

Entrepreneurship and Community Sustainability: The Chinese Migrant Experience in Australia

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Abstract. *Direct immigration from the Chinese mainland to Australia resumed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when tens of thousands of Chinese students were allowed to stay permanently in Australia. Since then, there have been numerous studies analysing various issues related to their settlement, and the Chinese have been portrayed in numerous ways, ranging from outsiders who were unable to assimilate, to hard-working citizens and a national economic asset. However, there are few analyses of how the Chinese had survived Australia's worst post-war recession during much of the 1990s, and how their community has sustained itself and now become one of the model communities in Australia, where there is virtually no job guarantee in the name of free market, and with a long and strong tradition of anti-Chinese sentiment. This paper seeks to address the gaps in the existing research literature by examining relationships between entrepreneurship and community sustainability and their impact on the sustainability of the new Chinese migrant community in Australia. Entrepreneurship means different things to different people and in the case of this community, entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival, but also constructive socio-cultural processes shaping the development of the community and enriching community life. Based on the author's longitudinal study of the experiences of new Chinese migrants in Australia since 1988, this paper opts to offer a broader analysis of the overall trends and key features of the new Chinese migration and their settlement experience in Australia, paying attention to how the Chinese have been mobilised in their new host country to engage in trade and small businesses and building the community economy.*

Keywords: *Strategic entrepreneurship, community sustainability, socio-cultural entrepreneurship, business entrepreneurship, community economy*

Introduction

The resumption of direct migration from the Chinese mainland to Australia took place in a rather unusual fashion in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Tens of thousands of Chinese students came to Australia under its ELICOS (English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students) scheme in the mid and late 1980s, and about all of them, totaling up to about 45,000, were given a four-year temporary residency permit after the June 4 incident of

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1989 (Birrell, 1994; Gao, 2001, 2011). When they were all allowed to stay permanently in Australia in 1993 by the Keating Labor government, honouring the commitment made by his predecessor, Bob Hawke, that no Chinese nationals would be forced to return to China, they became the largest intake of onshore asylum seekers in Australian immigration history (Jupp, 1991; Cronin, 1993). Therefore, their story is a significant part of Australian history and Chinese migration history. At the same time, their settlement experience also provides valuable insights into the ways in which a new ethnic community is formed and sustained.

Because of the settlement of 45,000 or so Chinese nationals in the early 1990s, there has been a rapid and significant increase in the Chinese-language speaking population in Australia. The estimated number of ethnic Chinese living in Australia in 1986 was only around 200,000 (Kee, 1992, 1995), but the 1996 Census recorded as many as 343,523 Australian residents identifying themselves as speakers of 'the Chinese varieties' (Clyne and Kipp, 1999). Since the mid 1990s, the number of Australian residents claiming Chinese ancestry has been rapidly rising. The 2001 Census revealed that the number of speakers of Chinese increased to around 401,300 (ABS, 2001), with more than 555,500 claiming Chinese origin (Chan, 2005). These figures have increased considerably in more recent years. In 2006, the number of Australian residents claiming Chinese origin rose to around 669,900 (ABS, 2007). The 2006 Census also showed that although the largest overseas-born groups in Australia have continued to be those born in Britain and New Zealand, the Chinese mainland has rapidly moved up from seventh on the list in 1996, overtaking Italy, to third place (ABS, 2007; Sun, 2012). In 30 June 2009, the number of China-born residents in Australia had increased to around 351,000 (DIAC, 2010a). According to the 2011 Census, there were about 866,200 Australian residents claiming Chinese ancestry, and more than 74 percent of them were the first generation in Australia (ABS, 2012). One of the foremost factors in this increase was the inflow of students from the Chinese mainland.

It was also since the settlement of 45,000 or so Chinese nationals in the early 1990s that the Chinese community in Australia has not only grown into a sizeable and vibrant part of Australian society, but has also come into its current 'model community' or 'model minority' phase (Ho, 2007: 1; Pung, 2008: 4). This label indicates that the community is now considered successful and well-off, because of its entrepreneurial spirit, skills and what they have achieved. At the same time, their experiences in Australia have attracted a considerable amount of research attention in the past decades and resulted in a large amount of publications. In general, the existing research literature on the Chinese in Australia could be categorised into two broad types, depending on the focus of research.

The first category may be defined as the mainstream-society-oriented or the dominant-group-oriented studies. They investigated and documented how the Chinese immigrants were mistreated in the early decades of Australia's history, including drawing on the Chinese experience in various analyses (e.g. Palfreeman, 1967; Willard, 1967; Huck, 1970; Cronin, 1982; Price, 1983; Rolls, 1992; Jose, 1995; Ryan, 1995, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2007; Kuhn, 2008). Some also related the Chinese immigrant experiences in Australia to broader perspectives, such as racism and its global context, and multiculturalism in Australia (Markus, 1979; Brawley, 1995; Lake and Reynolds, 2008; Jakubowicz, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2012). There were also many studies, according to Tung (2005: 34), looking at specific geographical regions, small localities, Chinatowns, and family networks (e.g. May, 1984; Atkinson, 1995; Brumley, 1995; Comber, 1995; Couchman, 1995; McCarthy 1995; Wilton 1995; Lydon, 1999; S. Fitzgerald, 2001; McGowan, 2004).

The second category is Chinese community-oriented studies, often concerned with a range of settlement-related issues (Choi, 1975; Kee, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997; Khoo and Mak, 2003; Chan, 2005). It is worth noting that there were some studies on pre-migration

experiences of the Chinese and various factors affecting their migration process (Kee and Skeldon, 1994; Coughlan, 1996, 1998; Viviani, 1996; Ho and Coughlan, 1997; Harris and Ryan, 1998; Sun, 2002). A small number of studies have also examined how the Chinese have obtained permanent residency in Australia since the mid 1980s (Birrell, 1994; Jose, 1995; Gao and Liu, 2002; Gao, 2001, 2006a, 2009, 2011). Importantly, since the mid 1990s, especially from the 2000s, more researchers have paid their attention to the post-arrival experiences of Chinese immigrants. A large proportion of research has explored various settlement-related issues. These include changing perceptions of Australia and China (Forth, 1994; Fung and Chen, 1996; Ip *et al.*, 1998; Ngan and Chan, 2012); family life (Crissman, 1991; Pe-Pua *et al.*, 1998; Chiang, 2004a); identity and transnationality (Ip *et al.*, 1997; Ang, 2000; Gao, 2006b; Lee, 2006; Tan, 2006; Chiang and Yang, 2008; Kuo, 2009); media consumption and cultural life (Sinclair *et al.*, 2000; Yue, 2000; Sun, 2002, 2005; Gao, 2006c; Sun *et al.*, 2011); social mobility (Ip, 2001; Wu, 2003; Chiang, 2004b; Hugo, 2008); education and intergenerational issues (Dooley, 2003; Ngan, 2008); gender-related issues (Ryan, 2003; Da, 2004; Hibbins, 2005, 2006; Ho, 2006, 2008; Yue, 2008; Syed and Murray, 2009; Cooke *et al.*, 2013); and health and ageing issues (Guo, 2005; Yan, 2005; Lo and Russell, 2007; Tan *et al.*, 2010). Also included among these research publications are some aimed at examining issues related to the occupational adjustment of Chinese immigrants (Iredale, 1983; Wu *et al.*, 1998; Chiang, 2004b; Hugo, 2008; Cooke *et al.*, 2013), and their family business and entrepreneurship (Lever-Tracy *et al.*, 1991; Ip, 1993, 1997; Yu, 2001; Collins, 2002; Lever-Tracy and Ip, 2005; Lund *et al.*, 2006; Ip, 2007; Collins and Low, 2010; Ye *et al.*, 2010; Dai *et al.*, 2011; Liu, 2011).

These latter categories of studies have clearly identified and focused on a very crucial aspect of post-migration life, which is the means of livelihood, and has continued the scholarly tradition of studying the entrepreneurship of overseas Chinese (Godley, 1981; Dobbin, 1996). In more recent years, entrepreneurship, and ethnic entrepreneurship in particular, have attracted more research attention than before, and many recent studies have examined the causes and consequences of ethnic entrepreneurship (Zhou, 2004; Morrison, 2006; Li, 2007). As part of this global trend, researchers have also sought to explain Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship in Australia, several aspects of which have been considered, including the impact of social and human capitals (Lund *et al.*, 2006; Sequeira and Rasheed, 2006; Collins and Low, 2010; Dai *et al.*, 2011), and their mixed embeddedness (Peters, 2002; Zolin *et al.*, 2011). Also examined includes the integration experience of Chinese entrepreneurs (Liu, 2011), their inter-generational succession (Ye *et al.*, 2010), their impact on trade (Tung and Chung, 2010), and their dynamism and transnationalism (Hsu, 2009; Selvarajah and Masli, 2011; Selvarajah *et al.*, 2012). The depth and scope of such research efforts, however, are evidently limited, the problems of which are at least twofold. First, many studies have in effect adopted an Australia-centric approach, paying too much attention to how Chinese immigrants have adjusted to Australia's employment market or network (Liu, 2010; Dai *et al.*, 2011), and taking less consideration of their *entrepreneurial efforts* and their links with their home country or region. This approach seems to be more problematic in the case of the migrants from the Chinese mainland than other groups, because China has shown its great economic attractiveness to many people all over the past two or so decades, providing many with opportunities to be economically active and successful. What is less studied is how the Chinese migrants in Australia have utilised the chances created by China's economic development and Australia's historic shift towards Asia. There is a missing link in our knowledge of how the Chinese migrants living in Australia have associated themselves with what has happened in China.

Second, recent research efforts have largely focused on ethnic entrepreneurs themselves and the entrepreneurial process (Lund *et al.*, 2006; Ye *et al.*, 2010; Dai *et al.*, 2011; Liu, 2011), and there are hardly any studies looking at ‘the synergy of entrepreneurship in community building’ (Zhou, 2004: 1040; 2009: 14). As Zhou also points out, research efforts without thinking beyond the existing frameworks in the understanding the causes and consequences of ethnic entrepreneurship may detract us from the big picture and is likely to lead us to an intellectual dead end (Zhou, 2004, 2009; Selvarajah and Masli, 2011). Although such a strong argument was made, the trend of focusing on the causes and consequences of ethnic entrepreneurship and the limits of the existing conceptual and analytical frameworks has continued not only in Australia, but internationally. That is, there is still no adequate research into the synergy of entrepreneurship in community building, which has remained less explored up to the present day.

It appears to be more necessary for Australia than other countries to study the synergy of Chinese entrepreneurship in community building as its reliance on the latter. What has taken place in China enables Australia to remain a lucky country that has not only prospered for more than 21 years without a recession, but has reached a growth rate that is a multiple of many other developed economies (Deloitte, 2012). Australia is also the only major developed economy to avoid the 2008-09 recession and one of only two major ‘rich’ nations to be ranked as the top economic performers in both 2010 and 2011 (CBC, 2011). These achievements are often credited to various factors, but the roles of Chinese immigrants and entrepreneurs are given much less consideration than that of Australia being a lucky country. The Chinese had previously been seen as a problem in white-dominated Australia, and lately they still have been portrayed in different ways, ranging from aliens or outsiders who were unable to integrate, to hard-working citizens or Australia’s national economic asset. Leaving aside its long history of anti-Chinese sentiment and discrimination, Australia at least is not a Mandarin-speaking country, and the country virtually has no job guarantee or security. Without taking into account of what efforts many Chinese immigrants have made to be a relevant part of Australian society, researchers have failed to offer trustworthy explanations of the experience of the Chinese population in Australia. As a result, little is known about their settlement activities and pattern, attitudes, identity and transnationality. In fact, there is not only a steady and significant increase in the number of Chinese settlers in Australia, but also a shift in the acceptance by the Australian public of the Chinese immigrants. The lack of knowledge of this rapidly expanding ethnic community has made it unfeasible to tell the differences between new Chinese immigrants and earlier groups and the explanation why so many Chinese immigrants are seen as ‘reluctant entrepreneurs’ in Australia (Ip, 1993: 57). The missing link has also made it impossible to understand how the Chinese survived Australia’s worst post-war recession during much of the 1990s, and how their community has effectively sustained itself and now irrefutably become one of the model communities in Australia.

This paper draws on data collected through the author’s longitudinal study of the new Chinese migrant community in Australia since 1988 (Gao, 2001, 2006b, 2009, 2011), and seeks to address the gaps in the existing research literature and explore the impact of Chinese migrant entrepreneurship on the community formations and sustainability through examining a variety of entrepreneurial activities of new Chinese immigrants in Australia. This longitudinal study has used a multimethod approach, which consists of individual-focused interviews, questionnaire surveys, and participant observation along with documentary sources, especially newspapers and magazines in both Chinese and English, published in Australia and overseas. Entrepreneurship means so many different things to different people and can be considered from different theoretical perspectives (Bruin and Dupuis, 2003;

Kumar 2008), but primarily refers to the action in a way that is innovative, creative and oriented toward growth and opportunity (Shane, 2008). In the case of the Chinese migrant community in Australia, entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival, but also constructive socio-cultural processes shaping the development of the community and enriching community life. This analysis is about what is called 'a new breed of Chinese entrepreneurs' (Wong, 2008: 3), and their role in facilitating and strengthening community-based social and economic regeneration. This paper is based on the data collected through a continuing study of the new Chinese migrant community, and it will pay attention to a broad analysis of the overall trend, patterns and key features of the entrepreneurial Chinese in Australia in the past 20 or so years. Special attention will be given to how new Chinese migrants have been mobilised in Australia to engage in trade and small businesses and various other socio-cultural activities, and the relationship between entrepreneurship and community sustainability.

In the section after this introduction, this analysis will briefly look at what has happened to Australia's immigration policy and program that have eventually helped renew the Chinese community. The next section will also introduce parts of the post-migration realities that many Chinese migrants have to live through. Two subsequent sections will focus on how new Chinese migrants have been mobilised to engage in trade and small businesses since the early 1990s, when tens of thousands of them were allowed to stay permanently in Australia. Special attention will be given to two types of entrepreneurial activities: business and socio-cultural entrepreneurships. This paper will conclude by putting forward some thoughts on how entrepreneurship can be used to enhance plural coexistence and sustainability at the community level in the context of global economic and political realities.

The new Chinese community and post-migration realities

Australia's nation-building policy since the post-World War II period has carried a new emphasis on immigration, and a wide range of new policy measures has been developed and introduced to optimise the input of immigrants to its economic growth and future prosperity (DIMA, 2001: 7). However, a great majority of its immigration intakes were first from Europe, including countries of Western and Eastern Europe. Since the Colombo Plan that was launched in 1950, Australia has also gradually, and selectively as well, opened its door to some educated people from South and Southeast Asian countries (Hull, 2003; Oakman, 2004). Education has since become a key mechanism as the main conduit for the movement of ethnic Chinese to Australia. After the formal abolition of the 'White Australia' policy in the early 1970s, a large number of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East were admitted into Australia in the late 1970s and 1980s, including tens of thousands of Indochinese refugees arrived by boat. Nevertheless, the utilisation of education as an entry criterion was never intended as a vehicle to reactivate direct immigration flow from China, which has only taken place in a meaningful way since the late 1980s (Forster, 1996).

As early as in 1980, however, Australia was already China's fifth biggest trading partner because of the efforts made by both the Whitlam Labor government and the Fraser Liberal government in the 1970s and early 1980s. Sino-Australian trade then 'amounted to US\$1.27 billion' (Huan, 1985: 124). Australia clearly saw greater trade potential in China than other places in the early 1980s as it already achieved a trade surplus of approximately AU\$650 million with China (Fung and Mackerras, 1985: 262), and its 'annual growth rate averaged 24.5 per cent, almost twice Australia's total export growth rate' (Woodard, 1997: 147-148). By the mid 1980s, Australia had effectively integrated itself into the Asia-Pacific economy,

and over 60 percent of its total trade was conducted with Asia and the Pacific (Humphreys, 1985). Despite being constantly distracted by numerous negative comments about China, Australian policy-makers have found China as a trade market too good to be ignored. While Australia was making its great efforts to integrate its economy into the rapidly developing Asian economy and link its economic restructuring to China's modernisation, the renewed interest of young Chinese in studying abroad and Australia's ELICOS program brought in thousands of Chinese students to Australia (Gao, 2001).

As mentioned, about 45,000 Chinese nationals were given a chance to stay permanently in Australia because of a historic decision made by two Labor prime ministers, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. The final decision of 1993 to allow 45,000 or so Chinese nationals to stay was also not made without consideration of Australia's long-term national interest. As an interesting episode of Australia's shift towards Asia (Mackerras, 2004), the decision was flawlessly timed to meet with a new phase of China's reform accelerated by Deng Xiaoping's famous inspection tour to southern China in early 1992. In spite of the humanitarian nature of the Chinese student issue at the time, this perfect piece of Paul Keating's 'Asianisation' policies (Cotton and Ravenhill, 1997; Scott, 2008) not only re-emphasised age, education and skills in the migration intake, but also included a better understanding of the need for human capital for Australia's future economic relations with China. This was why *The Herald*, one of the forerunners of Melbourne's Herald Sun, had an editorial as early as in 1990, applauding the initial decision to let the students stay as 'China's loss is our gain' (7 June 1990).

The post-1993 Chinese migration to Australia has been under more selective policies than before. In addition to educational qualifications, skills have been further emphasised, and the capacity to invest also has been added into the selection of new immigrants. The Howard Coalition government (1996-2007) was in power for 11 years of the past two decades, during which immigration policy became even more central to Australia's economic growth strategy. A large number of foreign students were allowed to seek permanent residency under its onshore skilled migration policy. The students from mainland China were well represented in this category, which has given a boost to Australia's international education industry. While student visa holders have been one of the major sources of Chinese migration, more Chinese have also migrated to Australia under its offshore skilled and business migrant categories. All these new policy focuses and measures have resulted in an annual intake of tens of thousands of Chinese, making China the third largest source of overseas-born Australians.

Lately, attention has also been given to the capacity to invest in Australia. By the end of the 1990s, approximately 80 percent of business migrants were of Chinese origin (Jordens, 2001: 69). This trend has continued in the past 10 years, for example, around 84 percent of sponsored business migrants in the state of Victoria were from China in the mid 2000s (Allan, 2006). Since the global financial crisis of 2008, China has been the first source country in both the business and skilled migration categories (DIAC, 2010b). These changes *in the past two or so decades* have not only resulted in the rapid and significant increase of the Chinese population in Australia, but have also transformed their community in terms of the level of education and family wealth. The latter has in turn provided many families with opportunities to achieve rapid upward social mobility or in numerous cases to regain a socio-economic status similar to what they had in China, especially a relatively high degree of intergenerational upward social mobility. The Chinese in Australia become more visible among the professionals, such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, civil servants and academics. Their capacity to invest in business, as well as their ability to run business, has all been improved beyond all recognition. All these changes have also helped to subdue racial-phobias among Australians, attract the re-migration of Chinese living in Southeast Asia, and transform Chinese settlement in Australia.

Significant changes have also taken place in the patterns of work and family life of many new Chinese migrants to Australia, the effect of which has been more severely felt by those from the Chinese mainland than other groups. As noted, Australia at least is not a Mandarin-speaking country, and it virtually has no job guarantee or security despite its claim of having an employment service. What new migrants have to adapt to is that this is a new socio-economic system that is completely different from the China of their time, and that everyone has to be on their own. These are part of their post-migration realities.

Because they are left to feed themselves and to fend for themselves, what has consequently emerged in Australia is a new Chinese community, a very high proportion of its members have to engage themselves actively in a wide range of small business activities. As the new immigrants from a non-English speaking country, they have significantly, if not completely, less opportunity to obtain a job than English-speaking migrants and the Australia-born. A very practical solution is to work for themselves or to *be self-employed*, especially if they could do any China-related business. In fact, the new Chinese migrants from the very beginning of their post-migration life in Australia had not only to rely on small businesses to make a living, but had also to be competent of doing them well (Gao, 2006b). In terms of this background, they were reluctant entrepreneurs, but they are also a type of new Chinese entrepreneurs. Yet, many theoretical explanations of them, especially of their entrepreneurship, appear still to be based on the old breed of Chinese entrepreneurs. Even a large number of recent studies have still looked at related issues from a long distance, such as from a cultural-historical perspective, viewing overseas Chinese entrepreneurship from a combined perspective of Confucianism and capitalism or from the perspective of kinship (Wong, 1998). Also commonly used is a so-called structuralist perspective, laying emphasis on the role of family networks or business networks, the focus of which has lately been expanded by some to include transnational links (Ip, 2007). What has been largely disregarded in the field is the changing migrant community itself and migrants themselves. In a China-based study, Yang (2007) has identified 'structural and institutional holes' to explain opportunities for entrepreneurs. In the case of the Chinese in Australia, the new breed of Chinese entrepreneurs has directly resulted from various economic structural and policy changes in Australia, especially those in immigration policy. The policy emphasis on qualification or education, skills and investment has then changed the overall readiness of the community and its members for their new lives and new roles.

Business entrepreneurship for survival and prosperity

The sudden and significant increase in the number of Chinese immigrants to Australia since the early 1990s has helped form two types of entrepreneurial activity. The first type is characterised by the direct involvement of the Chinese migrants in trade and other small businesses, while the second one is typified by their efforts to engage themselves in socio-cultural entrepreneurial activities in the community. This section analyses the first one, looking at how those who settled in Australia in the mid and late 1990s were initially mobilised, or forced in many cases, to be engaged in trade and other small businesses, instead of pursuing professional careers relevant to their previous training. That is, the emergence of many new entrepreneurs in the community, from the viewpoint of new migrants, was not an expected and gratifying outcome of Australia's immigration policy focus. Instead, it was a result of a combination of a range of factors, especially the smallness of Australia's population and job market. The lack of job opportunities for new immigrants was overlooked by Australia's policy makers, and forced many migrants to find out their own ways to survive

economically. A number of early studies of the settlement of post-1993 Chinese immigrants in Australia have revealed that they all had experienced a great deal of frustration in seeking professional jobs and further training for skilled jobs (Fung and Chen, 1996; Gao, 2006b). As mentioned, Australia has attracted many educated and skilled Chinese, many of whom were holding junior or *middle managerial and administrative* positions at different levels of the Chinese bureaucracy, while many were also qualified in China for a range of professions.

Having lived in Australia for a short period of a couple of years, however, the majority of them realised that it was impossible in this new country to get what they called an ideal job, including returning to the professions that many had in China. Yet, having had their 'golden dreams' turned into 'grey realities' (Fung and Chen, 1996: 2), they also did not choose to return to the home country because China in the 1990s was not an ideal place to live in their eyes and they also preferred to have their children educated in the West. As found in an early study by the author (Gao, 2006b), many new Chinese migrants decided to give up their ambition to seek ideal jobs, and to focus on accumulating wealth for engaging in trade or other small businesses. In the early 1990s, some of them already started importing various cheap Chinese products, and up to the mid 1990s, almost none of them had completely ignored the possibility of engaging in business to import cheap Chinese goods. The degree of their mobilisation for business activities was so high that the whole community was found to have engaged in such activities on two main fronts: the domestic small business, such as running milk bars, take-away shops, fruit and vegetable stores, and laundry services; and the China-related business, including import and export of various goods and services.

In addition to the small job market that has hardly been accommodating to new migrants, the corporatisation of Australia's retail industry and import and export industries, especially their monopoly of certain markets and goods had also affected many Chinese as their livelihoods *have relied on these industries*. Exports to China were also monopolised by some big companies. When some new migrants were planning to engage in import business, they frustratingly found that they could only import the products that the purchasing managers of big companies did not purchase. Of course, China at the time could only export a fixed set of low value-added goods, often as the supply to Chinatown shops. China was then also not rich enough to buy anything pricey from the West in large quantities through unofficial channels, which means that China provided the new migrants with little opportunity.

Despite such difficult circumstances, new Chinese migrants have been very active in China related trade activities in the past 20 years. Among many new ethnic Chinese businesses, a large number of them had not only survived the early stage, but also thrived in the more competitive market that has emerged since the early 2000s. In Melbourne, for example, almost everyone in the community knows successful stories of Conia (the first and largest Chinese TV importer), Tudor Hill International (the pioneer operator of Chinese official training programs in Australia), and Yellow Earth (the largest manufacturer and supplier of Australian sheepskin products). Together with several well-known social-cultural entrepreneurial ventures, which are to be discussed next, the above trade businesses have been considered typical examples of this period and this generation of Chinese migrants.

They all started in the early 1990s as part of what was called a period of commercial guerrilla warfare in the community. That is, their business activities over this period were characterised by its small-scale, large number, fast-changing and other irregularities. One of such examples was some Chinese importers of flooring materials made in China. In the mid 1990s, parquetry-flooring cost was around \$80-\$100 per square meter in Australia, and in some cases, the cost was as high as around \$115 - \$215 per square meter. A few new migrants contacted Chinese factories and started importing parquetry-flooring materials. However, no store manager trusted Chinese products at the time despite its lower prices. Though the

Chinese told local managers that all these products were actually made in China and that the local stores imported from their suppliers at higher prices, the local managers trusted their suppliers and refused the cheaper products from the new Chinese importers. Having been refused by the local stores, several groups of Chinese importers started their smart marketing campaign, combining both sales and installation. Their advertisements appeared in not only top Chinese community newspapers, but also in English newspapers, big and small. Their price was just around \$40-\$45 per square meter, including installation cost. At least partially because of their smart campaign, the price of the flooring materials in Australia was reduced to the level they set within a rather short period. All these types of import and export business activities have resulted in an abrupt and huge increase in two-way trade between Australia and China in the 1990s.

Similar guerrilla warfare had also happened to many other products, such as clothing and footwear, and pushed down the prices of numerous other goods over the 1990s. This is why the settlement of so many rather highly qualified new Chinese migrants in Australia has been regarded by many observers as being equivalent to a recruitment of thousands of purchasing and sales managers for doing business with China. As mentioned, despite the good and strategic intentions of its new policies, Australia's intake of a large number of trained and skilled immigrants has also created many serious problems to the life of new migrants. However, the high level of qualifications and previous work experience enables many Chinese to apply a high level of flexibility to adjust themselves to their post-immigration life in Australia. Take the example of the founder of Conia, the first Chinese TV importer, who returned to China to look for a business opportunity after being given permanent residency in 1993. He brought back a Shenzhen-made new Konka TV, which actually did not work as it used a different system. Having been persuaded by the founder of Conia, the Konka producer had then produced some TV for the Australian market.

The first container of Konka TV was ordered in 1994, when Konka had only 9 percent of the market share in China. Some Australian retailers, such as The Good Guys, a big retail chain selling white goods, refused to sell TV made in China at the start. The sale started in an informal way, which was among new Chinese settlers and promoted by community newspapers, as its price was only one third of Japanese products. Their sale was recognised by Konka, resulting in its decision to set up an operation to focus on export, including its support to Conia as its sales representative. The sale of Konka TV reached 10 percent of the market share in Australia in 2003, and it then peaked at 20 percent in 2004. It became the second most popular TV in Australia in 2008. Its success has led to new business operations of other Chinese TV companies in Australia and retailers such as the Good Guys have all become partners of Conia.

As indicated by Conia's growth, the new Chinese migrant entrepreneurship in Australia has since the early to mid 2000s entered its second stage, which is characterised by their efforts to strive for market share. The expansion of Sino-Australian trade and economic relations, as well as cultural and educational exchanges, has been a gradual and ongoing process, which has decided the pattern of how the Chinese have been engaged in economic activities in the past two decades. To some extent, without being a player in the resources industry dominated by big multinationals, the continuing growth and massive scale of trade, commerce and people-to-people exchange between Australia and China have provided many Chinese migrants with more opportunities than non-Chinese Australians. These have resulted in three types of businesses in the Chinese community, including: (1) import-oriented businesses, (2) people-to-people exchanges, and (3) export-oriented businesses.

Shortly after their settlement, many Chinese had to focus on importing a wide range of goods made in China. At the same time, some started venturing into exporting Australian

goods and services to China, from worthless cow by-products, sheepskin to education, and other services. There has been an invisible competition between new migrants and the purchasing and sales managers of established businesses. While the Chinese are taking hold of a larger import market share than ever in a slow pace, they have also played a vital role in engaging in export-oriented business. One of such examples is a successful migrant business called Yellow Earth.

Yellow Earth started as a small sheepskin tanning business, but it has little by little developed into the largest producer and supplier of Australian sheepskin products, especially of its luxury Yellow Earth brand. In the early 1990s, the owner gave up his postgraduate studies because he had an idea and strategy for his new life in Australia. Although his business started in a small factory in an industrial area in a southwestern suburb of Melbourne, he has always planned to sell his products worldwide. While accumulating his 'first bucket of gold' for further investments, his company has been making every attempt to expand the market internationally, especially to look for new products for his sheepskin material. Before producing Yellow Earth boots, the company tried jackets and medical products. They have also tried repeatedly to buy its rivals out of the sheepskin market in order to end the guerrilla warfare in the market and employ its own production strategies. By relying on similar skills, Yellow Earth has also become very competent in seeking external funding, including the Australian government's financial support to export local natural products.

By the end of 2011, the company in China alone has set up more than 50 stores, selling more than 300 products. Because of its role in making Australia's sheepskin boots a new fashion in China, Yellow Earth and its products were chosen as one of the few Australian companies presented in the Australian Pavilion at the 2011 World Expo in Shanghai.

What is more typical of the new Chinese entrepreneurship, especially in the past 10 or so years, than many manufactures and importers and exporters of material goods is the role that numerous Chinese have played in exporting education and bringing in Chinese tourists to Australia. The growth of both education and tourism as industries in Australia in the past decades has been phenomenal, making them well within the top three foreign currency earners, and become a crucial part of the Australian economy as both industries earn billions of dollars each year (Phillimore and Koshy, 2010; TRA, 2010). At the same time, there are hundreds of Chinese operators, big and small, in these two booming industries at both ends of business, Australia and China. The operators who have been running services for Chinese tourists and students have taken up a big market share since the late 1990s and early 2000s.

China granted Australia the approved tourist destination status in 1999, and Australia opened its door to ordinary Chinese tourists outside Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in 2003. All these reluctant steps towards people-to-people exchanges with China, the number one country on Australia's xenophobic list (Blainey, 1982; Fitzgerald, 2007), would be much slower without the push by Chinese migrants. In fact, a number of years before 1999, the so-called study-tour of Chinese officials had already emerged as a fast growing, lucrative and promising part of Australia's tourism sector. As early as in 1993, Australia had more than 3,000 Chinese visitors, more than half of whom came for business purposes under official study-tour schemes. The share of holiday travelers increased to more than 45 percent in 1999, and in 2003, the Chinese tourists coming to Australia reached above 50 percent. Despite the change, the official trip is still a large group. One of the pioneer study-tour operators, Tudor Hill International, is believed to have run about one-third of the study-tour groups from the early 1990s to the mid 2000s. The operators had some contacts in China, but their business in the past two decades has been well beyond the level of their personal connections. Like the Yellow Earth owner, the turn operators gave up their professional careers in the early 1990s,

when they realised the opportunity to run the study-tour business. Though it is different from Conia and Yellow Earth, the scale and duration of Tudor Hill were once admired by many new migrants and have attracted more to venture into the industry. Their involvement has reformed and promoted Australia's tourism industry (Lim and Wang, 2008). In 2012, the number of Chinese visitors to Australia reached more than 630,000, worth billions to Australia. People-to-people exchanges have then also created new opportunities for Australian goods and services in the Chinese market.

Socio-cultural entrepreneurship for demarginalisation and thriving

As some researchers have pointed out, entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival, but also 'have positive social repercussions', in the words of Dzisi (2008: 262), for the migrants and their social environment. Many researchers have also emphasised that entrepreneurship is more about 'social creativity' than business, and is in fact a form of social creativity (Hjorth and Bjerke, 2006: 119; Førde, 2009: 94). The same experience has also been observed in the new Chinese community in Australia, but their socio-cultural ventures are all found to have been, at least initially, responses to their new economic circumstances in the host society. As also revealed in the author's early study (Gao, 2006b), new migrants were found to have made two types of ongoing effort to counteract their marginalisation from both their new country and their society of origin after they settled in Australia. Many of them want to maintain their relevance to both Australia and China, the effort of which has been defined as dual-track demarginalisation. As part of this process, these migrants took a number of steps to demarginalise themselves and to move closer to mainstream Australian society. In addition to taking up Australian citizenship and helping their next of kin migrate to Australia, many started buying, or establishing, and running a business, because the attainment of economic prosperity and financial wellbeing has from the very beginning become the focus of the new migrants' endeavours. Among many types of entrepreneurial ventures, there were a number of cases where business undertakings are perfectly combined with socio-cultural ventures.

This section looks at two frequently mentioned cases of such socio-cultural ventures, and their roles in community building and influencing the socio-cultural lives of the Chinese migrants. One is the Melbourne-based 3CW Chinese Radio, which as one of the most victorious entrepreneurial business initiatives by new migrants from mainland China has been broadcasting 24 hours a day since 1999. The other case is the New Gold Mountain Chinese School, the first and most successful one of many Chinese schools and coaching centers that new migrants have established in all major cities in Australia since the early 1990s.

All these social-cultural entrepreneurial activities started taking place while many new migrants were engaged in small businesses or import-export activities. As mentioned, there have been fundamental changes in the demographic composition of the new Chinese migrant community since the early 1990s. As a result, some who are more familiar with the education systems and the media than doing business opted to run socio-cultural enterprises within the community market, because they were aware that the community went through a generational change and required a range of changes in cultural practices. For example, in the community media market, new migrants had experienced a change from being consumers to being participants in the early 1990s. The first half of the 1990s saw several new newspapers and magazines run by new migrants, and since then there are never less than ten Chinese language newspapers, including dailies and weeklies, and magazines in Sydney and Melbourne (Gao, 2006c).

All these new dailies and weeklies, and magazines, entered the market with fierce competition, but most of them have survived, and several of them have even ventured into bigger businesses. At the same time, the competition has not deterred new players from entering the market, as the community-based economy has been growing significantly. The community media market has therefore been driven and maintained by a large number of advertisements from community businesses, big and small. In order to make the newspaper business dependable, if not more profitable, strategies are still needed in the marketplace. Owners of *Huaxia Zhoubao (The Chinese Weekly)*, one of the new Chinese newspapers, broke the vicious circle of the fierce competition in 1999 by deciding to set up 3CW Chinese Radio in Melbourne and beyond. A large amount of money that they earned from their newspaper was spent on setting up 3CW, and radio programs had subsequently taken hold of a bigger share of the community advertising market while promoting their newspaper.

In 1999, two years after the handover of Hong Kong to China, the Chinese migrant community was experiencing deep-rooted changes to its diasporic identity, and many members were almost desperate for radio programs that broadcast for more hours in Chinese. Despite such favourable circumstances, 3CW had implemented a series of strategies to expand and consolidate its audience market. Its tactics of promoting itself and the newspaper to general audience have not only rather effective, but have also been perceived by a higher proportion of community members as an important contribution to the transformation of the community and its institutions. Despite controversies, 3CW has since played leading roles in the rapidly expanding community in supporting community businesses, coordinating socio-cultural events, and providing a platform for community members to exchange ideas.

The second case that has been more closely related to the communitywide effort to demarginalise themselves from both their host and home countries than 3CW is the New Gold Mountain Chinese School, or Xinjinshan as it is called in the community. Also emerged in the early 1990s, Xinjinshan was a completely new education business established by a group of new migrants who are very familiar with education and teaching. They believed that more Chinese would migrate to Australia, and therefore more Chinese language schools would be needed. At first glance, their plan did not appear to be innovative, as it seemed to repeat what was observed in many old Chinese migrant communities in the past. Community-based schools have long been identified as one of the three pillars, alongside community associations and newspaper, of the Chinese migrant communities. What Xinjinshan had first achieved was to not only have the school established before the community reached a 'critical mass' (Sinclair *et al.*, 2000), but have also skillfully run it in their own ways, including teaching Mandarin and simplified Chinese, hiring those trained in the Chinese mainland and having multiple campuses.

Once the critical mass is reached and experience is gained, Xinjinshan has ventured into new and more sophisticated activities that have never been attempted by earlier generations of Chinese migrants. They started running academic scholarship coaching centers in the mid 1990s, which has not only made the school more competitive than its marketplace peers, or rivals in a precise word, but has also led them to be part of the mainstream education system that has denied many educated Chinese migrants access to teach in Australia. Xinjinshan became the largest scholarship coaching center in Melbourne and beyond in the late 1990s, producing a large number of secondary school scholarship recipients every year. Since the early 2000s, it has been one of statewide Chinese language education providers, but the examination results of their students have made the school the first major teaching place for Chinese. At the same time, they have provided hundreds of migrants, especially educated female migrants, with job opportunities, playing its part in the formation of new community economy and institution.

From the above two cases, it is clear that diasporic Chinese socio-cultural entrepreneurial initiatives are all caused by their basic need of a means for economic survival, but have since been evolved as the consequences of a series of innovative initiatives into sustainable community institutions and mechanisms for demarginalisation first and then for thriving. As Sun argued, such ventures need to 'operate according to the logic of a material as well as symbolic economy' (Sun, 2006: 6). Socio-cultural entrepreneurial initiatives pursued by the new Chinese migrants in Australia have clearly revealed the relationships between not only business and socio-cultural entrepreneurial activities, but also the business aspect and the socio-cultural aspect of their socio-cultural ventures.

All these types of entrepreneurship have since supported a process of social renewal that the new Chinese migrant community is needed. As a result, the community as a whole has first become settled economically, and a large amount of earnings from various business activities has then facilitated the developments of the community economy and the community culture, both of which are important mechanisms to make the community sustainable and prosperous. Encouraged by the successful experience of Xinjinshan, more weekend schools have been established, attracting hundreds of students of Chinese origin, including many children from Indochinese refugee or migrant families. Because of better educational background and experience of new immigrant teachers, new Chinese schools are more popular than the schools run by the so-called old Chinese migrants or even many government schools. To compete for scholarships in some private schools and university entrance examinations, more coaching centers have been established, which have successfully trained numerous scholarship winners and further improved the standing of the community in Australian society. Almost all Chinese migrants, regardless of whether or not they have earned their fortune, have devoted a great deal of attention, as well as money, to their children's education.

Like what has happened in all major migration countries, children of Chinese migrants in Australia are also very successful in their academic performances and future careers, which have help them achieve intergenerational upward social mobility. While Australian students of Chinese background are broadly regarded as 'model students' (Dandy and Nettelbeck, 2000), their parents are credited or criticised for educating them in a Chinese way, but the community and its socio-cultural practices have been largely overlooked. Since the mid 1990s, Australian secondary students of Chinese origin have been found to be top performers in secondary school certificate examinations, which are called VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) in Victoria and HSC (Higher School Certificate) in New South Wales. This trend has become well documented since 1997, when the state government of Victoria under Liberal premier Jeff Kennett, for example, decided to publish the names of students who successfully scored 40 or above in a subject of their VCE examinations, equivalent to the top 20 percent of the VCE results (Douglas and Harris, 2008). The publication of VCE results in major newspapers has helped the Chinese community immensely as various forms of Chinese names have accounted for a very high proportion of the list. After about fifteen years, the publication has not only helped further refine the image of Chinese migrants in the eyes of the Australian public, but also made more people realise that the Chinese are not only good at Chinese, mathematics and physics as many understood, but also topping the tests in English reading and writing (Patty and Norrie, 2011).

Their great academic performance has long been reflected in their enrolment levels at the tertiary education, and there are an increasingly large number of university students of Chinese origin, studying for academic degrees in almost all professions, especially in law, medicine, engineering, architecture, dentistry, pharmacy, accounting and finance. In fact, many of them have completed the university courses one group after another, and entered

different professional fields. The success of the second generation is regarded as the most central factor in measuring the satisfaction of immigrant families in their host country. The attendance of the large number of students of Chinese origin at university has cleared their first hurdle in climbing the social ladder, but not guaranteed their full participation in Australian society, especially their chance to become more prosperous than now. Although the Chinese community as a whole is regarded by many Australians as a middle-class community, the community's attention has been directed to something beyond school study and academic performance, and gradually turned to the issues, such as whether there is an invisible glass-ceiling in Australian society above their children, blocking them from achieving further upward social mobility. This is an emerging but serious issue for the Australia's Chinese community, which merits increased research attention in the years to come.

Conclusion

Based on the experience of the new Chinese migrant community in Australia in the past two or so decades, this paper has broadly examined the relationship between entrepreneurship and community sustainability and the impact of two major types of entrepreneurial activities on the sustainability and prosperity of the community. This has been done based on the idea that new research should think beyond the constraints of the existing theoretical frameworks in understanding the causes and consequences of ethnic entrepreneurship. It appears evident that both business undertakings and socio-cultural ventures have been attempted by Chinese migrants as a means of livelihood, but have all functioned as mechanisms or community institutions to enhance the formation of their community in a country that is culturally and socioeconomically different from their familiar surroundings. Their entrepreneurship has, therefore, been discussed from the perspective of Chinese immigrants, which hopefully overcomes the problem of the frequently used Australia-centric approach. More importantly, through these cases, and particularly through these analyses, this paper has attempted to address the gaps in the existing research literature by paying attention to 'the synergy of entrepreneurship in community building' (Zhou, 2004: 1040; 2009: 14). This discussion has been aimed at arguing that entrepreneurship, both commercial and socio-cultural, is a practical form of social creativity and could be utilised to facilitate the coexistence of different ethnic groups and culturally different communities and the sustainability of a new community in a potential conflict of interest situation.

In theory, entrepreneurship takes place in not only all areas of life, but also in any social context at any time. Entrepreneurship is therefore everywhere and entrepreneurs are all over the place. Of course, entrepreneurship can also be used for different goals or objectives, both good and bad, while it can also be pursued in different ways and settings. Because of these, entrepreneurship needs, in practice, to be carefully cultivated in order to contribute positively to the community and to be directed toward not only the economic activities that benefit the community, but also the utilisation of its socio-cultural innovative feature. That is, while entrepreneurship needs to be given greater recognition as a means to revitalise the community life, it is also worth being aware that overemphasising its role in business activities would result in a vicious profit-mad capitalism or at least lead to the worship of money. On the other hand, paying too much attention to cultural particulars and the related inspiration could lead to narrow-minded nationalism or racism in the case of a migrant community. This paper has emphasised the importance of two types of entrepreneurial activities. Although this case is partially outside Asia, the experience that the new Chinese migrant community has had in

Australia is applicable more broadly, especially relevant to places, such as Asia, where culturally diverse and *economic* and social changes are occurring rapidly.

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