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Authors

Zhou, Min

Lee, Rennie

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Immigrant Organizations in the United States: Transnationalism, Community Building, and Immigrant Incorporation

Min Zhou and Rennie Lee
University of California, Los Angeles

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Abstract: Immigrant organizations in the United States have proliferated by rapid international migration, globalization, and the rise of new transportation and communication technologies that facilitate long-distance and cross-border flows in recent years. The power and influence of these organizations have grown in tandem with immigrants’ drive to make it in America and their obligations to support families and communities in sending countries. An emergent literature on transnationalism has burgeoned since the 1990s to examine new patterns of immigrant settlement. However, the existing research to date has put more emphasis on the effects of transnationalism on the development in sending countries than in receiving countries, paid more attention to immigrant groups from Latin America than those from Asia, and focused more on the individual than the organization as the unit of analysis. As a consequence, we do not have reliable knowledge of the impacts of transnationalism on immigrant communities in the host society and the extent and sources of intergroup variations. In order to fill this gap, and to further supplement knowledge gained from Latin American experiences, we offer a conceptual framework for a systematic analysis of the relationship between transnationalism and community building and illustrate it with the Chinese case. We focus on four main questions: a) How has Chinese immigration shaped the ethnic community over time? b) What types of immigrant organizations have existed in the Chinese immigrant community and how have these organizations evolved or developed over time? c) Under what conditions do some of the Chinese immigrant organizations operate transnationally, and what kinds of activities do they engage themselves across national borders? d) What bearings does organizational transnationalism have on the ethnic community and its group members? While not directly contesting the concepts of assimilation, we argue that transnationalism contributes to community building and immigrant incorporation in nuanced ways that are less understood. We show that immigrants often engage their ancestral homelands via organizations. Organizational development in turn enhances the capacity of the ethnic community to generate material and symbolic resources conducive to immigrant incorporation.

Key words: Chinese immigration, organizational transnationalism, community building, immigrant incorporation

Authors’ bio:

Min Zhou, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology & Asian American Studies and the Walter and Shirley Wang Endowed Chair in U.S.-China Relations & Communications at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Rennie Lee is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles.

[Please direct all correspondence to Min Zhou, email: mzhou@soc.ucla.edu]

Immigrant Organizations in the United States: Transnationalism, Community Building, and Immigrant Incorporation¹

Immigrant organizations in the United States have proliferated by rapid international migration, globalization, and the rise of new transportation and communication technologies that facilitate long-distance and cross-border flows in recent years. The power and influence of these organizations have grown in tandem with immigrants' drive to make it in America and their obligations to support families and communities in sending countries. An emergent literature on transnationalism has burgeoned since the 1990s to examine new patterns of immigrant settlement. Transnationalism is generally defined as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch et al., 1994:6). Portes (1994) delimits this general definition to occupations and activities that require *regular and sustained* social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation. It is the intensity of exchanges, not just the occurrences themselves (trips, occasional contacts or activities), that becomes a justifiable topic of investigation. However, the existing research to date has put more emphasis on the effects of transnationalism on the development in sending countries than in receiving countries, paid more attention to immigrant groups from Latin America than those from Asia, and focused more on the individual than the organization as the unit of analysis (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Portes et al. 2003). As a consequence, we do not have reliable knowledge of the impacts of transnationalism on immigrant communities in the host society and the extent and sources of intergroup variations.

In order to fill this gap, and to further supplement knowledge gained from Latin American experiences, we offer a conceptual framework for a systematic analysis of the relationship between transnationalism and community building and illustrate it with the Chinese case.² We focus on four main questions: a) How has Chinese immigration shaped the ethnic community over time? b) What types of immigrant organizations have existed in the Chinese immigrant community and how have these organizations evolved or developed over time? c) Under what conditions do some of the Chinese immigrant organizations operate transnationally, and what kinds of activities do they engage themselves across national borders? d) What bearings does organizational transnationalism have on the ethnic community and its group members? While not directly contesting the concepts of assimilation, we argue that transnational engagement with the ancestral homeland not only opens up new routes for immigrants' social mobility but also enhances the organizational capacity of the ethnic community via economic and social development, which in turn positively influences immigrant incorporation in the American society.

Transnationalism and Community Building: A Conceptual Framework

The Ethnic Community Revisited

As a sociological construct, an ethnic community entails meaning making, interaction, and action among members of a group based on a common heritage (real or imagined), shared physical and/or social space, similar values, norms, and behavioral patterns, commonly accepted goals and expectations, embedded trust and a sense of belonging or we-feeling, and a considerable degree of cohesion and solidarity (Fennema 2004; Hillery 1955; Kaufman 1959; Taylor 1979; Yancey et al. 1976; Portes and Zhou 1992). For community formation, two concepts—the ethnic enclave and the enclave economy—are particularly relevant.

The ethnic enclave. The term ethnic enclave invokes a place of origin for immigrant groups. Ethnic enclaves are clusters of immigrants from the same country of origin living together. They can coexist alongside other immigrant groups in one neighborhood. For instance, many ethnic enclaves are unambiguously identified by the name associated with a sending country or city, such as Little Italy, Chinatown, or Little Tokyo, while others are identified by the name of a neighborhood, such as Pico Union of Los Angeles (a Latino enclave) or Versailles Village in New Orleans (a Vietnamese enclave). Classical assimilation theories view ethnic enclaves as significant contexts for immigrant incorporation. Ethnic enclaves are viewed as temporary settling grounds, and are beneficial in that they meet immigrants' survival needs, reorganize their economic and social lives, and ease resettlement problems (Breton 1964; Warner and Srole 1945; Whyte 1943). Such classical theories predict that ethnic enclaves will eventually decline and even disappear as coethnic members become socioeconomically and residentially assimilated, or as fewer coethnic members arrive to replenish and support ethnic institutions. Old Jewish, Polish, Italian, Irish, and Japanese enclaves in America's major gateway cities are in line with classical assimilation theory as they have been gradually succeeded by native or immigrant minorities.

However, the ethnic enclave is often conflated and used interchangeably with the immigrant neighborhood so it is important to analytically distinguish the two. The former specifically refers to an ethnic community with distinguished ethnic social structures while the latter refers broadly to a place where foreign-born and native-born racial minorities cluster (Zhou 2009b). An ethnic enclave may be located in an immigrant neighborhood with more than one ethnic group sharing the same physical space but not necessarily the same social space. For instance, Koreatown in Los Angeles is a multiethnic urban neighborhood shared by Koreans, Mexicans, Central Americans, and other Asians (Zhou 2009b). In fact, it is uncommon for an immigrant neighborhood to contain just one single ethnic enclave with the exception of, perhaps, a few Chinatowns.

For our analysis, we consider the ethnic enclave as an ethnic community consisting of unique social structures— systems of values, norms, practices, patterns of social relations, and organizations bounded by a shared cultural heritage and a common origin. Various local organizations exist in an immigrant neighborhood, ranging from businesses, social service organizations, civic organizations, religious organizations, to family, kin, clan, or hometown associations. However, most of these local organizations are bounded by co-ethnicity and attached to particular ethnic enclaves, except for some social service non-profits and panethnic civic organizations (Zhou 2009b; Zhou and Cho 2010). Since ethnic-specific social structures are created locally through organizations and interpersonal interactions, we gauge the strength of an ethnic community by measuring the density, diversity, and co-ethnicity of these organizations that can be readily observed in a neighborhood.

The enclave economy. A defining characteristic of today's immigrant neighborhoods is the presence of various businesses owned by immigrant minorities, which are broadly defined as the ethnic economy (Light and Karageorgis 1994). The enclave economy is a unique type of ethnic economy, which is inherently connected to, and a basic part of, an ethnic community's social structures.

Because immigrant neighborhoods contain multiple ethnic enclaves, it is important to distinguish further two main types of ethnic economies: a) middleman-minority entrepreneurship; and b) the enclave economy. Middleman minority entrepreneurs refer to those who run businesses in non-coethnic immigrant neighborhoods (Min 1996). They typically establish

business niches in urban neighborhoods deserted by mainstream retail and service industries or by business owners of a society's dominant group and dominated by poor immigrant or native minorities (Bonacich 1973). Middleman-minority entrepreneurs usually have few intrinsic ties to the social structures and social relations of the local community and are vulnerable to interethnic hostility and conflict (Min 1996; Zhou 2009b). The enclave entrepreneurs, in contrast, refer mainly to those who are bounded by co-ethnicity, co-ethnic social structures, and location. In the past, they typically operated businesses in urban neighborhoods where their co-ethnic group members dominated and they themselves were also intertwined in an intricate system of co-ethnic social networks within a self-sustaining ethnic enclave. At present, many ethnic entrepreneurs can simultaneously play the role of middleman-minority entrepreneurs and enclave entrepreneurs. For example, a Korean immigrant running a business in Koreatown is an enclave entrepreneur relative to his or her Korean co-ethnics who live there, but to the Latino residents who make up the majority of the neighborhood, he or she is just one of many middleman-minority entrepreneurs (Zhou and Cho 2010).

The enclave economy is a special case of the ethnic economy, one that is bounded by co-ethnicity and location. Not every group's ethnic economy can be called an enclave economy. In its original conceptualization, the enclave economy should satisfy the following criteria. First, the group involved must have a sizable entrepreneurial class. Second, economic activities are not exclusively commercial, but contain a wide range of goods and services serving the basic needs of local residents and the ethnic-specific consumer needs of non-local residents. Third, business clustering entails a high level of diversity including not just niches shunned by natives but also a wide variety of economic activities resembling those in the general economy. Fourth, co-ethnicity epitomizes the relationships between owners and workers and, to a lesser extent, between patrons and clients. Last and perhaps most importantly, economic activities occupy a central location in an ethnically identifiable neighborhood or an ethnic enclave (Portes and Manning 1986). The enclave economy also has an integrated cultural component. Economic activities are governed by bounded solidarity and enforceable trust – mechanisms of support and control necessary for economic life in the community and for the reinforcement of norms and values and sanctioning of socially disapproved behavior. Relationships between co-ethnic owners and workers, as well as customers, generally transcend a contractual monetary bond and are based on a commonly accepted norm of reciprocity (Portes and Zhou 1992).

In sum, the enclave economy is not just any type of ethnic economy. The term “enclave” does not just evoke the concept of an ethnic economy, but refers to a specific phenomenon, which is bounded by an identifiable ethnic community and embedded in a system of community-based co-ethnic social relations and observable institutions. Central to the concept of the enclave economy is the idea that the ethnic enclave is more than just a shelter for the disadvantaged who are forced to take on self-employment or menial wage work in small businesses; rather, the ethnic enclave possesses the potential to develop a distinctive structure of economic opportunities and material basis for community formation and immigrant incorporation.

Institutional Completeness

The enclave economy and other ethnic social structures form the institutional basis of the ethnic community. To assess the strength of the ethnic community, the concept of “institutional completeness” is particularly relevant (Breton 1964; Fennema 2004). Breton (1964) defined “institutional completeness” in terms of complex neighborhood-based *formal* institutions that sufficiently satisfied members' needs. Breton measured the degree of organization in an ethnic

community on a continuum. At one extreme, the community consisted of an informal network of interpersonal relations, such as kinship, friendship, or companionship groups and cliques, without formal organization. Towards the other extreme, the community consisted of both informal and formal organizations ranging from welfare and mutual aid societies to commercial, religious, educational, political, professional, and recreational organizations and ethnic media (radio or television stations and newspapers). Ethnic communities vary in the density and diversity of neighborhood-based social structures, but few show full institutional completeness.

Breton applied the concept of institutional completeness to examine the conditions under which minority group members became interpersonally integrated into the host society. He hypothesized that the higher the organizational density within a given ethnic community, the greater the likelihood of the formation of informal social ties, and the higher the level of institutional completeness. He found that the presence of a wide range of formal institutions in an ethnic community (i.e., a high degree of institutional completeness) had a powerful effect on keeping group members' social relations within ethnic boundaries and minimizing out-group contacts. A high degree of institutional completeness would slow down, but would not block, members' eventual integration into the host society. Like classical assimilation theorists, Breton predicted that the ethnic community would fade progressively given low levels of international migration.

In our approach to the ethnic community, we borrow Breton's concept of "institutional completeness," to measure not only the density and diversity of local institutions but also the patterned social relations based on coethnicity (Zhou 2009b). The coethnic dominance of an institution's ownership, leadership, and membership strengthens within-group interpersonal interaction. A high degree of institutional completeness can lead to a significant return of the coethnic middleclass who live in suburbs but maintain communal ties to the ethnicclave through routine participation as entrepreneurs, customers, and members of various organizations. Diverse class statuses of participants in ethnic institutions, in turn, alleviate the negative effects of social isolation plagued inner-city immigrant neighborhoods. Thus, an ethnic community's institutional completeness, along with a significant presence of the coethnic middle class, positively influences immigrant incorporation through tangible resources provided by ethnic institutions and intangible resources formed by institutional involvement (Zhou 2009b). However, much of the ethnic community literature has ignored the relationship between immigrant engagement in the sending country and community development in the host country.

An Institutional Approach to Immigrant Transnationalism

Transnationalism is an old phenomenon, inherent to immigrant experiences in the US and in many other immigrant-receiving countries around the world (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Kivisto, 2001; Rouse 1989; Vertovec 2004). What is new about contemporary transnationalism is the scale, diversity, density, and regularity of such movements and the socioeconomic consequences that they have brought about by jet flights, long-distance telephone and fax services, the Internet, and other high-tech means of communication and transportation, and most importantly, the restructuring of the world economy and the globalization of capital and labor (Portes et al. 1999).

Several causal processes affect transnationalism. The existing literature highlights the effects of structural disadvantages associated with immigrant status or middleman status, such as racial discrimination and exclusion in host societies (Basch et al. 1994). Human capital (e.g., education, job skills, citizenship status) and other key demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sex,

and marital status) are important determinants of the formality and scale of transnational activities. Highly educated immigrants have been found quitting their well-paying salaried jobs to engage in economic activities across borders because they can better utilize their skills, bicultural literacy, and social networks to reap material gains. Thus, transnationalism works as an effective means of maximizing their human capital returns and expanding their middle-class status (Gold 2001; Guarnizo et al. 1999; Light et al. 2002; Zhou and Tseng 2001). Low-skilled immigrants also engage in transnational activities, but their practices are oriented toward sending countries. In particular, they are limited to sending remittances regularly to support families and kin, buying land or building houses for their own transnational lives, and establishing small, sustainable businesses in their homelands. These are effective ways to convert their meager wages earned in the United States to material gains and social status recognition in their countries of origin (Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991; Portes and Guarnizo 1991; Itzigsohn 1995; Goldring 1996; Popkin 1999).

The level of homeland development also leads to different types of transnational activities for different immigrant groups. For example, in sending countries where industrialization and development are at their early stages, informal trade and *viajeros* predominate. Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Dominicans traveled back and forth to engage in informal activities that bypassed existing laws and state regulatory agencies in both sending and receiving countries; thus, taking advantage of demands and prices in both countries (Portes and Guarnizo 1991). In contrast, in more developed sending countries, formal and large scale transnational activities predominate. These include import/export, transnational banking, and investment in knowledge-intensive and labor-intensive industries, as seen among the Taiwanese and the Koreans (Min 1986/87; Yoon 1995; Li 1997; Zhou and Tseng 2001). These transnational economic activities, in turn, have positive impacts on sending-state policies, as many nation-states have come to depend on migrant remittances and capital investments as a reliable source of foreign exchange, collateral for the solicitation of international loans, and capital mobilization for economic development (Portes 2003).

Regarding to the effects of transnationalism, recent studies have focused attention on the well-being of families left behind or on homeland development (Faist 2000; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Jones-Correa 1998; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Rouse 1989; Smith 2005). The most salient feature of transnationalism is in the form of monetary remittances for supporting migrant families left behind in the homeland (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Mahler 1995; Chin et al. 1996; Durand et al. 1996; Gold 2001; Goldring 2004; Guarnizo 1997; Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Landolt 2001; Levitt 2001; Portes et al. 2002; Rubenstein 1983). Other forms of transnationalism include religious remittances (Levitt 2007); political remittances (refers to the transfer of egalitarian ideology and leadership styles), activism, migrant rights (Piper 2009); and social remittances (ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities) (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). However, little has been done to examine the effects of transnationalism on the ethnic community in the host country.

Growing numbers of migrants of certain national origins continue to participate in the economic, sociocultural, and political lives of their origin countries even as they put down roots in the United States (Levitt 2001). While there are direct economic and non-economic benefits to individual transnational actors (in terms of employment security, economic independence, favorable earnings, and social status recognition in sending countries), these individual gains do not necessarily lead to group mobility in host societies. For example, despite extensive and well-

documented transnational ties, some groups, such as Dominicans, Salvadorans, and Mexicans continue to face economic hardships and suffer from group disadvantages in the US (Gold 2001). Also, while transnational entrepreneurship creates more opportunities for individual group members to become self-employed, its impact on the group or the ethnic community as a whole varies. For example, the Dominican community in Washington Heights in New York is marked by serious challenges and social problems despite the presence of thriving ethnic businesses and immigrant transnationalism (Hernandez and Torres-Saillant 1996). In contrast, old Chinatown and new Chinatowns in outer boroughs in New York have developed and thrived by the influx of foreign capital and highly skilled entrepreneurial immigrants, many are capitalized on homeland development via transnational engagement (Lin 1998; Zhou 1992; Zhou and Kim 2006).

There are two obvious oversights in the existing literature on transnationalism. At the macro level, more attention has been paid to the effects of transnationalism on development in sending countries than on immigrant incorporation in receiving countries. At the meso-level, emphasis is almost exclusively on individuals and families, overlooking a third important actor—organizations (Portes and Zhou 2011). Portes and his associates argue that transnational activities conducted on an individual basis are exceptional and many activities are channeled through organizations (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Portes et al. 2002, 2007). Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) indicate that individuals communicate ideas and practices to each other as friends, family members, or neighbors as well as organizational actors, which has important implications for organizational management and capacity-building. Research examining the salience of transnational organizations, including hometown associations, collective political organizations, and branches of home-country political parties, has focused primarily on family well-being and development outcomes in the homeland. In particular, it tends to view intense cross-border traffic as inhibiting immigrant incorporation in their host societies (Bada et al. 2006; Goldring 2002; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Johnson 2010; Jones-Correa 1998; Landolt 2001; Piper 2009; Popkin 1999; Schrover and Vermeulen. 2005; Vertovec 2004). We agree that immigrant transnational flows are not merely driven by individual behavior but also by collective forces via organizations. This paper contributes to the transnationalism and community literatures by examining the relationship between transnational organizations and ethnic communities in host societies.

By focusing on organizations, it becomes possible to examine how transnationalism is affected and in turn affects community development because organizations are tangible building blocks for the ethnic community. We argue that transnationalism impacts the ethnic community in distinct ways as it does individuals or individual families. On the one hand, transnationalism stimulates the development of ethnic organizations as organizational affiliations enable potential transnationals to claim authority and legitimacy in conducting business in the homeland while acting as go-betweens between businesses in the US and China. On the other hand, transnationalism opens up international capital, labor, and consumer markets beyond the constraints imposed by the host society and the mainstream economy and thus expands the economic base of the enclave economy, allowing it to diversify and making it more competitive and viable. The social and economic developments as such enhance the organizational capacity of the ethnic community to generate material and symbolic resources conducive to social mobility for group members.

Data and Methods

We bring in the Chinese case to examine how transnationalism is channeled through immigrant organizations, which in turn strengthens the ethnic community. The focus on the Chinese case is significant in two respects. First, Chinese Americans are one of the oldest and largest Asian-origin groups in the US. Changes in century-old Chinatowns and the development of new Chinese “ethnoburbs” as a result of post-1965 Chinese migration offer a unique opportunity to study new forms of immigrant organizations in comparative perspectives.³ Second, China (the People’s Republic of China, or PRC hereafter) is the largest homeland of any immigrant group in the US. It is also an emerging “capitalist” nation with a rapidly globalized market economy, being the most important partner with, and arguably the biggest threat (real or imagined) to, the US. A more powerful homeland is bound to influence immigrant transnationalism and its effects on diasporic communities are not well understood.

Data were collected both in the United States and China, including the compilation of an organizational inventory, a survey with organizational leaders, in-depth interviews, field observations, and focused group discussions. In the US, we constructed an inventory of ethnic Chinese organizations through: a) Chinese language business directories and community newsletters in major US cities; b) organizational websites; c) discussions with informants in the Chinese immigrant community; and d) organizations listed with the Chinese consulates in the US and government agencies in China. As of January 2010, we have compiled an inventory of 1,370 organizations, most registered as nonprofits located in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, the principle metropolitan areas of Chinese concentration. This inventory is by no means exhaustive and represents only a fraction of all Chinese organizations in the US. Despite this limitation, we believe that the inventory captures the diversity of Chinese immigrant organizations as it includes the largest and most stable.⁴

From this inventory, we selected fifty-five of the best-known and best-established organizations for a survey and an in-depth analysis of the organizational missions either by interviews or content analyses of organizational websites. We did not randomly select the organizations for the survey, site visit, or observations, but chose those that were “emblematic” of the principal types detected from our organizational inventory. Many are sufficiently old, large, and well-established to have a “track record” of organizational initiatives and activities in the US and China. These organizations were also the most capable of establishing a dialogue with Chinese authorities back home, engaging in significant transnational ventures, and making a difference in terms of their contributions both locally and transnationally. Leaders of these organizations were also the most informed about other associations in their respective communities and the most able to report about the character of their organizational fields.

We administered the survey between July 2009 and December 2010 by phone or in face-to-face interviews.⁵ We paid specific attention to the density, variety, and activities of these organizations as well as to the social relations among these organizations and between organizations and their individual members. Additionally, we conducted participant observations on Chinese transnational organizations mainly in Los Angeles, the new “capital” of Chinese immigration with the most dense and diverse associational life among old and new immigrants. We paid site visits to organizational meetings or activities during the same time period. For example, we participated in monthly organizational luncheons of alumni associations; fund-raising luncheons and dinners in Los Angeles’ Chinatown and Monterey Park by various Chinese organizations; traditional holiday celebrations in Los Angeles’ Chinatown; welcoming

banquets for Chinese officials visiting Los Angeles sponsored by various Chinese organizations; and the PRC National Day (October 1st) party.

Chinese Immigration: A Historical Overview

How has Chinese immigration shaped the ethnic community overtime? The Chinese have had a long history of international migration that dates back to the 12th century and have established dense economic, social, and cultural networks between the Diaspora and the ancestral homeland. In the earlier times, Chinese people emigrated from their places of birth (mainly from Guangdong and Fujian provinces in South China) to other places off shore, mainly in Southeast Asia, in search of means and opportunities for survival and improvement, but they did so selectively and seasonally. Early emigration was kinship-based and was oriented toward trade. However, such transnational flows were strictly controlled by imperial courts since the early 14th century until the mid-19th century. Large-scale Chinese emigration across the globe did not occur until the mid-nineteenth century.

Chinese immigration to the US occurred several decades before the massive waves of “new migration” from Southern and Eastern Europe. Being a part of Western colonization and geopolitical expansion, Chinese immigrants started to arrive in America in the late 1840s as a result of active labor recruitment for mining, railroad construction, and agriculture in America’s western frontier. They were found in large numbers in these activities until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 put an end to the flow (Chan 1989; Saxton 1971; Zhou 1992, 2009a). The old-timers were predominantly men from just a few counties in Guangdong Province.⁶ They sojourned in America for indefinite periods of time even though they did not intend to stay permanently. Unlike their European counterparts who were expected to quickly assimilate into the mainstream society, earlier Chinese immigrants were legally barred from naturalization and assimilation. They were subjected to racial discrimination; the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943) forced Chinese immigrants to concentrate in urban enclaves to take refuge and perform the most menial jobs in order to survive. These enclaves were tightly-knit bachelor societies with a highly skewed sex ratio and were forerunners of contemporary Chinatowns in many American cities, particularly in California and New York (Chan 1989; Zhou 1992). In this sense, Chinatown is an American creation, a direct outcome of racial exclusion.

The lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Second World War opened up some occupational channels for the Chinese. For example, many younger generation members entered the military, the shipyards, and the civil service, while others were engaged in wholesale trade and operated grocery stores and other small businesses that were left vacant by the forced removal of the Japanese to internment camps (Waldinger and Tseng 1992). However, the ethnic community remained relatively small and isolated with split households, in which men sojourned to America to support their families in China (Glenn 1983).

Contemporary Chinese immigrants since the late 1960s have brought about drastic changes in patterns of international migration and settlement. This is partly due to US immigration policy reform and the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 and China’s open-door market reform in the late 1970s. The 2010 Census showed that Chinese American population reached 3.8 million, from 435,062 in 1970. Much of the exponential growth is due to international migration. Over 60% of the Chinese ethnic population has been foreign born since 1980.⁷ According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 1.3 million immigrants were admitted to the United States from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as permanent residents

between 1960 and 1999, and 741,951 were admitted between 2000 and 2009.⁸ This, of course, does not take into account the increasing number of unauthorized immigrants. Currently, Chinese Americans (including those originated from Taiwan and the Chinese Diaspora) are the largest Asian-origin group and the second largest contemporary immigrant group in the US, after Mexicans. According to the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), 58% of the foreign-born Chinese arrived in the US after 1990, and 61% have become naturalized US citizens.⁹ Unlike the old-timers who were uniformly unskilled laborers from the southern region of Guangdong Province, contemporary Chinese immigrants hail from more diverse origins and socioeconomic backgrounds. The three main sources of Chinese immigration are mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In recent years, Chinese immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Americas have also been visible. Contemporary Chinese immigrants have been disproportionately drawn from highly educated and professional segments of the sending societies. The 2009 ACS showed that Chinese Americans (aged 25 or over) with four or more years of college education 23 percentage points higher the general US adult population (50.8% vs. 27.9%), and employed Chinese American workers were also more likely to hold managerial and professional occupations than the general US labor force (52.8% vs. 35.7%).¹⁰ There is also a highly selective group of entrepreneurs among contemporary Chinese immigrants who are not only highly educated with entrepreneurial expertise and skills, but also have extensive ties to the homeland. Some of these ties were established through their business activities in the homeland prior to their arrival to the US, while others were formed through transnational activities. These ties are further strengthened through their transnational businesses and their frequent visits to the homeland (Tseng 1995, 1997; Zhou 1998).

Contemporary Chinese immigrants are also more dispersed than their earlier counterparts. However, regional concentration remains commonplace. As of 2010, California and New York take the lion share of the ethnic Chinese population (37.4% and 17.3%, respectively). The greater Los Angeles, San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, and greater New York (including part of New Jersey and Connecticut) continue to hold significant shares of the US Chinese population (13%, 15%, and 19%, respectively).¹¹ Other metropolitan areas with large Chinese American populations include Boston, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Houston, and Seattle. In these urban centers, there are often multiple Chinatowns, an older one in the inner city and newer ones in the outer city or suburbs populated by contemporary immigrants. The larger suburban Chinese settlements are visible in the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles and the Silicon Valley, south of the San Francisco Bay – a new phenomenon referred to as the Chinese ethnoburb (Li 1997). The emergent demographic characteristics of Chinese immigration have contributed to a drastic transformation of the ethnic community.

Organizational Development in the Ethnic Enclave and Beyond

What types of immigrant organizations have existed in the Chinese immigrant community and how have these organizations evolved or developed overtime? Historically, the Chinese diasporic communities were supported by three pillars: Chinese education, the language media, and ethnic organizations (i.e., guilds, associations and non-governmental civic organizations) (Liu 1998; Wang 2000). The Chinese community in the US has followed the same organizational pattern. In the past, when Chinese were legally excluded from participating in mainstream American society, community organizing around a common heritage and shared lived experience helped mobilize ethnic resources to counter the negative effects of adversarial conditions. Old Chinatowns

emerged and developed to meet the survival needs of Chinese immigrants, most were male sojourners with the intention to return home. Chinese organizations arose and operated within the ethnic enclave as mutual aid societies based on family or kinship, place of origin, and/or sworn brotherhood (Kuo 1977; Kwong 1987; Wong 1988).

At the turn of the 21st century, Chinese immigrant organizations in the US have evolved and developed in a variety of fields, including traditional organizations, civic-cultural, economic, professional, alumni, educational, music/arts, sports, social service, political, and religious organizations. Table 1 is a summary of the organizational inventory that we compiled mainly from Chinese language phone directories in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. As table 1 shows, hometown associations are the most numerous in the Chinese immigrant community, making up 40% of all organizations in our inventory, followed by civic-cultural organizations (13%). Professional organizations and alumni associations, most of which emerged after 1990, are also highly visible, each making up around 10%. Economic, political, and religious organizations tend to center around adult immigrant needs, while social service, educational, music/arts, and sports organizations tend to be family-and children-centered. Because of the diversity in origins, socioeconomic backgrounds, and settlement patterns characteristic of contemporary Chinese immigration, traditional and new ethnic organizations have encountered challenges and opportunities in ethnic enclaves and ethnoburbs.

[Table 1 about here]

Traditional Organizations

Traditional organizations included a horizontal array of family or clan associations, district associations, and merchant or guild associations, which gave American Chinatowns a distinct structure. Three major types of organizations were dominant: family/clan, district, and merchant associations. The merchant elite rose to power as organizational leaders. Together, these organizations exerted almighty influences on all aspects of community affairs and were also instrumental for migrant labor recruitment and protection.

Family/clan associations encompassed not only close kin but the entire clan, whose members were not related by blood, but had the same surname or descent from common ancestors. Some family/clan associations were more inclusive than others, based on a combination of common surname, ancestral descent, and village of origin. For example, there were single-surname clan associations, such as the Lee On Dong Benevolent Association and the Eng Family Benevolent Association, or multiple surnames clan associations such as the Fong Lun Association (Sit, Seto), the Soo Yen Fraternal Association (Lui, Fong, Kwong), the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association (Lau, Kwan, Cheung, Chiu), and the Gee Tuck Sam Tuck Association (Choi, Ng, Chow, Yung, Tau). Family/clan associations were patriarchal and varied in size, ranging from small single-surname associations with 20 to 100 members to larger multi-family associations with 100 to ten thousand members (Kuo 1977; Wong 1988). There are few such family/clan based associations among other Asian or Latin American groups in the US.

District associations (also known as *hui guan* or *tong xiang hui*) were organized around a common place of birth or origin, similar to hometown associations among Latin American immigrants. These district associations were usually named after a village, a township, a county, or several counties in the homeland and members were recruited based on the place of origin. Examples are the Yeong Wo Benevolent Association, the Ning Yeung Hui Guan, and the Hainan Hui Guan.¹² Members also spoke the same dialect. The village-based associations resemble some features of the Latin American hometown committees and associations.

Unlike family or district associations, merchant or guild associations, also known as *tongs*, were organized as merchant-labor associations; many were operated as “brotherhoods” or “secret societies.” Tong members were not related by blood, surname, ancestral descent, or village of origin. Instead, they pledged allegiance to one another as “brothers in blood oath”. Each tong had a highly unified military force, as violence was accepted as necessary for self-defense (Kwong 1987). Most family or district associations had protection to defend their economic and political interests, but only the tongs had the “distinct advantage” of secret membership. As a result, many family and district associations developed formal or informal ties to tongs for insurance and greater protection. With intricate ties to family and district associations, tongs had greater finances, larger membership, and more menacing soldiers than other associations—operating under both the legitimate and illegitimate layers of social order (Chin 1996). Through secret language and mythical religious rituals, the bonds of tong members were solidified with a code of loyalty and pledge to revenge any offense committed by outsiders against one of their own members. Tongs controlled the economic life of a good part of old Chinatown. They were also involved in homeland politics. Some of the best-known tongs are the Suey Sing Association, the Hop Sing Tong, the On Leong Chinese Merchants Association, and the Chee Kung Tong.

Most of the above-mentioned traditional organizations were established in the late 19th century with chapters in major Chinatowns across America. At the early stage of organizational development in the late 19th century, ethnic organizations were conflict-prone, and turf wars between organizations within Chinatown were common. The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was established in the late 19th century as an umbrella organization, acting as the only legitimate government of Chinatown to maintain social order. Known originally as the *Six Companies* first developed in San Francisco’s Chinatown, this overarching “inner government” federated existing family, district, and merchants associations under a unifying leadership, monopolized key businesses in the community, mediated internal conflicts, controlled the social behavior of its members, and negotiated with the outside world in the best interest of the community. For example, the CCBA in New York was established in 1883 to represent a cross-section of the Chinese community in New York. It is made up of 60 member organizations, including district organizations such as the Ning Yeung Association; family associations such as the Lee Family Association; political organizations such as the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) Eastern Region Office; professional and trade organizations such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese American Restaurant Association; and religious, cultural, and women’s organizations.¹³ Los Angeles’ CCBA was established in 1889, made up of 27 member organizations, including clan, district, merchants organizations and some other civic organizations.¹⁴

Old Chinatowns in the era of Chinese exclusion displayed several distinctive features: (1) a small merchant class established a firm foothold at the outset of the enclave’s formation; (2) interpersonal relations were based primarily on blood, kin, or place of origin; (3) ethnic businesses were interconnected to a range of interlocking ethnic institutions that guided and controlled interpersonal and inter-organizational relations; and (4) the ethnic enclave as a whole operated on the basis of ethnic solidarity internally and social exclusion by external forces (Zhou and Lin 2005). Resulting from the developments of ethnic social structures and the enclave economy was a high level of institutional completeness in old Chinatown. Societal exclusion strengthened immigrant networks, created opportunities for community organization, and gave rise to an interdependent organizational structure in which the enclave economy and a range of

civic-cultural organizations were built. Personal and organizational interdependence, in turn, allowed for capital reinvestment and accumulation and the production of social resources by virtue of the immigrants' shared cultural bonds and shared experiences of exclusion—bounded solidarity—and their heightened awareness of common values, norms, and obligations—enforceable trust. Bounded solidarity and enforceable trust, however, did not inhere in the moral conviction of the individual or the culture of origin; rather, they were interacted with structural factors in the host society to help immigrants organize their social and economic lives in disadvantaged or adverse situations.¹⁵

Emerging Organizations

Since the late 20th century, the century-old CCBA and traditional organizations are still influential in Chinatown but their functions and authority in the greater Chinese immigrant community have been weakened for several reasons. First, there are more opportunities for mobility in the host society, allowing those with higher socioeconomic status (SES) to move out of the urban enclave and resettle in other urban neighborhoods of higher socioeconomic standing, white middleclass suburbs, or ethnoburbs. Second, new immigrants are no longer low-skilled sojourners from the same village that depend entirely on coethnic organizations like the old-timers did. Rather, they have migrated with their own families and can access a wider variety of social service agencies in and out of the ethnic community. Third, new immigrants, especially the highly skilled, arrive from major metropolitan areas outside of traditional sending regions across China, creating tremendous diversity in origins and SES within the immigrant population. Fourth, rapid urbanization in China have transformed the notion of “hometown” beyond village or township. Nonetheless, traditional organizations are stable, economically resourceful, and are anchored in Chinatown with legitimacy. Many organizations own real estate and have their own buildings, giving the Chinese immigrant community an ethnically distinct structure that few contemporary immigrant groups share.

Emerging from the Chinese immigrant community are “extended” hometown associations. In the past, a hometown association is usually named after a family name or a migrant sending place. The Chinese refer to migrant sending places as *qiao-xiang*, literally meaning “overseas Chinese sending villages.” Today, the hometown is likely extended beyond the village.¹⁶ Newly established hometown associations are often named after a town (e.g., *Guantou* Association), a county (e.g., *Lianjiang* Association), a city (e.g., *Changle* Association), a region (e.g., *Wuyi* Association), a major metropolis (e.g., *Beijing* Tong Xiang Hui), or even a province (e.g., *Sichuan* Tong Xiang Hui). These organizations are relatively large with memberships ranging from 100 to the thousands. However, members may not necessarily be born or raised in those places let alone sharing the same dialect. For example, Beijing calls itself a new *qiao-xiang*, because many new immigrants hailed from there. However, among members of *Beijing* Tong Xiang Hui, most were not even native Beijingers. Many went to Beijing to attend college and then worked there after completing their college education. These extended hometown associations are often recognized by the central and local governments in China and have maintained both formal and informal relationships with the Chinese government (Zhou 2010).

While many new hometown organizations are extended beyond sending villages and towns, there are still a visible number of associations following the old organizational pattern—village-based. This is particularly prevalent among rural immigrants from the Fuzhou metropolitan region, such as the American Houyu Association and American Yangyu

Association, but is no longer common among immigrants from Guangdong Province. Part of the reason is because many of the Fujianese immigrants were undocumented and relied heavily on kinship networks to migrate and to survive harsh circumstances after migration.

Other contemporary civic-cultural organizations are much like the extended hometown associations, except that they de-emphasize the importance of place of origin to meet various settlement demands for members beyond economic needs. These organizations promote ethnic identity not just for cultural maintenance, but also for economic or political purposes.

Unlike the old Chinatown *tongs*, new economic organizations and merchant associations depend heavily on transnational networks to operate and expand their businesses. These business organizations express a strong desire to integrate into the American economy while promoting co-ethnic solidarity for economic purposes and cultural maintenance in the ethnic community (Zhou 2010). They also position themselves at the forefront of the global economy, acting as transnational agents at the “Gateway to the Pacific Rim” on US shores.

Formal Chinese professional organizations in the US are registered non-profit organizations and generally maintain bilingual websites (Zhou 2010). Because of the skilled migration from China in the past three decades, these professional organizations are well represented in various fields of science, engineering, medicine, and finance. Organizational membership ranges from a few dozen to several thousands. Some examples include: Chinese Association for Science and Technology USA (New York-based with 15 regional chapters), Silicon Valley Chinese Engineers Association, and Chinese Scholar Association (Southern California).

Based on our interviews with organizational leaders, over 50% of the professional organizations run by mainland Chinese immigrants are explicitly transnational in nature. Many have been recognized and pursued by the Chinese government with the hope of importing new technology and human capital. These professional organizations serve multiple purposes. First and foremost is network building among professionals for both social support and information exchange on employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the US and China. Other important goals include bridging US-China economic relations, fostering greater Chinese diasporic economic exchanges, raising relief funds in the event of natural disasters in the homelands, and protecting the interests of Chinese immigrants in American society. Activities of professional organizations range from annual galas, monthly or quarterly meetings, irregular seminars on special topics, informal socials on a semi-regular basis, and organized hometown visits, but the chief means of communication is through email and the Internet, hence overcoming geographical constraints.

Like professional organizations, few alumni associations existed in traditional Chinatowns since its inhabitants overwhelmingly lacked a secondary education. Unlike traditional Chinese organizations, alumni associations are formed on the basis of college and universities and, to a lesser extent, high schools that immigrants graduated from in China. The main mission of alumni associations is networking and information exchange among members. Their transnational activities are mainly oriented to support their respective *alma maters*. Members of these organizations are also commonly members of professional and civic associations whose scope of activity in China is much broader.

Chinese immigrant political organizations and religious organizations have also grown rapidly in the ethnic community. Many political organizations are concerned with both US and homeland politics, but seldomly express their political positions in their mission statements. Historically, Chinese immigrant political organizations in the US, such as the Revive China

Society (the Hsing-Chung Hui), played a key role in serving as a revolutionary base to raise funds for revolutionary activities.¹⁷ While the Chinese government prohibits most overseas Chinese political organizations to engage in Chinese politics, it recognizes a few, such as the Chee Kung Party and the Association for the Promotion of China's Peaceful Reunification.¹⁸ Political organizations established by new Chinese Americans are more directly engaged in domestic politics than in transnational or ancestral homeland politics (Toyota 2010). Religious organizations, mostly non-denominational Christian groups, serve important social functions similar to those of professional and or alumni associations. Some specify secular goals, mainly networking and information exchange to enhance the mobility prospects of Chinese immigrants (Yang 1999). A visible number of these organizations attempt to be transnational but face barriers in China to conduct religious activities (Yang 2005).

In sum, new Chinese immigrant organizations have proliferated and diversified. They differ from the traditional organizations lodged in Chinatowns in some remarkable ways. First, family, kinship, and rural hometown no longer provide the basis for organization. District associations do emerge, but they are based on a broader concept of the place of origin, such as cities or provinces, and have more diverse memberships. Merchant associations take the form of economic or business associations that are more specialized and globalized, structurally linked to various network hosts among the Chinese both within and outside the ethnic enclave as well as those in the homelands. Second, the level of organizational density in new urban enclaves and ethnoburbs is high, but the organizational structure is horizontal rather than hierarchical and inter-organizational relations are not interdependent, unlike those in old Chinatowns. There is no equivalent overarching ethnic federation like the CCBA to act as a quasi government. Social control is thus relatively weak. Third, new ethnic organizations are oriented more toward incorporation in the host society than toward homeland development. For example, these organizations make special efforts to register naturalized US citizens to vote, mobilize non-citizens to become naturalized, and support pan-Asian political representation.

Traversing the Ancestral Homeland and the “New” Homeland

We purposively selected 55 large and well-established Chinese immigrant organizations listed in table 1 and conducted telephone or face-to-face interviews with the leaders. About 24% were founded prior to 1980 with the oldest one in 1867, 27% in the 1980s, and 49% after 1990. As table 2 shows, about 25% report having an orientation entirely toward China and 44% do so transnationally. Among the organizations that are solely China-oriented, none are traditional family or hometown associations. Less than a third of the organizations are solely oriented toward domestic affairs in the United States. We should caution here that a great majority of organizations in the ethnic community are US-oriented, but we focus only on the ones that are well-established and have the capacity to be transnational. We are mainly concerned with three questions: Under what conditions do some of the Chinese immigrant organizations operate transnationally? What kinds of transnational activities do organizations engage in across national borders? What bearings does organizational transnationalism have on the ethnic community and its group members? The answers will, we believe, shed light on a better understanding of community building in the host country, or in the “new” homeland to which some of our interviewees have referred.

[Table 2 about here]

Changing Structural Conditions for Chinese Transnationalism

The Chinese in America suffered from more than 60 years of legal exclusion; Chinatown, along with its ethnic institutions, was largely a product of it (Chan 1989; Zhou 1992). Historically, Chinese immigrant organizations were intertwined with Chinatown's enclave economy. Leaders of the traditional organizations were simultaneously wealthy merchants and businessmen, who formed the ethnic elite, also referred to as *qiao-ling* (meaning leaders of Chinese expatriate communities) (Kuo 1977; Wong 1988). Ethnic organizations functioned as mutual aid societies, much like extended families. Some of them were expanded to offer credit and financing through informal rotating credit associations, or *hui*. These organizations provided fellow countrymen with housing, employment-related or business-related services (e.g., finding jobs, translating and filling in paperwork for business licenses, settling business disputes, etc.), helping them with emotional, cultural, and economic issues. Most importantly, these organizations preserved cultural values and rituals that protected their members from threats from different factions of Chinatown and the larger host society.

At the outset, Chinatown organizations had a natural transnational orientation, aiming to help Chinese immigrants fulfill their "gold mountain dream" — to return home with gold and glory (Hsu 2000; Zhou 1992). Because of legal exclusion, organization leaders had to carve out an economic niche and invest and reinvest in Chinatown's enclave economy. In order to keep their businesses afloat, they had to tap into global supply chains and look to their ancestral homeland for consumer products and merchandise imports even though the homeland was poor and underdeveloped. Out of forced choice, the ethnic elite conducted their businesses across the Pacific Ocean while serving as transnational liaisons to bring news about China to warm the lonely hearts of those sojourning in a foreign land, and news about America to comfort the anxious relatives left behind. Ordinary organization members were also engaged in transnational activities. Many left their families behind to sojourn in America with a clear intention to return, and exclusion reinforced that intention. Even though circumstances did not allow them to travel back and forth frequently like the ethnic elite, their transnational engagement took the form of remittance sending. They remitted to their families and sent letters home on a regular basis but had to do so through their family/clan or district associations as they could not access to formal banking in mainstream American society.

For reasons associated with exclusion, traditional organizations prior to World War II were contained and grew roots in Chinatowns. Most of these organizations have invested in real estate and have owned properties in Chinatown, which are now worth millions of dollars. Figure 1 provides a glimpse into the multi-story buildings owned by some of the main traditional Chinese organizations in different Chinatowns. The organizations usually keep a main hall, an altar, and some space for rituals, meetings, and other organizational activities (as well as for temporary lodging in the past) and rent space on the ground floor and/or basement out to ethnic businesses in order to generate a constant flow of income. The rental income, now ranging from \$200,000 to \$800,000 annually, is used for operation and various activities. These kinds of economic resources are unavailable in newer organizations, including professional and alumni associations that are rich in individual human capital and family economic resources. More importantly, the real estate holdings of traditional organizations serve to anchor and stabilize the ethnic community.

[Figure 1 about here]

At present, the institutional basis of the ethnic community has undergone drastic transformations as an effect of broader structural changes in the United States and China. In the

United States, the removal of legal barriers to immigrant incorporation, the passage of civil rights legislation, and the liberalized immigration policy reform have created new opportunities for social mobility in mainstream American society, allowing immigrants to shift their orientation toward permanent settlement in the United States and making their full participation in American life possible.

In China, the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution has ushered in market reforms and social transformation nationwide while the end of the Cold War has opened up China's national door to the outside world. Since the early 1980s, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has shifted its policy toward the expatriate communities around the world from viewing overseas Chinese as potential spies and traitors to welcoming them as "supporters, pioneers, and promoters" of China's economic reform (Liu 1998; Nyìri 2001; Thunø 2001; Wang 2000).³ The emerging Chinese market has attracted investment of overseas Chinese to China and a significant trend of returned migration of highly skilled immigrants (Li and Yu 2011; Zweig et al. 2004). These broader structural factors have perpetuated transnational flows of people and capital at high speed without much slowing down.

Traditional organizations have renewed their missions to respond to the domestic and global changes and new immigrant organizations have emerged to meet varied demands of immigrants of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The Chinatown-based elite are better positioned than other immigrants to engage in transnationalism at the forefront of the homeland development because of their long-standing institutional basis in Chinatown and social ties to China. For example, San Francisco's Suey Sing Association (founded in 1867) was one of the few traditional organizations in Chinatown that supported the PRC despite strong opposition from the ethnic community prior to 1970. It played a crucial role in promoting the entry of the PRC into the United Nations and the normalization of sino-US diplomatic relations in the 1970s. It was the very first organization in the Chinese community in the U.S. to fly the flag of the PRC in 1994. Regarding the association's renewed mission, Mr. Honghu Chi made the following remark at the 13th Suey Sing Association Convention in Guangzhou in 2007:

*... "The American Suey Sing Association is moving in tandem with changing times. We continue to foster stronger fellowship and mutual assistance among our members, to cultivate stronger coalition with other ethnic organizations in and out of the Chinese American community, to help build stronger ties between China and the US, to promote a more balance sino-US trade, and to unequivocally oppose the notion of "two Chinas" and support a peaceful China's reunification."*¹⁹

Many traditional organizations that were formerly anti-PRC have abandoned their political missions of overthrowing the communist government and reestablished relations with China. For example, the CCBA, which has remained loyal to the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), no longer prohibits its leaders and members from renewing contact with China. Leaders of the CCBA have been frequently invited on official visits to China by the Chinese state.²⁰ There are several reasons for traditional organizations to engage the homeland: to renew old social ties and build new ones, to contribute to hometown development, and to seek economic opportunities for their members.

New Chinese immigrant organizations, mostly established after 1990, operate in a more open and favorable context vastly different from that encountered by their traditional counterparts. Many new immigrant organizations, such as professional organizations and alumni associations, have memberships that are highly educated, skilled, and assimilated. The main

goals of these organizations are to facilitate member socializing and networking, to help members establish themselves, and to advance the ranks of its members. They also engage the homeland, but do so as a viable option rather than a forced choice. The transnational practices of the new organizations vary depending on the enthusiasm and self-interested agendas of individual leaders. New organizations share similar goals with their traditional counterparts, but their engagement tend to be at the regional (municipal or provincial) or national level in China rather than at village or township level.

Main Types of Transnational Activities

Chinese immigrant organizations have engaged the ancestral homeland by four main types of transnational activities: a) hometown development projects; b) philanthropic work; c) conventions and conferences; d) community events and holiday celebrations; and e) business partnerships. The first two types are oriented mainly toward China and the other three transnationally.

First, hometown development projects usually are place-specific projects, usually based on a sending village or a township, that an immigrant organization represents. Organizational fund-raising is typically project-specific, such as building a new village gate, a roadside altar, a temple, a park, a library, and an elderly activity center; or upgrading a school, an ancestral hall, and a clinic; or paving or repairing a village road. Traditional family and district associations and new extended hometown associations play a central role in this type of activity. Some organizations work in tandem with local governments in China, such as proposing public works projects in accordance with the overall city planning and collaborating with the local government in project implementation. New immigrant organizations are unlikely to contribute to these types of development projects because they have no affiliation with a particular sending village or local hometown.

Second, philanthropic work includes fund raising for major disaster relief mostly in, but not limited to, such severe floods and earthquakes. For example, immediately after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province (measured at 8.0 M_s and claimed 68,000 lives), the CCBA in New York established the Sichuan Earthquake Relief Program and raised a total of \$1.32 million (with the largest single donation of \$50,000) donation money and delivered it to the American Red Cross within a 4-month period.²¹ Regular donations would also go to aid to families in poverty and educational funds and scholarship for children from poor families in the sending village as well as in the Chinese immigrant community here. For example, the Baisha Village Association (from Lianjiang in Fujian Province), practice *xi-juan* (wedding donation) and *le-juan* (happiness donation), to raise funds for philanthropic work, scholarships, and aid to poor families. *Xi-juan* is for newly-wed couples who are members of the hometown association to donate a lump sum of money, usually \$500; and *le-juan* is a freewill donation, ranging from a small amount, such as, USD\$15 (100 *yuan*) to a substantial amount (USD \$7,500 or 50,000 *yuan*). New immigrant organizations are also active in fund-raising activities for disaster relief and poverty reduction initiatives. These donations are made in the names of the individual and the organization.

Third, conventions and conferences are important organizational activities, which may be held regularly in the US, China, or somewhere in the greater Chinese Diaspora. New organizations usually hold annual conventions in the US. Professional organizations, for example, will hold annual conventions with distinguished keynote speakers and relevant themes in the profession, such as “Semiconductor — Embracing Our Life, Leading our Future” (the 2011

convention of the Silicon Valley Chinese Engineers Association). In contrast, long-standing family or district associations hold these conventions globally, reflecting the organizational efforts to connect with other Chinese communities in the diaspora. For example, worldwide clansman/hometown association conventions have become more and more visible in recent years (mostly since the early 1990s); some of these conventions are held in China with partial support from the Chinese government. These major events are published in commemorative editions, in Chinese or bilingually, that are circulated in the US, China, and the Chinese Diaspora worldwide (the left photo in Figure 2). The chief purpose of these regular conventions, initiated and organized by Chinese immigrant organizations, is for information exchange, social networking, relationship building, and achievement recognition.

[Figure 2 about here]

In recent years, the Chinese state has taken various proactive measures to promote interactions with diasporic communities through immigrant organizations. The central government and provincial or local governments have also initiated and sponsored high-profile business fairs as well as science, technology, and innovation expositions to help overseas Chinese seek better economic opportunities and build partnerships with businesses in China or in the Chinese Diaspora (Thunø 2001; Xiang 2003). Immigrant organizations send delegates to participate in these events in China. Calls for these conventions are widely advertised in the ethnic media in diasporic communities. Information and reports about these transnational events are briefed or detailed in various overseas Chinese editions, known as *qiao-kan* (the right photo in Figure 2), which are published in China and circulated abroad.

Fourth, community events and holiday celebrations are composed of an integral part of ethnic community life. Chinese immigrant organizations, especially those in Chinatowns or in Chinese ethnoburbs, take the lead in organizing in the form of parades, street fairs, or banquets. During major traditional Chinese holidays, such as the Chinese New Year (on lunar calendar), the Lantern Festival (January 15th on lunar calendar), and the Mid-Autumn Festival (the Chinese Thanksgiving Day in September when the moon is full), Chinatowns in major American cities hold parades, blending together typical American marching processions and the traditional ritual and festive celebrations of China. For instance, the Chinese New Year celebrations begin with controlled firecrackers and lion, dragon, or unicorn dances intended to ward off evil spirits. They are followed by beauty pageants with elaborate costumes, floats, and marching bands. Local politicians and community leaders make their presence in parades or on center stages at street fairs before cultural performances by traditional and contemporary Chinese singers and dancers. These cultural events and street fairs attract Chinese Americans who live elsewhere and other non-Chinese tourists. Some of the new organizations, utilizing their transnational ties with high level cultural institutions in China, usually organize and sponsor artists and other cultural workers to tour and perform in the Chinese communities around the US. Many Chinese immigrant organizations also participate in major international and domestic cultural events in Beijing as well as in local areas in China. For example, there was a section in Tiananmen Square in Beijing reserved for distinguished guests and leaders of overseas Chinese organizations to view the National Parade. The banners of overseas Chinese organizations from all over the world would be visible in the annual Charity Parade of Zhongshan, one of the main sending communities in Guangdong Province.

Last, both traditional and new organizations are engaged in building transnational business partnerships or acting as “go-betweens” to better capitalize on economic opportunities in China and the US. For many new immigrant organizations, business interests are one of the

most important goals because they do not need to rely on serving the survival needs of members, as traditional organizations did in the past. Rather, the leaders are either successful entrepreneurs or established professionals aspiring to become entrepreneurs, and possess strong bilingual and bicultural skills. They voluntarily form nonprofit civic organizations and claim leadership positions to build up identity and credibility. They travel back and forth between China and the US to establish *guanxi* with government officials and business people in China and serve as bridges to facilitate Chinese companies to enter the US market and vice versa. They also organize delegations to visit China, seeking economic cooperation and exploring potential business and investment opportunities. Leaders of these organizations are generally received warmly and treated as distinguished guests by the Chinese government and Chinese businesses. On the home front, these organizational leaders are actively involved in domestic politics and community affairs, supporting local politicians by making campaign donations and sponsoring community events, which in turn, add more credibility to the organizations. Once they firmly establish a foothold or reputation in the community and earn the trust of Chinese government officials and entrepreneurs, they enter into partnerships with businesses on both shores or offer their services as consultants or brokers to promote transnational trade and investment. In some cases, they help Chinese companies to go public in the U.S. stock market.

Significant Bearings on Community Building and Immigrant Incorporation

So far, we have shown how Chinese immigrant organizations in the US have developed over time and how some of these organizations operate transnationally. What bearings does organizational transnationalism have on the ethnic community and its group members? As the existing literature suggests, organizational development in immigrant or native-minority communities enhances the access to local and public resources and reduces the risk of neighborhood decline (Small et al. 2008; Wilson 1987). We argue that organizational development is a key mechanism for community building that can lead to the creation of material and symbolic resources conducive to immigrant incorporation.

The Chinese case illustrates how this works. First, immigrant organizations are intrinsically linked to an ethnic enclave or ethnoburb — the physical or symbolic location of the ethnic community. The proliferation of organizations adds to the density, diversity, and coethnicity of institutional completeness. This in turn contributes to community development by adding building blocks to reinforce the community's foundation and creating opportunities for member participation. Organizational participation reaffirms a sense of identity and symbolism among Chinese immigrants, who may or may not live within the physical confines of the community. For example, San Francisco's Chinatown, located in a low-income immigrant neighborhood, has continued to serve as a focus point for coethnic interorganizational and interpersonal interactions and transnational engagement because of its long-standing institutional basis; this is true even as the Chinese immigrant population is dispersing into the suburbs. When the Chinese government sends delegations to the US, immigrant organizations in Chinatown serve as local hosts to the Chinese guests by holding welcoming banquets that draw organizations and their members in or outside Chinatown. In turn, leaders of these organizations are treated as distinguished guests by the Chinese government when visiting China.

Second, immigrant organizations are well-connected to or a part of the enclave economy. As we have described, most of the leaders of the organizations are entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs. Organizational transnationalism leads to better economic opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs and contributes to local economic development by expanding existing

businesses. It also facilitates the influx of Chinese capital in the enclave and mainstream economies, making the enclave economy both local (linking to regional and national economies in the US) and global (linking to the Chinese economy beyond). The development of the enclave economy attracts middleclass coethnics living elsewhere (and non-coethnics as well) to support ethnic businesses and participate in community events. This, in turn, promotes cross-class relations and reduces the risk of social isolation (Zhou 2009; Zhou and Cho 2010).

Third, organizations are a physical site for immigrants to rebuild social ties through face-to-face interaction. They also validate or legitimize identity and function as a symbolic stage for individual immigrants to show their status in the community, gain social status recognition, or compensate for lost social status in the process of international migration (Min 2008; Li and Zhou 2011). As we show in the Chinese case, organizational leaders, especially those who are, or aspire to become, entrepreneurs, use their symbolic organizational affiliations to assert their status in the community and in the transnational field. Our interviews with both organizational leaders and Chinese officials indicated such functionality. On the one hand, organizational affiliations validate transnational migrants' identities and allow them to go beyond their closely-knit family or friendship networks in China, as many potential economic opportunities there are away from sending villages or towns. On the other hand, an official position in an organization carries prestige and power in the ethnic community in the US and in China. Mr. Wang, the president of an alumni association, explained,

“The Chinese are very status-conscious. People’s ranks in their work unit or organizations are important status symbols. In business or in contact with government officials, you must use proper titles, never the first name, to address yourself and people you are interacting. Mr. or Mrs., even Prof. or Dr., would sound too generic and anonymous to carry any weight. So you need to print business cards with your name and some sort of titles in Chinese, such president, director... This not only allows the Chinese to address you properly and comfortably but also shows that you are somebody worth meeting or doing business with. With an organizational title, you can get to meet high ranking Chinese officials too. You will notice that a business card from a Chinese would have multiple titles to signify the status of the individual.”²²

This quote points to the symbolic and functional importance of organizations in transnational practices, which is also highly relevant to the economic and social life in the Chinese immigrant community.

Conclusion

We show, in the case of the Chinese, that immigrants often engage their ancestral homelands via organizations. Organizational development, in turn, enhances the capacity of the ethnic community to generate material and symbolic resources conducive to immigrant incorporation. However, we don't want to create an impression that most Chinese immigrant organizations in the US are transnational; in fact, many are US based. Our interviews with organizational leaders have confirmed several findings in the existing literature: a) only a small fraction of the immigrant population routinely traverse national borders to conduct economic and/or sociocultural activities; b) the more established and assimilated immigrants as well as married men, naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and leaders of ethnic organizations are

more likely to be transnational; and c) immigrants engage their ancestral homelands via organizations and do so primarily for self-interested goals (Li and Zhou 2011; Portes et al. 2002; Portes and Zhou 2011; Zhou 2010). Nonetheless, transnational organizations provide an important institutional mechanism that enables leaders and members to engage in a transnational field to seek out alternative paths to social mobility. In this sense, transnationalism contributes to the economic and social development of the ethnic community in the host society.

The existing literature on transnationalism has shown that many immigrant groups have tapped the potential for organizational development via transnational practices in different ways. The Chinese case in the United States may be an exceptional one given the size of the Chinese economy and the long-standing ethnic community in U.S. It is clear that Chinese immigrants have an edge over other Latin American immigrants in their transnational pursuits because of the more diverse class composition and the higher level of socioeconomic status of its migrant population, the stronger entrepreneurial prowess, and the more established pre-existing ethnic community. Moreover, the Chinese government, while being as proactive in the transnational field as other Latin American countries, has more material resources at its disposal to cultivate ties to expatriate communities, practically institutionalizing the transnational movement of its professionals and entrepreneurs (Portes and Zhou 2011). What we emphasize here is how transnationalism affects host countries rather than homeland development and how ethnic communities are organized differently under different structural conditions.

Table 1: Chinese Immigrant Organizations in the United States

Organizations	Subtotal	Total	%
<i>Hometown Associations</i>		546	39.9
Confederate	43		
Clan/family	102		
Village	44		
District	127		
Provincial	65		
Tong	165		
<i>Civic-Cultural Organizations</i>		183	13.4
Confederate	3		
General	127		
Culture	53		
<i>Economic Organizations</i>		74	5.4
Confederate	22		
General	52		
<i>Professional Organizations</i>		146	10.7
Confederate	3		
General	143		
<i>Alumni Associations</i>		142	10.4
Confederate	3		
College	111		
High School	28		
<i>Educational Organizations</i>		17	1.2
Confederate	2		
General	15		
<i>Music/Arts</i>	48	48	3.5
<i>Sports</i>		18	1.3
Confederate	3		
General	15		
<i>Social Services</i>		50	3.6
General	38		
Health	12		
<i>Political Organizations</i>		83	6.0
Confederate	4		
General	79		
<i>Religious Organizations</i>		63	4.6
Confederate	2		
General	61		
Total	1,370	1,370	100.0

Source: Compiled by the authors from telephone directories, organizational newsletters, official listings, and Internet search in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York (January 2011).

Table 2: Select Chinese Immigrant Organizations by Orientations

Organizations	N	Oriented Mainly toward US	Oriented Mainly toward China	Oriented Toward Both
Family/clan or district associations (traditional)	4	0	0	4
Professional organizations	13	6	2	5
Alumni associations	3	0	2	1
Civic-cultural organizations	17	6	8	3
Social service organizations	4	3	1	0
Other	14	2	1	11
Total	55	17	14	24
(%)	(100)	(31)	(25)	(44)

Source: Phone or face-to-face interviews, conducted by the authors, with 55 large and well-established organizations.

Figure 1: Traditional Chinese Organizations in American Chinatowns



Traditional Chinese Organizations lined the main commercial streets of San Francisco's Chinatown (left); Lee Family Association in New York's Chinatown (right)



CCBA in San Francisco's Chinatown (left); CCBA in Los Angeles' Chinatown (right)

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Notes

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² Three Asian-origin groups—Vietnamese, Indian, and Chinese—were added to the CIOP, which aimed to examine the causes and consequences of immigrant transnational organizations and to compare known patterns of Latin Americans with those of Asians.

³ Ethnoburbs refer to middleclass suburbs that are dominated by foreign-born populations of diverse national or ethnic origins (Li 1997).

⁴ The 2010 census reports that more than half of the Chinese in the U.S. concentrate in the states of California and New York. Each of the three metropolitan areas has maintained a fairly extensive Chinese language telephone directory (e.g., the 2009 *Chinese Consumer Yellow Pages of Southern California* contains 2,800 pages). Even though the ethnic population has grown rapidly in every state since the turn of the 21st century, there are familiar settlement patterns of community development that resemble those in the traditional immigrant gateway cities. Indeed, obtaining a complete national inventory of Chinese immigrant organizations was an impossible task.

⁵ Interviews were conducted by myself, Rennie Lee, Sallie Lin, and Junxiu Wang with the assistance of Lu Xu. Lu Xu also provided assistance in bilingual data collection online and data transcription.

⁶ The main sending region is known today as Wuyi region, encompassing five original counties: Taishan, Kaiping, Engping, Heshan, and Xinhui.

⁷ S0201. Selected Population Profile in the United States, Population Group: Chinese alone or in any combination, 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Survey: American Community Survey. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/PTTable?_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-format=&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201PR&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201T&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201TPR&-geo_id=01000US&-geo_id=NBSP&-ds_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_&-reg=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201:035;ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201PR:035;ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201T:035;ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0201TPR:035&-

⁸ The number was 314,896 between 1960 and 1979, 993,679 between 1980 and 1999, and 741,951 between 2000 and 2009. In comparison, the total number of Chinese immigrants legal admitted into the US was 424,034 from 1851 to 1960.

⁹ See note #7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Many of these organizations maintain a Chinese language website: Yeong Wo (Zhongshan and three other counties) <http://www.yeongwo.com/>; Ning Yeung (Taishan), Hainan (Hainan Island which became a province in 1988) <http://www.hainamsca.com/>.

¹³ See <http://www.ccbany.org/>, viewed on December 5, 2009.

¹⁴ Ng 2009; see also http://www.ccbala.org.

¹⁵ Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "Gaining the Upper Hand: Economic Mobility among Immigrant and Domestic Minorities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (1992): 491–522.

¹⁶ Village-based hometown association are no longer common since 1990, except for the Fujianese. Because most of the undocumented Fujianese hailed from rural villages, many established hometown associations based on the village of origin, e.g., *Houyu Village Association*.

¹⁷ The Revive China Society was founded by Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii and Hong Kong in 1894. It consisted mainly of overseas Chinese and Christians (such as clerks, workers, farmers and tailors), and was under the leadership of a small group of missionary-educated young people like Sun himself. There were about 150 members who took an oath to "expel the Manchus, restore the Chinese rule, and establish a republic." It attempted a failed revolt in Canton in 1895, which led to Sun's exile overseas.

¹⁸ The North American Chee Kung Party was founded from Chee Kung Tong on October 1925 in San Francisco. Its first platform was federalism and multi-party democracy. The Party turned to the left during its third party congress in 1947. Known as Zhi Gong Party, it has been recognized by the Chinese Communist Party as a legitimate political party in China. The Association for the Promotion of China's Peaceful Reunification aims to promote the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations and finally achieve a complete unification of the nation. It has sister associations in major US cities.

¹⁹ *The 13th Suey Sing Association Convention and 140th Birthday Celebration Special Issue*, Guangzhou, Dec.3, 2007, p. 6, translated by Zhou.

²⁰ The former president of the CCBA in Los Angeles, Mr. Peter Ng, paid 7 visits to China in 2009, including the one invited by the Chinese government to attend the celebration of the PRC's 60th birthday parade at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

²¹ <http://ccbanyc.org/enews0809.html>, accessed on July 2011.

²² Interviewed with Mr. Wang in Los Angeles 2010 in Chinese, translated by Zhou.