they had so much money they did not know what to do with it, so it was easy for Chinese migrants to become addicted to the activity. Also, gambling was a kind of

status symbol because you had to have money in the first place to participate in the activity. It functioned as both a way to exercise your success and as a way to make new friends at the gambling parlors.

This attracted many Chinese migrants to gamble regularly. Shop owners would go from after work to late at night and gamble their earnings in local casinos and small gambling parlors. I met a few respondents who had gambled most of their earnings away as well as one woman who came to South Africa because her uncle had a gambling problem and she wanted to come to see if she could help him quit. Gambling was one of the few social activities that Chinese migrants participated in, but because of stories of addiction and of migrants losing tens of thousands of Rand, the general Chinese community now looks down on the activity and it serves as a kind of cautionary tale for newer migrants just arriving in Johannesburg. One older man told me, “I used to gamble. I gambled a lot before, but now I don’t. I was addicted to it, but after I lost almost all my money, I realized I had to stop. Now I tell people to avoid those casinos because going there will only bring misfortune.” As it happens, most recent incoming Chinese are unable to make much money in the shop-keeping business and so are not able to take up gambling. As a result, the Chinese gambling community has shrunk over the past few years.

Although each of these Chinese social circles has a different subculture and often very specific membership, they are not completely separate from one another. Most Chinese migrants belong to multiple communities and all Chinese shopkeepers are in some way involved in the social circles in their shopping malls. I spend time to illustrate these different communities not only in order to describe the setting of my research, but also to emphasize the diversity that exists in the Chinese community in Johannesburg. When referring to the Chinese in South Africa, especially those in Johannesburg, it is important to recognize just how diverse this population of migrants is. Not only that, but the Chinese migrant communities are not always in harmony with one another. The Chinese people in Johannesburg are a various and dispersed group—a complex network arranged around particular characteristics that are sometimes at odds with one another but at other times harmoniously strengthen and support one another.

Durban: Segregated Chinese in a Port City

While Johannesburg is the industrial and financial center of southern Africa, Durban is the busiest port in South Africa—a key entry way for goods coming from the East. Most of the goods from Durban’s port are shipped either by rail or truck to Johannesburg to be distributed from Johannesburg to places throughout southern Africa. Durban is also known for having the largest population of Indians outside of India, making its cultural make-up and experience with diversity quite different from other parts of South Africa. While Johannesburg attracts black immigrants from neighboring countries, Durban has a decisively South Asian flavor to its cultural diversity. In the past seven years, Chinese wholesalers have increasingly targeted Durban as a major place to invest and grow the Chinese wholesale market. This is because as Johannesburg becomes oversaturated with Chinese shopkeepers, more and more Chinese move to rural parts of South Africa. Many of these locations are closer to Durban than Johannesburg because several major towns, such as Ladysmith and Newcastle, are located two to three hours from Durban. Because Chinese shops located in these smaller cities need to get their stock from someplace convenient and accessible, Durban’s Chinese wholesale market has developed over the past five years. Whereas ten years ago, there was only one small wholesale warehouse in Durban, now, there are a total of four retail and wholesale Chinese shopping malls with plans to expand further.

These shopping centers range from semi-upscale, new developments to dingy, rundown, and partially abandoned warehouses. Three of the four locations are in downtown Durban no more than ten minutes from the beach. These shopping malls have been in Durban the longest, with the original wholesale warehouse being one of them. This warehouse is partially coming apart with a couple hallways ending in dead ends with cement debris littering the floor. Yet each stall and warehouse compartment contains a Chinese shop that has boxes upon boxes of stock that they do not put on display—instead, because they only sell wholesale, they confirm the orders in advance and pack boxes to be ready for pick up over the weekend when Chinese store owners from all over southeast South Africa come to Durban to get their stock for the week. The warehouse is not particularly big, especially compared to the massive complexes in Johannesburg that house easily over 400 Chinese warehouse stalls. Instead, Durban has no more than twenty separate store owners in their oldest Chinese wholesale location. As of 2012, they are currently building a new location in an empty lot for the Chinese wholesalers to move into.

The next earliest established Chinese shopping mall in Durban is called Oriental City and is located ten to fifteen minutes from the Chinese wholesale warehouse. Oriental City is a multiple story shopping mall that has Chinese shops on the first three floors with other floors having been converted to a parking lot above the mall. On two of these floors, furniture stores rent out the space to store and sell their furniture—as you drive up to the sixth floor parking area, you will see furniture on display in the previous floors of the parking lot. When I was there in 2012, the third floor was under massive construction as they remodeled many of the stalls, so shops were only on the first two floors of the mall while the third floor and some of the second floor stalls were used for storage. Again, the size of Oriental City pales in comparison to any Chinese shopping mall in Johannesburg, having no more than 30 stalls per floor as opposed to the 100 stall minimum found in Johannesburg. Most of the shops in Oriental City were involved in both retail and wholesale, and there were three large wholesale shops in the mall—one of them was the largest Chinese bead wholesaler in all of South Africa. These larger wholesale shops dominated Oriental City's business, but business was good enough that even the smaller retail shops told me that they had wholesale customers on Sunday mornings. The majority of shop owners in Oriental City were Fujianese migrants.

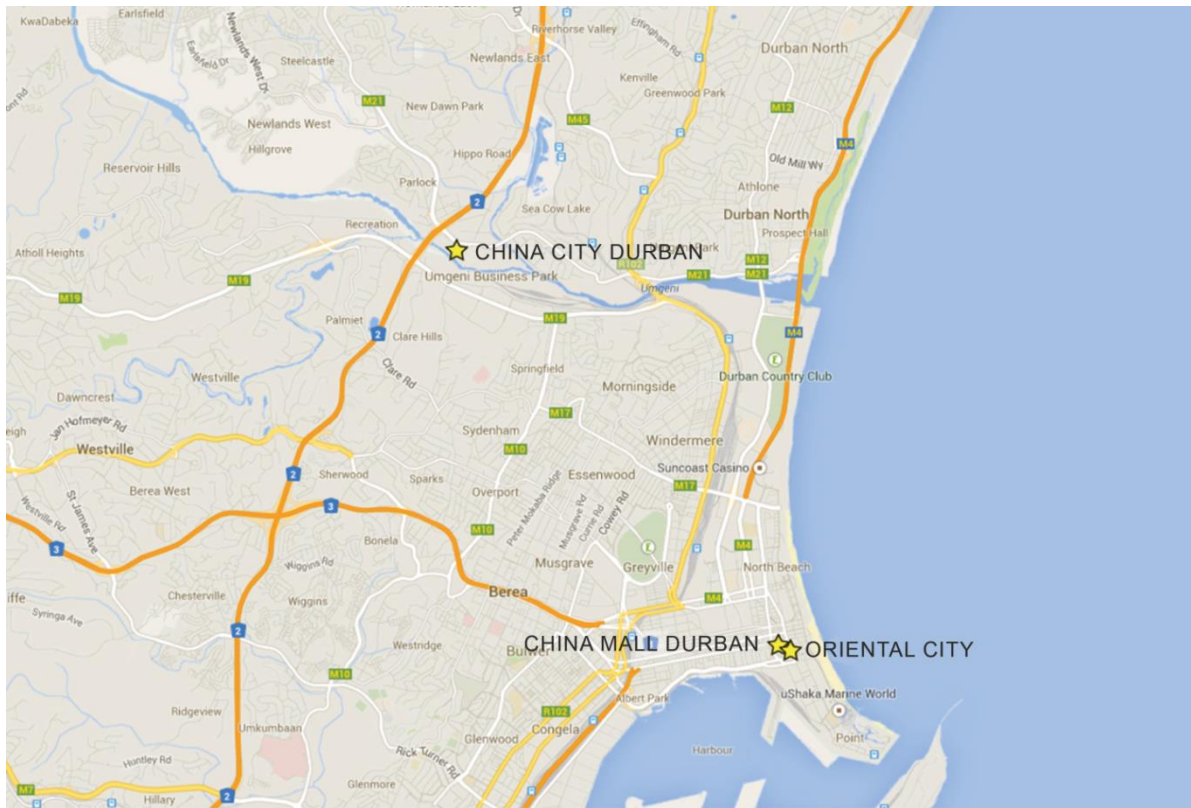


Figure 6 – Map of Durban Chinese Shopping Centers

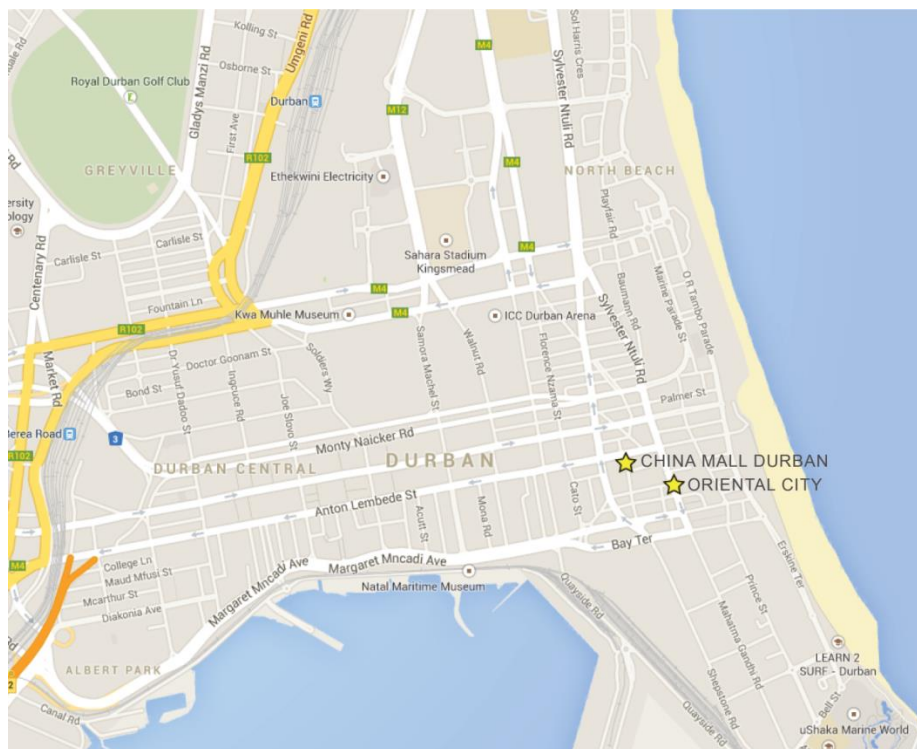


Figure 7 – Map of Durban Downtown Highlighting Chinese Shopping Centers

Durban China Mall is just down the street and around the corner from Oriental City. This is one of the newer malls that opened around the end of 2010 and was still in the process of reconstruction when I conducted interviews in 2012. The mall has four stories, but only the first and second floors were open for business. According to Chinese shopkeepers, before 2010, the mall was an Indian mall, but then it was sold to the same people that own China Mall Johannesburg, one of the largest and oldest Chinese shopping malls in Johannesburg. Because of the connection between China Mall Johannesburg and China Mall Durban, many owners from the mall in Johannesburg were given deals and encouraged to try opening stores in the Durban mall. This shopping center has a food court and caters more towards retail and local South Africans, having several popular chain department stores on the first floor as well as overall having nicer and more presentable stores. As opposed to the small warehouses or tight stalls packed next to each other in most Chinese malls in Johannesburg, China Mall Durban had spacious stores with full glass entrances, high ceilings, and a layout that resembled a typical local shopping mall. There were around 70 stores at the time I visited with plans to open more stores on the third and fourth floors. Shopkeepers told me that the mall was offering special deals to shop owners such as giving them free rent for six months to entice shop owners to do business in China Mall Durban. The Chinese shopkeepers in this mall were a mix of some Chinese migrants coming from Johannesburg, a few Fujianese migrants, and several early-coming migrants from Taiwan, Guangdong, and Hong Kong.

The final major Chinese shopping mall in Durban is China City Durban and it is located in an area called Springfield. Springfield is a ways north of downtown Durban near one of the freeways that lead out of the city. It was constructed here because the owner of China City wanted to cater to the wholesale sector and chose this location near the freeway outside of the Durban city center so that Chinese shop owners coming from rural areas, small towns, and cities like Ladysmith and Newcastle would not have to go all the way into downtown Durban to get their stock on the weekends. To some degree, this has worked as early Sunday morning many Chinese shop owners will drive several hours to Durban and go to China City to get their stock, but at the same time I was told that many of the shop owners from the surrounding area still prefer to continue to use their old connection to shops in the rundown warehouse in city center because of their longstanding relationship with their Chinese wholesalers. China City entertains both retail and wholesale customers, with retail customers all week and wholesale customers mostly on the weekends and in the early mornings. The mall itself is built much like Chinese shopping malls in Johannesburg with stalls that resemble warehouses. Because China City is one of the newest malls in Durban, it is still very new with clean walls and floors making the stalls seem presentable and well decorated so that although the mall itself is basically a warehouse transformed into a shopping center, it no longer has the feel of a warehouse. The mall has two floors with the ground floor covering a large amount of space—in total, there were over 120 stall locations, including a food court area and a few larger store spaces. Most of the stores in China City were filled and business seemed to be doing well with customers appearing early in the day until closing. Shop owners in China City consisted of a majority of Fujianese migrants with a few mainland Chinese shopkeepers and a few South Asian shop owners. Straightaway when conducting interviews in this mall, I noticed that many of the shopkeepers in this particular mall were young men in their 20s. I asked a few respondents about this and most were not aware or did not seem to notice, but when I mentioned it, they would agree with me saying, “Hmm, yeah, I never noticed that, but I guess that is true.” When thinking of an explanation, especially when they themselves were young men in their 20s, they all suggested that it was because at their age,

in Fujian, most of the young men would like the opportunity to come out to explore and travel. It would seem at this particular mall, because it is newer and still opening up, more recent work opportunities have allowed young migrants to find jobs in China City.



Figure 8 – China City, Durban



Figure 9 – China City, Durban

The Durban Chinese community is split into a community of early-arriving Taiwanese immigrants and a community of Fujianese migrant shopkeepers. Some of the Taiwanese came to Ladysmith and Newcastle in the late 1980s with Taiwanese factories and have since resettled to Durban, engaging in different jobs from factory work and opening upscale stores in local South African malls, to working in importing Chinese goods and opening Chinese restaurants and food markets. This Taiwanese community used to be larger than the community of recent Chinese shopkeepers, but as more Taiwanese people return to Taiwan and more Fujianese people migrate to Durban, the balance has shifted. Although there are a few mainland Chinese migrants in Durban not from Fujian province, in the past two years, the Fujianese population has grown so rapidly that they dwarf the number of non-Fujianese and non-Taiwanese Chinese in Durban. While I do not mean to imply that in Durban, the entire Chinese immigrant population is either from Taiwan or Fujian, the social circles of the Chinese in Durban are split along these lines, leaving the mainland Chinese to become grouped with the Fujianese. In other words, Durban has two semi-segregated populations of Chinese: the Taiwanese on one side and the Fujianese and mainland Chinese on the other side.

Although research has indicated tensions have existed between the Taiwanese and the more recent Chinese migrants (Park 2012), I did not necessarily observe direct hostility between these Chinese communities. In my conversations, migrants were generally polite when speaking about the other group, with both sides telling me that they simply do not engage much with the other group due to differences in their time of arrival to South Africa and different fields, professions, and social circles. The Taiwanese, on one hand, have settled in South Africa. They have children that go to local schools. These immigrant parents do not work in Chinese shopping malls and have already established social circles with other Taiwanese who came much earlier

than the current wave of recent Chinese migrants. Because they are better established financially, the Taiwanese also are in the middle-to-upper class in South Africa being able to afford better housing as well as free time on the weekends. The Fujianese and mainland Chinese migrants, on the other hand, have just recently come to South Africa and most consider themselves sojourners rather than settlers. They have come for one main purpose: to explore what it is like to engage in entrepreneurship in South Africa. Most of their families are still in China and they must work in the shops every day of the week, preventing them from engaging in much social activity outside of the Chinese shopping malls. These shop-keeping migrants are of low education and a poorer rural background, unlike the Taiwanese that have become upper class citizens. Their social circles have grown to become distinct and separate.

On top of these natural differences, organizations for the Chinese in Durban are also split across these divisions. Because Taiwanese and early-comers are more established and have more free time, they are able to attend normal Chinese church services on Sunday mornings. But because the shop-keeping scene is busy on the weekends, especially in the morning, Chinese churches that reach out to the recent migrant population in Durban must hold separate and special church services to accommodate for their busy work schedules. These churches often hold bible studies during a week night at a Fujianese person's home, resulting in Chinese churches where Taiwanese and Fujianese members of the same church never meet. In addition to Chinese churches, Durban also officially has two different Chinese activity organizations: one for the Taiwanese immigrants and one for the Fujianese migrants. These organizations function as distinct social communities that plan activities and assist the Chinese in Durban.

I happen to be in Durban during one of their celebrations and I was invited to attend the Taiwanese community organization's dinner. It was held in Sibaya Casino, one of the most expensive and high-class casinos located north of Durban sitting on top of a hill near the airport. The dinner was free for all attendees and each attendee received a raffle ticket for a drawing at the end of the dinner. I was told that last year, at the same festival celebration, they gave away a car as the grand prize. This year, the grand prize was four tickets to Taiwan. The Taiwanese community organization gets its funding from donations from the Taiwanese South African community. On the other hand, the Chinese-Fujianese community organization also holds a celebration around the same time, but because their organization has far less money, their celebration dinner was not as extravagant as that of the Taiwanese. Most migrants are invited to either one or the other depending on their affiliation, but a Chinese church missionary couple who works in both communities told me that from attending both events, the mainland Chinese-Fujianese celebration would always be lower status. It would be held in a cheaper hotel in downtown Durban. The food would not be as plentiful or as nicely catered. The best prizes would be of lower value, such as a dinner gift certificate or discounts at Chinese shopping stores. I bring up this example of the Taiwanese and Chinese-Fujianese community organizations to emphasize the overtly distinct nature of the two Chinese communities and how they are not only separate with few overlapping social circles, but that they also represent different classes of the Chinese migrant community. This means that culture, historical trajectory, and socioeconomic class separate the Taiwanese and Fujianese people in Durban.

Bloemfontein: A Few Chinese in a Rural City

The third and final location of my research takes place in Bloemfontein, a rural city located in the heartland of South Africa, the Free State province. Local South Africans often describe Bloemfontein as a sleepy rural town with not much to do despite being the largest city

in the Free State. It was historically an Afrikaans town where Dutch farmers called Boers settled and raised their families. It is located six to eight hours away from both Johannesburg and Durban, creating a triangle between the three cities. It is located less than 90 miles (145 kilometers) away from Lesotho, approximately a two-hour drive away.

Similar to Durban, Taiwanese Chinese immigrants in Bloemfontein came in the 1980s either to Bloemfontein or its surrounding towns, such as Kimberly. They have since settled in Bloemfontein often bringing family members because of their success. Many now have children who were either born after they arrived in South Africa or came to Bloemfontein at a young age, growing up in South African culture. These Taiwanese Chinese settlers are mostly rich still working as factory owners or in the import-export business. Some have so-called retired now, investing their money in real estate, small shops in local South African malls, and Chinese markets importing goods from China and Southeast Asia. Taiwanese immigrants come from mixed backgrounds, but most were involved in entrepreneurship and business in Taiwan, while some were academics or had other degrees and professions, but switched career paths to become involved in business in South Africa. Not all Taiwanese Chinese people in Bloemfontein came in the 1980s—some who arrived later through social connections came in the mid-1990s and as a result have had less economic success than early-comers, but even these Taiwanese migrants are still considered middle-to-upper class, able to send their children to expensive private schools, open nice shops in local South African malls, and live in houses in good neighborhoods. Because generally this group of Taiwanese Chinese people is economically well-off, they end up living in gated communities with one another, designing and hiring contractors to build their own houses, and choosing to live in areas that are relatively safe. This results in key residential areas in Bloemfontein where most of Taiwanese Chinese residents live.

Over the past decade, increasingly more *Fuqing ren* (Fujianese Chinese migrants coming from the county-level city of Fuqing) have come to Bloemfontein to set up small-scale shops engaged in both retail and wholesale. Many of these migrants come from Johannesburg and other parts of South Africa. Similar to the case of Durban, as the Chinese retail and wholesale market has become increasingly oversaturated all across South Africa, Fujianese migrants have moved to Bloemfontein to find pockets of space where they can still make money. As more Chinese people move to rural areas to open shops, Bloemfontein becomes a prime location for wholesalers to serve these rural Chinese shops. Some of the Fujianese migrants also come from Lesotho where they were either shop-keeping or working in factories. A Chinese businessman who managed a factory in Lesotho told me that as Lesotho erects more immigration blocks and laws around Chinese migrant workers and as their economy also faces increasing hardships, many Fujianese immigrants move to Bloemfontein in search for work, living with family and friends or friends. As a result of these two trajectories, a separate and distinct Fujianese Chinese community has emerged in Bloemfontein.

As with other parts of South Africa, Fujianese Chinese migrants have congregated together in one building located in downtown Bloemfontein. The building is like a small mall area, but is mostly rundown, with a broken elevator and alcoves with cement rubble lying on the floor. The stalls and shops, however, are bigger than the cubical warehouse storage rooms in Johannesburg and look mostly like proper shops with glass windows in the front of the stores for the shops to display their goods. Not all the shops had this luxury of extra space and glass fronts, but some of the larger spaces and the stores on the outside of the mall had these luxuries. The building itself was considered Bloemfontein's Chinatown, even though it is only one building that houses all the Chinese shops. When I conducted my research in 2012, there were no more

than 20 shops in the shopping center. The building was two floors and many of the Fujianese shopkeepers lived on the second floor together in a kind of dormitory-style living space. The shopkeepers in Bloemfontein ranged from all different ages with the youngest respondent I spoke with being 17 years old. When I returned for a secondary visit in 2013, Taiwanese Bloemfontein residents told me that they were planning on building a new Chinese shopping mall.

Unlike Durban, the Taiwanese and Fujianese community in Bloemfontein not only has more connections and associations, but also has a positive relationship with one another because of the influence of Chinese Christian missionaries in Bloemfontein. Through speaking with a Chinese missionary couple who have worked with Taiwanese and Fujianese migrants in South Africa in Bloemfontein and Durban for over ten years, I learned that the missionaries who established the Taiwanese Chinese church in the early 1990s¹² would serve not only the Taiwanese population in Bloemfontein, but also incoming Fujianese migrants. When the Fujianese came to Bloemfontein, they deliberately reached out to these new migrants and their communities, offering services and support to them as well as starting a bible study in their living spaces. Because at this time, Bloemfontein had very few Chinese people, the church quickly became the main social community for both Taiwanese and Fujianese Chinese migrants. Although not every Fujianese immigrant converted to Christianity, many kept ties to the Taiwanese Chinese church or would interact with church activities as part of their social circle.

This tradition and attitude has continued over the years, and currently, the Taiwanese Chinese church in Bloemfontein holds a special Monday night service just for Fujianese Chinese migrants. This service actually outnumbers their normal Sunday morning service, as more Taiwanese Chinese immigrants move out of Bloemfontein and more Fujianese migrants move in. The missionary couple I spoke with said that this close relationship between Taiwanese and Fujianese communities is unique in South Africa and that in fact Bloemfontein is the only place in South Africa where basically all the Chinese have had contact with the Christian church. In other words, unlike most parts of South Africa, the Taiwanese and Fujianese community in Bloemfontein are either members of the Chinese church or have had some contact with members of the church. In fact, I was specifically told that the majority of current Fujianese migrants in Bloemfontein were baptized Christians. In part because the Bloemfontein Chinese community is relatively small, especially in comparison to that of the community in Johannesburg, the community is more tight-knit and the church is able to reach, know personally, and contact more Chinese families in Bloemfontein. Despite the differences in socioeconomic class and culture between the Taiwanese and Fujianese Chinese in Bloemfontein, the church has resulted in a more cohesive and closer Chinese community than in Johannesburg and Durban.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I aim to provide the necessary and important background for situating the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa. I provide a broad overview that is not meant to be comprehensive, but instead highlight the key moments of Chinese emigration. I also provide more specifics on Chinese people in South Africa, and layout the setting for the Chinese communities in Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. While existing research provides some of these details about the Chinese communities in South Africa, I provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the complex and diverse relationships of the Chinese

¹² The one Chinese church in Bloemfontein is called Chinese for Christ and while being their own independent church, they meet in an Afrikaans church called the Dutch Reformed Church.

migrant communities. This chapter serves not only to establish this stronger descriptive foundation of what the Chinese community is like in South Africa, but also to lay out the important background for understanding the findings of this research.

Chapter 3: The Self-Employment Dream

Traditionally, income disparities and wage differences act as a starting point for explaining why migrants move and where they end up going (Hatten and Williamson 1998). Migrants also move to diversify their income sources, thereby minimizing their household's economic risk (Massey et al. 1998). Global economic structures, particularly a bifurcated labor market, economic stratification, and capital venture flows, can also help explain migration patterns and connections (Sassen 1988; Sassen 2001). The case of Chinese migrants in South Africa builds on the foundation of standard economic theories that help explain why migrants move and where they move to. Employing a capabilities approach (Sen 2001) to help illuminate the motivations for migration, I argue that the ends to migration has always been about increasing one's freedoms. Consequently, understanding a migrant's perception of economic benefits requires an expansion of economic factors to economic freedoms—or those freedoms that are tied to economic gains. Chinese migrants venture to South Africa not simply to earn more money and improve their economic situation, but also to achieve the dream of being one's own boss (Hamilton 2000) and the freedoms that come along with self-employment. These freedoms include setting one's own hours, choosing how hard one wants to work, and earning whatever profit you make. Economic freedoms are not just tangible benefits tied to self-employment but also include the meanings and status ascribed to being one's own boss—these are non-pecuniary benefits tied to self-employment. In this chapter, I describe the narrative story of Chinese migrants seeking to improve their economic freedoms and then provide a more detailed description of these important freedoms.

Immigrant Entrepreneurship: Positive Outliers and Non-Pecuniary Benefits

The case of Chinese South African entrepreneurs resembles that of ethnic entrepreneurs in the United States in that in both cases while most entrepreneurs on average struggle to make significant economic gains, a few migrants have obtained incredibly high levels of success. United States scholars have long debated how profitable and successful immigrants are in their self-employed, small-scale entrepreneurship endeavors. Immigration sociologists seem to conclude that self-employed migrants in the United States not only enjoy success, but also experience broad sweeping benefits (Portes and Zhou 1995; Waldinger 1986; Zhou 1992) but economists argue that little to no evidence exists that prove that immigrant entrepreneurs have had more success than other immigrants and actually experience low levels of returns on their endeavors (Bates and Dunham 1991; Borjas 1986). Evaluating the two sides, Portes and Zhou conclude that both are right depending on the assumptions and models that they employed (Portes and Zhou 1996:228). Looking purely at the average rate of return revealed that immigrant entrepreneurs gained little to no significant economic advantage over their immigrant counterparts. But looking at absolute economic gains provided the opposite result: immigrant entrepreneurs did experience overall economic benefits. Highly positive outliers were the cause for these seemingly contradictory results. A small number of immigrant entrepreneurship success stories were extremely positive, conflating the results when they were neglected or minimized as an outlier in the data. This means that in the case of the United States, a small number of immigrants experience extremely high entrepreneurial success, while the great majority of migrant entrepreneurs struggle to gain any significant economic benefits from their business endeavors. Despite this reality, research shows that these few success stories have a major effect on increasing immigrant populations and encouraging other migrants to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors (Bailey and Waldinger 1991).

In applying this US-based research to the South African case, it is important to acknowledge the differences of circumstance between the two country contexts. Much of the immigrant entrepreneurship literature on the United States examines middle-upper class, educated immigrants. Chinese immigrants to South Africa, on the other hand, are generally lower-middle class, with little to no education beyond middle school. Literature on American Chinese migrants deals with shops in ethnic enclaves; South African Chinese migrants gravitate towards South African malls, where they serve the local population. In fact, some Chinese immigrants purposely move away from Chinese enclaves, seeking out small black towns and villages where they can make more profit away from Chinese competition.

Despite these differences, Portes and Zhou's (1996) conclusion is supported by data I obtained through interviews and participant observation. While a few Chinese migrants experienced high economic gains from opening small-scale shops in South Africa, the great majority of immigrants gained little income advantage through becoming their own boss. Interviews suggest that Chinese migrants who arrived in South Africa over seven years ago described their entrepreneurship endeavors as relatively easy and that they make far more money in South Africa than in China—this is especially true for those arriving ten or more years ago.¹³ At the same time, migrants arriving in the last two years described the process as extremely difficult because of the sheer saturation of Chinese entrepreneurs. They said their shops were, in certain circumstances, losing money monthly. Nearly all recently arriving respondents said they would make about the same amount of money if they stayed in China. Demographic information about the increase in Chinese migrants (Park 2009; Statistics South Africa 2011) suggests that Chinese migrants arriving in the last five years far outnumber those who arrived seven or more years ago. In other words, the American case seems to resemble the South African case in that both have a majority of migrant entrepreneurs struggling to gain benefits from self-employment, but the few success stories that do seem to be the exception rather than the norm end up playing a key role in the narrative and decision-making process of the most recent Chinese immigrants (Bailey and Waldinger 1991).

These success stories only partially explain why many Chinese migrants go to South Africa to open up small-scale retail and wholesale shops. The other half of the puzzle is found in the economic freedoms that Chinese migrants pursue and the important value of self-employment itself. Hamilton (2000) employs an economic model to show that non-pecuniary benefits play an important role in providing an incentive for self-employment. Although some small-scale entrepreneurs gain massive success through their endeavors, the great majority struggle mightily, experiencing less earnings and slower economic progress than other migrants engaged in paid employment. These struggling entrepreneurs see being one's own boss as an important non-pecuniary benefit and a reason to continue enduring lower wages (Hamilton 2000:628). Hamilton's (2000) data, however, cannot speak to the nature of why and how being one's own boss would create such a large non-pecuniary benefit to self-employment. I consequently apply Sen's (2001) capabilities approach to these two theories of migration, thus shifting the focus off of economic gains and onto freedoms as the end goals in making decisions to migrate. In other words, I show in what ways being one's own boss extends and increases the migrant's freedoms, what meanings and statuses are ascribed onto these economic freedoms, and

¹³ This data is susceptible to selection bias, because Chinese migrants who were not successful in their entrepreneurial endeavors may have returned to China or moved on to a new place. If this is true, then this only further accentuates the Portes and Zhou (1996) finding that very few migrants experience business success, but those who do experience huge positive economic gains.

why these freedoms are important enough to forego economic earnings and growth that the migrant would gain in paid wage employment.

To pursue their dream of becoming a major entrepreneurial success story and gaining economic freedoms that go along with basic self-employment, Chinese migrants leverage structural benefits that exist in South Africa rather than personal human capital advantages that many ethnic entrepreneurs in the United States leverage. As stated earlier, existing research centers on middle-class, educated immigrants and their entrepreneurship endeavors in the United States (Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Sanders and Nee 1996). Sanders and Nee (1996) found that family and human capital, especially education and English proficiency, were key factors that increased self-employment. Human capital was mostly acquired before coming to the United States, immigrant self-employment was mainly families employing familial labor, most migrants were from middle or elite class backgrounds, and informal credit associations were foundational to establishing small-scale businesses (Sanders and Nee 1996:246).

I argue that in the case of South Africa, families and social capital still play a role in explaining how migrants are able to start their pursuit of attaining the dream of self-employment. The key difference between the case of immigrants in the United States and Chinese immigrants in South Africa is that Chinese migrants have little education, almost no English proficiency, and lack business experience. Despite these barriers, Chinese immigrants utilize social and familial capital, taking advantage of the less formalized economic environment in South Africa, to relatively easily and quickly adjust to and navigate around the South African shop-keeping scene. This suggests that although much of the research around immigrant entrepreneurship focuses on structural adjustments taking place in highly developed countries resulting in shifts of educated migrants moving to the West (Kloosterman and Rath 2003), the Chinese have tapped into a migration strategy that allows lower class, uneducated migrants to move to lesser developed parts of the world to leverage structural advantages in order to pursue the dream of being one's own boss.

China: The Home Country Narrative

Because the case of Johannesburg deals with Chinese migrants coming from all over different parts of China, coming at different times to South Africa, and having different education and class backgrounds, each migrant's narrative of what his/her economic life was like before emigrating is distinct from another. Their accounts are subjective narratives that I use to understand slices and parts of the Chinese economy through a personal and experiential lens. We thus get a glimpse of the starting point for these Chinese migrants as they perceive it and what drives them to pursue small-scale entrepreneurship and the dream of being their own boss. Based on these narratives, Chinese migrants see their lives in China as a manageable and decent life, but do not find any realistic opportunities to socioeconomically improve or advance their life.

As I mentioned in a previous section, I interviewed 24 respondents in Johannesburg. Six of these were employed prior to migration in skilled labor, four already had small businesses or were self-employed, nine were involved in factory work or other unskilled labor, three had no formal employment but took care of children, and two were unemployed students before coming to South Africa. In every instance but one, skilled labor referred to a technical occupation, such as a mechanic or factory machine repairman. All four respondents who owned small businesses sold homemade items, such as soybean products or baskets, either from their home or a small cart. Unskilled labor mostly took the form of factory work in manufacturing, but also included wage service labor such as working in a shipyard or warehouse. When asked about how much

respondents earned in China, the reported average income per month was around 1,250 RMB (about \$200), ranging from 800 RMB a month to 2,500 RMB a month. Of the 24 respondents, 17 Chinese migrants arrived in South Africa within the last seven years with the remaining seven respondents having arrived at least eight years ago. Although most of the respondents had high school education or less (with about half completing high school), three respondents had higher education and seemed to be middle or upper-middle class. This was exhibited in their education (college degrees) and employment (engineering, business experience, and management), as well as in some cases, cultural capital (valuing education) and possession of assets, such as owning a home. All of these middle or upper-middle class migrants came from the group of respondents who arrived at least eight years ago, arriving eight, ten, and twelve years ago.

Perhaps as a result of a slightly more educated and middle-class background of some of the migrants who arrived in South Africa more than seven years ago, earlier arriving migrants' narrative experience of China were somewhat different than the majority of respondents. These less recent Chinese migrants emphasized the difficulties in higher costs of living and relatively low levels of pay. One man named Mr. Chou who had a college education and worked in a Japanese supermarket explained, "At that time [when I graduated from college], our monthly wage was about 1,000 RMB. Also, you must pay individual's income tax and health insurance. The actual spending money we get is 800 RMB. 800 RMB. This was in 1998." When I asked if 1,000 RMB was enough to live on, Mr. Chou replied, "Living on and surviving is fine. But if you are thinking about improving your life, then it's very difficult. Think about it, after food and transportation, that's 300 RMB. With 500 RMB what else can you buy? Right? Living is not a problem. But mainly if you want to improve your standard of living, 500 RMB is definitely not possible."

I asked one of my respondents, named Ms. Zhou, about possibly moving back to China, and she described her economic problems there:

Right now in China, housing rent is very high—housing is like 50 square meters for 3,000 RMB, every month 3,000 RMB—but you can definitely find someone to rent it at this rate. Because, how do you say, right now in China... like us Shanghainese people, like my son, a university student, he lives with roommates and he is even educated, speaks great English. How much do you think he makes? He makes 3,400 RMB! 3,400 RMB! Think about it, if you drive a car, not even owning a car, but just driving a car, it's 2,000 or more RMB. So what money do you have left? So my son, they are married, and Shanghai housing is expensive. A house in the suburbs is 1,600,000 RMB. And that is in the *suburbs* (emphasizing "suburbs"). You say, what can we do? We sold our old house, and they put together 200,000, so 1,200,000 and we still had to get a loan for 500,000. My son is still working to pay off the loan, and he says it is still okay (*hai2 ke2 yi3*). Adding on a pension fund, it is 150, oh, no, 1,500, and then paying the land lord, is up to 3,000, so it's just about his monthly salary all goes to paying for the house. Then add on top of that, electricity, water, and food, you say... and they want to have children, right? And they still say, it is still okay (*hai ke yi*). You say, now, we are living one step at a time, is truly accurate.

These narratives reveal that middle-class Chinese migrants leaving China before 2005 focused on problems of increasingly high costs of living and relatively low wages as well as a

drive to save money so that they can increase their overall standard of living. To these middle-class Chinese migrants, improving their standard of living meant being able to save enough to buy a house or a flat, own and drive a car, and have enough left over to save for nice consumer goods (such as televisions and cell phones) as well as for their children's education (not necessarily private education, but paying for their children's future college education). These were the most commonly mentioned items that migrants arriving in South Africa over seven years ago said they would have trouble achieving if they had stayed in China. When asked about whether or not it was difficult to find good jobs in China, all seven respondents quickly said that surviving day to day was not difficult. Instead, the issue seemed to be around making enough money to really "develop" (*fa zhan*) their lives and improve them.

Chinese migrants regardless of when they arrived in South Africa commonly used this language of "development" to describe their goal for migrating. When speaking about their own lives and wanting to "develop" it, Chinese migrants depicted an idea of an inter-generational upward socioeconomic path. Mr. Chou described it in this manner: "When I say 'develop' I mean to save up money for my family and have a better standard of living—buy nicer things, own my own nice house for my kids to grow up in, and overall provide a better future for my children and their education." Whenever I asked respondents directly about this idea of "development," they always mentioned their families and especially their children. They felt that they were working towards a better life than their parents had and they want to provide their children with the same upward trajectory (both in terms of socioeconomic standing and standard of living). This desire for inter-generational personal development is reflected in the study of second-generation immigrants in the United States (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Foner and Kasinitz 2007; Luthra and Waldinger 2013). In regards to this development, all respondents felt it was difficult to achieve this staying in China. For middle-class households, then, leaving China would not only decrease their costs, but also enable them to pursue the dream of self-employment, where they could set their own wages and generally make enough to save away and develop their lives.

For the other 70 percent of respondents who arrive in South Africa after 2005, they described their economic life as a far more difficult struggle than their middle-class counterparts. Respondents frequently described the economic atmosphere in China as harsh and competitive. Although none of my non-student respondents were unemployed, most claimed it was difficult finding a job that had future potential. "Sure, if you just want to survive, you can definitely find some kind of job that helps you earn just enough money, but there are fewer opportunities to really develop (*fa zhan*) in China." Similar to Mr. Chou, this man also emphasized the difference between jobs that merely provide a minimum and jobs that have potential to lead to more "development," and increase one's freedoms and economic opportunities. Jobs that allowed them to just survive prevented them from developing their lives because they could not save any extra money for future generations and would only continue to exist at their current socioeconomic state and standard of living. Many respondents cited their low-education as a major hindrance, saying, "For people with college education, they can compete in the developing Chinese economy, but for people like us... we have no education and no skills. We cannot compete with everyone else. We can only hope to find very low [standard of] living jobs." Ironically, even respondents with college degrees like those previously mentioned felt that they could not take advantage of the opportunities in China. When asked about their economic situations in China, migrants commonly implied an inability for upward mobility and despite the growing economy in China, a feeling that they would be left behind.

These recently arriving, uneducated Chinese migrants also talked about increases in costs of living in China. Although this issue was less salient than it was for earlier-arriving migrants, it still came to mind for about half of the interview respondents. For these lower class migrants, however, the issue never revolved around buying and owning cars or the price of real estate. Instead, they focused on the cost of food and basic living expenses. Most of these migrants lived in rural parts of China or small towns, and so did not have to deal with problems of high rents. Their main issue was the price of common goods and food, specifically the price of rice, using it as a benchmark for inflation. The cost of cell phones, public transportation, and gas were a few other commonly discussed prices that served as examples of how expensive living in China was getting.

Recent immigrants also discussed the risk involved in trying to do business in China. I was chatting with a group of shopkeepers who were taking a “break” (because the shops had just opened and there were few customers in the shopping center) and we were talking about life in China. I asked them why they did not consider going to the city or urban area in China to try doing business there. They all somewhat laughed at the idea (or at me), and one man named Mr. Chen said, “You think it is so easy? The competition in the city is far more difficult than at home [in my hometown]! And the risk is much higher—what happens if you fail? Then you are in real trouble.” They were concerned that if they failed, they would have nothing to fall back on and would no longer be able to survive day-to-day. This was especially true for Chinese migrants who were already involved in selling small homemade goods. The thought of expanding their business into larger markets always seemed too risky because of the competition they would have to face and the lack of social connections to help them get started. Much of this discussion around risk was comparative. A different man in the group conversation who had lived in South Africa for five years said, “Here in South Africa, you just need money to rent a place and you can easily, for pretty cheap, open up a shop. In China... I’m not talking about selling something from your house... if you want to really open up a store like the ones here [in the South African mall], then you have to pay a lot for rent. It is very expensive. And you have to compete with everyone else!” At this, Mr. Chen who had just started opening up his own shop a year ago said, “Here [in South Africa], everyone is pretty much selling the same stuff. In China, it is the same thing, but with far more people and far more competitors. Even though there are more and more Chinese here [in Johannesburg], the competition is still worse in China.” These remarks reflect the view of most Chinese migrants I spoke with about opening businesses in China. Based on their narratives, many of the recently arriving Chinese migrants have considered the idea of small-scale entrepreneurship in China, but all decided that it would be too risky and far too competitive for them to survive in the Chinese market. Instead, they decided that they should pursue their dream of being their own boss in South Africa, a place where they perceive far less competition, less monetary investment, and overall less risk involved in their endeavor.

Stories from Johannesburg: Developing the Dream

Surprisingly, Chinese immigrants did not have much information prior to their decision to move to South Africa. When asked about how much they knew about South Africa before coming, regardless of when they arrived or their level of education, all of my respondents said very little—a couple even said they knew nothing about South Africa before coming. One husband and wife couple described their journey saying, “We just came. I didn’t know really anything about South Africa. I just came and figured things out after coming.” At the same time, all but one respondent from Johannesburg had relatives living in the city before their arrival and

cited this social connection as the main reason that allowed them to make the move. This provided most migrants with at least some vague idea of what South Africa was like—most stories they heard revolved around earlier-arriving Chinese migrants and their success stories as well as hearing about the problem of crime and the dangers in South Africa.

While I do not use a social network analysis of Chinese immigrants in South Africa, social ties play a major role in Chinese migrants have an easier time migrating to South Africa and establishing their small businesses. Network analysis focuses on seeing people as nodal points connected to one another and analyzing the effects of these relationships (Scott 2013). In the field of immigration, this has taken the form of research on social ties, social capital, and social embeddedness (Menjívar 2000; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Social networks decrease the barriers to entry and the costs of migration for new immigrants arriving in the destination country. When it comes to entrepreneurship, social networks help migrants start businesses by lowering the entry barriers for small-scale entrepreneurs (Waldinger et al. 1990). These are all true for the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, but instead of focusing on a social network analysis, I choose to focus on how migrants understand and ascribe meaning to their decision to migrate. A narrative perspective sheds light on why Chinese migrants chose to utilize specifically social networks in South Africa rather than utilizing other networks they had around the world and what meaning these choices have for the migrants.

Although migrants did not have much foreknowledge of South Africa before deciding to migrate there, when asked directly respondents said they had some knowledge about the business scene and the problem of crime in South Africa. I will deal with the issue of crime in the next chapter, but here, I want to consider what stories the migrants heard about South Africa and what effect it had on the migrants' decision to pursue self-employment in Johannesburg. In line with what most respondents expressed about having a lack of knowledge about South Africa, their understanding of shop-keeping in Johannesburg was relatively low. They would say that they heard a little bit about the economic situation from their relatives and how their shops were doing. The most common response I heard when asking about what Chinese migrants knew before coming to South Africa was, "I heard I could make money here, so I came." The earlier arriving Chinese immigrants told more extreme stories about hearing of the success of their relatives. One man, Mr. Lin, who had an advanced degree in chemistry and was working in a research company told me, "My little sister is doing business here, and she was making more money than I did! Not just a little bit more, too, but a lot more—ten to 20 times more money than me!" He went on to say that he would compare how hard he worked to how easy his sister would make it sound like it was to make money in South Africa selling things. His sister was one of the first-comers to the Chinese-South African entrepreneurial scene, arriving 16 years ago in 1997. Although this was a long time ago, the story of grand success seem to stick with this respondent, as he finally decided to try his own hand at starting a small business in South Africa two years ago in 2010.

While Mr. Lin's story was not one of the more normal experiences of the immigrants I interviewed, it still reflected a common theme for those who had relatives who arrived much earlier in South Africa. Many of these individuals who stayed in South Africa experienced huge success and their stories emphasized how easy it was for them to achieve their dream. Several migrants told me that they were told all they needed was approximately 10,000 Rand to start their business and they would be able to make it back and more within a few months. For those who heard these stories, success seemed to come without much effort for their relatives and so their expectations of their economic gains were set very high. When I asked these respondents if

their expectations were met when they arrived in South Africa, they all had far more tempered descriptions of their economic success. A typical response was something along the lines of what one migrant said, “Yes, I guess so. I mean, I made money, and business is still okay (hai2 ke3 yi3),” implying that really, business was not as good as advertised. In other words, early-arriving Chinese migrants did experience success, but not to the level of the stories they heard from their relatives. Beyond this, respondents emphasized that they did not know what to expect, such as how businesses were run, what permits they might need to apply for, and how they would get their goods. The only thing that they seemed to hear about was the success of their relatives. This important and central role of immigrant success stories in generating increasing migration from China to South Africa resembles that of many other cases of migration where a few successful immigrants and their social networks leads results in many more migrants coming to the destination country (Massey 1999; Menjivar 2000; Gibson et al. 1995; Clark 2003; Park 1997; Guerin-Gonzales 1996).

As expected, more recently arriving respondents heard more tempered stories of success from their relatives. These migrants simply told me that business was okay and that they heard that you could still have some success coming and opening up a shop in South Africa. These narratives were not aggrandized stories of massive and easily earned success. Instead, they focused on how the Chinese were still able to set up their own business and keep it running at a profit—in other words, a minimum of success at achieving self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship. The other note that migrants talked about was the lack of skills required to do the job in South Africa. Respondents told me they heard from their relatives that they really did not need any special skills to start their own business, and that they could easily start once after arriving and saving up for a few months.

Interestingly enough, not a single interviewed migrant told me that they heard about the economic struggles or difficulties of entrepreneurship in South Africa. This might be a result of a self-selected bias, as those who would have heard about the difficult economic conditions in South Africa would have naturally chosen to stay in China or move somewhere else. Still, for whatever reason, Chinese migrants who ended up coming to South Africa had heard generally lukewarm or positive reviews of economic endeavors in South Africa—that they would at least have a job and be able to make a living. This remains consistent to other American cases where migrants who go to America hear only of the American dream and focus on the possibilities of success rather than focusing on the potential barriers and struggles of making the dream a reality (Clark 2003; Gibson et al. 1995; Guerin-Gonzales 1996; Park 1997). As I will later discuss, however, those who arrive in the last year or so find that although they are indeed able to find a job, the job pays less than what they would otherwise be able to find in China. This suggests that with the decrease in positive economic stories, the size and magnitude of immigration from China may start to slow down as migrants seem to primarily hear about the economic status of South Africa and very little else.

Achieving the Dream: Step 1- The Journey

Chinese migrants arriving in South Africa all expressed similar plans in regards to achieving their dream. The plan was a simple two-step process: step one was to find a way to get to South Africa, and step two was to earn enough money to open their own shop. I realize that this might sound over-simplified, and as we will see, in many ways it is, but this was certainly the way that all Chinese migrants, regardless of when they arrived, described their plans of how they would become their own boss. One woman shopkeeper, Ms. Mao, put it simply saying:

[To become a big boss here] all you need to do is know someone here who can take care of you and help you here. If you don't have that, then you can't even begin. But once you do, find a way to come here—through family or friends or saving money—and then work for someone else until you have enough money to start your own shop. That's it. You don't need to know anything else [or have any education].

The first step was coming over to South Africa, usually through a family or friend connection. This involved having their family or friend coordinate some way for them to get into the country. Although a few migrants mentioned coming to Lesotho and then crossing the border, this was not a normal way to enter the country. Instead, most Chinese migrants obtained visas and either overstayed in South Africa, applied for work visas through their family or friend connection, or handled visa extensions once arriving in South Africa. Having a job through their family or friend, however, was a major part of this process that allowed them to come into the country and have legal paperwork—as one of the big requirements for visa extensions is to prove you have some income available and will not get stuck in South Africa. Also, of course, having a job allowed you to apply for a work visa and therefore qualify for a longer stay. Those who did not have legal status had problems getting extensions from the Department of Home Affairs, the South African immigration office.

I certainly heard numerous stories about how difficult and unpredictable the immigration process was. My own experience doing field research and visiting the Johannesburg Department of Home Affairs office confirmed the stories of the local Chinese. The office itself is confusing, offering nearly 20 different services, while at the same time, having almost no signs or directions explaining where one should go to extend your visa. Additionally, once you find the right place to go, the forms are also quite elaborate, requiring documentation of your place of stay, any income that you have or currently earn, a sponsor willing to vouch for you and writing a letter in English saying so, and photocopies of specific pages of your visa and passport. These were the requirements for a United States passport holder applying for a simple tourist visa extension—for work visas, the process requires even more documentation. I applied for a visa extension during my fieldwork in South Africa, and although I requested an extension until August 3, providing even my plane ticket as proof I was leaving on that date, but for some unknown reason, I only received extension until July 31. The Department of Home Affairs provided no explanation, and, reading about the rules, I was most certainly within my six month extension timeframe (having arrived in February 11). This goes to show just how random and peculiar the immigration process can be.

Some Chinese migrants, because of language deficiencies, had to hire other Chinese South Africans to help them through the process. In most Chinese malls, I found several advertisements written in Chinese posted on bulletin boards offering visa extension and immigration office services. But I also heard stories of scams run through these services, where the papers migrants received were not real. This was possible in part because Chinese migrants often did not deal with their legal paperwork until they had to leave South Africa. They would hire these immigration services and leave the country without a problem, but when they tried to re-enter, they would not have the proper paperwork to come back and so would not be allowed back in the country. As a result, it was difficult to catch these scams and differentiate between reliable honest Chinese immigration services and agents who were taking advantage of Chinese migrants. One family I spoke with told me they were planning to go back to China for the

Chinese New Year but was worried about whether they would be allowed back into the country upon returning because they had overstayed their current visa which would result in a monetary fine on the way out of South Africa. As a result, they were considering using a Chinese immigration service to help them get paperwork completed in an attempt to ensure they could return to South Africa. They told me that these immigration agents used bribes to get through the visa process, but it was not a sure thing either because some of these services were scams and they did not personally know these immigration case agents. Many of the Chinese were afraid of this, and so relied heavily on family and friend networks to deal with immigration issues, but this particular family had cousins who were scammed and had great difficulty getting back into the country, so they were especially wary. In the end, they decided to file their own paperwork and trust that they would be okay. I found out later that they had no problems getting back into the country. Their story illustrates the high level of anxiety many Chinese migrants felt when traveling in and out of South Africa.

While obtaining a legal way to enter South Africa was indeed a major issue, so too was getting enough money to buy the plane ticket to fly over. In general, however, most respondents seem to say that either their family was able to save enough money to send them over, or that their connection in South Africa would sponsor them to come over. Neither of these cases seem to happen more often than the other, but whenever I spoke to successful shopkeepers, they always seem to have at least one person, usually a family member, that they were sponsoring (financially and/or legally) to come over to South Africa. In general, choosing to come to South Africa was considered a cheaper option than other countries. Ms. Mao told me, “I have a lot of family in Italy and Japan, but it was too expensive to go there.” When I asked if she meant the plane ticket was expensive, she said, “Yes, but more importantly the cost of living there is just too high.” Another respondent said, “I wanted to go to Hungary because I have a lot of relatives that live there, but it was just too expensive. South Africa is much cheaper, and so I only had the money to come here.” One migrant told me that she had extended family in Europe, but could not afford to make a living there. When I asked if her family in Europe would support her, she replied, “Yes, but I cannot live with them forever. I have to think about the future, and it is much more difficult to save enough to live on my own there than here.” Because of the high cost of living in developed countries and the low economic and educational background of most recent Chinese migrants in South Africa, these migrants rarely seriously considered going to more developed cases. This means that although one would think that lower immigration barriers in South Africa compared to Western states would be a major explanatory factor in the Chinese-South African case (Massey 1999), because the cost of living is too high in developed countries, migrants do not even consider the issue of visas and immigration control. Ultimately, even with the support of social networks, cost of living was the central issue that migrants had to overcome and because of the poor economic background of Chinese migrants in South Africa, their choice was limited to places with lower standards of living.

Johannesburg: The Destination Country, Setting and Narrative

Johannesburg is the largest economic center and a central business hub for all of southern Africa. The majority of goods that enter through Durban and Cape Town end up in Johannesburg, where railways send them to other parts of southern Africa. What has become known in South Africa as small, medium-sized and micro-enterprises (SMME) have shaped the economic landscape of Johannesburg (Rogerson 2000). These SMMEs refer to an assortment of small-scale entrepreneurship that includes both formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Black immigrants started moving into this sector as early as 1994, setting up businesses ranging from the most common clothing manufacturing and automobile repair and maintenance, to more informal street vendors selling crafts and cultural curios (Peberdy and Rogerson 2003). Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, on the other hand, mostly came to Johannesburg in the mid- to late-1990s and have been involved in the retail and wholesale of clothing, accessories, and other household items (Park 2009). Overall, estimates of the portion of self-employed entrepreneurs run as high as 25 percent of non-South Africans in central Johannesburg (Reitzes, Tamela, and Thulare 1997). Research also shows that certain groups of non-Africans tend to cluster around certain industries and sectors of the SMME economy. The Chinese in retail and wholesale reflect this, but also Malawians in clothing production and West and Central Africans in music, food, restaurants, and clubs (Rogerson 1997; Rogerson 1999). Because of this rapidly growing SMME, the South African government has made efforts to support these entrepreneurship endeavors through government policies and initiatives such as setting up the Centre for Small Business Promotion and signing agreements with the European Union to start risk capital funds for SMMEs (Rogerson 2000; SouthAfrica.info 2003).

Although policy infrastructure certainly exists around small-scale entrepreneurship, the execution of this rule of law plays out rather weakly on the ground. Immigrant entrepreneurs' largest challenge is immigration laws and visa requirements, but upon entering the country, immigrants utilize bribes and avoid corruption to navigate through any legal issues they come across (Peberdy and Rogerson 2003). For the Chinese in particular, this seems consistent as respondents told me about regularly paying off bribes to the local police and also very little regulation around selling permits. One man, Mr. Po, who was rather animated when discussing the South African police, told me, "If you haven't paid a bribe to the police yet, then you haven't lived in South Africa long enough! Some of them come every week to get bribes from me!" Interviewees said although they knew you could register your business with the South African government, which provides some government support and some other benefits that they were not clear on or fully aware of, in the end these were unnecessary and meaningless. As Mr. Lin put it, "All you need is money and to find a place to rent, and you can start your business. There's not much paperwork or anything you really need to know."

The immigrant entrepreneurship scene for the Chinese in particular has grown and changed over the years in South Africa. Early-comers in the 1990s were able to ship in cheap Chinese goods and sell them wholesale to other immigrant entrepreneurs and local businesses. These first-movers attained huge success resulting in asking their families and friends to move to South Africa to help expand their business and to provide more job opportunities to other family members. Soon, wholesale became oversaturated, and in the early 2000s, the Chinese shopkeepers began moving into retail, primarily because they could not establish a strong wholesale business. Now, walking around Chinese malls and stalls, most shops post signs saying they are willing to sell wholesale, even though their primary market is for individual customers.

In the last five years, Johannesburg has seen an explosion of Chinese shopping centers and areas. Several Chinese shopkeepers told me that seven years ago, there were only three or four Chinese shopping malls. This was consistent with my findings from participant observation and exploration that China Mall Johannesburg, China Mart, and China City (the first two located in the south near the railways, and the third located in city center) were the first three Chinese wholesale distribution centers, and were the largest and oldest in Johannesburg. Oriental City, located near Chinatown, opened up soon after that, closed for remodeling, and then reopened. As of 2012, there are over twelve different Chinese shopping areas, most of which opened since

2009, with a couple newly opened in 2011 and 2012 with further plans for expansion. Although the majority of these Chinese shopping malls are located in the southern part of Johannesburg near the industrial sector because of the railways and concentration of wholesale centers, Chinese shopping stalls have increasingly spread throughout all of Johannesburg becoming more diffusive and common.

Old Chinese shopping malls were mostly converted warehouses and relatively rundown old buildings, some of which mall owners have remodeled, but many are left in their original state. These warehouses are nothing like the glamorous malls that are somewhat famous in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. From the outside, they seem plain and dirty, usually with rather large parking lots and an absence of flashy, modern advertising. Inside, stores would try to decorate the space with their colorful products, but typically, each shop had no distinctive name and relied much more heavily on their store number. These Chinese warehouses, with barren concrete walls sometimes exhibiting the structural skeleton of the building itself, are often packed with anywhere from two to four hundred stalls, with stores of all sizes, some large enough to take up a quarter of a side of the mall, while others were more like service counters stuffed into the side of a hallway. Essentially, the shops were each former storerooms of the warehouse converted into a small stall or shop. Conveniently, Chinese shop-keepers kept their stock either above their store in an attic-like space or in a nearby warehouse storeroom that was left as an actual storeroom. Chinese shop-keepers would pay rent for all used spaces, but sometimes would get lucky and managers would allow them to use empty, unrented spaces for free to store their supplies.

A new trend has recently emerged from Chinese malls, where a few of the newly opened shopping malls have the specific goal of appealing to the general public and are trying to cater to higher-end shopping, instead of being located in a dingier warehouse space and having the feel of a distinctly Chinese ethnic enclave. China Mall West, a new mall opened in December 2011 from the same company that had been running one of the oldest and first Chinese malls, China Mall Johannesburg, represents one of these new models for Chinese shop-keeping. China Mall West and China Mall Johannesburg are the only Chinese shopping centers with their own website, not to mention a Facebook account and social media. At the time of my visit in February 2012, they had 67 shops opened, 73 listed online, with plans to open up 200 additional shops by 2013. I spoke with Lisa, the manager of China Mall West, and she told me that they were “trying to change the perception of Chinese retail stores.” She was working on publicizing the new mall, holding weekend flea markets for Chinese shop-keepers who could not afford to rent out space in the upscale, clean mall location. She also organized a fashion show with white South African models of all ages to display clothing from stores in the mall. There was even a car show where professional drivers did car tricks, such as drifting, in the huge parking lot of the mall to attract attention and gain publicity.

Customers ranged from local black South Africans, white store owners, and Chinese shopkeepers owning retail shops either in Johannesburg or in smaller towns several kilometers outside of Johannesburg. In the warehouses where wholesale was the primary focus, nearly all the customers were either white South African shop owners or Chinese migrant shopkeepers (in roughly even proportions). In the more retail Chinese shopping centers, customers were mostly local black South Africans looking for cheap but quality goods. Sometimes, white South African store owners would also be looking for wholesale deals in these Chinese malls, as even primarily retail Chinese shops would sell goods in bulk and at wholesale prices, but there were rarely Chinese shopkeepers at these predominately retail shopping centers. When I asked shop owners

about this, they told me that most Chinese shopkeepers who did not directly import their goods from China had connections with big Chinese South African wholesalers and would get their products from them.

With this explosion of new malls and Chinese shopping areas in general, respondents were constantly aware of the increasing saturation and competition in South Africa. This was the most visible and pointed to reason why profits were down for Chinese shop-keepers. One woman who had been working at the same shop for five years said, “There used to be only three or four Chinese shopping malls, but now there are ten or twelve! And we all sell the same thing! So I think the reason we don’t make much money in the last two or three years is that there’s only so much money selling this stuff and we’re splitting it with so many Chinese now.” This articulation of splitting the profits with more and more Chinese was the most common explanation that shop-keepers gave to explain why business was tough in the past couple years. Although I noticed some other competition from local South Africans as well as Indian and Middle Eastern immigrants, this competition was considered far smaller and insignificant compared with the constantly incoming Chinese migrant shopkeepers—only one respondent even mentioned any other competition besides that coming from Chinese migrants. As a result, more Chinese have decided to move out to rural towns and neighborhoods up to 200 kilometers away from Johannesburg to set up shops there. A woman, Mrs. Lee, who had been in South Africa for twelve years and was the boss of her own shop, told me that some adventurous Chinese immigrants will just pick a road leading out of town and drive until they see a town. They will write down any turns and road names they end up taking, and when they have reached a place where there are no other Chinese shops already established, they will look around and try to set up their own shop there. These Chinese migrant entrepreneurs do not even know the name of the town or village they have arrived at, but they will know how to get there and how to get back to city center. Although this story might be a bit of an exaggeration, it describes the extent to which Johannesburg has become so saturated with Chinese malls in the past two or three years and how some Chinese entrepreneurs are coping with it through searching for untapped markets.

Upon arriving in South Africa, one of the central narratives that emerge for Chinese migrants is comparing the situation in their home country of China with their new destination of residence. While in the next chapter I discuss the social and daily differences that Chinese migrants experience, I want to talk here specifically about their understanding of the state of development in South Africa as compared to China. Chinese migrants frequently used the Chinese phrase *luo4hou4*, literally meaning backward or behind, to describe the state of development of South Africa. The Chinese phrase has the connotation of something being poor or impoverished. All Chinese migrants I interacted with seemed to have a general consensus that South Africa was more underdeveloped and “backward” than China. Mrs. Lee, who recently went back to China to visit her family told me, “When I went back [to China], I felt that we are very behind and underdeveloped here. If I compare the country here to China, it becomes evident that South Africa is a very backward country (*luo4hou4 de guo2jia1*).” When I asked respondents what specifically made South Africa seem underdeveloped to them, the most common response was pointing out high crime rates, police corruption, and lack of infrastructure. Mrs. Lee continued to tell me, “Just look around. When you walk around here you know right away that South Africa is a very poor place... Well, [for example] the roads are poorly maintained, it is not safe anywhere even though there are cops everywhere—in fact, the cops are usually the ones committing the crimes!” The Chinese migrants living in Johannesburg seem to value rule of law and social stability when evaluating a country’s level of development.

Ironically, although they dislike the problem of crime in South Africa it is the same lack of enforced rule of law that makes starting their own business much easier for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs as they were not required to obtain any complicated business permits for their small scale businesses and they can utilize corruption through the use of bribes to continue their business operations.

I frequently asked respondents whether they experienced the same problems of crime, corruption, and infrastructure in China but everyone said that their situation in China was far better than their experience of these problems in South Africa. One man put it simply saying, “Yes, there is crime also in China, but it is not nearly as bad. In China, you hear of these stories every now and then, but in South Africa, it is commonplace—nearly everyone has some encounter with crime.” I received similar responses in regards to infrastructure and police/government corruption. While I discuss the problem of crime in detail in the next chapter, I want to point out here that Chinese migrants were acutely aware of particular aspects of the state of development in South Africa. Additionally, their narrative reveals that they understood that migrating to South Africa was a “backward” step in terms of their destination country’s level of development. In contrast to those migrants who move to more developed countries, Chinese migrants in South Africa did not just think of South Africa as a different or equally developed place as China, but understood that they were moving to a less developed place (and giving up certain freedoms associated with a more developed economy and state) to pursue their dream of becoming a big boss. This reveals the meaning that migrants ascribe to their migration decisions—employing small pond migration as a development strategy means the Chinese migrants knowingly move to a less developed place in hopes of raising their socioeconomic status for themselves and their future generations.

Achieving the Dream: Step 2- From Wage Labor to Self-Employment

As mentioned earlier, the second step after arriving in South Africa through a family or friend connection was to work and save up for opening one’s own shop. For those who came over seven years ago this step was usually quite short taking about a year maybe two at the most. Chinese migrants spent this time working for their family or friend, and learning the trade. Although most respondents said there was nothing really to learn and that opening a shop took no education or skills, they mostly described having to get to know certain people and obtaining important social connections to open their own shop. When asked directly about what they learned since coming to South Africa, most respondents paused for a while to think or said, “Nothing really” at first, with a few respondents even being unable to really think of anything. In the end, the most common answer was what Mr. Lin said: “Well, I guess if I learned anything it would be running a business, but there really was not much to learn.” This seemed strange as from my educated perspective a migratory journey from one part of the world to a completely different part of the world would necessitate a lot of learning and new experiences, especially for those migrants who had never traveled much. While it was unclear to me why the migrants spoke this way about having not much to learn, one of the few things frequently mentioned was learning to speak English, which I deal with in the next chapter. But this narrative emphasizes how migrants did not feel that running a business required any special knowledge or skills and that literally anyone could do it.

One of the prerequisites to starting their own enterprise was getting to know either Chinese manufacturers to buy the goods they wanted to sell or domestic wholesalers from whom they could get a good deal and sell their goods at a slightly higher retail price. They also needed

to get in contact with different Chinese shipping personnel, who handled paperwork and taxes for importing goods at the ports as well as general transportation of the goods. Although these business connections do not take any special skills to learn, the Chinese migrants still required time after arriving in South Africa to make these connections so that they could get the goods required to open up their shops. All the Chinese migrants I spoke to did not cite these business connections as a problem or barrier that prevented them from doing business. Mr. Po, who had been in South Africa over ten years, told me that “It’s hard to work with people, if you are working closely with them or owning a shop with them, but finding people to get merchandise from? That is no problem at all.” Several Chinese migrants I spoke with talked about the difficulty of owning a store with someone (including friends and even family) and how it never worked out in the end. But when it came to establishing business ties with other wholesalers, this never seemed to be a problem from the perspective of the Chinese shopkeepers. Another man, Mr. Lau, who had just recently opened his own stall said, “Oh it was no problem opening this store. I had money saved up and so I could afford it. Getting the goods was easy too—I asked a friend who had been doing this a number of years and he pointed me to the right people.” These quotes show that despite intense competition in the retail and wholesale market, Chinese social ties and relationships were more important than trying to protect one’s suppliers and keeping this information to oneself. Additionally, this reflects the ease at which this information could be obtained without social networks, as the Chinese retail and wholesale industry had grown so dramatically in Johannesburg that suppliers had to compete with one another to get as many customers as possible, making it easy to find someone that would sell you merchandise at a good price. It seems that in general, finding connections to get the goods to sell in their shop was the easy part of the second step—many respondents described this process as mostly trial and error, trying things out and learning as they go.

The more difficult part, however, to the second step was saving enough money to start their business. Chinese migrants needed enough money to pay for the initial investment in stock and to pay for their shop’s rent. For those arriving over seven years ago, the Johannesburg small-scale entrepreneurship terrain, especially for the Chinese, was still wide open. Because competition and demand was low, goods were cheaper and could be sold for a more guaranteed profit, making the starting goal around 10,000 RMB. Rent was also a lot lower, again in large part because Chinese migrants had not yet saturated the small-scale entrepreneurship market, leaving plenty of open space for shops. Now, for respondents that I interviewed who had arrived in the last five years, all of them complained about high costs, especially in regards to rent. It seems that getting goods is still relatively cheap, but rent costs have gone up a couple thousand Rand per month. This, combined with increases in the general costs of living in South Africa (which local South Africans also frequently comment on, using the price of bread as a prime example), has created a far higher barrier to entry for recent Chinese immigrants currently working in the shop-keeping sector. Despite these increases in the cost of operation, Chinese migrant shopkeepers still had a comparative advantage over local wholesale and retail shops because of their ability to speak Chinese and obtain low-cost quality goods from China. As mentioned above, although not every shop-owner (especially those arriving more recently) had direct connections back to manufacturers in China, they would have easy access to speak with wholesalers who had these connections, so still retained a comparative advantage. I discuss the importance of language in more depth in the next chapter, but speaking Chinese becomes a significant advantage for the Chinese shopkeepers in South Africa.

Many of the Chinese wage laborers have been working in South Africa for up to four years. They still have the goal of saving up and opening their own business, but they simply have not reached a point yet where they feel comfortable going out on their own, or they have had to send money back home and are unable to take that big step up to self-employment. When I ask them whether they still plan on becoming their own boss, they all say yes, but do so with a strong sense of uncertainty. One respondent who had arrived four years ago with plans for opening his own shop by now told me, “Yes, I think I will still open my shop, if the opportunity comes up and if I can earn a little more money.” When I asked when this would be, suggesting perhaps it would be in the next year or so, he replied, “Oh no, this I cannot say. I don’t know when I will be able to open my own shop, but if business is good and I can earn more, then I will.” Many of the more recently arriving migrants had the same kind of story where it seemed quite indefinite whether or not they would be able to achieve their dream of becoming a big boss (*da4 lao3ban3*).

Although step two was a big barrier for many Chinese migrants in South Africa, I learned of a few alternative, and successful, narratives that a small minority of the Chinese population in Johannesburg experienced. One lady, Ms. Ching, I interviewed worked first in a make-up accessory factory in Bloemfontein (a rural town/city in central South Africa). She came to Bloemfontein in 2003 when she was in her early-to-mid 20s, and worked in this factory for four or five years. She then decided to move to Johannesburg after saving up from working in the factory because she wanted to try to open her own shop. Mr. Lau had a similar story where he worked in a factory about a two hour drive outside of Johannesburg. He took this factory job around ten years ago (in 2002) and only in the last year decided to move to Johannesburg to open his own shop. In both these cases, both respondents were able to open their shops right away, never having worked for anyone else as an in-between step. They seem to confirm that indeed the problem of social and business connections is easily solved and they were able to set up their shop learning as they engaged in the process. Getting the financial capital from their previous work and saving up allowed them to quickly move into becoming their own boss. In both cases, the respondents talked about wanting a freer lifestyle as the main reason they decided to leave their factory jobs and to try opening a shop in Johannesburg. They described their factory jobs as “like a prison,” where they had to work hard and had little rest, working some days from “five or six in the morning, all the way to eleven or twelve at night.” When I asked them how their shops had been going, both had moderate responses. Mr. Lau said he had yet to make a profit, but he was just a few months in and he would keep trying to see if he could be successful or not. I asked whether he ever thought about going back and working in the factory because business was not doing well, and he said, “No, I like this lifestyle a lot. You can make friends here easily with your neighbors and there is more freedom to do what you want. It is more relaxed.”

Those who achieve their goal of self-employment still experience a myriad of different results. Respondents who arrived ten or more years ago all experienced intense success, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Those who started their shops five to ten years ago reported more moderate gains. However, nearly all respondents, without any prompting, told me about how business was getting worse in the past two to five years. “Every year, the business is getting worse and worse—each year worse than the last.” I asked one respondent how much money his business was making, and he remarked, “What money [profit]? This past year, there are months that I actually lose money!” Another respondent who has had a shop for seven years told me, “At the year’s end and the year’s beginning, during the holiday season, our business is still okay and we can make money, but if you look around right now, there are no people! How can we make

money in this [economic] environment?” Out of all the people I spoke to both in formal interviews and in participant observation, only Mr. Chou told me a different story and seemed to feel like even in recent years, there was still money to be made in these Chinese small-scale shops in Johannesburg. He arrived in Johannesburg twelve years ago and owned three shops in three different malls in the city, including one rather large store in the aforementioned, more upscale China Mall West.

As a natural response, I wondered whether or not my respondents had thought about giving up on their self-employment and, either going back to factory work for those who could, or returning to their middle-class jobs in China. For those respondents who had skills such as experience being salesman, working as middle management in factories, and even having skilled labor such as being a mechanic or fixing manufacturing machines, not a single one told me that they considered doing such a thing. Even Mr. Lin, who worked conducting chemistry research, said, “Yes, I have thought about going back to China, but I would probably try to open a shop there. I don’t think I would go back to my old work.” When I asked why, Mr. Lin said, “Well, I enjoy being a big boss (*da laoban*), and I don’t think I can go back to working for someone else.” Most of these respondents did consider ways that they could fix their economic problems, but all within the context of keeping their self-employment status. They told me about potential plans to move into rural areas, go back to China and start a business there, or try to find a poorer country or place to move to where they could possibly start a more successful shop. Their strategies for dealing with their economic troubles all remained in the confines of staying self-employed, showing how important this lifestyle was to them and that ultimately this was a better lifestyle than the life they were living in skilled or unskilled, wage labor.

The Dream of Being One’s Own Boss: the Value of Economic Freedoms

The Chinese migrant narratives illustrate that it is not simply earning more money that motivates their future plans and decisions, but instead, the valuable freedoms associated with being one’s own boss that drive them to move halfway around the world to a completely foreign culture to try their hand at starting their own business. I am most certainly not arguing that making more money is not part of the equation, but to gain a more holistic picture of why more recent Chinese migrants have moved to Johannesburg, one must look beyond simple increases in income and uncover their narratives concerning self-employment.

Before looking at this, however, I want to point out that there were indeed a small minority of interviewed migrants who did primarily think of their migration journey strictly in terms of increasing their income. Of the 24 respondents interviewed in Johannesburg, only four Chinese migrants had actually experienced major gains in their wage earning because of starting their businesses at least ten years ago in the late 1990s. These individuals, perhaps because of the huge increases in income (which they describe as “incomparable”) that they experienced from doing business in South Africa, described their narrative as mostly about enjoying the effects of earning far more money. All four respondents have since settled down in South Africa. All of them now own houses in South Africa and their entire immediate families have moved to South Africa. Three of the four were currently permanent residents, while the fourth was applying for permanent residence at the time of the interview. Three of the four also had children and sent their kids to private schools with local South African children (as there are no predominately Chinese private schools in Johannesburg, although here are some less formal weekend classes for learning Chinese). One of the respondents, in fact, who arrived eleven years ago, met and married a white South African after three years living in South Africa. These Chinese migrants

told me about their lives in South Africa, buying nice, big houses in the suburbs of Johannesburg, being able to send their kids to good schools with the hopes of sending them abroad to top universities worldwide, and settling down in South Africa with their families. They represent a minority of the Chinese population in Johannesburg, and focused a lot on the amount of income they were able to make in their businesses. Given the sheer amount of money they made and how this money dramatically changed their lives and capabilities, this is not very surprising. Additionally, in the chapter on Fujianese migrants, I show the Fujianese in South Africa have a different approach to employing the small pond migration strategy and value income far above freedoms associated with self-employment—this serves as a counter-case to the majority of Chinese migrants who are interested in the lifestyle and freedoms associated with becoming a big boss rather than just earning more money.

Hearing these success stories of migrants in South Africa helps draw some more income minded migrants to South Africa, but because of different times and the struggles of more recent arriving migrants, the main economic motivation of the majority of my respondents was not just making more money, but specifically they described their journey as being about entering a new social status, one where the migrant was his or her own boss. Migrants acknowledged that because they arrived later, they could not expect the same kind of success. One respondent said, “Some Chinese are really too rich now because they came a long time ago. They have lots of success and money. They were lucky. But for us who came more recently, like me, five years ago, we are not so lucky.” Although they had tempered expectations, respondents still valued self-employment, even if the economic benefits would not be as extreme—so they came to South Africa knowing they would not be able to achieve these high, lofty success stories, but instead, focused on gaining self-employment. Chinese migrants frequently discussed their motivations for migration not as a journey to go wherever the money was good or wherever they could earn the most, but instead, as one that had a distinctive goal and destination: to save up money so that they could open their own shop/stall. This goal was not only seen as within reach, but also one worthy of pursuit. This mindset is in contrast to more income-focused migration strategies, which I discuss in a later chapter about the Fujianese migrants in South Africa.

Respondents emphasized that the difference between being an employee and owning one’s own shop was huge. Mr. Chou said, “You can’t compare the difference between working [for someone else] (*da gong*) and being the boss (*lao ban*)!” Mr. Lin said, “Being the boss is great! You can keep your own hours. You make so much more money, you can’t even compare.” It is unclear to what degree these statements might resemble reality. While I never heard anyone directly say that wage labor could earn as much money as shop owning, one respondent did tell me that he was wary of opening a shop because of how much competition there was currently and that he was not sure whether he would actually make that much more money. Also, several shop owners did tell me that some months they actually lose money because of the lack of customer traffic and the amount of money they have to pay for their goods and rent—although they all said that they would make up this money in other months, especially December and January during the holidays so that in the course of the year they would not lose money overall. These respondents have a self-selection bias, as I assume any migrants who would lose money over the course of an entire year would give up their business and likely return to China. Therefore based on the data I had access to, it is still unclear to what degree small scale Chinese entrepreneurs were really successful. Still, ultimately, even though the most recent arriving Chinese migrants who owned their own shops admitted that they might make roughly the same amount of money doing business in China, migrants who either arrived much earlier to the retail

and wholesale scene or were still engaged in wage labor felt that self-employment was significantly more lucrative than wage labor. The primary conclusion to draw here is that most Chinese migrants had a strong opinion that self-employment was the obvious and best way to go.

I observed three main freedoms Chinese migrants valued associated with being one's own boss—the Chinese immigrants talked about these reasons as the main motivators as to why they wanted to open up their own shops. First, and foremost, respondents talked about the independence associated with being one's own boss. They could make their own decisions about their salaries and times to go to work. "There is a lot of freedom in owning a shop. You can come to work whenever you want, even as late as 11 [in the morning], and leave as early as 3 [in the afternoon]," Mr. Chen remarked. Mr. Chou acknowledged that indeed, owning a shop can be hard work, but "you can choose how hard you want to work. Some people are really ambitious and they want to open up five shops, one in every mall! If you want to work that hard, you can. But if you are satisfied with just one or two shops, then you probably don't have to work as hard. It's up to your personality." For these two particular respondents, they told me that they frequently took advantage of these freedoms. In fact, Mr. Chou agreed to interview with me in the morning of the next day, but then when I showed up at the time we agreed upon, he was nowhere to be found in his shop and when I asked one of his employees, she told me that she did not know where he was and that some days he comes in after lunch and some days he does not come in at all. This was a common situation for many store owners where they seemed to go into the shops they owned as often or as little as they wanted. While I met several migrants who seemed to work hard and have long hours even despite owning their own shop and having the supposed freedom to go to work whenever they wanted, many respondents told me that they were busy when opening a new shop or having to restock, but other parts of the month, they had a lot of freedom and took advantage of it. One man who had been in South Africa for twelve years and now owned three shops in three different malls in Johannesburg told me he used his free time on the weekends to go play soccer in a Chinese soccer league. Income was still an important factor, as respondents would typically say something about earning more money, but they often talked in more detail about the lifestyle and freedom as described above that went along with owning their own shop rather than simply making more money and what their increased income could do for them.

The second freedom that Chinese migrants frequently brought up was tied to retirement. "If you are successful, you can just hire people to work your shop, and so you can really have freedom to do things you enjoy. I think this is a good plan for when you get older and can't work anymore." Often times, for respondents over the age of 40, the discussion about owning one's own shop revolved completely around retirement. Chinese migrants saw being a boss as a secure way to enter into retirement, and looked forward to making enough money to move back to China, open a shop there, and retire. Mr. Lin put it this way saying, "It makes enough money to take care of you and your family, and it gives you something to do when you get older, so that you're not just bored doing nothing." One respondent who was 45 years old and had made good money already in China said that the entire reason he moved to South Africa was to try out opening a shop to learn and see if he could do it so that he could return to China to open a business for his retirement. When I asked why he did not just stay in China and start a business immediately, he said, "Well, my sister is here doing business and so I thought I could learn from her. Also, it is by far cheaper to open a shop here than in China, so there is much less risk involved. I don't mind losing money here too much if I can learn about business." Because he arrived just two or three years ago and was located in a new mall that had yet to fully develop,

his business was doing quite poorly and he would even lose money every month. Although most of my respondents over 40 were not quite losing money, many were, in the last two years, not making much at all, and did say that some months they would be in the red, depending on the time of year. Again, while this is true for some shop owners (especially more recently opened shops), most shops that stayed in business did not lose money over the course of the entire year, as the holiday season was a key time for these shops to make up for losses. For those who owned a shop and were advanced in age, all of this was to set them up for retirement—not necessarily in terms of storing money, but trying out a lifestyle and a profession that they thought was suitable for when they advanced in age.

The third freedom related to self-employment that I observed from my respondents was freedom in mobility and place. Although nearly all respondents acknowledged that you “had to go where the business was,” they also implied in our conversation that they could pretty much set up a shop anywhere in South Africa. When I asked Ms. Zhou about whether or not she was thinking about moving to another part of South Africa, she told me, “Johannesburg is where the business is, but if things get worse, we could always try the rural countryside or try to go somewhere else. The crime is so bad here; my husband and I have thought about going to Durban or somewhere safer.” On the one hand, respondents in Johannesburg felt that they had to stay because the city was such a large business hub—so one could argue that this is not freedom at all. While I agree to some extent that the freedom of mobility was far less important pull factor of the dream of self-employment, mobility was still important for a subset of Chinese migrants in South Africa. Evidence from those who moved to Durban, in particular, revealed that the freedom to move was an important idea tied to self-employment. In Durban, one respondent who had moved from Johannesburg explained, “Johannesburg is far too chaotic! It’s also very dangerous—even when we [my husband and I] go to get stock from Johannesburg, we have to be so careful. I don’t like it there. When you own your own shop, you can pretty much go anywhere in South Africa, even to those really rural and obscure places that no one else knows about. We did not like Johannesburg, so we decided to come down here and try it out for awhile.” Another wage worker from Durban said, “Once I have enough money to open my own shop, I’d like to maybe try to move to Cape Town and open my shop there. I hear Cape Town is beautiful—everyone wants to go there.”

Younger respondents were particularly drawn to this idea of mobility as a central reason for why they wanted to become self-employed. This is similar to traditional professions that require a high level of human capital (such as being a doctor or lawyer) because the individual could move freely to many places around the world because of the demand for such professions. This is in contrast to wage labor such as factory work where the individual is tied to the location of the factory. Many of these younger migrants were single and arrived in South Africa as young adults. Moving to Cape Town was a common theme, as one 25-year-old male migrant from Johannesburg, Mr. Chau, told me, “Yes, I have been to Cape Town and it is beautiful there. Right now, I am just working for my parents, but once I become a boss, I would love to find an opportunity there to open up a shop.” Another young man from Durban who was 21 years old said, “Once I’ve made enough money [to open my own shop], I want to either go back to China and open a shop there with some friends, or maybe try to open a shop by the seaside. It’s really beautiful here in Durban, but I don’t get to go to the seaside much. Maybe I can open a shop near the beach.” Yet another young male worker from Bloemfontein said, “When you are your own boss, you can go anywhere you want. Some people choose the rural areas because they don’t mind the quiet life, while others go to the big cities or to other countries like Lesotho. If I can

make enough money to become a boss, then I would go to Johannesburg because I have lots of friends there.” For most middle-aged respondents in Johannesburg mobility was not an important freedom associated with self-employment because they felt that the city had the most business. But for those already living outside the business hub (in Durban and Bloemfontein) and for young adults working for other people, a central theme in their desire to be their own boss was the freedom to move and live where they wanted.

Conclusion: Small Pond Migration

In this chapter, the narrative journey of Chinese migrants coming to South Africa and pursuing their dream of self-employment reveals specific examples of how small pond migration works. First and foremost, migrants understand and acknowledge that South Africa is more “backward” (*luo hou*) than China. They point out everything from the lack of infrastructure to the persistence of crime as evidence for how South Africa is less developed than China. As stated earlier, one of the two things that all Chinese migrants knew about South Africa before deciding to migrate was how bad the crime is in Johannesburg—so Chinese migrants knew the state of development in South Africa before arriving. They, however, still choose to come to South Africa and, in fact, take advantage of the lack of rule of law to set up their shops. This is evident in how easy they say it is to set up their shops and how little paper work is involved in the process. Additionally, they utilize bribes to enter the country and continue to do their business, again taking advantage of “corruption” and the lack of an honest police force—an attribute that the Chinese themselves point to as evidence of a *luo hou* country.

Not only have Chinese migrants taken advantage of certain characteristics of South Africa to pursue their dream of self-employment, but Chinese migrants also experience effective increases in economic, social, and human capital in the process of moving to South Africa. In the economic case, migrants do not actually have more money or necessarily make more money, especially when investing in the plane ticket to get to Johannesburg. But because of exchange rates and lower costs of living compared to that of China, Chinese migrants talk about how there is much less risk involved in their entrepreneurship ventures in South Africa than to do the same in China. Small pond migration, then, is not always about literally making more money as a result of migrating, or about general economic gains that occur due to migration, but instead, the economic gains are specific to the migrant’s goals—in this case, economic differences such as less competition, lower barriers to entry, and lower costs of rent and living all combine to make achieving the specific goal of self-employment more attainable.

Similarly, in terms of social and human capital, the effective gains that Chinese migrants experience are all specific to the goal of becoming one’s own boss. Migrants do not necessarily gain more social connections, but connections that enable them to open up shops in Johannesburg. In China, they still had these connections to these relatives living in South Africa, but were unable to tap into the benefits of these networks. The process of moving, then, allows them to use these family and friend networks to find jobs, a place to live, and get started in a new culture and a new place. This is essential for the first step of their two-step plan to achieve their dream of self-employment. Although these social networks are not directly related to the characteristics of South Africa as a smaller pond than China, the fact that South Africa is less competitive has an indirect effect on the social networks that potential Chinese migrants have access to. Because of a less competitive atmosphere (at least in terms of the South African economy, and specifically in retail and wholesale shop-keeping), the connections that Chinese migrants have to family and friends in South Africa are effectively bigger fish in the small pond,

so these relationships have more value in South Africa than if the Chinese migrants stayed in China, where they do not have any networks with “big fish.”

Finally, in terms of human capital, again Chinese migrants do not actually suddenly gain education and knowledge when moving to South Africa. Instead, small pond migration is about how these migrants gain advantages over their counterparts in South Africa after moving from China. In this case, it is not about skills or business experience, as the Chinese come with very little, but one major advantage that the Chinese migrants have over their South African counterparts is the ability to speak Chinese. Here, Chinese migrants are essentially utilizing economic advantages that Chinese manufacturers have over South African manufacturing. Moving to a smaller pond, then, allows the Chinese migrants to exploit the fact that China is quickly becoming the world’s largest manufacturer, and has huge comparative advantages in producing all kinds of different goods. This means that Chinese migrants in South Africa take advantage of their ability to speak Chinese to work with Chinese manufacturers to import cheap Chinese goods and sell them in the South African market at far lower prices than other South African stores. This advantage in human capital protect the Chinese from competing with local South Africans who might also want to open up shops but cannot compete with cheap Chinese goods, providing a higher likelihood of success for Chinese migrants. Small pond migration utilizes the advantages of their home country over the destination country. From the migrants’ perspective, they experience a competitive edge in human capital through moving from China to South Africa.

Self-employment is a major goal and dream for Chinese migrants coming to South Africa. The Chinese in Johannesburg in particular, who come from all over China, value self-employment, not merely for its potential to produce huge gains in income, but also for the lifestyle and freedoms that go along with it. On the one hand, migrants younger in age seem to see being their own boss as a way that they can supplant their lives anywhere, going wherever they want with the capital and the experience of a successful business. Self-employment, then, comes with the capability to live where the migrant wants to live. On the other hand, older Chinese immigrants see becoming their own boss as a means to an ends: gaining the skills and foundation for a safe, relaxed, and happy retirement, making self-employment almost a hobby to tend to when they retire. One’s capability set is increased in that Chinese migrants can gain access to a path for retirement that they otherwise would not have access to. All respondents mentioned a freer lifestyle where one has more flexibility in how they spend their time, instead of being forced to come in to work seven days a week with more rigid working hours each day. Although many respondents who have achieved their goal of self-employment admit openly that business has not been good the last few years and that there are months when they lose money, they still value their lifestyle and the freedoms that come along with owning their own shop. Instead of thinking about changing professions, reinvesting in education, or going back to working in factories where they can earn more money, they think about strategies to increase their earnings through self-employment, possibly changing locations as a way to deal with over-saturation in Johannesburg. The narratives of Chinese immigrants in Johannesburg highlight that their end goal is not purely economic gain or more income, but instead, importantly about the freedoms and the lifestyle that becoming a boss can offer them.

Chapter 4: Non-Economic Costs and Benefits

Whereas in the last chapter, I focused on the economic freedoms associated with the dream of self-employment, in this chapter, I shift focus to the place and culture of South Africa, and how moving from China to South Africa produces both non-economic barriers and freedoms that Chinese immigrants experience and navigate in their daily lives. These are barriers and freedoms that Chinese migrants claim to experience in their narrative journey from China to South Africa. I elaborate on the benefits perceived by Chinese migrants in gaining the experience of venturing out, experiencing good weather and beautiful environments, and taking advantage of a slower pace of life. On the flip side, Chinese migrants also must deal with substantial costs to emigration, such as dealing with high crime rates in Johannesburg and navigating through life without speaking much English. Notably respondents did not mention overcoming barriers such as racism or poor health care when discussing their lives in South Africa. Likewise in spite of macro-statistics that indicate more political empowerment in South Africa when compared to China (Klugman 2010), respondents did not mention experiencing any increase in political freedom.

Although this chapter follows the chapter on economic freedoms, this in no way implies that the economic factors and the power of the dream of self-employment are substantially more important than the factors discussed in this chapter. In many ways, I believe the opposite is true—that in fact for the most recent Chinese migrants coming from all over China the non-economic benefits of gaining the experience of traveling abroad, enjoying nice weather and beautiful scenery, and experiencing a slower pace of life in South Africa have a greater effect on the number of Chinese migrants that choose to stay in South Africa than purely economic motives. Because the Chinese migrants are constantly immersed in their economic activity does not prove that their economic activity must be the main reason why they choose to go and stay in South Africa. Instead, the narratives of Chinese migrants reveal that on the whole, the desire to venture out has a bigger influence on migration decisions than pursuing the self-employment dream. Furthermore, those who decide to remain in South Africa do not necessarily do so because they realistically believe they will eventually achieve their dream of self-employment, but instead, despite giving up certain freedoms and encountering difficult barriers in South Africa, they stay in large part due to quality of life benefits such as nice weather, beautiful scenery, and a slower pace of life. Although I have organized these factors as separate from the economic freedoms that they hope to enjoy and work towards, the decision for the most recent Chinese migrants to stay in South Africa consist of both an evaluation of their economic standings as well as their enjoyment of these improvements in their subjective quality of life (in addition to how well they are able to cope with the barriers of crime and language).

Keep in mind that the narrative experience of immigration involves two steps: first, the process of deciding to leave China and go to South Africa, and second, the experience of arriving and living in South Africa. The benefit of having traveled outside of China is an enticing and important factor that takes place in the first step of migration as the immigrants are deciding on whether to stay in China or go abroad. The issue of crime, however, is also mentioned in the early decision-making process, as many migrants hear about the problems of crime before leaving China. In comparison, weather, environment, pace of life, and language are more salient once having arrived in South Africa—many of these factors were unknown to the Chinese migrants before deciding to come to South Africa and became important to them after living in Johannesburg for some time.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the importance of each of these benefits, not only explaining how they fit into the migrant's narrative journey to South Africa, but also showing how they are each related to important freedoms that enhance the subjective quality of life that the Chinese experience in Johannesburg. Then I will move on to discuss the costs of migration, showing how the Chinese attempt to navigate through the barriers of crime and language—revealing that indeed the act of migration is not all about gaining benefits, but that migrants decide to stay because they believe that the benefits are worth the costs. Between this and the previous chapter, I hope to provide a holistic picture of the multiple important factors involved that help explain why the Chinese from all over different parts of China have migrated to Johannesburg over the past decade and why they choose to continue to remain in South Africa.

Venturing Out: Exercising the Freedom of Movement

Vanessa Fong's (2011) work on Chinese college students reveals a sudden increase in interest from Chinese students, and their families, to study abroad in First World, developed countries. As she follows up with students she interviewed and worked with seven years prior, she finds that the same students who in 2004 had no interest in studying abroad, by 2010, their families were taking out loans to help fund their students to study in places like Japan, Australia, Singapore, North America, and Europe (Fong 2011). Her work reveals a shift in culture, especially amongst the younger generation in China—instead of the historical Chinese attitude that feared outsiders, desired to remain isolationist, and generally had a negative view of the West (Bin Wong 1997), the more recent generation of Chinese (certainly since the Deng Xiaoping era post-1980s) has developed a far more positive view of the world outside of China.

In a similar way, in my interviews with Chinese migrants living in Johannesburg, all had extremely positive views of *guo wai*, which translates into countries outside of China. Although Fong's work looks at the social middle class in China, my research focuses on mainly lower class, uneducated migrants, those living in rural and suburban areas, yet these migrants also seem to share a similar view. When interviewing a young man in his early twenties, he told me that “in China, people there always have a positive view of countries outside of China (*guo wai*), so when I had the opportunity to come here, I definitely could not pass it up.” When I first encountered this attitude, I thought there must be some logical reason or specific idea that people had grabbed onto. Perhaps they have an idyllic vision of the developing world as a place with golden streets, kind of akin to how some poor countries think that everyone in the United States must be rich (which might be relatively true in many cases). As I pursued this idea more with my interviewees, one respondent said, “Yes, in the village where I come from, if you have the money to go abroad, you will definitely go. There is just a sense that things are better out there. I don't really know what it is specifically, or why it is better, but people just have a really ideal, wonderful picture of *guo wai*.”

Of all my interviews with Johannesburg Chinese migrants, not a single one really pointed at any particular thing as the reason why they thought that the *guo wai* was simply better than their lives in China. After getting rather vague answers, I decided to start pushing my respondents more about the question and even suggesting possibilities, such as asking if they thought the money was better to make outside of China, or if they thought the lifestyle was more glamorous. But no matter what I suggested, nothing seemed to click with my respondents, as they continued to insist that it was not any specific thing, but they just had a wonderful and ideal (*wan mei*) vision of *guo wai*. I point out the vagueness of their answers because it stood out in stark contrast to other conversations and lines of questioning I engaged in with my respondents;

Chinese migrants were willing to speculate on the cause of crime, lack of business, and poor South African economy, but were unwilling to provide a concrete answer for the reason as to why they felt it would be better to venture outside of China. This suggests that Chinese migrants' desire to venture out was not rational, calculative decision-making, but rather a more cultural feeling that drove them to want to emigrate from China and experience the rest of the world.

This idea of traveling abroad was a major factor that influenced most of my respondents' decision to leave China. Social networks and economic factors still play a major role in narrowing down to which country prospective migrants travel. Specifically, having a family connection to the receiving country and going to a place that had lower costs of living and cheaper airfare were important considerations that led many of my respondents to South Africa. But the original impetus to leave China seems to find its motivating factor in a desire to exercise the freedom to travel abroad, to a place that the Chinese had created to be idyllic and generally better than life in China. I asked Ms. Ching who arrived in South Africa in 2003 if there were any problems in China that caused her to leave, but she responded saying, "No, nothing like that. I just had the opportunity to travel outside of China, and I felt like I had to take it." I continued to ask her more about this, and she said, "Well, I was pretty young at the time and my cousin told me that there was this opportunity to work in a factory here, so I just thought that I should come here, try it out, and have this experience of living abroad while I was still young." Most respondents had a similar response as they consistently expressed the feeling of wanting to take advantage of a unique opportunity to see the world and travel outside of China to experience firsthand how the rest of the world was like, understanding that this opportunity was difficult to come by.

In Fong's (2011) analysis, Chinese students studying abroad sought out a flexible developed world citizenship that would promise greater happiness and freedom because of transnational mobility. My respondents, however, did not have the same clear objective in their decision to come to South Africa. Instead of wanting to specifically become a part of the *developed* world, Chinese migrants in South Africa want any experience in the *guo wai*, and because of their lower socioeconomic standing, they do not have the luxury of feasibly living in first world countries. While this sets the South African Chinese migrants apart from Fong's Chinese students, both have similar goals in mind as they desire to develop and improve their lives but employing different strategies. Fong's students look to connect themselves with the developed world and its culture whereas Chinese shopkeepers use a small pond migration strategy to "try things out" to see if they can increase their overall quality of life in South Africa.

Responses like those above did not vary much across gender, or how long they lived in South Africa. Out of all the interviews conducted in Johannesburg, only four respondents did not mention the idea of venturing out at all during the entire interview. Of those who did talk about venturing outside of China, those who arrived in South Africa between the ages of 18 and 29 seemed to talk about the idea of venturing out more than those who arrived at an older age. For these younger migrants, embarking on this adventure to see what life was like in the *guo wai* was truly central in their decision to leave China. Economic endeavors and the dream of becoming self-employed were still part of their narrative, but to a much smaller degree, especially amongst those who arrived in the past five years. For these migrants, the economic incentive was quite marginal, as they described their venture as "just trying things out (*lai shi shi kan*)" and had little expectation of making tons of money. This group of younger and more recent Chinese migrants would commonly say that they had no desire to continue studying in

college or even to complete high school, and so either decided to come find work immediately after high school, or never finished high school in China and after a few years of working in China, decided to go on this adventure to South Africa. Yet, although venturing out was certainly more salient in younger migrants' self-description of their journey to Johannesburg, even older migrants talked about the opportunity to go abroad and work in a different and new place—to “try their luck” at making some money somewhere else. The opportunity was seen as too good to pass up, not necessarily strictly because of the stories of vast riches and easy money, but rather because the act itself of leaving China was seen as an important and worthy benefit.

Sen's capabilities approach is useful since the very act of migration is a freedom in itself, and the Chinese embarking on these journeys are keenly aware of this. They highly value being able to act on the freedom of mobility—to be able to move halfway across the world to an extremely foreign place to experience what the idyllic *guo wai* had to offer. While Fong (2011) provides some basis for understanding one side of this, many others (Chu 2010; Pieke and Mallee 1999) have also pointed to the importance of Chinese culture in valuing the ability to travel abroad. They argue that social and cultural structures that developed over time in Chinese history have created the conditions for many Chinese to value the idea of migrating abroad. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is especially true in certain parts and provinces in China, such as the southeastern coast. In the same way, the very experience of traveling to South Africa was valuable to my respondents, regardless of how the trip actually turned out or whether or not they made a lot of money. In fact, Chinese migrants seemed actively aware that South Africa was “more backward (*luo hou*)” than China, even before coming to South Africa. One migrant told me that the only thing she knew about South Africa before coming was that it was poor—much poorer than China. Although migrants choose to go to a poorer place, they still think of this as a *benefit*, not a cost. Being able to have the freedom to travel anywhere at all outside of China is understood as a luxury, or a unique and important opportunity. Exercising this freedom, then, is a huge experiential benefit to the Chinese migrants in Johannesburg that they instantly gain as soon as they embark on the journey.

From a Western perspective, this might seem strange. Why would anyone go to South Africa to “experience the world outside of China?” Why is traveling to South Africa seen as the idyllic *guo wai*? Fong (2011) argues that Chinese migrants choose to go to developed countries to study abroad to obtain certain First World rights and citizenship—to experience a sense of being able to belong to a higher class society. The attitude I find in my respondents resembles that of Fong's Chinese students, but on a lower social class. My respondents, due to their low education, lack of financial capital, and lack of skills, see a different set of countries as still being “a step up” and still gaining an experience that others in their villages may not have the opportunity to do so. Many Chinese do not have the opportunity to travel abroad, so the act of traveling itself, regardless of where, becomes a worthwhile and luxurious experience. Although it would seem that South Africa is not necessarily an accurate depiction of the *guo wai*, and although Chinese students traveling to developed countries certainly experience unique benefits that my respondents did not experience, none of these factors seem to prevent the Chinese migrants from adamantly talking about their own journeys as unique and important opportunities—ones that they simply could not pass up. More research should be done on this topic to investigate the cultural elements going on in China that create such a value on traveling abroad, not only to First World destinations, but even to perceived poorer and “more backward” countries.

Crime: A Deterrent to Coming and Staying

Chinese migrants considering the trip to South Africa really did not know much about Johannesburg before making the journey. To the extent that they had heard anything at all, the most common stories were of making money and how the economy and businesses were doing. Aside from this, the only other thing that respondents had heard was the problem of crime. In Johannesburg, this was brought up in every single interview I conducted, whether I asked about it or not. Some respondents would talk at length about this issue and would share many stories without prompting (or stopping) about the crime that they must face on a regular basis—this was in stark contrast to their inability to explain what was so great about the *guo wai*. When I asked about what they heard about before coming to South Africa about Johannesburg, I would ask specifically about issues such as what the Chinese community was like here, what the government was like, what the environment or daily life was like, and for all of these things, respondents told me they knew nothing. “Aside from the economy, the only other thing I really heard about was the crime problem. This I was told about before coming.” Quotes such as these were common responses to my line of questioning regarding what they remembered hearing and knowing prior to journeying to South Africa.

My respondents choose to come to Johannesburg despite the stories of crime, but a few respondents told me that many of their counterparts ended up not making the journey because of some of the stories of crime they had heard. In the basement of one of the Chinese shopping malls, I met Mr. Ang, a 32-year-old man who had been living in South Africa for 8 years, who shared his story about dealing with police corruption regularly every week. While telling me about this, he began explaining that many Chinese left to go back to China because they could not deal with the criminal activity in Johannesburg. “A lot of people come and even though they know that it is dangerous here, they still think if they can make money then they will stay. But soon, maybe after a year or so, they find out that the crime is really, truly bad and they cannot take it anymore and return to China. I know a few people who hear these stories in China and that is the main reason they do not try coming here.” Stories like these emphasize the magnitude that crime acted as a barrier to Chinese migrant shopkeepers in South Africa.

As the quote above illustrates, the problem of crime also came up in migrants’ discussion of their decision to either stay in South Africa or go back to China. I would ask respondents who had personal experiences with crime whether they had thought about returning to China at that point. One woman, who had lived in South Africa for six years now, told me that in their second year in South Africa, they had burglars follow them home from their store and rob them at gunpoint. She said, “We were very scared [when it happened] and just gave them whatever they wanted... in the end, they did not hurt us at all or anything, but just took our money and some valuables and left... Of course at that time, we thought about going back to China. We were very scared of things happening again, but after some time passed, I guess the feeling went away and we just kept staying here.” In a more crowded mall in Johannesburg, I met Mr. Chau, a young 25-year-old man who had only been in South Africa for two years. He claimed to be the adventurous type and did not mind the crime so much saying, “Yes you have to be careful at night and things, but if you want to go out, you can—it is no problem. But yes, you do need to be careful... I personally am maybe a bit different from most of the Chinese people here—I still like going out and exploring even though it might be dangerous.” Although he himself felt comfortable living life regardless of crime, he was still very aware that most people have difficulty with this. He continued saying, “Some of the Chinese who can’t handle the crime just choose to go back to China. I know a lot of people who decide this... Crime is a serious problem

here.” The Chinese were all highly aware of the problem of crime, as they felt as though it was all around them, and they saw this issue as the biggest cost and freedom that they had to give up to live and stay in South Africa.

The stories that I heard about crime in Johannesburg were numerous and vivid. A 55-year-old woman, Mrs. Cheng, from a Shanghai suburb started talking to me immediately about the problem of crime when I approached her asking for an interview. I told her that my study was asking people about what their lives were like in China and what they were like here, and she quickly jumped into a narrative discussing the problem of crime in South Africa.

Right now, South Africa’s safety/environment continues to be bad. Just recently, last Christmas, there were robberies, so it was hard to earn money. This month and last month, it has been a bit quieter, but three months ago, during that period, there were a lot of robberies—more than all last year! In Sandton, a more developed and upper class neighborhood in Johannesburg, there were still robberies going on. Before, people just wanted your money, and as long as you give them money [they would leave you alone]... but now, last month, at night, 11 robbers at around 11 o’clock, they came to a small shop outside of this shopping center. Usually, they would just take a crate of shopping goods worth maybe three to four thousand rand. But this time, after they robbed them, they still wouldn’t leave. They assaulted the shopkeeper and broke the head of one of them! And what is worse is that they hit an artery! In the end, thankfully it was still okay, but only because there was someone nearby who called the police—if there was no police there, this person was definitely going to die. You say, if you break open an artery, how much blood do you think you will lose? Here, certainly, the safety issue is truly bad. On the whole, we just go to work and go home from work.

This was just one of many stories about the problem of crime that the Chinese migrants faced living in Johannesburg. In this account, the respondent emphasizes how violence has increased over the years—whereas before, you could just give up your money and they would not hurt you, now, there was a sense that even if you gave up your money freely, they might still beat you. Several other respondents also voiced this concern saying that before, all they wanted was your money, but now, they might beat you even if you freely gave up whatever you had. In addition, this account of criminal activity shows the high amount of detail given in the attack on a nearby Chinese shopkeeper. The amount of detail was common amongst my interviews in the retelling of criminal stories. These details help emphasize exactly what the Chinese are most afraid of. In this case, her account emphasizes the blood and violence of the injury and that the Chinese migrants in both incidents cannot do anything to prevent the injustice from happening to them. Fear of bodily harm and the lack of freedom to do much about it were two important costs that Chinese migrants had to face when choosing to live on in Johannesburg.

Crime in Johannesburg is not restricted to private citizens, but applies to the police as well. Mrs. Cheng continued telling me about crime in South Africa and turned her attention to the South African police:

We don’t go out anywhere... and here, the police is about the same as the robbers. Of course, there are good police officers too—in everything there are always some good people too. But typically... for example, last year, my friend had to go to the

bank to get money before paying for goods and a police officer pulled them over afterwards—and if a police officer pulls you over, you feel like you must pull over and respect their authority. But now, police officers will inspect all over your car to look for money, because they know that Chinese people have cash on them. They took 530,000 Rand, and afterwards, because it's the police, what can you do? Now, the life of a Chinese person here is really, truly difficult!

Her account shows that their fear was not only directed towards violence from robbers, but also from police abuse. Although the abuse is not physical, extortion from those with authority is yet another dangerous part of living in South Africa. This creates further pressures, problems, and barriers for Chinese migrants. Mrs. Cheng's accounts also reveal a feeling of being targeted because of being Chinese. While this racism is not necessarily because of their Chinese heritage, because the Chinese in South Africa are seen as having more money, they are (in their perception) targets for police corruption. Data from interviews and conversations during participant observation all affirmed Mrs. Cheng's sentiment that many Chinese shopkeepers felt that they were a target of more crime because of being Chinese.

Mr. Ang explained in detail about the Chinese South African experience with police corruption:

When stopped by a police, even if your car is in good condition, they still can find faults with it. Even if your license is valid, it doesn't matter. They just want to delay your time. As we are in business, time is important. So eventually I will just give them 50 or 100 Rand. For those who can speak better English, it is better. For me, I have no choice. In SA, I would say 100% of the Chinese has encountered this situation. This will not happen in China or California. This is a very corrupt country. I think it will get better. The government is paying more attention to this problem... [Corruption] is very common. At one time, I even get stopped by police one or two times a week—sometimes even every day. The police are getting rich by doing this. The money they collect is much higher than their salaries. It is getting worse too. A long time ago, the police would be happy with 25 Rand. Nowadays, they can even ask for 500 to 1000 Rand!

I continued discussing crime with Mr. Ang, and he told me about his personal experiences:

I have been robbed twice. At one time, it was a Saturday at my home. Someone carrying a school bag knocked the door. I usually don't open the door. But I thought it could be the security guard. When I opened the door, he pointed a gun at me and entered into my house. The other time I was robbed, I went out from my shop to get a business document. They followed me to my house and robbed me that way.

Mr. Ang's account highlights the role police play in exacerbating the situation, harassing Chinese migrants for bribes and slowing down business. His experience with crime was particularly personal because robbers had entered his home twice to steal at his place of residence. I asked him if he considered moving back to China or leaving someplace else. He told me that at the time, he considered it because it was a stressful situation, but because his

daughter was getting a good English education, he would wait until she went to college abroad somewhere and follow her wherever she decides to go. Interestingly, fear for his daughter's safety, for example, did not drive him to give up on his desire to continue to improve his family's life and increase their freedoms—the benefit of English education for his daughter as a long-term investment for their family's future outweighed the daily fear and regular encounter with crime. I will discuss the beneficial aspects of living in an English speaking country later on in this chapter, but Mr. Ang's interview reveals that although crime was commonplace and often Chinese migrants could do nothing about it, those who chose to stay in South Africa felt strongly that developing (*fa zhan*) their lives and investing in future generations was more important than the risks they faced and the freedoms they gave up as a result of crime.

I experienced the full extent of the fear of the police and paranoia over crime when I entered a shop near Chinatown run by three women. Due to my sampling methodology, I officially interviewed the woman I spoke to first, Ms. Mei, who was 19 years old and had come to South Africa to make money to send back home to her parents and two siblings. As I was interviewing her, the two other middle-aged ladies came over to listen to our conversation. They began to add their own thoughts, and kept steering our conversation to the issue of crime. They told me that South Africa was a terrible place to live, and that “we have a saying here, have you heard it? The police in China are like the mafia (gangsters), but here in South Africa, the police *are* the mafia (gangsters)” (emphasis mine). I had not heard this saying from anyone else, nor did I hear much comparison between the crime in China and the crime in South Africa. If anything, most respondents did not mention much serious crime in China—a few migrants said that in China it can be dangerous to go out late at night, but overall, most Chinese migrants I interacted with felt that the crime in South Africa was far worse than what they experienced in China.

The two middle-aged ladies continued to tell me that they used to have boxes all over the store and kept their inventory out in the open, but black people would steal boxes of their things and they could not do anything to stop them, so they had to build cabinets around their store to put their stock in. I asked them about the security guards, because I had seen several security guards at this mall patrolling the area, but they told me, “What can they do? They are probably in on it for all we know!” The oldest woman told me that she believed the black street vendors who sold things on the sidewalk around the parking lot of the mall were the ones stealing their things. She got so riled up telling me about the problem of crime that she finally said that she was getting too upset talking about it and could not say anything more. The two women left and I completed my interview. After finishing, they returned and made sure that I would not give up their identity or reveal the location of their shop in my research. They said they were afraid of the police and security guards finding out that they had said these things because they would come and harass them or even threaten their safety. As I was leaving, the second eldest woman told me that when I return to America, I must tell everyone that “South Africa is a terrible country (*cho guo jia*).” The word she used has graphic implications in Chinese and literally means “to smell badly.”

Although Ms. Mei did not seem to have as drastic feelings about crime as her two co-workers, the incident helped me understand the extent to which some Chinese migrants felt strongly about the problem of crime. Again, in their account, one finds the police and local authority figures, such as the security guards, only contributing to the problem of crime. The similar theme of corruption is expressed in how the women felt helpless because those who were supposed to protect them only added to their fears. These fears are further accentuated with the

black street vendors surrounding their mall, allegedly plotting to steal their goods. The issue of race comes up here again, where Chinese shopkeepers felt that blacks were typically responsible for problems of crime. This was also a common feeling—although Chinese migrants rarely said anything derogatory about the black population (and many in fact said they had no problems interacting with them and working with them), it was a regular reference that robbers were always “black robbers” and criminals were always “black criminals.” The primary exception to this is when respondents spoke about corruption and police officers, where race was a non-issue. The racial language of crime is consistent with the way local South Africans stereotype criminals as mostly black immigrants (Lerner, Roberts, and Matlala 2009)—a few Chinese respondents mentioned that they thought “black criminals” were usually foreigners and not resident South Africans. Wanting to respect these two women’s privacy, I did not ask them why they continued to choose to stay in South Africa, despite their strong emotive reaction towards crime in Johannesburg. It may be likely that many who had such strong reactions did indeed choose to return to China, as a few respondents mentioned to me in other interviews. Life for these two women seemed full of fear, stress, and worry. These are some of the freedoms that crime takes away for the Chinese migrants living in South Africa.

These accounts of crime were not only common, but seen as a regular part of the daily life in South Africa. I was chatting with a group of men and they were discussing the issue of crime in South Africa. After asking me if I had been robbed yet, one man who had been living in South Africa for 13 years turned to me and said, “If you haven’t experienced crime firsthand here yet, then you can’t say that you have truly lived in South Africa yet.” They all nodded in agreement and said that this was a common saying people would tell those who had recently arrived in South Africa. I heard similar sayings from several other Chinese migrants when talking to them about crime—all of them emphasizing that if you have not had some encounter with crime in Johannesburg, then you probably have not lived there long enough. In other words, it was all just a matter of time until something would happen to you. One respondent who had lived in Johannesburg for five years told me that “after awhile, you just accept that you will be robbed or some other criminal activity will happen to you. You get used to the idea and you just remember to give them whatever they want and you should be okay.” Although most of the Chinese migrants I interacted with did not have such an accepting attitude towards the problem of crime, I want to emphasize the idea expressed here that those who decided to stay in Johannesburg had to accept criminal activity has a regular and normal part of daily life. Of all the issues and topics I spoke to Chinese migrants about, crime was on average the most salient and discussed topic. It was seen as the main barrier and problem with living in South Africa. As one respondent put it, “If it weren’t for the crime in South Africa, this place would actually be a wonderfully ideal (*wan mei*) place to live!” Many of the Chinese I spoke with told me that if the crime would not improve in the next few years, they would seriously consider moving back to China. Although the economic situation in South Africa (with Chinese shopkeepers becoming increasingly over-saturated and profits on the decline) was also a big issue that caused migrants to make similar remarks, crime was alongside these economic issues as main barriers to remaining in South Africa, especially Johannesburg.

The experience of crime in Johannesburg amongst Chinese migrant residents is not one that is out of the ordinary or necessarily even higher than other racial counterparts in the area. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ranks South Africa as having the eleventh most homicides per capita, of 207 countries, in 2012 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2012). Other crime statistics reveal that South Africa ranks above the highest quartile

internationally in robberies, burglaries, thefts, and assaults (Harrendorf, Heiskanen, and Malby 2010). The South African government asked the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in 2007 to assess why violent crimes were such a problem in South Africa. They argued that the normalization of violence, a flawed and corrupt criminal justice system, a vulnerable population (inequality, poverty, unemployment), and a subculture of violence and criminality were key factors that help to explain violence in South Africa (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2010). National crime statistics reveal that Johannesburg and the Gauteng province in general has consistently been the province with the most crime throughout South Africa (South African Police Service 2012). Crime in South Africa is both a nationally and internationally recognized issue that plagues all of civil society, not just the recent Chinese migrants in Johannesburg.

Because the problem of crime per capita is so severe in Johannesburg, its effect goes beyond only those who actually encounter criminal activity firsthand. A culture of violence develops that causes residents to consistently feel unsafe (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2010; South African Police Service 2012; Palmary, Rauch, and Simpson 2003). For the Chinese living in Johannesburg, this was certainly the case. They talked about their lives as intensely restricted because of the high rates of crime. “Chinese people here do not go out at night! We get up in the morning, go to work, and then come home before it gets dark. At night, we just hide away at home, just like mice. It is just too dangerous to go out after dark.” With only two exceptions, every respondent I spoke with provided the same response—that they rarely went out at night and in general, because of the problem of crime, they had little social lives. “Life is simple here, but maybe too simple! It is the same thing day in and day out. Because of the crime problem, we cannot go out and do anything, so we just go to work and come back to stay at home. There is not much different every day and not much to do.”

The exceptions were a young 25-year-old man, Mr. Chau, who had lived in South Africa for two years and the earlier mentioned 19-year-old Ms. Mei who had the co-workers who were adamant about the problem of crime in South Africa. Both respondents admitted that indeed crime was a real problem. Although the young woman had not experienced crime first-hand (as she had only been in South Africa for a year), the young man had been robbed twice since arriving in South Africa. He said, however, that he would not let crime dominate his life. “While I do not go out at night very often, I feel like if I wanted to, I could. I am probably not a typical Chinese person living here in this regard, so maybe my answers will not be useful to you, but I personally feel like I won’t let the fear of crime stop me from exploring this country and experiencing it.” Later on in our conversation, he talked about how he had gone on some road trips with other young Chinese migrants and that indeed there are dangers associated with them. In fact, one of his encounters with crime happened while traveling. He had pulled over to help a black South African while driving up to Pretoria, but it turned out that it was a set up and he was robbed at the roadside. “I think you can always use crime as an excuse not to go out at night, but the truth is, it is still okay. As long as you don’t go looking for trouble, in those really suspect neighborhoods, driving around Johannesburg at night is still okay.” Ms. Mei said that going out at night was a way for her to make friends and that she would go to restaurants or karaoke clubs with her friends who were around her same age. “We go out maybe once every few weeks or so. For me, I think I would be too bored if I stayed at home every night, and it is the best way for me to meet some people here and make friends.” When I asked if anything ever happened to her or her friends, she mentioned that one time, they had too many people seated in the car and the police pulled them over and asked to see all their identification. The issue was resolved with

after hassling with the police officer (as she implied that they seem to be asking for a bribe) and finally with the driver receiving a fine.

These two respondents show that although the great majority of Chinese migrant shopkeepers stay at home and rarely go out at night, younger-aged migrant workers tend to be more daring and adventurous—braving the possibility of crime and valuing their friendships and social life over the fear of crime. As a researcher living in Johannesburg for over two months, and as part of my participant observation, I spent time going out with young local Chinese South Africans to see what the night life was like. Those whom I went out with were not migrant shopkeepers, but rather local Chinese South Africans who were either born in South Africa or had grown up there since they were young. While it is true that in many areas, once the sun sets, the streets get empty, stores close, and there is not much to do, but in certain areas, like Chinatown, there remain people who brave the possibility of criminal activity and go out to be with friends and engage in social activity. I observed and heard that for Chinese migrants, the main form of entertainment that took place after sunset was going out to eat together. This usually happened in and around Chinatown, but every neighborhood in Johannesburg seemed to have at least one Chinese restaurant that migrants would frequent at night. For special occasions, groups would gather to have *huo guo*, or hotpot, where a special, boiling pot is used to cook vegetables, seafood, and meats while you eat. Although most of my respondents would claim to rarely go out at night, they all said that for special occasions, like a birthday or having something to celebrate, they would go out to eat together with friends. When I asked how frequently this occurred, the most common response I got was that it was difficult to say and may not even happen once every month.

Besides eating out, Chinese migrants also would sometimes go to sing karaoke, located in Johannesburg's Chinatown. There were a couple karaoke bars, but only primarily young Chinese migrants would dominate this social activity. Out of the four younger migrants I interviewed, three of them talked about singing karaoke (not necessarily frequently, but every now and then, when they went out with friends at night). None of my respondents over the age of 30 mentioned this activity as something they did when going out. For the older generation, gambling was a known problem amongst Chinese migrants. One woman who arrived in South Africa 12 years ago told me that she came because her uncle had a gambling problem and she came to try to help him stop gambling. Several other respondents mentioned this as a common (unfortunate) hobby that some Chinese would frequently engage in as a social activity. One man told me that he used to gamble regularly, and that it became an addiction, but after he had lost a lot of money, he finally had to quit and now he does not gamble any more. For older Chinese migrants in Johannesburg, gambling was the most common other social activity that migrants engaged in besides going out to eat with others. This happened in local South African gambling parlors. When I first heard this, I was surprised as I expected that Chinese migrants would have their own gambling circles in somewhat informal places, in part because many of the older Chinese migrants could not speak much English. When I asked about this, the woman who came to help her uncle with his gambling problems told me, "What English do you need to know to gamble? All you need to know are a few numbers and some hand gestures. You just point at things to get the point across."

These social activities (or lack of them) shows that although crime was a very real problem in Johannesburg, there still existed opportunities for Chinese migrants to go out at night and engage in social exchange. This is not to say that there were not some risks involved. A younger respondent at the age of 19 told a story of going out with a big group of friends and

squeezing into a car so that they were overfull—apparently a common occurrence amongst the Chinese migrants, as I was told it was often the case that only one of them had access to a car. The police pulled them over not far from Chinatown and harassed them for bribes. In the end, they did not give any formal tickets, but their friends had to pay several hundred Rand to get the police to leave them alone. Mr. Chau said that he went out at night almost weekly and told me, “You just need to be careful and stay away from those dark places and areas. When you go out at night, you have to really watch out for your things and don’t carry anything that you aren’t ready to lose or give up. But if you stay in a group and drive places together, it is still okay.” Although these opportunities for recreation during non-working hours existed, a great majority of Chinese migrants were so fearful of the lack of safety in Johannesburg that few regularly took advantage of night outings. The threat of crime restricted the freedoms of the Chinese migrants to freely enjoy recreation and their time off from work.

As part of the interview, I asked my respondents how much they engaged in social activities in China. Although people’s personalities differed and some were more social than others, everyone agreed that in China, if you wanted to go out a couple times each week, it was typically not a problem. While some respondents did not frequently engage in social activities in China just as they did not in South Africa, the reasons for their lack of social engagement was either work related or because they preferred to stay home. One migrant explained himself saying, “In China I also did not go out much, but not because of crime or anything like that. I had to work a lot, even at night, and then on the weekends I get pretty tired and so... I am just that kind of person, but if I wanted to be very social, I could.” Most respondents, however, did experience a decrease in their social activity upon coming to South Africa. Mrs. Cheng who was particularly talkative and seemed to enjoy our conversation told me, “Oh yes! In China, I used to go out all the time. We would go spend time with our family and go out shopping or just go somewhere nearby [our home] to eat. It was no problem. Here, sometimes it gets a bit lonely because there is not much opportunity to go out [to have fun].” Overall, Chinese migrants expressed a decrease in their social activity when compared to their lives in South Africa, and even if they did not experience much difference, the reason for their lack of social engagement was not because of crime in China. In other words, they had the freedom to choose how much they wanted to go out in China, but were aware that they had to give up this freedom in South Africa so that even if my respondents’ social lives were similar in the two countries, every one of these respondents still expressed concern that crime limited their social life in South Africa.

In part as a way to adjust to a lack of social life, Chinese migrants created a vibrant community in their workplaces. Chinese shopping areas were communities in themselves, as many respondents described the friends they made as predominately through either living together or having shops near each other. Frequently, I would interview one respondent and several other shopkeepers from nearby shops would come by and inquire of who I was and what we were doing. Sometimes, they stayed to listen and add their own opinion, turning the interview into a small group discussion. Shopkeepers would also rely on their neighbors to help out when they needed to leave the shop for awhile, to handle stock, use the restroom, get food, or meet someone. Kids, especially young toddlers, would quickly bring neighbors together, as little two-year-olds walk around to neighboring stores and everyone in the area are in charge of watching out for them. Parents would feel completely comfortable letting their children roam around the stores, as they trusted their Chinese neighbors with taking care of their little ones. While at first, the freedom of allowing their children to run around the mall might seem dangerous and might also seem contradictory to the above discussion on crime, the crime that

Chinese shopkeepers were fearful of was never physical violence for the sake of violence. In other words, from the Chinese migrants' perspective, the objective for criminals was always to get money. Hurting or kidnapping a child did not fit this objective, and I never heard any stories of this happening, so the Chinese felt comfortable letting their children roam around relatively freely. These little ones became focal points for Chinese interaction and bonding amongst shop neighbors.

During the dead hours of the shopping malls, typically on weekdays and mornings, Chinese shopkeepers would get together and talk, eat, and even play games together. Men would often have computers nearby and would trade movies, games, and other entertainment with other neighbors. Women would often congregate in small circles near one of the stores and talk, watch children together, and sometimes watch a show together. Community interaction was not confined to only neighboring shops, as I observed many shopkeepers walk from one end of the mall to the other to visit with friends when the consumer traffic was low. During the week, especially in some of the smaller Chinese mall locations, Chinese migrants were relatively free to interact with others. The three biggest and oldest malls, however, were often times busy even during the mid-mornings, resulting in somewhat less social and community-oriented atmospheres. Still, the workplace served as an arena where Chinese migrants could engage in making friends and having a community, providing at least some freedom that helped overcome the restrictive power of crime minimizing the opportunities to engage in social recreation in Johannesburg.

The problem of crime is also salient when deciding where to go and live within South Africa. When speaking with Chinese shopkeepers in Durban and Bloemfontein, respondents frequently talked about Johannesburg as a far more unsafe place than where they were currently located. Many of them, however, complained about the lack of customers in their locations saying that business was hard in Durban and in Bloemfontein, but when I asked them if they ever considered moving to Johannesburg, nearly every migrant talked about how Johannesburg was too chaotic for them. One man told me "I went to Johannesburg for one day and got robbed! Yes, it's true! I went there to get supplies to come back to Durban, and I was robbed." Another respondent said, "No, I don't think I would like to go to Johannesburg. It is too chaotic (*luan*) there; at least that is what I hear. The crime is much worse there than here." The idea that Johannesburg was just too chaotic (*luan*) was a common phrase that respondents would tell me from Durban and Bloemfontein. Most of them had heard stories and many had visited Johannesburg and so had some firsthand experience of the problem of crime in the city.

In the case of migrants from Durban, shopkeepers all got their stock from Johannesburg, and because robbers started targeting their routes to steal their cash, they have had to devise several ways to get around this problem. According to the Chinese migrants, in the last few years, "black robbers" started to set up ambush areas at checkpoints along the highway from Durban to Johannesburg. Because most Chinese shopkeepers carry cash to pay for their goods, they would target Chinese drivers with large vans and trucks and rob them at gunpoint. To try to get around this problem, shopkeepers started sending black drivers to Johannesburg, but because they did not trust the black drivers with that much cash, they would fly to Johannesburg, pay for the goods in person, and then ride back with the supplies (because the robbers much preferred stealing cash than the goods). This situation not only shows how crime acts as a barrier to do business in South Africa, but also that Chinese migrants from Durban still had to regularly deal with the crime in Johannesburg. Despite living in Durban, the Durban Chinese were still very much aware of the criminal problems and difficulties taking place in Johannesburg.

Despite how bad crime is in Johannesburg, most of the migrants I interviewed in Durban and Bloemfontein came directly from China to their respective locations. I had expected that perhaps crime drives out many Johannesburg Chinese into more rural locations or to other city centers that have substantially less criminal activity, but out of the 18 respondents I spoke with in Durban and Bloemfontein, only 4 had come directly from Johannesburg (4 others had been to Johannesburg before, but left South Africa for economic or family reasons before coming back to either Durban or Bloemfontein to try shop-keeping again). In other words, in the decision making process of Chinese migrants about where to live and work in South Africa, crime did not significantly drive the Chinese out of Johannesburg to Durban or Bloemfontein, but it did have a major role in keeping the Chinese who arrived in other locations from moving into Johannesburg.

Crime also acts as a factor that directly influences small pond migration decisions. When considering whether or not to move from Johannesburg, Durban, or Bloemfontein to a more rural, *shan xia* village to do business, respondents had the perception of more crime in the rural outskirts than in Johannesburg which kept many of them from making the move. Mr. Yang who had lived in South Africa for 6 years told me that:

In the *shan xia* places, there is lots of crime. I have a friend who is a few hundred kilometers away from here (Johannesburg) and he tells me that he has to be very careful with his cash and that he gets robbed pretty regularly, like every month or so, they break in or he gets confronted on the street after work. But he says that the money is still better than here, and so I guess he thinks it's worth it. You make more money, but you deal with crime constantly and you lose some of it to black robbers. I guess some people prefer that kind of lifestyle and really want to make money at all costs, but not me. Plus it is more boring out there and you are pretty isolated from a lot of other Chinese. I thought about moving out to a *shan xia* location, maybe just to check it out, because business here was doing so poorly. But in the end, I did not go because it just sounds too dangerous and not worth the trouble and risk.

This was a typical description of what the life of those who chose to go to more rural areas to do business, hoping to take advantage of becoming a bigger fish in a smaller pond. Another respondent, a woman from Durban who had children living in a *shan xia* location and had been in Durban for 5 years told me a story of her children being robbed and how she worries for them every day:

My daughter and son-in-law are living in a mountain-side village area. I fear for their lives every day! A couple months ago, four or five robbers came when they were closing up their shop and robbed them. They did not just take their money and some goods, but also beat my son-in-law and threatened them. They said that they would burn down their shop if they did not give them all their money. I have heard that this happens in some *shan xia* places, so I was very afraid when I heard that this happened to them. I worry for them so much, but they say that the business is better there and for our family to survive and make money... this is what we have to do. Still, I personally don't think it is worth it, as I am worried for them all the time and just hope that every day they will be okay.

Based on my respondents' description of *shan xia* areas, it was unclear whether or not these spaces actually had more crime than Johannesburg. Crime statistics in South Africa suggest that Johannesburg has much higher crime than rural areas (Crime Stats SA 2013), but statistics such as these are not per capita which may affect the migrants' perception of crime in the rural areas. Additionally, crime statistics in rural areas are subject to undercounting due to underreporting (South African Police Service 2012). For example, based on the Chinese migrants' stories, many Chinese shopkeepers choose not to report their experience with crime to the police because they feel that the police can and will do nothing. While it is unclear whether the Chinese migrants' narrative of worse crime in the *shan xia* areas is accurate, those who live in Johannesburg seem to hear these stories from their family and friends and choose not to venture out to these spaces as a result. Sometimes, Chinese migrants did mention alternative factors such as a more boring lifestyle in the rural areas, but all conversations either focused on crime or circled back to it as the primary factor.

One difference between their stories of crime in Johannesburg and in the rural areas that my respondents did not seem to realize was that crime in Johannesburg was described as overall less extreme and more regular, especially in regards to police corruption. Their examples of crime in the *shan xia* were typically extreme incidents and always of "black robbers" rather than the police. These incidents were described as happening regularly anywhere from every few weeks to every month or two. In Johannesburg, respondents described their interaction with crime as happening on a weekly basis which included the police harassing them or asking for bribes. The weekly examples of crime in Johannesburg were less dramatized, and although there were some examples of more violent or bigger incidents of crime (happening to other people), Chinese shopkeepers most frequently mentioned first-hand experiences of being robbed on the way home, pulled over by the police, and in the most extreme case, having their home broken into. While this could be a result of dramatizing other people's experiences in the countryside as compared to their own in Johannesburg, the narratives still reveal that from their perspective, crime is a major factor preventing them from choosing to go to *shan xia* places.

These narratives of crime reveal the direct role crime plays in making small pond migration difficult. It is a major cost that migrants must endure if they choose to go to lesser developed places to try to take advantage of increased competitiveness in their business ventures. Not only do crime and the fear of crime prevent easy execution of small pond migration, but it also acts as a major barrier to general, daily freedoms that the Chinese are unable to enjoy. This is most apparent in their social lives and difficulty engaging in recreational activities after dark. When the Chinese migrants share their narrative experience of their journeys from China to South Africa, the problem of crime, especially in Johannesburg, but also throughout South Africa, is the single largest cost they have had to endure as a tradeoff for other freedoms and economic gains they experience through the use of small pond migration. It represents the most common reason (expressed by those who have chosen to stay) why migrants decide to return to China and is a salient issue that affects their mobility decisions of where to live and do business.

Weather, Scenery, and Pace of Life: Other Freedoms to Enjoy

After economic freedoms and venturing out, weather was the next most common element that Chinese migrants talked about as a benefit to staying in South Africa. In each of my interviews, I would ask them what the best part about staying in South Africa was. Only seven of the 24 Johannesburg respondents would mention anything economic related, like making

money or even being self-employed. This was in part because many of the Chinese had yet to achieve their economic goals. The most common response I received to this question was about the weather and environment. Chinese migrants felt that South Africa had great weather, especially compared to their lives back in China. One respondent told me, “The weather is great here. In China, where I live, in the winter it is freezing cold and in the summer it is sweltering hot. No matter what, daily life has some suffering (*hen xin ku*). Here, it is never too hot or too cold—it is very nice.” When I first started my research, I did not think that the idea of weather held much importance, as it sounded as if the migrants were saying that South Africa was such a difficult place to live that the only thing good about it was the weather. In fact, in my first interview, when the respondent gave me a similar answer to that above, I laughed thinking it was a joke, as if he was telling me there is nothing good about South Africa. This quickly prompted him, however, to explain further the importance of weather to him, elaborating on how uncomfortable his daily experience back home was due to hot or cold weather. 14 of my respondents in Johannesburg out of the 24 I interviewed mentioned the weather as one of the biggest benefits to residing in South Africa.

South African climate stays mostly moderate throughout the year. During the summer months, the South African Weather Service, an organization having weather data since 1836 and temperature data since 1990, reports highest temperatures in the mid-80 degrees Fahrenheit range (30 degrees Celsius). In the winter, the same data shows the lowest temperatures between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit (5-10 degrees Celsius). Johannesburg follows these averages closely, whereas Bloemfontein has colder winters (but similar summers) at around 30 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius) and Durban has warmer winters (but also similar summers) at mid-50 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degrees Celsius) (**Unsupported source type (ElectronicSource) for source Sou121.**). These temperatures are overall cooler and more moderate than those in China. Of course, it depends on which province the Chinese migrants are coming from, but many provinces in China experience highs of 95 to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (35-39 degrees Celsius) during the summer months. Winter temperatures can also drop to the 20 degree Fahrenheit range (-5 degrees Celsius), and not just in mountainous, highly elevated regions, but even in cities like Beijing experience harsh lows at night. While these weather issues have less effect on those with access to air conditioning and heating, many of my respondents could not afford these luxuries and even lived in areas where such luxuries were hard to come by. Indeed, those who did not have access to air conditioning and heating often talked more vigorously and intently about the weather difference in South Africa. For example, one man told me, “In the village I come from, I have to suffer through the hot summer and the cold winter. No one has the nice air conditioning that they have in the cities—only well-off people can afford that.”

This overview picture of climate in South Africa and China helps explain the importance of weather in the Chinese migrants’ experience of living in South Africa. It explains comments such as what one Johannesburg resident said, “In China, it gets so hot sometimes that you just step out of the house and you are instantly wet with sweat! It doesn’t matter how many showers you take. It is really like suffering in the summer. But then, in the winter, it is freezing—so cold you just don’t want to go outside ever. Here, the weather is great all year round! It is really a great benefit to living here.” Descriptions such as these reveals that even though many Chinese migrants in South Africa do not spend much time outside, even the times that they go to and from work are significantly experienced. In addition, because of the intensity of the heat or cold in China, and the lack of air conditioning and heating in their homes, the weather does not just

affect them when they are outside—instead, having temperate weather year round results in more comfortable living in their homes as well.

The Chinese migrants' discussion of good weather reveals that their subjective quality of life is an important part of what they consider important benefits to staying in South Africa. As outlined in the previous chapter, the economic lives of Chinese shopkeepers were difficult, often not making much money and even some months losing money. Pay as a wage worker watching someone else's store was also not ideal or any better than wages they would receive at home in China. This being the case, Chinese migrants who chose to stay in South Africa did so in part due to non-economic factors such as experiencing good weather. When they considered moving back to China, they thought about the harsh heat and cold they would have to deal with upon returning and felt that perhaps staying in South Africa would not be such a bad thing after all. One man remarked that "South Africa is actually an ideally wonderful (*wan mei*) place to live. The weather is so good here, and it is actually a beautiful country. If not for the crime, I think a lot of Chinese people would move here and stay here."

This leads into the next benefit that some Chinese migrants talk about gaining if they choose to stay in South Africa: beautiful environment and scenery. Chinese migrants described South Africa as a physically beautiful country. "It is actually quite beautiful here. If you drive not far from here (Johannesburg), you can see beautiful landscapes, mountains and fields. It's quite pretty." Besides geographic beauty, several Chinese also mentioned the problem of pollution and air quality in China. "Where I come from (outside of Guangzhou), the smog is really bad. The air here is clean and much better. There were days in China where you couldn't go out without coughing." Others focused on problems with congestion. "Here in South Africa, the country's land is so big and vast, and there aren't too many people living here. Not like in China, where it is crowded everywhere. I like the open space here." While this factor was less mentioned in the Chinese narratives, especially compared to venturing out and crime, it still came up in nearly half of all interviews alongside the benefit of good weather. In Durban, eight out of twelve interviews included some discussion about the environment and scenery—especially Chinese migrants telling me about the beautiful seaside and being able to visit the beach whenever they had free time.

Although many Chinese migrants I spoke with, including those living in Durban, did not have time to actually visit these scenic places, they still spoke as if these beautiful sceneries were easily accessible and part of their daily experience of South Africa. In Durban, a lush, green, mountainous, and seaside city with plenty of natural beauty, the Chinese talked about going to the beach and enjoying the scenery even if they said they rarely had the opportunity to go. Many times in interviews, Chinese migrants would mention Cape Town as they described the beauty of South Africa. I would ask if they had gone before, but every single respondent who brought this up told me that they had never been, but would like to sometime in the future. In the end, regardless of their actual encounters with the beauty of South Africa, it seemed that for many Chinese migrants, living in a place that had variety of beautiful landscapes allowed them to feel as if they had the freedom to visit them, which was meaningful in and of itself. Chinese migrants did not necessarily decide to stay in South Africa because of the natural beauties of the country, but instead, mentioned it as a benefit—that they had easy access, and therefore an added freedom, to beautiful landscapes and scenery, even when they had never visited most of the places they would often describe and talk about. This factor emphasizes an important part of Sen's capabilities approach—that indeed the thing individuals want is an increase in their

freedoms, regardless of whether they actually choose to exercise this freedom or not, it still has value to the individual to have such a freedom.

Beyond weather and landscapes, some Chinese mentioned the difference in pace of life between South Africa and China. One respondent told me:

Life here is much lighter (*qing song*) than in China. In China, you have to get up and work at six or seven in the morning and then work until sometimes nine or ten at night. Here, you only work at nine or ten in the morning until around five in the afternoon. Sometimes, we have to stay late to do inventory, but that is only maybe once a month. Plus, the atmosphere in South Africa in general is more relaxed. In China, maybe because there are so many people, you feel like the pressure (*ya li*) of life is just really heavy—like you have to compete all the time. Here, the culture and the society in general is just more relaxed and lighter (*qing song*).

Most respondents agreed that their lives in South Africa were indeed very simple. Working as either a shopkeeper or shop owner did not involve too much stress or time pressured events. Watching the store day in and day out was typically uneventful, allowing the Chinese migrants to relax and do what they wanted. Spending many hours in Chinese shopping malls, most of the time during the week, shop attendants would be socializing with others in the mall, using their phones (either to socialize to friends and family in China and in South Africa or to play games), watching movies on laptops, playing games on computers, reading (Chinese) books, or taking naps. Overall, the average day for a Chinese shopkeeper was slow paced and easy going.

While everyone I spoke with agreed that this was an accurate depiction of life in South Africa, and most respondents felt that indeed China was more chaotic, competitive, and stressful, the effect of this varied widely amongst my respondents. Many migrants did not feel that they necessarily preferred one lifestyle over another and that they were capable of adjusting to the different environments. Some migrants, however, said that the slow pace of life was a cost to living in South Africa—that their lives were too slow and too boring. A few respondents told me stories of friends they knew who returned to China for this very reason, feeling like life in South Africa was too uneventful and they could not adjust to it. While a slow pace of life had this negative effect on some Chinese migrants, for others it had the complete opposite effect on their decision to stay in South Africa.

One such respondent was a mechanic in China, but had since become a shop attendant working for someone else's shop. He was 32 years old and had lived in South Africa for eight years. He never finished high school, but instead joined the work force doing odd jobs until his mid-twenties when he became an apprentice to a mechanic and started working in a car garage. He told me that the slower pace of life in China was actually the biggest benefit to staying in South Africa and that he far preferred the slow pace of life that he experienced in South Africa. "I really enjoy the relaxed lifestyle here (in South Africa). In China, it is too busy all the time and the pressure is really big to find a job and succeed. Here, I can take it easy and day by day. I like it much better here." Another respondent told me, "It is true that life here is slower, but it's not so bad. You get used to it. In China, you just always feel like there is pressure." When I asked what kind of pressure, he said, "Pressure to work, I suppose. And I guess even when you are at home, you feel this pressure. Everything is just moving so fast in China, and with so many people... I don't know, but I think maybe it is these things that make you feel pressure." Although the slower pace of life was a reality in the Chinese migrants' daily experience, not all

of them saw this factor as a salient issue, but those who did had rather extreme responses, either choosing to leave South Africa because of an inability to adjust, or preferring to stay in South Africa because they did not want to return to a faster-paced lifestyle in China.

This factor reveals the importance of personal, subjective preferences when thinking about the costs and benefits of decisions to migrate. Attributes of a place, whether geographic or cultural, may have differing effects on individuals based on their personal preferences. Theories that undervalue the migration narrative often lose sight of these kinds of nuances, focusing instead on more macro-oriented factors, such as wage increases and social networks. The narrative stories of Chinese migrants in South Africa, however, reveal the importance of individual-level differences in personal preferences for daily life. I am not arguing here that these micro-level factors are more significant than larger issues such as the desire for economic gain and the importance of social networks, but rather that, at least in this case, they help explain why some Chinese stay in South Africa and some decide to leave. This suggests that other subjective preferences structures may help explain the nature of other migration patterns. Even in the case of the Chinese in South Africa, more research needs to be conducted to determine to what extent preferences for slower pace of life, for example, might affect the kinds of Chinese people who choose to stay in South Africa and those who choose to return back to China.

Language: A Cost *and* a Benefit

Chinese migrants in South Africa move from living in a Chinese speaking country to living in a predominately English speaking country. This creates a language barrier for incoming Chinese migrants because many migrants have low levels of education and therefore cannot speak much English. The South African Chinese, especially outside of Johannesburg, do not have extremely strong or isolated enclaves where they can easily live without speaking any English. In Johannesburg, the Chinatown area is the closest thing to a Chinese ethnic enclave, but as described earlier, Chinatown is just one street and no more than a few blocks, not housing a large portion of the Chinese migrants living in Johannesburg. Although the lack of English skills does impede the daily lives of Chinese migrants, respondents also described living in an English speaking country as a benefit, not just a barrier to their daily freedoms. Language, then, acted as both a cost and benefit in the decision-making process of Chinese migrants in South Africa.

The majority of respondents talked about language as a barrier to their everyday experience in South Africa. It was common for them to say things much like what one respondent told me that “obviously because I cannot speak English, I do not really have any local friends.” Other similar remarks would isolate the language barrier as a reason they did not understand South Africa politics, government, rules and laws, and local news. Some respondents also mentioned the lack of being able to speak English as a hindrance to their ability to deal with crime, as they were often unable to argue or to report abuse. The English language barrier also prevented them from having more active social lives, as some migrants mentioned that they felt less safe traveling away from either predominately Chinese areas or areas that they were already familiar with, because if something happened, they may not be able to understand what is going on or communicate with locals and appropriate authorities. Moving to an English-speaking country meant that the Chinese had to give up certain freedoms because they were not confident in their English abilities.

Similar to the problem of crime, Chinese migrants developed ways to work around the language barrier. When I asked one respondent how he got along without English, he told me,

“It’s not too bad. There are plenty of Chinese markets around that I can go to and besides some simple English I don’t need to know much to work with customers and local people.” When I asked specifically about more serious services, such as needing a doctor or dealing with immigration, respondents said, “I don’t go to the doctor much, unless I have some kind of serious health problem, but I haven’t had this problem yet... I suppose if I did, I know there is a Chinese doctor in the mall here, so I could go to them. I think most malls have something like this.” Indeed, in most Chinese shopping areas, a Chinese doctor would open up a shop that sold Chinese herbal medicines and would also see patients and offer his or her medical advice. The doctor often did have some medical training in China as well as a background in medicinal herbs and Chinese medicine, but was not necessarily trained in Western medical practices. This was one way that Chinese migrants were able to work around the language barrier to get an essential and important service.

In terms of dealing with immigration, many Chinese migrants relied on intermediary services of Chinese migrants who could speak English to sort out immigration policy and forms. At the Department of Home Affairs, I saw several of these services (also for other immigrants) where one person would serve as a guide and help immigrants through the process; guides would often know the Home Affairs workers and would have a personal rapport with them, enabling the process to move more smoothly. Aside from these ways of getting around language barriers, translation services were also needed, useful, and popular. Chinese businesses importing large amounts of stock would typically use a translation service to get through port customs and rules. I knew several Chinese translators who were paid over 8,000 Rand a month (way above the average income) to literally sit around an office waiting for the phone to ring to help translate port information to Chinese businesses and vice versa. Some of these small translation companies of three or so people would be able to keep running off of only a handful of clients, simply because translation services were so needed that businesses were willing to pay a lot for their help. Because the Chinese community is so spread out throughout all of South Africa, even in Johannesburg with its urban sprawl and diffusive Chinese communities, Chinese shopping malls became mainstay Chinese communities (as discussed above as a way to increase social interaction despite problems with crime). As a result, every Chinese shopping mall had some kind of community board where migrants would post advertisements in Chinese. This acted as a way to tell people about their services as well as for those looking for a service to tell others what they were looking for. From job openings to various translation services, one could find most services that a Chinese migrant might be looking for have difficulty finding in a foreign country. Additionally, they had a daily Chinese newspaper that also helped to advertise Chinese community events and focused on news events that were more pertinent to the Chinese community. This ranged from Chinese holiday pieces and news about new Chinese shopping areas to reports on crime in and around Chinese communities. In these ways, Chinese migrants navigated around language barriers to live their daily lives and to overcome obstacles.

While it was clear that Chinese migrants felt their inability to speak English was a major hindrance to their daily lives, they did not talk much about the language barrier and did not focus on language as a primary hardship. Of all my interviews, only two respondents mentioned language as a major cost to staying in South Africa, saying that returning to China and being able to speak Chinese in their daily interactions would be the largest benefit to returning home. This surprised me as English did come up rather frequently as a barrier that either prevented or complicated daily freedoms, such as going to the nearest grocery store and interacting with local people. This is not to mention the various difficulties not speaking English posed to dealing with

the major problem of crime and navigating through some business and immigration regulations. But for almost all the Chinese migrants I spoke with, migrants easily accepted that language barriers were an expected part of daily life and represented a cost that was relative low when compared to the benefits of living in a foreign country. Respondents demonstrated this repeatedly, as whenever they talked about the language barrier, they usually would emphasize the expected nature of their inability to speak English, saying phrases like “of course,” “naturally,” and “as expected.” Perhaps because language barriers are a natural part of venturing abroad, and perhaps because these migrants are a self-selected group who are willing to travel outside of China, although language barriers did affect all of the migrants and their daily lives, Chinese migrants chose to greatly devalue the negative implications of being unable to speak English. When I asked most respondents about learning English themselves (with the exception of younger respondents), they were either rather indifferent or said that they picked up some things from doing business but had not actively tried to study English. Ultimately the Chinese in South Africa did experience significant losses in various freedoms due to their weak English ability, but they did not value (or prefer) these lost freedoms much, and therefore did not express the cost of living in an English-speaking country as a very high one.

Some Chinese migrants also expressed living in an English-speaking country as a unique benefit. None of my older Chinese respondents expressed learning English as a benefit, but amongst younger respondents and those who have children and are planning on staying in South Africa for the long-term, living in an English-speaking country was seen as a significant benefit. Mrs. Lee who had two children and had been living in South Africa for 12 years told me:

The South African education system is not too bad—at least I like it. It is different from China, in that they have more extra-curricular activities and field trips, but China is more academically rigorous. It’s different, but good here. And the biggest benefit is they can learn to speak English here... I thought about going back to China to send the kids to school there, but I think it is better that they stay and learn English here, because English is so important, it will give them a good chance to study in a good college abroad... We were thinking of sending them to Britain, Canada, or the United States for college. This is all in a long time from now, though, but this is what we are thinking for now.

Another woman who also had children living in South Africa expressed a similar belief. She said, “I don’t think about going back to China or sending my kids back to school because even though the school system here is not as good as in China, they can at least learn English really well.” Respondents who expressed these ideas also talked about how important English was and that this would give their children an ability that could help them in the future, either to move to a First World, English-speaking country, or to provide them a skill to better compete in the international work force. These migrants were employing a kind of step-wise migration strategy, but through their children taking advantage of learning English in South Africa and then helping them move to a First World, developed country.

The idea that learning English in South Africa was a major benefit was not only prominent in those migrants who had children, but younger Chinese migrants also expressed the importance of learning English. One 24-year-old man told me that “living in South Africa, one big benefit to me is learning and practicing English. This way in the future, I feel like I can travel and go more places, not necessarily to move to, but just to travel.” Another even younger

respondent, age 18, from Durban expressed that “even though sometimes I get bored here, I know it is good to be here because I can learn more English. When I talk to my friends back in China, I know my English is much better than theirs, so I know this is good for my future.” Younger respondents saw living in an English-speaking country as a benefit because it enhanced their freedoms to either move around and travel, or become more competitive in the workplace.

Similar to the slow pace of life, living in an English-speaking country functions both as a cost and benefit. For those who are not interested in learning English, the language barrier acts as a daily nuisance that restricts simple freedoms, like going to the market and engaging in social activities, as well as preventing the exercise of bigger freedoms, such as battling crime and taking advantage of government services. For those who want to learn English and see it as a tool to improve their future, living in South Africa provides the natural benefit of immersion in the English language, helping Chinese migrants quickly improve their English abilities. While the majority of respondents fell in the former rather than the latter category, these differences again highlight the subjective and preferential nature of freedoms and their effects on migrants’ decision of where to live. In the case of South Africa, my interview data combined with the participation observation discussed in Chapter 2 (History and Setting), reveals that English language education for Chinese migrants with children is of utmost importance when it comes to deciding on whether to stay in South Africa or to go back to China. This suggests that migrants who either start families in South Africa or bring their (young) children with them to South Africa are more likely to go from seeing themselves as sojourners to becoming an immigrant.

Conclusion

Analyzing the narratives of Chinese migrants in South Africa, one finds multiple factors at work that create a complex decision-making web, taking into account many factors that affect their freedoms, and through these freedoms, affect their subjective quality of life. These factors span the entire array of their lives, from more commonly discussed economic factors, such as income, risk management, and self-employment, to less identifiable and more personal factors, such as weather, environment, and pace of life, and still to more social factors, such as crime, interpersonal activities, and language. With each of these factors, the end result is some kind of freedom that the individual experiences, either more or less of. As diverse as the factors of the decision to migrate are, so are the end resulting freedoms, ranging from independence, the ability to move, social interaction, and free time. These two chapters are not an attempt to completely and holistically cover every factor or freedom that I heard over the course of my interviews and participant observation (as this would be an impossible task due to individual, personal preferences and circumstances), but instead to show that patterns exist amongst Chinese migrants and their narrative stories of the journey to South Africa and their decisions about whether to stay or move somewhere else. Common factors, some more salient than others, keep popping up amongst Chinese migrants in South Africa.

With every cost that the Chinese migrants faced, they also found ways to work around these obstacles. Chinese migrants would create social space in their workplace so that they still had social interactions despite the restrictions of crime. Alternatively, they would simply learn to adjust to a quieter lifestyle, one where their primary forms of entertainment were reading, using the Internet, communicating over online chat services, watching shows on their laptops, and playing games on their phones—Chinese migrants learned to keep themselves occupied while staying in after sundown. Additionally, to overcome the English language barrier, services would arise to fill the needs of the Chinese, such as Chinese doctor clinics, immigration services,

and translation services. Although no real ethnic enclave emerges in most cities in South Africa, and only a small enclave appears in Johannesburg's Chinatown, Chinese migrants are still resourceful enough to find their way to Chinese markets and restaurants, as well as posting job listings and service information on community boards in Chinese shopping centers. All of these services and adaptations act as ways to minimize the cost of living in South Africa.

Ultimately, each individual migrant or migrant household must weigh these different factors, taking into consideration what costs and benefits are most important to them, to decide under what conditions they would move. This thought process, especially for the most recent migrants coming from all parts of China to Johannesburg, is complex and involved at each stage of migration: from the initial move from China to South Africa, to the constant decision of whether to stay in South Africa or go back to China, and finally to the alternative decision (that sometimes comes up) of whether to move somewhere else. Although this data cannot show whether or not Chinese migrants actively process their decisions, carefully going through and calculating the pros and cons of moving, the narratives reveal what is and is not important to migrants, what they tend to value and consider in the process of decision-making, and how they work around the costs while maximizing the benefits of their decision.

Chapter 5: The Counter-Case of Fujianese Migrants

In Chapter 2, I lay out the multiple waves of Chinese migration to South Africa. In particular, I show how Fujianese migrants stand out amongst other Chinese emigrants in their historical trajectory and socioeconomic background. While scholars have studied the Fujianese people and their propensity to migrate (Liang and Ye 2011; Pieke et al. 2004; Liang 2001; Thuno 1999), this chapter seeks to understand how Fujian migrants differ in how they make decisions about where to go and how they understand their own migration narratives. In other words, while existing research paints a picture of the important historical, geographic, and social connections that explain why Fujian migrants choose to go abroad, what meanings do Fujianese migrants ascribe to their mobility, what are their goals, and how does their approach differ from other Chinese migrants?

The previous two chapters that look at Chinese migrants and their decisions around economic freedoms, costs, and benefits to migration come from interviews and participant observation with Chinese migrants coming from all over China and mostly to Johannesburg (although some found themselves in Bloemfontein and Durban as well). This chapter contrasts their way of thinking with that of Fujian Chinese migrants in South Africa. This comparison reveals differences in the way migrants employ a small pond migration strategy—on the one hand, mainland Chinese migrants are interested in the long-term investment of their quality of life and family's (especially children's) future for the purpose of inter-generational advancement, while on the other hand, Fujianese migrants have a purely sojourner's attitude towards their migration journey, preferring short-term benefits to long-term investments. In addition, while mainland Chinese migrants value non-economic capabilities above strictly income gains, Fujianese migrants use mobility to find spaces where they can maximize their money-making. As a result, Fujianese migrants tend to move far more frequently than their mainland counterparts and exhibit a kind of hyper-small pond migration strategy, where they do not consider moving to First World countries, but instead, move from place to place within the global south.

Key Method and Setting

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my methodological approach towards the Fujianese case, important background to the case, and then compare them with mainland Chinese shopkeepers in South Africa. Data comes from 18 in-depth interviews, primarily from Durban and Bloemfontein, key interviews from church workers, missionaries, and Chinese community members who regularly work with Fujianese Chinese migrants, as well as participant observation in Fujianese Chinese shopping malls. In-depth interviews were found randomly through the same sampling method that I used for mainland Chinese migrants. In other words, when I collected my in-depth interviews, I did not specifically target the Fujianese population in South Africa, grouping them in with the mainland Chinese shopkeepers. Prior to conducting my research, I did not understand the degree to which Fujianese Chinese migrants were separate and distinct from other Chinese migrants in South Africa, but once I started speaking to more Fujianese migrants, I realized that their responses were in stark contrast to those of the mainland Chinese. Once I conducted my research in Durban and Bloemfontein, it became apparent that the Fujianese migrants in South Africa have a distinctly different way of understanding and talking about their migration narrative. At this point, because of the large number of Fujianese in Durban and Bloemfontein, it was unnecessary to specifically target them for sampling, as they were the natural majority of shopkeepers in the Chinese shopping malls.

For the *fuqing ren*¹⁴, the shopping malls and their living spaces were the primary places where their community engaged in social activity. Although I was unable to conduct participant observation in the Fuqing people's living areas, I was able to spend time getting to know the Fuqing community at the shopping malls themselves. Fuqing migrants thought of other members of the Fuqing community as part of their family. During one conversation with a husband and wife couple of shopkeepers in Durban, I told them that although I was born in Singapore my family was originally from Fujian province (one grandparent from both sides). In response, the woman told me, "Well then, we are all family here. Most of us here in this shopping mall are *fuqing ren*. We consider each other all family here. And even though you are from America, because you are *fuqing ren*, you are also considered family." This was a common attitude in the Fuqing community in South Africa. The Fuqing community is tight-knit and close, frequently helping each other out, living in cramped spaces together, and treating each other as family even when no blood relation existed. While some mainland Chinese migrants also live together, I found that because the growing diversity of mainland Chinese migrants coming at different times to South Africa, many of these migrants have moved on and now live by themselves or in suburbs. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, the mainland Chinese migrant community tends to be more spread out and diverse throughout Johannesburg and its suburbs. In part because the Fujianese migrants tend to have arrived in South Africa more recently and often come from a lower socioeconomic class, they tend to need to live in cheaper and worse off conditions. At the same time, when talking to Fujianese migrants, none of them seemed to mind and did not complain about these tight living situations. Additionally, the Fuqing migrants would often call each other by familial terms, emphasizing that their living situation was much like living with family. Although this is a common practice for Chinese culture, Fujianese migrants used these terms even between migrants who had just met and were essentially strangers. When I asked one respondent about this, she told me, "Maybe it is because we all feel like we have had similar struggles in trying to survive and improve our lives? I don't know much about these things, but that is how I feel any way—we all have gone through similar life experiences and are from the same home (*jia xiang*) and so are like family."

In total, I conducted 18 interviews with Chinese migrants with Fujianese origins. These interviews were spread throughout three locations: seven from Durban, six from Bloemfontein, and five from Johannesburg. 12 of the 18 interviews were with men. Ten respondents arrived in the last two years, four respondents have lived in South Africa between two and five years, and the remaining four respondents have lived in South Africa between five and seven years. These numbers indicate the number of total years they lived in South Africa. For a third of my respondents, including two of the four migrants who lived in South Africa for five to seven years, the years they lived in South Africa was not continuous, as they lived in South Africa for four or more years, then moved away¹⁵ to try to do business elsewhere, and then returned again within the last two years of the interview. I met several Fujianese migrants through participant observation who had similar stories of coming to South Africa in the mid-2000s, then leaving to go to some other overseas opportunity, but then returning in the past two years to try their luck

¹⁴ I refer to the Fujianese Chinese as "*Fuqing ren*" because this is what they commonly called themselves as well as what other Taiwanese Chinese and mainland Chinese would refer to them as. Fuqing is a county-level city in Fujian province and people from the area, rural or city dwellers even if they are from the surrounding area, commonly refer to themselves as *fuqing ren*.

¹⁵ Some moved to other parts of southern Africa. Others moved back to China, but then soon after moved again for business opportunities. Several respondents mentioned moving to parts of Southeast Asia as well.

again at opening a business in South Africa. Most of these migrants were in Johannesburg the first time that they came to South Africa, but then, when I met them in 2012, they had moved to either Durban or Bloemfontein. In terms of the ages of my Fujianese respondents, ten were between the ages of 18 and 29, four were in their 30s, and four were in their 40s. Only four respondents had completed high school while the rest had little formal education, stopped schooling after middle school, or had some high school education, but quit school to find work. Those migrants who completed high school were all young men in their 20s who had come to South Africa soon after finishing their high school education and working for a couple years in Fujian.

Table 3 – Fujianese Respondents’ Demographic Information

Gender	# of Respondents	% of All Respondents
Male	12	66.67%
Female	6	33.33%
Number of Years in South Africa		
Less Than 2	10	55.56%
2 to 5	4	22.22%
5 to 7	4	22.22%
Ages		
19-29	10	55.56%
30-39	4	22.22%
40-49	4	22.22%
Education		
Some High School or Lower	14	77.78%
Completed High School	4	22.22%

Although I only formally interviewed five Fujianese migrants in Johannesburg, I spent time conducting participant observation in Fujianese social circles in two shopping malls in Johannesburg. Unlike the Fujianese community in Durban and Bloemfontein, in Johannesburg Fujianese migrants are far more spread out throughout the city. While some Fujianese migrants still live together and support each other, helping family and friends migrate to Johannesburg through providing work and a place to stay, in the Chinese malls, Fujianese shopkeepers are dispersed among the mainland Chinese shopkeepers without any one shopping mall having a predominately *fujing ren* presence. This is representative of the proportion of Fujianese migrants to mainland Chinese migrants in Johannesburg; where because of the large number of Chinese migrants populating the city, the Fujianese are a relatively small minority despite their increasing number in recent years. On top of this, several respondents and Fujianese migrants told me that many of the incoming Fujianese started out in Johannesburg, but then have decided

to go to more isolated locations in South Africa in search for places where they are the only Chinese store in a small rural village.

This same phenomenon is increasingly happening in Durban, as I spoke with several Fujianese migrants who told me they either had formal plans to move to rural towns a two-hour drive away from the Durban area or they had family or Fujianese friends who were currently working in these isolated locations. Unlike Johannesburg where the Fujianese migrants are sparsely spread throughout the Chinese shopping malls all through the city, in Durban, two of the four Chinese shopping malls are places where Fujianese migrant shopkeepers predominately work. The other two Chinese shopping mall locations have more mainland Chinese shopkeepers, but also have a few Fujianese migrants working there as well. In general, *fuqing ren* in Durban have a more organized and closer community where they mostly live in the same area and even have organizations that set up activities and provide support for Fujianese migrant shopkeepers. This is as opposed to Johannesburg where although some Fujianese live together, these areas are spread all throughout Johannesburg and its suburbs.

In Bloemfontein, all the *fuqing ren* more or less know each other, living in the same area and opening shops in the same mall. This is largely because of the low number of Chinese living in Bloemfontein. In Chapter 2, I discussed how the older Taiwanese Chinese community has reached out to the newer arriving Fujianese because of a history of influence from missionaries and the Chinese church in Bloemfontein. Unlike Durban, where the Taiwanese Chinese and the Fujianese have completely separate communities, Bloemfontein has a deeply connected Chinese community, where most Chinese people in the city know of each other or at worst know someone who knows the person. In other words, generally speaking every Chinese migrant (regardless of when they arrived in South Africa and where they come from) is separated by only two degrees of separation in Bloemfontein. This does not necessarily mean that these ties and connections are deep, where the Chinese see each other every week and have close relationships with one another. While these ties are mostly positive and supportive because of church influences, the Fujianese migrant population have deeper and closer ties to each other than with the Taiwanese simply because the Fujianese live together and see each other on a daily basis. Because there is only one Chinese shopping area in Bloemfontein, most Fujianese shopkeepers in Bloemfontein work nearby each other and many live upstairs from their shops. While there are Taiwanese Chinese shopkeepers also in Bloemfontein, they have more expensive and higher class shops located in local South African malls and shopping centers, whereas the *fuqing ren* have shops in Bloemfontein's Chinatown, which is essentially one building: a partially rundown warehouse in a rougher part of downtown Bloemfontein. From key interviews with Chinese church elders and Bloemfontein missionaries, I learned that the number of *fuqing ren* has increased dramatically since 2009, as many come from Johannesburg and Lesotho because of oversaturation of Chinese shops in the case of the former and worsening economic conditions for Chinese factories in the case of the latter. Much like Durban, the Chinese shop-keeping scene in Bloemfontein is rapidly growing as they seek to provide wholesale service to the city and its surrounding areas.

Fujianese Hyper-Small Pond Migration: Moving Anywhere and Everywhere

The Fujianese migrants moving to South Africa are engaging in a small pond migration strategy. Much like their recent mainland Chinese counterparts, they too are purposefully seeking out "smaller ponds" to improve their chances for success. I argue that the Fujianese, in fact, have an even more aggressive migration strategy, as they are the ones who choose to move

out into rural villages and explore even less developed areas of South Africa. While most mainland Chinese shopkeepers end up in Johannesburg, the Fujianese are unafraid to venture out to Durban, Bloemfontein, and other smaller and more isolated towns like Ladysmith and Kimberly. Beyond locations such as these, Fujianese migrants I spoke with also told me that some of their family and friends moved to completely isolated, small rural villages—these places are so small that the migrants did not even know the names of these villages and said that their family and friends who live and do business in them also did not know the villages' names.

When I asked these respondents how their family member or friend knew about this village, they each told me a similar story: because business was not doing well in Johannesburg, Durban, or Bloemfontein, the family member or friend decides to move to a more isolated place where there would be no other Chinese shop there. If he or she¹⁶ does not already have a social connection with someone who needs help in a rural or isolated village, he or she begins the search for a new location where there is no Chinese competition. The migrant starts this search with a social network connection with someone who has already started a business in a less developed area. This area is typically still a pretty large town, but a few hours away from Johannesburg, Durban, or Bloemfontein. They then choose a road heading out of the town and drive until they find a village where they do not find a Chinese shop and decide to set up shop there. They keep track of the directions so that even though they do not always know the name of the small village, they will still know how to get back to the larger town that they came from.

This aggressive strategy is an extreme form of small pond migration, where the migration is internal but follows the same basic idea of the international small pond migration strategy that Chinese migrants utilized through going to South Africa—the Fujianese migrants move to areas that are less developed because these areas also have fewer Chinese migrants that are willing to start businesses there, and therefore find less competition, enabling them to maximize the effective return on their economic, social, and human capital. Using data from interviews and participant observation, I argue that the Fujianese employ a different strategy from the mainland Chinese because of differences in their values and preferences, resulting in the Fujianese migrants being more mobile and focused on gaining more economic return for their mobility.

Before discussing the differences in the Fujianese migrants' preference structures, I first establish what the lives of *fuging ren* are like, showing how the Fujianese migrant experience is on the one hand, still employing a form of small pond migrant, yet on the other hand, uniquely different from the experience of other mainland Chinese migrants in South Africa. Interview data reveals that Fujianese migrants have much higher rates of moving around when compared to their mainland Chinese counterparts in South Africa. This is both in terms of the proportion of migrants who have lived somewhere else besides China and their current location as well as the number of different places that each migrant has traveled and worked in. Out of the 18 Fujianese migrants I interviewed, 13 respondents had traveled and worked in another part of South Africa or another country altogether (outside of China) before arriving at the city that I met them in. Compared to the mainland Chinese respondents, only six out of the 24 migrants interviewed told me that they had traveled someplace else before coming from China to their city of destination. In addition, of the 24 mainland Chinese migrant interviews, only one respondent had come to South Africa, left back to China, and then returned again to South Africa. Whereas for the

¹⁶ In each of the stories, the family member(s) or friend(s) always included a male presence. When asked, it was made clear that this was because setting up a Chinese shop in these villages was an extremely dangerous endeavor. In all the stories that included women, the women went with their husbands to these village areas, and in all but one case, they left their children with grandparents who lived in Johannesburg, Durban, or Bloemfontein.

Fujianese, four of the 18 respondents reported having lived in South Africa for three to five years before moving back to Fujian province for a couple more years and then returning again to South Africa in the last two years. The amount of moving around that *fuqing ren* experience is even higher when considering that the average age of my Fujianese respondents was much younger than the average age of mainland Chinese respondents at 30.2 for the Fujianese and 39.6 for the mainland Chinese. This means that on average the mainland Chinese respondents had nine more years that they could have moved around to other countries to work and live, but showed far less of an inclination to move than the younger Fujianese migrant respondents.

Additionally, the places that the Fujianese moved to showed a wider breadth and variety than that of the mainland Chinese. Of all the Chinese migrants interviewed in Johannesburg and Durban, six respondents had lived in a different location (besides their current city of residence and their home in China). All of the six mainland Chinese migrants lived in another part of South Africa. In other words, the mainland Chinese I spoke with started from their home provinces, moved to one location in South Africa and then moved to either Johannesburg or Durban, which is where I met and interviewed them. In three of the six cases, the migrant started at a small rural village in South Africa before then moving to Johannesburg or Durban. In the other three cases, they moved between Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein. On the other hand, for the Fujianese migrants, they exhibit far more adventurous and diverse mobility patterns. Of the 13 respondents who indicated that they lived and worked someplace outside of China and their current South African city, five of them had moved to more than just one other location, meaning that they migrated at least three times or more. These migration patterns were not always from one destination to another—in most cases, the Fujianese migrant would move to one place, move back to their homeland in Fujian province, and then move again back out to another location—but in all five cases, respondents indicated that they lived and worked in at least four different locations: Fujian, the South African city that I interviewed them in, and two other locations. Unlike the mainland Chinese migrants who mostly moved within South Africa, the destination locations for the 13 Fujianese respondents who had migrated multiple times were incredibly varied. Only one of the 13 respondents migrated only within South Africa, while the other 12 Fujianese migrants had traveled to other international destinations before arriving in South Africa. This included nearby countries in southern Africa such as Lesotho, Namibia, and Mozambique, but also included much further destination countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Singapore. Fujianese migrants stayed anywhere from one to six years at these different locations, but the average length of time at any one location was just over two years. While for some of these cases, one could argue that because of their younger age and lack of children, they are more likely to be able to move around more, but many of the Fujianese I interacted with were older and had families, which they often left in Fujian.¹⁷

Fujianese migrants' lifestyles were different from that of the mainland Chinese migrants. While mainland Chinese respondents often lived in their South African city for a longer period of time and seemed to have a plan to stay at least another year or two depending on how business went, the majority of Fujianese migrants had lived in South Africa for a rather short period of time and had little idea of whether they would still be in the same place a year from the interview. Fujianese migrants saw their lives as fluid, constantly changing and adapting to their

¹⁷ In cases where both parents traveled, they left their children with grandparents. The stories Fujianese migrants told me varied in whether the respondent traveled alone or with his or her partner. This seemed to depend on where they went—I heard more stories of couples going together to Southeast Asia than to the Middle East and Africa, suggesting that proximity encouraged more couples to go together rather than having just one parent move.

surroundings and the opportunities that existed, not just in their current locations, but in various places around the world. Although these migrants live mobile lives, they do not consider moving to First World countries and stay true to the basic idea of small pond migration: they seek places that have less competition so that they can maximize the effectiveness of their economic, social, and human capital to maximize their potential for success. In the next section, using primarily interview data, I argue that although Fujianese and mainland Chinese migrants both employ a small pond migration strategy, differences in their preferences for values and freedoms explains why each group of migrants have such drastically different migration trajectories.

Comparing Fujianese and Mainland Chinese: Long-Term Investing vs. Short-Term Money-Making

As explained in Chapters 3 and 4, mainland Chinese migrants choose to move and stay in South Africa for several key reasons: to exercise their freedom of mobility, to experience the world outside of China, to pursue a dream of self-employment, to live a simple life, to enjoy beautiful scenery and temperate weather conditions, and to learn English. I argue that while earning money is certainly a factor in the mainland Chinese migrants' decision making process, their end goal is more focused on the freedoms associated with being one's own boss rather than purely economic gains. According to their self-narrative, mainland Chinese migrants put emphasis and value on the non-economic benefits they gain from remaining in South Africa, rather than focusing purely on their economic lives. In the end, those who choose to stay have a plethora of reasons to continue living in South Africa that outweigh the potential difficulties of not earning more money and not achieving their economic goal of self-employment.

At first, this may come across as an obvious excuse—after all, immigrants who are disappointed in their economic situation but stay in their destination countries would likely justify their decision with other benefits they receive from living in their new countries. Yet in this case, this idea that self-described narratives are merely justifications of failed endeavors ignores the many Chinese migrants who chose to return to China. While this project is unable to speak to those who returned and how their perspective differs from that of those who stayed in South Africa, the Fujianese Chinese migrant population serves as a sort of middle ground, helping to reveal an alternative attitude and value structure that migrants could adopt which would radically change their decision-making process. The Fujianese people, in contrast to the mainland Chinese, value their economic freedoms far more than any social or lifestyle benefits they might experience living in South Africa. As a result, they live nomadic lifestyles where they move to wherever they can take advantage of existing economic opportunities, ignoring the costs of constant mobility, such as leaving friends and family and having to adjust to new environments and daily life.

In general, the Fujianese Chinese migrant experience of South Africa does not differ much from that of the mainland Chinese. When comparing Fujianese and mainland Chinese migrants who live in the same city (Johannesburg and Durban), their experience of crime, the Chinese community, the economy, and the culture are similar. Responses between Fujianese migrants and mainland Chinese migrants were so similar on most topics that at first, when conducting interviews and participant observation, I did not notice any difference between the two groups. Fujianese migrants shared with mainland Chinese migrants complaints about crime and corruption, stories of increasing economic hardship with each passing year, a lack of free time to socialize outside of work, and stories of spending most of their time either working or

staying at home after sundown. It was not until arriving in Durban and observing the rather segregated and distinct Chinese communities that I began to pay discreet attention to the differences in responses between Fujianese and mainland Chinese migrants.

In explaining some of the differences in the described experience of Fujianese migrants, one must point out that mainland Chinese migrants' average continuous length of stay in South Africa when I interviewed them was five years whereas Fujianese migrants' average length of continuous stay in South Africa was 2.6 years. For respondents that moved back and forth between South Africa and China, I only included their most recent length of stay in the calculation. The difference of when these two groups of migrants arrived helps explain some of the differences in their experiences. As stated in earlier chapters, Chinese migrants who arrived in South Africa before 2005 experienced the most amount of business success, with those who arrived in the 1990s receiving the biggest benefit from being a first-mover into the wholesale Chinese market. Because the Fujianese migrants generally arrived in South Africa within the last three years, they are already facing the difficulties of cities becoming quickly oversaturated with Chinese shopkeepers, making competition increasingly more dense and intense. But apparent in all interviews regardless of province of origin was that Chinese migrants expressed the increasing difficulty to make money and save enough to open up new shops. Fujianese and mainland Chinese alike complained about how every year the profits were getting smaller and business more difficult. In both Johannesburg and Durban, nearly all Chinese migrants had this perspective. In Bloemfontein, however, the Fujianese complained less, as the market there seemed to still have room to grow and although they recognized that in general the economy was not doing too well, they also said that business was "*hai ke yi* (still okay)," and that they could make a good living shop-keeping in Bloemfontein. In the end, when comparing the experiences of the mainland Chinese migrants and the Fujianese migrants who arrived around the same time, both expressed similar experiences of business and economic life in South Africa.

Overall when controlling for both geography and length of time stayed in South Africa, the experiences of mainland Chinese migrants and Fujianese Chinese migrants are remarkably similar. As stated before, it was not until I arrived in Durban that I started to notice any difference in the responses between the two groups of Chinese migrants. This was in large part because the Chinese migrant communities in Durban were so distinct, and as I spent more time with the Chinese communities, I began to pay more attention to differences in my interviewees' responses. Because the Chinese community in general was much smaller in Durban and easier to organize and map out, I quickly saw how distinct the Fujianese community was in its organization and migratory experience. Not only did differences stand out because I would stumble across several distinct Fujianese Chinese communities embedded within the Chinese shopping malls, but also because the life trajectories Fujianese migrants described involved more moving around and a general sense that their physical location was always transitory. As I continued to learn about the Fujianese migrant community and moved my research from Durban to Bloemfontein, the differences became increasingly apparent and I realized that although mainland Chinese and Fujianese migrants both experienced much of the same things in South Africa, they have very distinct and different ways of understanding mobility, talking about their future plans, and valuing aspects of their everyday life. These differences help explain the different decisions the Fujianese migrants make and why the Fujianese end up on a migratory trajectory that differs significantly from that of mainland Chinese migrants in South Africa.

The most apparent difference between Fujianese migrants and mainland Chinese migrants is how they think about their economic lives. In Chapter 3, I discuss how mainland

Chinese migrants had the primary economic goal of becoming one's own boss. This dream of self-employment drove the economic desires of mainland Chinese migrants. They were not simply seeking wage increases, but rather focused on saving up money to open up their own shops. The narratives of these mainland Chinese migrants reveal their end goal revolving around freedoms associated with being able to make their own hours, set their own wages, and not have to work for anyone. The focus of mainland Chinese migrants was on the quality of life that came with self-employment. As a result, other quality of life issues were also equally important to mainland Chinese migrants who chose to stay in Johannesburg because even when business was not going well and they faced the daily pressure of crime and corruption, they expressed the benefits of living in a English speaking country, having a slower pace of life, and enjoying comfortable weather as reasons to stay put.

On the other hand, Fujianese migrants talked about their economic lives differently. Instead of focusing on opening up their own shop, none of my Fujianese respondents ever mentioned the idea or importance of becoming one's own boss. This was not their primary goal. Instead, they spoke in terms of sheer maximization of economic benefits, primarily in terms of higher wages and profits. At first, I thought this was because the Fujianese already owned their own shops, so did not see this as a valuable goal, but upon closer inspection, all five respondents in Johannesburg, four of the six respondents in Durban, and two of the seven respondents in Bloemfontein were not shop owners, but were hired shop keepers. This means overall, only seven of the 18 Fujianese respondents interviewed were already shop owners, whereas eight of the 24 mainland Chinese migrants owned their own shops. The proportions were rather similar, especially when considering that the sample of Fujianese migrants included seven respondents from Bloemfontein where the Chinese shop-keeping scene had yet to become over-saturated (in 2012) and so most Fujianese migrants were able to easily open their own shops. This shows that whether they owned a shop or not did not explain the difference seen in their response regarding their economic goals in migrating.

Additionally, mainland Chinese migrants' main reason for remaining in Johannesburg and South Africa was because they owned their own shops and that this was a better situation than risking giving up this economic freedom to move to other areas where the profit might be better. This included considering moving back to China; because profits in South Africa have decreased every year, Chinese migrants believe that opening shops in China might earn them more money, but the risk of having to face more competition in China is too great for them to seriously consider moving back. Overall, the mainland Chinese shop owners still thought of their mobility and location valuing the fact that they achieved their dream of becoming self-employed and so despite decreasing profits in Johannesburg and South Africa in general, they were willing to even sometimes lose money and have no profit rather than risk giving up their economic freedom.

In comparison the Fujianese migrants, regardless of whether they owned their own shop or were working for someone else, had only one thing on their minds: how do I use my mobility to make as much money as possible. A 47-year-old man, named Mr. Fong, working in Durban's China City explained that he had plans at the end of the year to move out to a rural village some 50 kilometers away from Durban. When I spoke with him, he had already told the owner he would be leaving in six months and had a friend who he would work with in the rural village. "I have everything planned out already so that by the end of the year I will no longer be here," Mr. Fong said. When I asked him where he was going, he said, "I do not know the name of the village—I only know it is 50 or so kilometers away from here. My friend invited me to go up

because he said the business was very good there—much better than here, at least... I am not making much money here. It is getting worse every year.” Mr. Fong had moved many times in his past, including first to Lesotho, then to Johannesburg, then back to China, then to Durban, then back to China again, and finally back to Durban again. At the time of the interview, he was also considering moving to Singapore, and told me, “If I had more money, I would go to Canada or the United States. I hear that you can earn a lot from shop-keeping there.” When I asked him why he moved around so much, he said, “It is all for the money. That is the only reason I move so much. If there was money to be made in one place, I would just stay there... But the economy is always changing, so one year, one place is good to make money, but that does not mean the next year, that same place will be a good place to make money. So I have to move again if I want to keep making good money.” As we talked more, I was surprised to learn that he had a wife and son back in Fujian—I almost assumed he was single because he had not mentioned his family at all when talking about his migration and business endeavors. I carefully asked him if he is able to keep in touch with his family easily and he told me, “Yes, it is easy to call them nowadays with the Internet and everything... Sometimes I don’t talk to them for a month, if there is nothing to talk about, but if I need to talk to them, it is easy.”

Living such a nomadic lifestyle, Mr. Fong had spent much of his life moving around to different locations trying to maximize his profits. In every place, he opened his own shop, telling me that he likes “being the shop owner because whatever you earn, you keep. If you earn 10,000 Rand, you keep 10,000 Rand. Working for someone else, the money you make, they take most of it.” This strategy is similar to that of the mainland Chinese shopkeepers, as they too are utilizing mobility in such a way that they seek out less developed places to capitalize on less competition and increased effectiveness of their existing capital, but the Fujian do so with explicit bias towards earning more money. While the mainland Chinese often talked about other freedoms associated with being one’s own boss and living in South Africa in general, the Fujianese interviews always ended up talking about the bottom line: how much money is the migrant making.

In addition, Mr. Fong in particular (as was the case with many Fujianese men I spoke with) had to give up regular contact with his family, wife, and son to go on this money-seeking endeavor. I was surprised to learn he was married and had a child in part because he did not mention this at all throughout the interview until directly asked, and did not display much emotional connection even when I did ask some questions about his family. This was typical of many of my Fujianese respondents who did not talk about family left behind in Fujian and even when they did, did not display much emotional response. This stands in stark contrast to mainland Chinese migrants who often spoke about family, saying that they missed them and that they were the main reason they had considered moving back to China. Furthermore, Fujianese respondents often thought communicating with family once a month was “frequent” whereas mainland Chinese migrants typically expressed frequency in terms of daily and weekly communications. Further research is required to fully understand the underpinnings of this difference, as it is unclear whether this is because of cultural differences in expression or if Fujianese migrants are actually less family orientated than their mainland Chinese counterparts. Additionally, mainland Chinese migrants often talked about plans to bring their children to South Africa or had already brought their family over, especially those migrants who have lived in South Africa for over 5 years. But because of the transitory lifestyles of the Fujianese migrants, they do not have these plans and generally decide to go back to China to visit their children, rather than plan to bring them along on their journey.

Mr. Fong's narrative reveals that his focus and intention was wholly on making money. He did not give any thought about his family or children coming to South Africa because he himself had no plans to stay long-term, but would continuously be looking for better money-making situations. The way he described his search and decision to move from Durban City to a rural village made it unclear if he would ever stop his nomadic pursuit of economic gain. This was a common way that Fujianese migrants expressed their understanding of mobility and their life path. Whereas mainland Chinese migrants talked about being together with family as an important value, and thought about their children learning English as an important part of living in South Africa, Mr. Fong and other Fujianese migrant shopkeepers did not seem to even consider this idea because of their commitment to seeing themselves as entrepreneurial sojourners. This is not to say that the Fujianese did not care about their families, as many respondents told me they kept what they needed to survive but every month they would send back whatever they could to take care of their family. Instead, Mr. Fong's story emphasizes the nature of Fujianese migrants to have tunnel vision that trains itself on one thing above all: finding spaces where they can make the most amount of money possible.

Another key difference between Fujianese migrants and mainland Chinese migrants was that while the mainland Chinese shopkeepers talked about living in an English-speaking country as an important benefit for the development of their family (especially their children), Fujianese migrants did not value learning English in their experience of shop-keeping in South Africa. As discussed in Chapter 4, mainland Chinese migrants talked about "developing their lives" and this narrative focused on inter-generational advancement which importantly included learning English, especially the children in their families. Fujianese migrants, on the other hand, did not have the same narrative of "developing their life" and never mentioned the benefit of living in an English-speaking country. When I asked explicitly about learning English themselves, the most common response was expressed well by Mr. Guo, who had been doing business in Durban for almost two years. He answered, "English? What English? I have not learned almost any English since I arrived here... it is not that English is not important—yes, the Indian shopkeepers know English so they can work in those upscale and nicer shopping malls, but to me, it is too hard and takes too much time to learn it. English will not help me make money right now." Mr. Guo at least recognized the potential benefit to learning English (which not many Fujianese respondent did), pointing to Indian shopkeepers in Durban as an example to how English might help, but unlike mainland Chinese migrants who saw learning English as a long-term human capital investment, Fujianese migrants' outlook on speaking English focused on short-term money-making. From a short-term profit-maximizing perspective, especially because Fujianese migrants do not have long-term plans to stay in South Africa, the possibility of moving to a place where one would get no return on learning English outweighs any potential long-term benefit.

When discussing the issue of making money, I asked Mr. Fong what he would do if he found a good money-making situation, and he said, "That is very difficult to say. Sometimes, one year it is good to make money here and then the next year it is better somewhere else. If it was easy to find a place to make really good money, then I would not have to move around so much." It is unclear to what degree this statement is an accurate reflection of reality, but it further shows that he had little plans to stay put and that there seems to always be a feeling that there are greener pastures somewhere else that he would be inclined to act upon. This view was the most common attitude amongst Fujianese migrants and contrasted with the decision-making of mainland Chinese migrants in South Africa, who rather than employing this hyper-small pond

migration strategy, chose to value the non-economic benefits of living in South Africa and ended up settling there, even if they acknowledged difficulties in making money.

Another Fujianese migrant, Mr. Chang, from the same shopping mall in Durban told me a similar narrative to Mr. Fong. He had been traveling between Durban, Johannesburg, China, and Egypt for the past decade at the time of the interview. The first time he left Fujian was at the age of 17. Instead of finishing high school, he went to Durban to work in a relative's shop and then later moved to Johannesburg to do business there also. After a couple years, he returned to China, got married in 2006, and then he and his wife left for Egypt where he was able to set up his own shop and be very successful. With the Arab Spring taking place in 2010, they left for fear of violence and because it interrupted their ability to do business. As a result, after staying in China for a year or so, he returned to Durban opening their own shop in Durban's China City. Because he had made good money in Egypt, I asked him why he did not decide to stay in China and start his own business there. He responded saying:

But in Fujian, we, for the last 11 years or so, have felt that it is better to do business outside of China (guo wai) than in China (guo nei). When I went back to China from Egypt for just 10s of days (shi qi tian), I felt like I couldn't stay there any longer. I felt like I needed to leave the country. Because I have a child in China, I went to go back to see him—if not, I would have just come directly from Egypt to South Africa... Also, business doesn't feel like it moves forward in China. When you earn 10 RMB, you spend 10 RMB. When you earn 50 RMB, you spend 50 RMB. It just feels like you can't get ahead in China. But here in South Africa, for example, yesterday I made 1,000 Rand, and I will spend some of this, but I can also invest most of this back into the business to make more money. In China, you buy something, and you sell it, you buy another and you sell it. You don't gain much of anything—the money just goes in circles.

Similar to the aforementioned respondent, Mr. Chang and his wife must give up regular physical contact with their son in order to travel, as their son stays in China with his grandparents. Additionally, his response shows his focus on continuously trying to make more and more money. Even though I got the sense from his description of how great money making was in Egypt that he had already made a lot of money, it was not enough for him to stay in China, and in fact, he feels a need to reinvest the money he has made to continuously make more. I even asked why he did not decide to reinvest his money in China, but his response shows that he has a feeling that business will be better in South Africa. It was never clear why he needed so much money or what this money was going to be used for. Unlike mainland Chinese migrants who talked about using money for things like their children's education, buying a nicer home, and living in safer areas, Fujianese migrants rarely spoke about settling down and investing in their children's development. When mainland Chinese shopkeepers talked about their success making money in South Africa, they described the process of settling down, choosing to live in South Africa, having kids immigrate to be with them, and generally liking what the country had to offer in terms of education and general lifestyle. In other words, the focus for mainland Chinese migrants once they had made good money was no longer on money but rather on other freedoms. In comparison, Fujianese migrants such as Mr. Chang continued to primarily keep their focus on making money. Mr. Chang later told me that he would love to go back to Egypt once the political situation settles down because the money making there was so good, showing that he had no intention of staying in South Africa and is constantly thinking about better places he can move to where he can make more profit.

This drive to make as much money as possible did not seem to stem out of need. Fujianese migrants did not list off all the expensive costs they had in China that drove them out to seek employment elsewhere. This is in contrast to Ms. Zhou, whom I mentioned in Chapter 4, a Chinese migrant from a Shanghai suburb, who could not help herself but tell me in detail how expensive life was in China, especially how her son's "monthly salary all goes to paying for the house. Then add on top of that, electricity, water, and food." Mainland Chinese migrants often talked about this need to make more money to develop (*fa zhan*) their lives, and yet they were more willing to give up economic gains for quality of life benefits. In contrast, Fujianese migrants rarely talked about what they used their money for (besides sending whatever they could home to their families). When I asked one recent Fujianese migrant, Mr. Lo, about what he wanted to make money for, he gave me a look of shock that I would ask such a question. He then replied, "What does anyone want to make money for? To pay off debts, send money to my family... My family uses the money to buy daily things, whatever they need." Mr. Lo then paused and stammered around a bit while thinking about the question. He then continued, "Oh, they also use the money to do their own small business selling things. Of course, I also need the money here for living and eating. Also, I spent money to open up this shop, so I have to make more money back." While mainland Chinese migrants talked specifically about the things that they needed money for, Fujianese migrants often gave me vague responses like Mr. Lo's. As I began asking my respondents about what they wanted to make money for because of their large preference for making money over all other freedoms, Fujianese migrants often acted as Mr. Lo did, surprised at my question and taken aback that anyone would ask such an obvious thing. At the same time, their responses were often hesitant and unsure, as if they were answering the question for the first time, frequently using filler words and phrases to buy time to think about their answer. This suggests that the idea of making money was so innate in their way of thinking that to them, it seemed normal and obvious as to why it was such an important goal, but at the same time Fujianese migrants were unaware of any of their explicit goals as they embarked on their money-making endeavors.

I spent several days in a Durban Chinese shopping center that was populated by mostly Fujianese shopkeepers who had a tight knit community in the shopping mall. In our group conversations, they frequently talked about their previous money-making experiences. One day, I was chatting with a Fujianese couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ling, in their shop and a neighbor came by to visit and joined our conversation. The neighbor started talking about how he had heard his cousin was making twice as much as he was making in a rural village 100 kilometers from Durban and he was considering leaving Durban because the business was so bad lately. This prompted Mrs. Ling to start telling stories of their business ventures in Malaysia: "One year, we made three times the amount we are making now and that was over the entire year, not just one month! Whew, at that time, business was so good for us there... We were selling clothes and accessories, much like here... There were customers in the stores almost all day long, not like how it is here. If things do not get better here, maybe we will try going back." While she was telling this story, the neighbor expressed his awe at their situation, saying things like, "*Zhen de?!* (Really?!)" and "Wow, maybe in the end it would have been better for you to stay at a situation like that." Conversations like these seemed to happen frequently, especially in comparison with time spent with mainland Chinese migrants who either had few stories to tell about their past entrepreneurial endeavors or chose not to talk about them. This suggests that Fujianese migrants used their money-making experiences as a sort of status symbol, finding value in being able to

say that at one point, they were a great success. Money-making for Fujianese entrepreneurs was not strictly out of need, but also driven by social status.

What is also interesting about the Fujianese migrants is that they never seemed to consider moving to more developed countries. Although one respondent mentioned Canada and the United States, this was the only person. Instead, most Fujianese migrants talked only about the possibility of moving to developing countries, like Argentina, Singapore, Zimbabwe, and other Southeast Asian or African countries. This stands in stark contrast to the migrants in Paul's (2011) study. Stepwise migrants use mobility as a tool to increase their human and social capital so that they can then turn this capital into moving to a developed country. Fujianese migrants were so economically minded and focused on making money that they were not concerned about improving their human or social capital—this is exemplified in their disinterest in learning English. Ultimately, Fujianese migrants were also not interested in increasing the capabilities and freedoms associated with their quality of life, such as social freedoms or a more comfortable lifestyle. Instead, they were consistently focused on making more money and so believed that the best way to do this was through using a small pond migration strategy, becoming the monkey king in a mountain with no tiger (*shan zhong wu lao hu, hou zi cheng da wang*).

The economically-focused attitude was typical amongst Fujianese respondents, even if they were unable to set up their own stores. One migrant was 30 years old and working for someone else's shop in China Mall Johannesburg. He had spent most of his last ten years between Fujian and Singapore, but made his first trip out to Johannesburg a little over a year ago. Like most Fujianese migrants, he discussed his migration decisions in terms of finding a place where he could make the most money. "The money-making in Singapore is not very good. It was not bad, but not great either. I had a family friend here who said that I could make more money here, so I decided to give it a shot." When I asked him how it was going so far and about his future plans he kept responded with, "It is too early to tell. I have not been here long enough to know for sure whether I can make money here... So far it is okay, but if I can find an opportunity to make more money elsewhere, I would go there." This was the attitude I heard many times while interviewing Fujianese respondents. The idea was that they were here, but always temporarily and always with the desire to go where the money was good.

To be fair, because on average Fujianese migrants I spoke with arrived more recently than those from mainland China, many of them had only lived in South Africa for less than two years. But in comparison the mainland Chinese respondents who also came to South Africa two years ago did not have the same way of talking about their future. For example, one woman who came to Johannesburg only a year ago said, "It is still early—I have only been here six months or so—but I will stay and try [shop-keeping] out for a while... Maybe I will stay for a couple years to see if I can't save enough money to open my own shop." For mainland Chinese migrants, this was the predominant attitude—to stay for at least a few years to see whether or not they could save enough money to become their own boss. In other words, their plan for the future consisted of staying in South Africa for at least a few years, whereas not one Fujianese respondent expressed this attitude of staying awhile before deciding to move elsewhere. This was the case even for mainland Chinese migrants who owned their own shops and had experienced some success. When they complained about the decreasing profits in South Africa, I asked why they did not just move away back to China or to some other country to do business, but they often responded with a desire to stay and wait things out to see if indeed the next few years continues to get worse. In contrast, the Fujianese migrants never seemed to have this "wait and see"

attitude in mind. They were far more transitory in their way of thinking about their mobility, being willing to leave at a moment's notice to better money-making environments elsewhere.

Conclusion: Preference Structures and a Culture of Poverty

I treat Fujianese migrants as a separate case for comparison with other mainland Chinese migrants for two primary reasons: first, because of their different values regarding the freedoms and capabilities that they want to achieve, and second, because of their distinct historical trajectory and social community discussed in Chapter 2. I draw this comparison to emphasize the importance of preference structures when considering the migrants and their decision-making process. Economic theories that attempt to create a model that explains the decision-making process for potential migrants are able to consider issues such as social networks, sunk costs, and risks associated with moving (Khwaja 2002; Hammar and Tamas 1997; Haug 2008), but have yet to develop models that include the question of personal preferences. The capabilities approach as a whole acknowledges that preferences determine which freedoms are valued and which are less important to the individual (Sen 2001), but the approach proposes no way to adequately take into account the differences in preference structures from one individual to another.

One of the only ways to uncover these important differences is through a narrative approach to understanding the migrant decision-making process. In talking and spending time with Chinese migrants in South Africa, what migrants tend to bring up on their own accord and the ways in which they connect certain values and freedoms to their migration narrative reveals what they find most important. With the Fujianese Chinese migrants, they constantly brought up issues and questions of money, being aware of how much money they were making here on a monthly basis as well as what they could have been earning in China. Their way of understanding their migration journey always included a narrative or discussion about money and wages. They also seemed completely unhindered to go anywhere in the world as long as the money was good, showing an obvious preference to maximizing their income. This way of using mobility highlights the Fujianese migrants' focus on short-term benefits rather than thinking about long-term investments and their understanding of their lives as a constant sojourn. Other mainland Chinese migrants, on the other hand, spoke about a larger diversity of topics when it came to thinking about migrating—they had a more holistic view of their lives and the freedoms they gained and lost from migration. Although they also spoke in terms of money, this was far less natural and obvious to connect income with their migration narrative. When thinking about their economic life, mainland Chinese migrants did not only focus on making more money, but also considered questions of self-employment and general quality of life concerns that were related to their work environment. These values show their long-term investment perspective where mainland migrants prioritized long-term benefits over short-term gains.

These differing narratives reveal the different preference structures individuals can have. It also shows that it is possible to methodically evaluate and compare differences in preference structures because these differences are not random or completely individualistic. While each of my respondents had different preferences towards some capabilities over others and no two migrant narratives were exactly the same, clear patterns developed over the course of my research that reveals the possibility of uncovering important differences in groups of migrants and their preferences. Using a narrative approach to understanding why people migrate and how they continue to make decisions about mobility reveals the importance of preference structures

and that not only can researchers uncover patterns in these structures, but also the potentially powerful role that preferences play in explaining the development of migration patterns. This serves as a missing component in existing theories of migration that might help explain why some migration patterns and strategies are more common among certain groups of migrants while less common among others.

While this research is unable to definitively explain why Fujianese migrants have these distinct preferences of money making over all other capabilities, I suggest that theories about a culture of poverty provide some traction to understanding Fujianese people and their way of thinking. Although the terminology and policies of a “culture of poverty” (Lewis 1969) has become hotly debated, in recent years, the idea that poverty inculcates individuals with common practices, understandings, and meanings has emerged as a useful theoretical frame to understand those who come from poor backgrounds (Sanchez-Jankowski 2008; Cohen 2010). Because Fujianese migrants I interviewed had low education and were poor peasants and traders in China, their attitude towards money resembled that of poor Americans studied in Sanchez-Jankowski’s work (2008) where impoverished individuals focused particularly on the short-term value of money, rather than the potential long-term investments that having money could provide. Similarly, Fujianese migrants in South Africa operated based on a desire to gain as much money as possible, rather than looking further into the future at what money could help them gain in the long-run, freedoms such as self-employment, a more comfortable lifestyle, education for their children, and other capabilities that require monetary investment. Unfortunately, current research on the specific case of self-employed Chinese migrant entrepreneurs do not employ comparisons across different migrant entrepreneurial groups, and thus little theorizing exists on what causes the difference in preferences observed here in the Fujianese migrants. Although I apply this idea of the culture of poverty to the Fujianese case, this chapter suggests that more research be conducted that accounts for the possibility of cultural, historical, and structural influences that might shed light on why certain groups of people have unique ways of understanding how to use mobility as a strategy for development.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I began this dissertation describing South Africa as a kind of “Wild West”—a frontier in which Chinese migrants of lower socioeconomic must navigate an environment of pliable rule of law, taking advantage of poorly enforced business and immigration laws while at the same time dealing with crime and police corruption. They do this with hopes of achieving their dream of self-employment with the ultimate goal of improving their quality of life and increasing their inter-generational advancement, or to “develop” (*fa zhan*) their lives. Much like pioneers who set out for the American frontier in the 1800s because of stories of finding gold and a better life, Chinese migrants are driven by stories of migrant entrepreneurial success, increased economic opportunities abroad, and a idyllic, picturesque (*wan mei*) view of the world outside of China (*guo wai*). They employ a small pond migration strategy in which they knowingly move to a less developed country to increase the effectiveness of their economic, social, and human capital. While some Chinese migrants are unable to cope with the freedoms that they must give up to live in South Africa, such as separation from family, social and cultural adjustments, and most importantly problems with crime and corruption, others choose to stay not only because of the potential of achieving their self-employment dreams, but also because they enjoy quality of life benefits such as a slower pace of life, temperate weather, a beautiful environment, and living in an English-speaking country.

Although the experience of the shop-keeping sector in South Africa was similar between mainland Chinese migrants and Fujianese migrants, each group employed a different small pond migration strategy because of their different preferences and values. On the one hand, mainland Chinese migrants had long-term aspirations for the migration journey, often discussing planning for their retirement, investing in their children’s futures, and bringing their family over to live in South Africa on a long-term basis. They chose to value long-term gains and quality of life concerns over short-term social and economic hardships, such as dealing with an unsafe environment and difficulties making money in the South African struggling economy. On the other hand, Fujianese migrants viewed their journey through a lens that adopted predominately short-term, profit-maximizing behavior resulting in a hyper-small pond migration strategy where they constantly moved seeking out better frontiers to make money. They rarely spoke about long-term plans, and frequently said that they would see how things turn out in the next year or so, having no other plans beyond this timeframe. They still employed a small pond migration strategy, looking for new frontiers and spaces where they could take advantage of a lack of competition and maximize the utility their existing capital, but because they were only concerned with short-term, economic benefits, they moved around frequently, rarely staying in one place for more than a couple years. They were also willing to venture into more dangerous and “wild” places, as they saw their journey as a temporary sojourn to make as much money as possible and then to leave for the next frontier. Although they claimed that once they found a place where the money was good, they would choose to settle down, I did not meet any Fujianese migrants in South Africa that had done so.¹⁸

While the differences between mainland Chinese migrants and Fujianese migrants are based on individual preferences, these individualities and differences in preference structures are

¹⁸ While this could indicate that South Africa was not a good place to make money, I did meet many mainland Chinese migrants who thought it was “good enough” (*hai ke yi*) and chose to stay despite not making as much money as they had hoped. It is unclear whether this is because mainland Chinese migrants were more successful and were making more money than their Fujianese counterparts, or if Fujianese migrants were simply not satisfied with making the same amount that mainland Chinese shopkeepers were making.

nested in broader cultural and historical structures. As described in Chapter 2, Fujianese emigration has a long history creating a “culture of migration” that made many *fuqing ren* more likely to go abroad if the opportunity presented itself. These geographic, social, and historical factors, such as being an important seaport location coupled with inland mountainous regions, having previous encounters with successful entrepreneurs, and having a long history of sailors and traders, are some of the social facts that explain why two groups of individuals differ in their preferences and values for some freedoms over others. Establishing and investigating the narratives of these migrants is the only way to interrogate these individual differences and uncover different driving forces that explain a migration stream, as statistical and aggregate migration data only test variables that the researcher assumes to be motivating factors. Through these migrant narratives, one is able to not only uncover these less salient motivations for migration, but also begin to understand the meaning ascribed to mobility in the migrants’ quest to increase their capabilities and freedoms.

As a way to understand the case of Chinese migrants to South Africa, I employ Sen’s capabilities approach to the field of immigration, arguing that Sen’s definition of development applies directly and universally to all migration patterns where the migrant him or herself is using mobility as a development strategy. I argue that this simple yet important application of a capabilities framework is an important theoretical frame that bridges the gap between the south-north and south-south fields of study, allowing for fruitful comparisons and cross-conversations between migration patterns that may seem to have no commonalities between them. I further argue that the implication of such a framework provides an alternative way to understand the migration-development nexus that goes beyond economic models to a more social and narrative approach towards understanding the differences and changes that take place as a result of migration.

Small Pond Migration: South Africa and Beyond

One of the most important contributions of this dissertation is the uncovering, theorizing, and describing of small pond migration as a mobility strategy that migrants use to improve their lives. In Chapter 1, I contrast this migration strategy with Anju Mary Paul’s (2011) stepwise migration strategy, a multi-stage migration strategy that Filipinos employ as a way to get around increasingly heightened barriers to entry seen in top-tier, preferred destination countries. While in Paul’s case, Filipino migrants moved to increase their human capital as a resource to slowly move through a hierarchy of increasingly more developed countries (from the Middle East to Southeast Asia to China to the US, Canada, and Europe) (Paul 2011), I find that Chinese migrants in South Africa employ an opposite strategy to achieve the same goal of improving their quality of life. Instead of trying to arrive in the most developed countries in the world, uneducated Chinese migrants (having less skills and human capital than Paul’s Filipino migrants) choose to move to less developed countries, exploring new frontiers as a way to increase the value of their existing capital. They do not do so to gain more human capital (although some do want to gain the experience of being an entrepreneur), but instead, they see moving to a less competitive place and becoming a big fish in a small pond as a good thing that instantly makes their existing human capital more competitive. Additionally, instead of seeing this move to South Africa as a way to save up money to eventually move to a more developed country, Chinese migrants consider moving to even more “backward” (*luo hou*) spaces, such as rural villages or other parts of Africa, to keep increasing the value of their capital, increasing their socioeconomic status, and thereby increase their capability sets. The Chinese idiom, “In a mountain with no

tigers, the monkey becomes king,” expresses this mobility strategy well, as Chinese migrants seek out frontiers without tigers to become king.

In the case of Filipino migrants, Paul argues that the cause for stepwise migration is because Western countries are more attractive (providing higher pay and higher status among immigrants) yet since post-9/11 there are much higher barriers to entry in the West, especially for low-capital migrants (Paul 2011). In the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, most migrants could not even consider going to Western, developed countries because of their lack of education and lack of financial capital. Instead, the countries they considered were all places with lower standards of living and costs of transportation, and those who ended up in South Africa did so because it was one of the cheapest options while still providing opportunities for them to achieve their development goals. I argue that as Western countries, the global north, and even intermediary countries have higher barriers to entry (either due to policies barriers or migrant selectivity), small pond migration may become an attractive alternative to extremely low-capital migrants. While those impoverished migrants who have so little education and financial capital that international mobility is simply not an option will remain unaffected, potential migrants who are of low socioeconomic class but live in middle-income countries may have the unlocked ability to utilize small pond migration to increase their capability sets.

In the case of Chinese migrants, a history of migration and having social networks are key factors that allow these migrants to use a small pond migration strategy. This does not mean, however, that small pond migration is restricted to Chinese emigrants. In fact, while conducting participant observation in Chinese shopping malls throughout the cities of Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein, I met several other (smaller) groups of immigrants who had set up businesses amidst the Chinese shops—these groups included Thai, Indian, and Middle Eastern immigrants. While it is unclear to what degree these other immigrant groups were employing a small pond migration, my few interactions with them suggested that they also came from a low socioeconomic background and were still able to become self-employed shop-owners in South Africa.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the success rate of small pond migration varied significantly based on when Chinese migrants came to South Africa. Some who came in the late 1990s were huge success stories, being the shining example of the immigrant rags-to-riches dream. But on the other end of the spectrum, migrants who arrived after 2010 had difficulties and struggled to make a profit—but even those migrants felt that their overall quality of life was better in South Africa, with more opportunities for the possibility of advancement, than in China. In the case of stepwise migrants, Paul reported less than 14% of migrants (4 of 30) were successful in accomplishing their goal of entering into their preferred destination country (Paul 2011)—the likelihood of success depended on starting financial state, ability to mobilize social capital, and individual human capital distinctions. Because in the case of Chinese migrants in South Africa, migrants had a less concrete idea of what their migration goals were, and many of these goals were either very long-term or they were still early in their migration journey, it is difficult to evaluate how successful Chinese migrants were in employing small pond migration. That said, unlike with stepwise migration where success depends on the migrant’s existing amount of capital, small pond migration’s success depends more on the changing economic and social environment of the destination country. On the whole, the majority of respondents and migrants I interacted with enjoyed a higher quality of life in South Africa than in China (even after complaining about problems of crime and safety), saying that they preferred it in South Africa than to going back home with the most common benefit of returning home being to be with

family. Although small pond migration certainly is not for everyone (as many Chinese migrants reported family and friends returning to China being unable to deal with life in South Africa), it provides an alternative way for migrants with less financial and human capital to improve their lives and possibly increase their freedoms and capabilities.

At the same time, the experience of Chinese migrants in South Africa was heavily dependent on the country itself and its economic and social status. Although most respondents had no college education, migrants had a keen sense of how the South African economy was doing because it affected their business, with a special emphasis on the strength of the South African Rand—exchange rates had a major impact on the costs of their imports and the amount of money they earned and could send home. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 4, crime was the one major issue on everyone's mind. This shows that the Chinese migrant experience of their small pond migration strategy was integrally tied to domestic social affairs of the destination country's government. Many Chinese migrants hoped that the government would somehow improve and handle these social problems, citing that this would be a substantial and important improvement to their experience in South Africa.

Although Chinese migrants would like more rule of law in the area of policing and corruption, they also take advantage of the lack of rule of law in the enforcement of business and immigration law. If the enforcement of these laws strengthen, Chinese migrants are more likely to leave or explore other frontiers besides South Africa. In other words, while Chinese migrants want some development in terms of security and crime, they oppose other developments such as stricter and enforced immigration policy. This has most recently become a major issue for Chinese migrants in South Africa. Starting April 1, 2014, new immigration policies are set to take place that will clamp down on illegal immigration. The most important of these policies are requiring all visa applications to be done in person as well as blacklisting those migrants who frequently overstay. I spoke recently to a Chinese Christian missionary, Ms. Tan, who lives in Durban and works regularly with Chinese shopkeepers. She told me that Chinese migrants are concerned about these new immigration policies because they will prevent them from returning home frequently and in the current system, they already have a lot of trouble getting visas because of their lack of English proficiency and so now they anticipate having even more problems getting the appropriate immigration paperwork. According to Ms. Tan, some Chinese migrants are preparing to either return to China or entertain exploring other frontiers, such as Botswana while others are waiting to see if these policies will actually be implemented or if they are just an election ploy for the upcoming election in May 2014.

These recent occurrences highlight two important aspects of small pond migration: first, as the destination country develops, it may cease to be a true "frontier," making it lose its appeal as an appropriate destination for small pond migration, and second, the closing of one frontier will only encourage migrants to seek out other less developed spaces to employ small pond migration. When utilizing a small pond migration strategy, as a destination country develops, it may become a less attractive space for new migrants to attempt to enter into. As pointed out earlier, however, this highly depends on the way in which a country develops. If the country develops in such a way that promotes immigration and generally improves the citizens' quality of life, then it may provide even more benefits to small pond migrants. But developments such as enforced immigration laws may make it more difficult for migrants looking to take advantage of new frontiers. This is not unlike immigration theory that shows how immigration policy has a massive effect on migration decision-making (Massey 1999; Zolberg 1999). But what is also implied more generally about small pond migration is that eventually if South Africa were to

develop to become more like a developed country (particularly in having strong and enforced rule of law in all areas of society) that it would cease to be a destination where low socioeconomic class migrants could utilize a small pond migration strategy. While existing migrants may not move to less developed frontiers, new migrants would look for other frontiers to explore, as South Africa would cease to be a frontier due to its developments.

Additionally, these recent immigration policy developments also foreshadow the future of small pond migration between Chinese emigrants and the continent of Africa. As one frontier closes as a prime destination for migrants employing a small pond migration strategy, new ones become more attractive for future Chinese migrant waves. As China continues to heavily invest in increasing amounts throughout Africa (Information Office of the State Council 2013), more social connections are becoming established between the two regions. Keeping in mind that the recent Chinese-South African connections started from official government-to-government contracts between South Africa and Taiwan, as more Chinese businesses are established throughout Africa, more social networks are also established between potential Chinese migrants and Chinese living in Africa. What is occurring in South Africa now may foreshadow what will soon take place throughout the African continent. This may further be expedited if South African immigration policies become harsher towards incoming migrants, as the government attempts to deal with high unemployment rates, especially amongst its black South African population. This would close the doors on potential Chinese migrants, who look at South Africa as a prime location for small pond migration, and encourage them to look elsewhere in Africa for other small pond migration opportunities. Ms. Tan who has visited Botswana to work with Chinese migrant shopkeepers there, she states that as South Africa becomes saturated with Chinese shopkeepers and with these new immigration policies being announced, there are increasingly more Chinese moving there to open shops—she plans to move their to continue her missionary work to Chinese migrants in Africa once the Chinese church in Durban is better established.

Concluding Reflections

Upon reflecting about small pond migration, two encounters in my life came to mind. The first is with my parents. As my parents were starting to think about retirement, they decided to move from San Jose, California to a suburb in Las Vegas, Nevada. My mother had been investing money in the stock market and the money she was making was their retirement plan. My parents' main motivation for moving away from the city that our whole family grew up in to a completely foreign place where they knew no one was because of the capital gains tax in California. My mother told me that she had to pay federal taxes on her stock market profits as well as state taxes that ran as high as 40% because of the amount of money they were making in capital gains. The state of Nevada, however, did not have any state taxes on capital gains. She did some calculations and concluded that the amount of money they would save from moving to Nevada would easily allow them to retire.

The second vignette that comes to mind is a short encounter I had when I spent one year teaching English in a rural province in central Thailand. One day, a couple from the United States was coming to the school to visit some old friends—they had taught a few years ago as English teachers in the school and had kept in touch with the local Thai teachers. I was invited to have lunch with them as seeing how I was also from the United States the Thai teachers thought that we might have things in common to talk about. After meeting them and talking for a bit, I learned that they were in Thailand not just to visit old friends but to spend time going to different Buddhist temples (as Thailand is a very culturally Buddhist country). They were Buddhists who

spent three months in Colorado as ski instructors and with the money they made in those three months, they were able to live and travel throughout Thailand for the rest of the year—they continued this routine every year, spending three months working in Colorado and nine months exploring and doing a spiritual retreat in Thailand. This was possible in part because of the exchange rate, which at the time was 40 Thai Baht to every US Dollar. After this encounter, I suddenly realized that I was doing things backwards—the amount I was earning in Thailand as an English teacher would be worth far less once I returned to the United States.

In each of these stories, the “migrants” are employing the same logic that is behind small pond migration. In the first case, my parents moved from the busy and bustling Silicon Valley to a quiet suburb in Las Vegas to take advantage of a state that has less to gain from high taxation of its population. In the second case, the married couple of ski instructors moved from the United States to a less developed country, Thailand, to take advantage of the lower cost of living and the highly beneficial exchange rate so that they only had to work three months out of every year. These upper-middle class individuals are using mobility to maximize the value of their existing capital. They do so through moving to less developed spaces, because certain characteristics of these spaces provide what is necessary for them to increase their capabilities and freedoms (and ultimately to improve their quality of life). While this is not the same as a small pond migration strategy, the logic behind the strategy is the same: moving to smaller ponds has its benefits that may be a lifestyle that is more preferential to the migrant.

On a grander scale, this logic has been well-known to educated businessmen everywhere. The phenomenon of globalization in which companies becoming increasingly mobile and move their manufacturing factories to places where they can take advantage of exchange rates and cheap labor is just one example of how commonplace this strategy is in international business. In this “race to the bottom,” businesses seek out the least developed places where labor is as cheap as possible yet still getting the job done. Again, the same logic exists where companies maximize the value of their existing capital through moving to smaller ponds.

As I reflected about this dissertation, I realized the prevalence of the logic behind small pond migration in the world today and especially amongst those who have access to large amounts of capital. What is interesting, then, about the Chinese in South Africa is that this group of relatively poor and uneducated pioneers has managed to employ the same strategy used by big, multinational companies, but in a less exploitative manner. They have taken their small amounts of economic, social, and human capital and taken advantage of the characteristics of a smaller pond to maximize the value of their capital, allowing them to have a hope of improving their lives—a hope that they otherwise would not have had if they stayed in China. While the effectiveness of a small pond migration development strategy is far more suspect when the individuals employing it are not wealthy, upper-class, and educated, for many of my respondents, the small improvements in their subjective quality of life are meaningful and the strategy provides them an important opportunity to develop their lives. As some migrants continue to employ a small pond migration strategy to look for the next frontier in search for a better life, for many of my respondents, in their own view, small pond migration has worked for them and they now choose to settle into their newfound and better lives.

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