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# Chinese Attitudes toward African Migrants in Guangzhou, China

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African migration to China has emerged as a significant sociological phenomenon only very recently. Africans in China are predominantly self-made entrepreneurs doing business face-to-face with Chinese entrepreneurs and living among local Chinese residents. Their encounters with the Chinese in local markets, residential neighborhoods, and on the streets offer a rare opportunity for exploring interracial dynamics beyond the Western black–white paradigm. In this article, we examine how Chinese perceive Africans vis-à-vis other foreigners and how contexts and conditions of Chinese–African encounters affect attitudes and racial formation. Our data suggest that the attitudes held by local Chinese residents in Guangzhou toward African migrants are ambivalent. The Chinese tend to perceive Africans negatively in general, but they also look upon Africans’ overall presence in a positive way and express openness to interacting with them. Our findings indicate that the mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion are shaped by the intersection between the types and levels of contacts and the social contexts in which intergroup encounters occur. While there is a rising awareness of racial differences among local Chinese in Guangzhou, the process of race-making differs from that in other immigrant gateway cities of the Global North. Theoretical implications for racialization are discussed.

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African migration to China has emerged as a significant sociological phenomenon only very recently. In Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province in southern China, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Africans since the turn of the twenty-first century (Bertoncello and Bredeloup 2007; Bodomo 2012; Castillo 2014; Li, Ma, and Xue 2009). These newcomers, broadly referred to as “African migrants” in this article, are of diverse origins, hailing mostly from West and East Africa. Many of them enter China on short-term business, tourist, or student visas, but overstay their initial visas to remain in the city for a much longer duration of time. The majority of them are independent merchants and traders doing business with Chinese entrepreneurs. They live among local Chinese residents, including rural-to-urban Chinese migrants, and share the same neighborhoods, means of transportation, and public spaces. Their encounters with the Chinese in local markets, residential neighborhoods, and on the streets offer a rare opportunity for exploring interracial dynamics beyond the Western black–white paradigm.

In this article, we pay special attention to the relations between local Chinese residents and African migrants in an emerging world city of the Global South. Analyzing data from surveys, in-depth interviews, and field observations in Guangzhou, we investigate two main questions: (1) How do local Chinese residents perceive and receive foreigners of visibly different racial and cultural characteristics? and (2) What influences Chinese perceptions and attitudes toward African newcomers in a nontraditional immigrant gateway city? We develop an analytical framework of interracial relations that incorporates the effects of structure, culture and their interactions on racialization.

## SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Intergroup relations involving natives (insiders) and immigrant or racial/ethnic minorities (outsiders) are often conflict-prone. Scholars differ in their explanations about sources of conflict and mechanisms for conflict resolution. Three sociological perspectives—threat, ethnic economy, and contact—are particularly central to the analytical framing of our current study.

### The Threat Perspective

The threat perspective conceives of economic competition and cultural differences as main sources of intergroup conflict. From the individual threat approach, hostility toward immigrants emerges when natives in the host society feel threatened by the possibility, or reality, of being out-competed in local job and housing markets and access to public resources. Prior studies have found that natives who compete directly with immigrants over jobs, housing, and other material goods are more likely to harbor negative attitudes toward immigrants than are those of low socioeconomic status (SES) (Bonacich 1973; Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Olzak

1992). Overall, the natives most hostile to immigrants and immigration are those who potentially stand to lose the most economically from immigrant presence.

From the group threat approach, hostility toward immigrants arises not only from the consciousness that immigrants are *illegitimate* competitors, taking economic opportunities and public resources that do not “belong” to them, but also from the fear that immigrants alter the prevailing way of life or the foundation of national identity (Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995; Sears and Jessor 1996; Scheepers et al. 2002). Thus, the threat is not associated with the competition, per se, but with the *legitimacy* of the competitors by virtue of their group membership (Wimmer 1997). What matters is whether the insider group feels that its collective cultural, religious, or economic interests are threatened (Fetzer 2000; Scheepers et al. 2002). Existing studies also point to the influence of microlevel factors, such as an individual’s *symbolic* interests, values, group identifications, and purpose of the interaction, and macrolevel factors, such as the specific contexts in which intergroup interaction occurs, the relative power and social position of the ingroup vis-à-vis outgroups, and the cooperative or competitive nature of the interaction (Sides and Citrin 2007; Stephan, Ibarra, and Morrison 2009). It is important to keep in mind that threats evolve in ongoing relations between groups and that the consequences of threats are thus interactive and recursive (Stephan et al. 2009).

### The Ethnic Economy Perspective

Ethnic economies consist of businesses owned and run by members of ethnic or immigrant minority groups (Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward 1990). From this perspective, intergroup relations are conditioned by the types and locations of ethnic businesses. There are different types of ethnic economies, one of which—the middleman minority economy—is most relevant to the understanding of ingroup–outgroup dynamics. Middleman minority entrepreneurs usually operate businesses in racial/ethnic minority neighborhoods, serving a non-coethnic clientele of lower SES (Bonacich 1973). The entrepreneurs have several marked characteristics that reinforce their double outsider status. First, they are “sojourners” who intend to return to their community or country of origin and are, thus, socially isolated from the host society’s dominant group. Second, they aim to profit quickly from their portable and liquefiable businesses and then reinvest their earnings elsewhere. Therefore, they are not socially rooted in, nor do they belong to, the communities where they conduct business. Third, they most commonly establish their business niches in poor racial minority neighborhoods, and thus are a socially in-between group (Bonacich 1973). Jews in Europe, Chinese in Southeast Asia, and Indians in Africa are historical examples (Min 1996).

In ethnic economies, the relationships of immigrant entrepreneurs with their customers and other entrepreneurs (e.g., suppliers) are interdependent, requiring cooperation (Gold 2010). However, these relationships tend to be more contentious and conflictual when customers and other entrepreneurs are of different ethnoracial backgrounds and social positions (Blalock 1967; Gold 2010; Min 1996). Since they are outsiders and lack the political power to defend themselves, middleman minority entrepreneurs are frequently scapegoated, blamed by native racial majority and minority group members for systemic and structural problems of the host society (Min 1996).

## The Contact Perspective

The contact perspective is rooted in Robert Park's race relations theory (Park 1950). Park sees intergroup relations as moving in a natural cycle of competition, conflict, and accommodation. When different racial or ethnic groups first come into contact with each other (e.g., through immigration or colonization), their interactions tend to be conflictual because of competition for scarce resources and preexisting prejudices about an outgroup's supposed cultural and socioeconomic inferiority. Competition for economic and territorial dominance causes intergroup conflict; racial prejudice and social distance intensify this conflict. Park cautions that conflict should not be confused with racial prejudice or social distance, since conflict sets the precondition for change, leading to accommodation as ingroup and outgroup members make adjustments toward reducing conflict and achieving coexistence (Park 1950).

Individual prejudice toward the entire generalized outgroup may be achieved through positive direct contact at the individual level (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). While intergroup contact *causes* prejudice reduction, the magnitude of the effect varies by the target group in question. Through decades of research, scholars have been able to pin down the conditions that make intergroup contact more likely to lead to prejudice reduction. Gordon Allport's (1954) seminal work outlined four optimal conditions for successful intergroup contact—equal status, cooperation, similar goals, and official endorsement. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) caution that that these conditions *facilitate* the process, but are not necessary for it to take place, and add two more facilitating conditions: the depth of contact and the voluntariness of the encounter of both parties (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011).

## Gaps in the Existing Literature

Existing theories from the threat, ethnic economy, and contact perspectives highlight multilevel factors that influence intergroup relations and outcomes, yet leave some noticeable gaps. First, most established theories assume that the host country is a migrant resettlement society that promotes the eventual integration of immigrants. In host societies where immigrant integration is highly selective and restrictive, as those in the Global South, the sources of intergroup threat may be different. Second, most established theories assume that the host society is structured, as it is in the United States, by a racial hierarchy in which a dominant white European majority group subordinates racial or ethnic minority groups (e.g., black or nonwhite indigenous) and immigrant groups occupy intermediate positions. In host societies lacking such an entrenched racial hierarchy, race may play a different role in affecting intergroup relations. Third, the existing literature pays greater attention to conflict and tension in intergroup relations than accommodation and harmony, as if conflict and tension were intrinsic to group processes. In research on ethnic entrepreneurship, for example, merchant–customer relations in socially marginal locations are studied to the neglect of the relationships between ethnic entrepreneurs and their suppliers, landlords, and government agencies in other social settings (see Min 1996).

The presence of Africans in Guangzhou, China, presents a sociologically interesting phenomenon in three important respects. First, Africans' racial visibility (e.g., differences in skin color and national origin) and on-the-ground encounters with local Chinese residents create

new opportunities to explore intergroup relations beyond the black–white paradigm, particularly in a society in which ethnocentrism and folk color caste are believed to be strong but social structures are not entrenched in the legacy of African slavery or Western colonization. Second, interactions between African migrants and local Chinese residents, including rural-to-urban Chinese migrants, cross boundaries of race and class. Investigating these exchanges helps to generate insights into the sources of prejudice and discrimination and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. By looking at the perceptions and attitudes of local Chinese residents toward African migrants through patterns of intergroup interactions in an increasingly globalized city in China, we seek to generate a more sophisticated understanding of interracial dynamics.

## RESEARCH SITE AND DATA

### Guangzhou as a New Host City for African Migrants

Guangzhou has a long history of foreign trade, but has never been a host city for international migrations in the conventional sense. Located about 120 kilometers north-northwest of Hong Kong in southern China, it is the capital of Guangdong Province and the third largest city in the country (after Shanghai and Beijing), hosting a population of 12.7 million in 2010.<sup>1</sup> The city has been at the forefront of China's economic reform since the late 1970s and is often referred to as the Hong Kong on the Mainland or the Gold Mountain by the Pearl River, attracting hundreds of thousands of migrants from rural areas and other cities in the hinterland of China. In spite of stringent population control regulations by way of the *hukou* (household registration) system, the ratio of the migrant population without Guangzhou *hukou* (GZ *hukou* hereafter) to the resident population with GZ *hukou* in the city in the late 1990s was 1:3 (Zhou and Cai 2008). Many rural-to-urban migrants, lacking GZ *hukou* status and thereby access to full citizenship rights, take up self-employment as an effective pathway to social mobility.

Before 1997, Africans were barely visible on the streets and residential neighborhoods of Guangzhou. Since then their presence has become increasingly conspicuous. In 2008, Guangdong provincial authorities recorded 2,125 Africans registered as long-term visa holders and 163,000 Africans with temporary visitor visas; 80 percent of them lived in Guangzhou (Wang et al. 2009). Although no official figures are available, it was conservatively estimated that between 50,000 and 130,000 African migrants were residing in Guangzhou for a period of at least three months in 2008 (Cai and Huang 2008; Wang et al. 2009). The Chinese media reported much larger figures, ranging from 150,000 to 300,000 or more.<sup>2</sup>

Guangzhou is attractive to African migrants for a variety of reasons. First, it has a booming economy, sustaining double-digit average annual growth rates for more than two decades. Situated at the center of the Pearl River Delta, a region dubbed the “World Factory,” Guangzhou is China's most important manufacturing center, commercial hub, and trading post, producing premium quality manufactured goods ranging from clothing and fabrics to shoes, toys, electronics, and motorcycles (Cai and Huang 2008). Second, the city has a well-established and integrated system of wholesale markets, warehousing infrastructure, and logistics services for domestic and foreign traders. The port of Guangzhou is a vital transport hub, providing industries in the Pearl River Delta region and neighboring provinces with easy access to railroads and highways and direct routes to Hong Kong and other major international destinations (Zhou, Xu, and

Shenasi 2016). Third, since Guangzhou is China's most important and convenient port of entry, foreign traders and merchants can more easily bypass China's stringent visa restrictions to conduct business. Fourth, Guangzhou's municipal government and local control over foreigners are relatively lax compared to those in other capital cities in China.<sup>3</sup> Foreigners can find rental housing in the private market with little official restriction or local opposition. Together, these conditions make migration a lucrative option for rural-to-urban Chinese and international migrants seeking to benefit from the city's economic opportunities.

## Data

Our analysis is based on data collected from a study of Chinese–African interactions in Guangzhou. This study was conducted by the lead author Min Zhou between 2009 and 2012 with fieldwork that extended beyond 2012. The data included two surveys, one was the “Chinese Attitudes toward African Migrants in Guangzhou Survey” (Chinese survey hereafter, Zhou 2010)—a face-to-face survey with a questionnaire on 550 Chinese in 2010 (513 valid cases), and the other was the “African Perceptions of Chinese and Guangzhou Survey” (African survey hereafter, Zhou 2011)—a similar survey on 250 African migrants in 2011 (233 valid cases). Respondents were recruited from snowball sampling. Forty-five Chinese and 50 Africans in the survey samples were selected for in-depth interviews. Systematic field observations on main commercial streets, wholesale markets, and shopping centers in the research site were conducted between 2009 and 2012. Follow-up fieldwork in the forms of participant observation and unstructured interviewing has continued since 2012.<sup>4</sup> We also draw from another qualitative study, “The Social Adaptation of African Merchants in Guangzhou, China,” which looked at how African merchants in Guangzhou found housing, business opportunities, and their way around the city, and how these foreigners rebuilt social support systems to facilitate their business endeavors and social adaptation.<sup>5</sup> In this article, we focus on Chinese perceptions and attitudes toward Africans based primarily on qualitative data.

## GENERAL PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF LOCAL CHINESE RESIDENTS TOWARD AFRICAN MIGRANTS

### A Descriptive Profile of African Migrants in Guangzhou

Prior studies and our own research show that African migrants to Guangzhou are predominantly young men of diverse origins (Bodomo 2012; Cai and Huang 2008; Li et al. 2009). Nigerians form the largest group (31 percent in our African survey). Other countries that send numerous migrants to Guangzhou include Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Uganda, and Kenya. Most of the African migrants in Guangzhou are well-educated (67 percent in our African survey have at least some college education). While two-thirds are proficient in English or French, less than one-fifth speak Chinese well; most of those who speak Chinese well either are or once were exchange students; among the self-employed, only 6 percent speak Chinese well. Nonetheless, our field observations show that Africans and Chinese are able to communicate with each other with the

aid of people, machine interpreters, calculators, facial expressions, the use of “Chinglish,” and gestures (Han 2013).<sup>6</sup>

The majority of African migrants in Guangzhou (66 percent in our African survey) are entrepreneurs, primarily exporters of a wide variety of manufactured goods from China such as textiles, toys, and electronics (Cai and Huang 2008; Cai and Chen 2008). Because of high consumer demand in African markets and low prices of manufactured goods in China, many African entrepreneurs have been able to capitalize on newfound opportunities in China with remarkable success. The success stories have, in turn, inspired friends and families back home, stimulating subsequent migrations to China via social networks.

Three groups of African entrepreneurs are notable. The first group consists of expatriates of African import/export or trading firms. The African expatriates are generally capital-rich with long-term business visas. They do business with Chinese companies and manufacturers in large-scale trade via formal channels, and they seldom deal directly with individual merchants in local markets or on the streets (Cissé 2013). The second group consists of independent merchants who have prior experience in trade and commerce in Hong Kong or Southeast Asian countries (Le Bail 2009). They go to China with long-term business plans but on short-term business or tourist visas. They usually operate their own small- or medium-size firms and tend to rely on Chinese agents, trading partners, and other intermediaries.<sup>7</sup> Although they are seen shuttling back and forth between Hong Kong and Guangzhou to circumvent visa restrictions, they keep a regular place of residence in Guangzhou. The third group is made up of petty, or aspiring, entrepreneurs. This group is the most numerous of the three and also the most diverse in terms of socioeconomic background and business experience. These petty entrepreneurs go to China with the main goal of making quick money. They tend to live among local Chinese residents and trade face-to-face with Chinese merchants in local wholesale markets and street markets. They often carry large plastic bags or suitcases, which is why the Chinese refer to them as “calculator merchants,” “suitcase merchants,” or “garbage-bag merchants.” Some petty entrepreneurs later become owners of small- or medium-size firms and grow their business like the second group (Zhou et al. 2016). It should also be pointed out that a sizable share of the Africans in Guangzhou are university students, some of whom entered the country on Chinese scholarships. Many students did not initially plan to enter business, but picked it up as the opportunities presented themselves (Haugen 2013). Others had clear goals of engaging in export business, but entered the country on student visas in order to circumvent stringent Chinese visa restrictions.

Many African migrants to Guangzhou settled in *chengzhongcuns*, where low-cost housing is available and government control is weak.<sup>8</sup> Because *chengzhongcuns* are self-governed enclaves in gray areas of local legislation, homeowners often enlarge their houses with illegal add-ons or multiple partitions to create more rental units. As a result, *chengzhongcuns* grow into overcrowded migrant enclaves. Findings from existing studies and our own fieldwork indicate that most African migrants in Guangzhou cluster in Xiaobei neighborhood along Xiaobei Road and adjacent low-income neighborhoods in the northwestern part of Guangzhou (Castillo 2014; Li, Lyons, and Brown 2012; Xu 2010; Wang et al. 2009). These neighborhoods are populated by Chinese rural-to-urban migrants, who are also considered outsiders to the city, or the “floating population.” Without GZ *hukou* status, they lack equal access to public education, housing, and other social welfare programs and are systematically excluded from better job opportunities reserved for local residents with GZ *hukou* status



(Solinger 1999; Zhou and Cai 2008). Even before the arrival of Africans, these neighborhoods were segregated and perceived by the government and residents with GZ *hukou* as problematic neighborhoods plagued with concentrated poverty, overcrowding, social disorganization, crime, and the usual urban ills (Zhang 2003). Local Chinese residents residing in other parts of the city tend to view the concentration of Africans as adding further stigma to those migrant neighborhoods.

### A Descriptive Analysis of Chinese Perceptions and Attitudes toward African Migrants

Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of local Chinese residents in our Chinese survey. Among those surveyed, only about half were born in Guangzhou and less than three-fifths speak Cantonese at home (the local dialect of Guangzhou), suggesting that a significant number of the

TABLE 1  
Selected Characteristics of Local Chinese Residents Surveyed ( $N = 513$ )

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Female	49.1
Median age (years)	31.0
Married	52.8
Born in Guangzhou	50.1
Rural <i>hukou</i>	25.5
Speaking Cantonese at home	58.7
Good command of English	15.0
At least some college education	39.2
Currently enrolled in college	27.7
Living in Xiaobei neighborhood	26.7
Living in neighborhoods adjacent to Xiaobei	45.3
Seeing Africans in my apartment building	29.4
Seeing Africans in my neighborhood	59.6
Labor market status	
Self-employed	18.9
Doing business with Africans	69.5
Fully-employed	57.1
Professionals (including 2.7% civil servant)	17.7
Sales and other services	32.3
Other fully-employed	50.0
Other part-time or non-employed	24.0
Monthly incomes [1US\$ = 6.4 yuan in 2010]	
No income	12.6
Under 1,500 yuan per month	17.4
Between 1,500 and 7,500	47.4
Over 7,500 yuan per month	22.6
Considered oneself in lower classes	44.8
Familiarity with African histories or cultures	10.7
Familiarity with Hollywood films	54.1
Familiarity with international current affairs	63.0
Total surveyed (valid $N$ )	513

*Source:* 2010 Chinese Survey (Zhou 2010).

Chinese who participated in our survey are internal migrants from other parts of China. Interestingly, very few respondents in this survey had English proficiency even though 39 percent claimed to have at least some college education. Nearly three-quarters lived in Xiaobei or surrounding neighborhoods, due to sampling. A large share of respondents (60 percent) reported seeing Africans in their neighborhoods, compared to 29 percent in their apartment buildings. Nearly one-fifth of respondents were self-employed and a third were in sales and other services; the Chinese in these occupations were more likely than those in other occupations to have direct contact with African migrants. Less than a quarter had monthly earnings of 7,500 yuan (US\$1,100) or more, and 45 percent considered themselves in lower classes. Only about 10 percent of respondents reported that they were either familiar or very familiar with African histories and cultures. In contrast, more than 50 percent were either familiar or very familiar with Hollywood films and nearly two-thirds with international current affairs.

The Chinese surveyed generally held consistently unfavorable perceptions toward Africans in terms of physical characteristics, as shown in Table 2. For example, only 6 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Africans were good-looking, and nearly three-quarters believed that Africans had unpleasant body odor. In our field observations, we witnessed Chinese passersby covering their noses when Africans got near them, whether in crowded shops, buses, or subways. The Chinese often conflate the cologne or perfume that Africans wear with body odor because few Chinese use scented body products.

Respondents were more split on their perceptions of African personality traits and abilities, however. For example, 56 percent of Chinese disagreed that Africans were polite, but still a good number (over 40 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that they were. Similarly, 56 percent of Chinese viewed Africans as violent, but 41% disagreed that they were. Three-quarters disagreed that Africans were law-abiding, which appeared to fit the perception that most Africans were visa overstayers, a point to which we return later. Of the positive assessments on three measures (laziness, intelligence, and athletic talent), two went against conventional U.S.-based racist views—the shares of respondents who disagreed that Africans were lazy and unintelligent were 65 and 85 percent, respectively.

TABLE 2  
Selected Responses of Chinese Perceptions toward Black Africans (N = 513)

<i>Do you agree with the following statement? Strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree</i>	<i>Agree or strongly agree (%)</i>	<i>Disagree or strongly disagree (%)</i>
<i>Physical attractiveness</i>		
Africans are good looking	5.9	92.4
Africans have unpleasant body odor	74.3	23.8
<i>Personality traits and abilities</i>		
Africans are polite	40.2	56.2
African are violent	56.4	41.0
African are law-abiding	21.3	74.6
Africans are lazy	32.1	<b>65.1</b>
Africans are innately unintelligent	16.2	<b>82.5</b>
Africans are endowed with athletic talent	<b>70.2</b>	28.7

Source: 2010 Chinese Survey (Zhou 2010).

Notes: Positive assessment in bold italics.

Table 3 describes Chinese attitudes toward Africans. In terms of the desire to interact with Africans, the barriers seem to be low. More than 60 percent were willing to make small talk with Africans in public, and 45 percent disagreed that they would feel uncomfortable living in an African-concentrated neighborhood. The degree to which Chinese were willing to interact with Africans followed the classic pattern of Bogardus social distance (Bogardus 1933). Chinese respondents were mostly willing to work with or live alongside Africans, and about half were open to having African friends. Social distance was most pronounced with respect to the most intimate ties, with 13 percent of respondents expressing their willingness to marry Africans and nearly twice that amount saying that they would accept their children's marriage to Africans. These findings suggest that the Chinese are open to forming weak ties with Africans, but reluctant to integrate them into their close social circles.

Overall, Chinese respondents appeared accepting of Africans as a group. The overwhelming majority did not see the influx of Africans as negatively impacting their city, neighborhoods, or their own lives. Despite their concerns with African visa overstayers, local Chinese residents believed that African migrants contributed positively to the local economy, globalization, and multiculturalism.

TABLE 3  
Chinese Attitudes toward Black Africans ( $N = 513$ )

<i>Attitudes</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Social interaction</i>	
Are you willing to make small talk with Africans in public? % Yes	<b>63.7</b>
Do you agree with the following statement? % Disagree or strongly disagree	
I feel uncomfortable living in a neighborhood with a lot of Africans	45.0
<i>Social distance</i>	
Are you willing ... % Willing	
To accept Africans as coworkers?	<b>72.9</b>
To accept Africans as your neighbors?	<b>64.9</b>
To accept Africans as your close friends?	50.1
To marry an African?	12.9
To accept your child marrying an African?	27.7
<i>Social acceptance</i>	
Do you agree with the following statement? % Disagree or strongly disagree	
Chinese particularly dislike black people	<b>69.6</b>
Chinese are particularly afraid of black people	<b>91.6</b>
The influx of Africans poses a threat to public health	<b>55.8</b>
The influx of Africans has negatively impacted the city as a whole	<b>82.0</b>
The influx of Africans has negatively impacted my neighborhood	<b>89.8</b>
The influx of Africans has negatively impacted my own life	<b>92.2</b>
The government should not grant Africans permanent residency status	<b>78.8</b>
The government should impose the law to deport African visa overstayers	25.9
Do you agree with the following statement? % Agree or strongly agree	
Africans contribute positively to local economy in Guangzhou	<b>79.7</b>
Africans help promote Guangzhou's globalization	<b>80.1</b>
Africans enrich Guangzhou's multicultural scene	<b>87.3</b>

*Source:* 2010 Chinese Survey (Zhou 2010).

*Note:* Positive assessment in bold italics.

The findings shown in Table 2 and Table 3 indicate inconsistencies between perceptions and attitudes. While Chinese generally evaluate Africans negatively in terms of physical characteristics, personality traits, and abilities, they tend to express more positive views toward Africans with respect to social interaction, social distance, and social acceptance. Next, we analyze qualitative data to tease out the main mechanisms influencing perceptions and attitudes.

## CHINESE–AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS ON THE GROUND

### Chinese–African Encounters in Local Markets

In the local labor markets in Guangzhou, Chinese and Africans are not in direct competition with each other.<sup>9</sup> Rather, Africans trade with Chinese entrepreneurs in occupational niches in which their relations are interdependent and mutually beneficial (Zhou et al. 2016). Among self-employed Chinese in our survey, 70 percent reported doing business with Africans, compared to the less than 40 percent who reported doing business with whites (mostly Middle Eastern Arabs). The Chinese entrepreneurs under study were in direct contact mainly with the third type of African entrepreneurs.

Although Africans are culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse, local Chinese residents tend to perceive them as a homogeneous group. This perception serves as a premise from which interracial relations between Chinese and Africans emerge and develop. One main pattern of interracial business relations is between African merchants and Chinese entrepreneurs who act as middlemen (via brokerage firms or as individual agents). Another main pattern is between African merchants and Chinese manufacturers in the absence of Chinese middlemen. A third main pattern is between African and Chinese merchants via a conventional style of exchanging goods with cash, or in the words of the Chinese, “one hand with cash and the other hand with goods.” All three patterns of business relations are interdependent, mutually beneficial, and generally peaceful, despite language and cultural barriers. Some transactions result in the development of trust over the long run, while others lead to friendships that extend beyond routine business relationships.

May, a 32-year-old female Chinese merchant selling low-end jeans and casual clothing in a small store on the main commercial street of Xiaobei neighborhood, recalled:

I was a little scared at first sight of these black men coming to my store, especially when they looked right into your eyes and grinned. The Chinese don't do that. After a while, I got used to them. They are just people who look different. They are polite and respectful, bring good business. In business, I'd say they need me and I need them . . . I later became friends with a couple of them and introduced them to my other friends who sell electronics. We used to hang out in McDonald's for lunch.<sup>10</sup>

Cooperative and interdependent relationships sometimes turn contentious. In regular business dealings, conflicts often occur because of a breach of contract, which is well documented in the literature (Bodomo 2012; Li et al. 2009; Mathews and Yang 2012). In our fieldwork, some of the common fraudulent practices reported by respondents include: African merchants bypassing their Chinese middlemen to deal with manufacturers directly, Chinese manufacturers delivering goods of lower quality and at a much later date than promised, and fake Chinese

manufacturers' representatives running away with deposits of African merchants. These fraudulent practices are not uncommon among entrepreneurs in informal economies and immature market conditions where regulations are lax and uncertainty is high, and both Chinese and African entrepreneurs are aware of them. As their businesses grow, many Chinese and African entrepreneurs return to using middleman and brokerage firms, again fostering cooperative inter-group relations (Zhou et al. 2016). From our observation, the potential for conflicts exists even in cooperative business relations in local markets, regardless of race.

### Encounters between Chinese Rental Agents and African Tenants

The arrival of African migrants in Guangzhou creates demands for basic services, one of which involves rental housing. As opposed to Americans, European, Japanese, Korean, and African expatriates (those who are capital-rich entrepreneurs or well-paid expatriate employees of African firms and on long-term business visas) doing business in the country, most African migrants come to Guangzhou on short-term business or tourist visas. Owing to their sojourning nature, the limited resources that individual migrants have at their disposal, and visa restriction, the vast majority of African migrants rent from the low-end, unregulated segment of the rental housing market in or around Xiaobei neighborhood.

African migrants' demand for cheap housing facilitates the expansion of an informal housing market. Most rental housing that Africans find acceptable is concentrated in Xiaobei and directly adjacent neighborhoods, where there is a wide range of long- or short-term rental housing. Housing there also varies in type, including regular two- or three-bedroom apartment units and makeshift "matchbox" units. The latter, which are partitioned off regular apartment units or private houses in *chengzhongcuns*, are furnished only with a bed and small table set and equipped with a tiny bathroom and cooking stove. Owners of such rental housing are usually locals with GZ *hukou*, while rental agents tend to be migrant workers-turned-entrepreneurs, some of whom have not attained GZ *hukou* status. Rental agents are the ones on the front lines interacting with Africans face-to-face. They not only broker business transactions but also provide additional services, such as showing tenants how to use facilities and get from place to place; resolving problems with disconnected electricity and water services due to unpaid bills; and mediating landlord-tenant disputes regarding security deposits, possible damages to rental property, and possible fines. Because of the additional work, rental agents command a 10–20 percent service fee on top of the rent. Africans are well-aware of and accept the service fee as fair because these agents fill a much-needed service void. Through frequent contact, relations between Chinese rental agents and African tenants improve. For example, interviewed at the sitting area in front of her office, Ms. Chen, a 40-year-old female agent, recalled:

I was in this business initially just to make a living almost 15 years ago. I didn't know English, I still don't, but learned just a few useful words, such as "hi," "yes," "no," "need house?" "cheap!" "deal!" ... With my smile, patience, hard work, and attentiveness to their needs, I have built a good client base. The Africans like me and trust me, and they spread the words about me among their friends. Now they all call me "Mama." I have a lot of returned and new clients, and this office front is their gathering place in the evening. My work is hard, but theirs is not easy. We kind of bond together.<sup>11</sup>

Some Chinese rental agents and African tenants even become good friends. Ms. Zhang, an agent who speaks some English, gave an example:

I had a client whom I hung out with a lot for lunch and tea and later became friends. Once he was found overstaying his visa, and was detained by the police for quite a long time. When he was taken into the detention center, I was the first and only person he called for help. He asked me to sell his furniture and some household items and then deposit the money to his bank account. And I did. He was very grateful for it.<sup>12</sup>

Through extensive contact based on mutual benefit and interdependence, Chinese rental agents and African tenants build trust and form friendships.

### Encounters between Chinese Transportation Service Providers and African Customers

Another basic service demand of African migrants is for transportation. The Xiaobei area is conveniently located, easily accessible to Guangzhou's sophisticated and affordable public bus and subway lines and intercity bus and railway terminals. Africans quickly learn their way around the city through affordable public transportation. However, they still have high demand for affordable transportation because many of them do not have the means or proper papers to own their own vehicles. Minivan or car services are also available, having emerged in the informal economy in response to African demand. Some African merchants need to travel long distances to factories or wholesale markets in the Pearl River Delta region outside Guangzhou. For them, taxis are too expensive and, at times, too small to hold their merchandise. Furthermore, many Africans lack the means or proper papers to own their own vehicles. The drivers are mostly Chinese migrant entrepreneurs who do not have proper business licenses. They wait in front of residential buildings with a high concentration of Africans and negotiate with Africans a mutually agreed-on price for a particular destination per trip. The relationships between Chinese minivan drivers and African customers are very much like those between rental agents and tenants.

The relationships between taxi drivers and their African customers are vastly different. Taxi drivers in Guangzhou are made up of two groups, one consisting of locals with GZ *hukou* status, and the other, migrant workers without GZ *hukou*. Local drivers with GZ *hukou* are either employees of taxi companies or independent contractors on long-term leases with taxi companies. By contrast, migrant drivers often sublease from local taxi drivers, so they must work odd and longer hours to compensate for subletting costs. Thus, they have less room to be selective about their clientele.

Many Africans reported experiences of discrimination at the hands of taxi drivers. In our African survey, 40 percent Africans responded "sometimes," and 25 percent, "often" to the question: "Have you ever been refused service by taxi drivers?" In our field observations, we noticed a visibly high frequency of taxi drivers passing up Africans waving for a cab and taking Chinese customers instead. Taxi drivers who participated in our in-depth interviews gave two main reasons for doing so. A frequently cited reason was Africans' use of strong cologne. Mr. Li, a migrant taxi driver from Hunan who participated in an in-depth interview, said:

They "smell" and that smell stays long after they are gone. I am choked by that intense smell, and it drives away my other customers too. I tell you, I am not discriminating against those

*heigui* [he just did by using this derogatory term for black people]. I just mind my own business. I have to refrain from smoking while at work because I know my smoking or the smell from my smoking would drive away my customers.<sup>13</sup>

Payment is another bone of contention. Taxi drivers who participated in our in-depth interviews and whom we met during our fieldwork almost uniformly reported the problem of underpayment as a main reason for avoiding African customers. They complained that Africans frequently paid fares based on their own reasoning or on the lowest amount once paid by their friends traveling from point A to point B, rather than on the meter, and that Africans often refused to pay the toll charge or surcharge not shown on the meter. Mr. Lai, a local taxi driver, explained his behavior in these words:

I always try to avoid them [Africans] because I just don't want to deal with the problem [of underpayment]. At the taxi pickup at Baiyun Airport, I cannot bypass them. It's my bad luck, because I know for sure they will not pay the toll fee. ... They also underpay by throwing you a ¥10 bill when the fare is ¥12, or a ¥20 bill when the fare is ¥22. I have this problem only with these *heigui*, never with other foreigners, never with Chinese. If you don't believe me, ask other taxi drivers.<sup>14</sup>

The contentious relations between Chinese taxi drivers and African customers are characterized by mutual distrust. We found from our fieldwork that, when fare disputes occurred, the driver would report the incident over radio dispatch or text other drivers, thereby perpetuating the stereotype of the underpaying African. Africans were also deeply suspicious and distrustful of taxi drivers, owing to personal experiences and news of discrimination circulating among their friends. They complained that taxi drivers often choose longer routes or go around the streets to get higher meter readings. They saw underpayment as a strategy to deal with dishonesty in taxi service. Miscommunication leads to stereotyping and deepens the harsh feelings between Chinese taxi drivers and their African customers.

## Encounters between Chinese and Africans as Neighbors

African migrants in Guangzhou live among local Chinese residents in Xiaobei and surrounding neighborhoods. About two-thirds of Africans in our African survey reported living in the same building as the Chinese, and more than half interacted regularly with their Chinese neighbors (Zhou 2011). However, the interactions between Chinese and their African neighbors were often superficial, limited to saying "hi," making small talk with body gestures, or helping Africans with simple tasks when asked, such as reading utility bills for them and lending them tools. Neither group demonstrated any deep interest in what the other group did.

Chinese neighbors like that Africans smile at and say "hi" to everyone, but complain that they "come home too late" and "make noises loud enough to wake everybody up." Chinese and Africans are on different sleep schedules; most Chinese go to bed by 10:00 p.m. while Africans stay up past midnight into early morning. Ms. Bai said during an interview in her home:

We moved in when the building was brand new. At that time there weren't many Africans. But all of a sudden, around 2006 or so, they [Africans] are everywhere, a lot of them ... I don't know them well because they don't stay for long. Now there are women and little kids too. Generally

speaking, they are fine. I only have two issues with them. One, they are too pushy, especially when they are trying to get into that small elevator with all those bags. And two, they come home too late, and I am waked up (sic) in the middle of the night by their noises every day. That exacerbates my insomnia.<sup>15</sup>

Frequent contact in the same apartment building and neighborhood ease intergroup tension through mutual accommodation. Many Chinese neighbors own their apartments and cannot easily move away, so they learn to accept the use of cologne as an African cultural habit and the irregular bedtime as a necessary means to do business and maintain contact with families back in Africa. Some Chinese respondents recalled that they managed to accommodate cultural differences after more frequent interactions with Africans. Mr. Zhao, a resident, commented in an interview:

Every nationality has its own unique culture and habitual ways. We should not impose our own ways onto them [African]. Besides, cologne is cologne, not harmful to our health. I could not stand that smell in the beginning. But as I have more and more contact with them, I got used to it. No big deal.<sup>16</sup>

Through increased contact, Africans have also adjusted their ways to gain social acceptance. Chinese neighbors mentioned that Africans who had been in Guangzhou longer were more likely to wear lighter cologne, keep quiet when returning home after midnight, and learn some basic Chinese to make small talk. “The Chinese love it when I speak Chinese. I can soften a stone face whenever I say ‘ni hao’ [how are you] or ‘dui bu qi’ (sorry), said Adam, a Ghanaian merchant living in a high-rise apartment building in Xiaobei.<sup>17</sup>

## Encounters between Chinese Authorities and African Migrants

Because of China’s underdeveloped immigration policies, characterized by steep restrictions on foreigners’ permanent residency and long-term stay and an absence of policy on migrant resettlement and integration, immigration control and management are often localized, falling mainly in the jurisdiction of the Municipal Public Security Bureau and its local offices. Most Africans enter China on short-term visas (typically valid for just four to six weeks). Many face difficulty in getting their visa extensions approved and are forced to overstay their visas, remaining in China illegally. The municipal government of Guangzhou labels these visa overstayers *sanfei* (illegal entry, illegal residency, and illegal employment) foreigners (Lan 2015).

Local government officials believe that the “majority” of Africans are *sanfei* even though no exact figures are available. To them, managing this particular foreign population is a much bigger headache than managing the domestic floating population.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, the municipal government adopts an “open one eye and close the other” attitude and tries to keep the *sanfei* problem under control at the local level. This approach gives the local police *extra* responsibilities; it increases workload and thereby induces resentment. Due to local police cynicism and apathy, compounded by the lack of explicit policy directives from the central and municipal governments, local control over *sanfei* foreigners is limited to haphazard visa checking and periodic raids.

In Chinese cities, the police dealing with civic affairs are functionally divided into two main groups—the *jiaojing* (traffic police, who deal with traffic matters) and *minjing* (the “people’s



police” who work in local offices managing household registration, community and neighborhood safety, and social order). Because of the different functions the *jiaojing* and *minjing* serve, Africans report mixed experiences with the police. They generally rank *jiaojing* as polite, friendly, and helpful, but *minjing* as rude, fearsome, and corrupt. They are unaware that most of the *minjing* with whom they interact, such as during visa checks and raids, are not police officers, but rather, assistant enforcers hired by the police. Some Chinese refer to these enforcers as *er gou zi* (“running dogs” in Chinese). These enforcers are mostly low-paid and untrained migrant workers who wear uniforms that resemble police uniforms.<sup>19</sup> Ping, a rental agent whose clientele was mostly African, commented on these enforcers: “They are nobody and have no status here. But once they put on these uniforms, they turn into ‘foxes exploiting tigers’ power.’ And they bully the Africans.”<sup>20</sup>

Africans identify irregular visa checking as the biggest problem they face in their daily lives. Aabil said with anger to the interviewer:

The one thing I detest the most is your police. They are everywhere and harassing people at will. When they ask us for our passports, they don’t show their ID and don’t give you any reason, just yelling, “you passport, you passport!” If you don’t show them your passport, or if they find that your visa expires, they will drag you to the station, and the police will beat you up there and extort you big time.<sup>21</sup>

Aabil had never been taken into a police station, but heard his friends talking about their experiences of being beaten up there. In fact, he was not aware that some of the “police” on the streets were actually *er gou zi*. During our fieldwork, we observed incidents of passport checking such as that Aabil described above. In the majority of cases, those conducting the passport check were assistant enforcers rather than the actual police.

The visa issue is real and has triggered overt interracial conflicts. One highly publicized incident was when a Nigerian man jumped to his death while being chased by the police during a surprise passport check in July 2009, which caused a protest of more than 100 Africans in front of a local police station (cited in Lan 2015). Another incident was when a 28-year-old Nigerian entrepreneur died at a local police station after being taken there because of a fare dispute with a Chinese motorbike driver. This incident triggered a standoff between 100 to 500 African protesters and 300 Chinese policemen that held up traffic for hours at one of the city’s busiest intersections in the Xiaobei neighborhood (cited in Lan 2015). Media reports on these protests depicted Africans as *sanfei*, reinforcing the negative views of local Chinese residents toward Africans.

Africans employ two common strategies to cope with problems associated with their tenuous visa status. One strategy is to actively seek visa extension. However, doing so involves either paying a substantially large sum in service fees to Chinese agents or buying fake visas from the local Chinese black market. Either way, Africans often fall victim to unscrupulous Chinese agents who exploit their vulnerability, hence increasing the potential for conflict. Miss Li, an agent, said:

Africans are willing to try every possible means to get their visas extended, even pay excessively high prices, as high as ¥12,000 for a three-month visa [the official visa application fee is ¥130]. Sometimes they pay a lot of money but find out that their visas are fake. So they would go directly to the counterfeit documents agents.<sup>22</sup>

Another strategy African migrants employ is to simply let their visa status lapse and deal with the problem after being caught by police. This strategy is also problematic because of

the potential for police corruption. Mr. Mei, a merchant who has established friendship with Africans through work, explained:

When you are caught having an invalid visa, you will first be taken into a local police station and then be locked up in a small room. That's when you can start negotiating with the police. They are usually greedy, and ask for a fine of ¥10,000 to let you go. You will negotiate it down to an amount that is mutually acceptable. Then you call your friend to bring the money. You pay the amount, and you are out ... and you dare not ask for a receipt ... when you are caught, basically, you have two options—pay or jail.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, Africans' coping strategies often put them into more precarious situations that further disadvantage them. Local law enforcement agencies also post bilingual (Chinese and English) warning signs in public spaces in and around the Xiaobei neighborhoods, such as restaurants, cafés, and hotels and street corners where Africans congregate, about the penalties for drug-trafficking, violence, robbery, and prostitution, which serve to target and stereotype African migrants (Castillo 2014). Under such conditions—different goals, lack of official endorsement, unequal status, lack of cooperation, and superficial contact—Chinese–African contact for the sake of visa procurement services is more likely to result in conflict than in prejudice reduction or understanding.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis of data from surveys, interviews, and participant observations reveals five main findings. First, the Chinese under study had mixed racial views on African migrants. They generally perceived Africans negatively in terms of physical attractiveness, personality traits, and abilities, but the majority of them did not believe that Africans were lazy or innately unintelligent. Second, despite negative perceptions, the majority of the Chinese under study did not consider African migrants significant threats to their own lives, neighborhoods, or the city as a whole. Third, the majority of the Chinese under study expressed receptive and positive attitudes toward African migration, seeing the newcomers as positive contributors to the local economy, globalization, and multiculturalism in Guangzhou. Fourth, Chinese perceptions and attitudes were highly contingent on patterns of interactions between individual characteristics and contexts. For example, mutual distrust and negative attitudes were found between Chinese taxi drivers and African customers. However, the relations between African and Chinese minivan service providers or rental agents, based on conditions of relatively equal status, cooperation, and complementary goals, were more amicable. Fifth, overall, African migrants' everyday encounters with local Chinese residents on the ground were routine, civil, and orderly, with few overt or violent conflicts.

These findings indicate that the Chinese have not yet formed a collective xenophobic consciousness, nor have their attitudes been racialized in ways that are explained by theories of threat or ethnic economy developed from the Global North. Several significant theoretical implications about mechanisms of social exclusion are in order. First, the economic threat of being out-competed in the labor market and housing market, which operates at the individual level, is a key exclusionary mechanism that provokes fear and anxiety (Blalock 1967; Bonacich 1973; Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Olzak 1992). However, negative attitudes are shaped by interactional context and mediated by social status. In Guangzhou, local Chinese residents

and African migrants are not in direct competition with each other. Even in the same line of business, most of them share similar economic goals, and their routine economic relations are often complementary and mutually beneficial. Moreover, African–Chinese interactions often occur under conditions of status balance. Africans are more highly educated than the local Chinese residents with whom they are in direct contact, which balances out their disadvantaged foreigner, and racial, status. Also, when the two groups compete directly in the housing market, local Chinese residents tend to be low-skilled rural migrants without *GZ hukou*, who are themselves marginalized in society. In some cases, the Chinese migrants without *GZ hukou* are discriminated against more harshly than Africans, as in the case of the informal rental housing market, which favors Africans over Chinese migrants without *hukou*.

Symbolic threat constitutes another key exclusionary mechanism in the existing literature. Negative attitudes can stem from a collective fear or anxiety of being overpowered or infected by a foreign “deviant” or inferior culture (Blumer 1958). In the case of Chinese encounters with African migrants, this known exclusionary mechanism does not seem to be pervasive. African migrants, though highly concentrated at the neighborhood level, comprise only a tiny fraction of the city’s migrant population. Local Chinese residents treat them as an exotic foreign cultural group rather than a threatening cultural force. However, the potential for cultural conflict exists and materializes in certain situations, such as negative media reporting about lifestyle differences, public health hazards, and social problems.

Third, the effects of contact are not uniform, but are conditioned by the types and levels of contacts as well as by the contexts in which intergroup encounters occur. Our findings partly confirm Allport’s argument that equal status, cooperation, and similar goals set optimal conditions for successful intergroup contact. However, in the case of Chinese–African relations in Guangzhou, the lack of official endorsement does not appear to negatively affect intergroup relations on the ground. Legal barriers seem to put Africans of higher socioeconomic status together with Chinese of lower socioeconomic status in the same labor and housing markets, a condition that, in the short run, seems to mediate intergroup tensions. Whether residential segregation of African migrants will lead to increased hostility between groups in the long run remains an empirical question.

Our study reveals an emerging awareness of racial differences but not the ongoing processes of racialization evident in immigrant gateway cities of the Global North. The consequences of Chinese–African encounters are paradoxical. At the institutional level, lack of official endorsement and visa restrictions put Africans in a vicious cycle of exclusion. Their residential choices are limited to stigmatized *chengzhongcuns*. They are misrepresented by the mainstream Chinese media and official discourse as *sanfei* foreigners. And they are negatively perceived by local authorities and local residents in general. At the micro level, however, greater contact reduces social distance, which in turn facilitates greater cooperation and nurtures closer relations, leading to a virtuous cycle of inclusion. Further research is needed to investigate how nation-state policies that are highly restrictive of immigrant resettlement and integration shape boundary-making beyond race.

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## NOTES

1. Reported by the Sixth Chinese Census of the Population, retrieved February 3, 2016 ([http://www.gzstats.gov.cn/tjgb/gjpcgb/201105/t20110517\\_25227.htm](http://www.gzstats.gov.cn/tjgb/gjpcgb/201105/t20110517_25227.htm)).

2. "More than 300,000 Africans illegally staying in Guangdong," retrieved February 3, 2016 (<http://news.163.com/14/0815/08/A3M6IDUV00014SEH.html>).

3. Guangzhou is the only capital city in China that has attracted high numbers of African migrants. In Guangzhou, local control over African and other foreigner traders and merchants living in low-income neighborhoods has been tightening over the course of our fieldwork and has continued since fieldwork was completed. Although local authorities intensify law enforcement, actual raids are inconsistently and unsystematically carried out, amounting to little more than "hide-and-seek" games for the migrants (Li et al. 2009).

4. Chinese respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques: quota and snowball sampling by neighborhoods (Xiaobei neighborhood in which Africans are densely concentrated, a second neighborhood adjacent to Xiaobei, and a third neighborhood in a different part of the city with no foreigners present). Small business owners and residents in the three neighborhoods under study, and college students were selected via snowballing. We also selected a snowball sample from college students from four universities. African respondents were selected via snowball sampling and were limited to those who lived in the African concentrated in Xiaobei neighborhood and the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to Xiaobei (Zhou et al. 2016).

5. This study was conducted by one of the coauthors Tao Xu. The data contained in-depth interviews with 31 African merchants (26 male, 5 female) and participant observations in the main shopping mall and neighborhoods with a sizable African presence in 2008 and 2009.

6. "Chinglish" has emerged as the major lingua franca for communication between groups. It is "characterized by simple English vocabulary and sentence structures, repetition of key words, the mixing of Mandarin expressions, and clear influence of Chinese syntax, among others" (Han 2013: 88).

7. Some directly trade with Chinese manufacturers.

8. *Chengzhongcun*, or literally "village in the city," is an urban form distinct to contemporary China (Zhang 2003). *Chengzhongcuns* are villages surrounded by new real estate development. Landless farmers in such villages rent out their housing to augment their incomes from wage work. Housing rental is lucrative, especially as the demand increases among internal migrants, who lack financial means and GZ *hukou* status to access housing in the formal market (Zhou and Cai 2008). Rental agents preferred renting to foreigners over internal migrants, based on our interviews with rental agents.

9. Mathews and Yang (2012) note that African traders in Guangzhou, particularly of the first type that we describe, tend to compete with Chinese traders who are doing business in Africa or in Chinese import/export firms. These two groups of traders are competing to be the dominant middlemen in China-Africa trade.

10. Interviewed by Min Zhou on June 24, 2012.

11. Interviewed by Min Zhou on June 24, 2012. Ms. Chen's office was a makeshift shanty between two houses. In front (by the sidewalk), there was a sitting area with two wooden couches, a coffee table, and a few plastic stools.

During the interview, a couple of Africans stopped by and just sat there. They indeed called Ms. Chen “Mama” and seemed to know her well as their smiles and gestures indicated.

12. Interviewed by Tao Xu on December 23, 2008.
13. In-depth interviews with Mr. Li, August 20, 2011.
14. Interview with Mr. Lai during fieldwork, August 15, 2011.
15. Interview in Ms. Bai’s home in the “Chocolate City,” June 20, 2011.
16. Interviewed by Tao Xu on December 16, 2008.
17. Interviewed with Adam in a restaurant in Xiaobei by Zhou’s research assistant (RA), July 2, 2011.
18. Since August 2008 the Guangzhou government has counted foreigners as part of the “floating population” category and thereby subject to the same rules and regulations (cited in Lan 2015: 295).
19. Staff from the local government agencies, such as City Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau and Municipal Bureau of Taxation (*chengguans* and tax collectors), as well as private security guards, also wear similar uniforms. They are often mistaken for police by the Africans.
20. Interviewed with Ping in her office in Xiaobei by Zhou’s RA, August 16, 2010.
21. Interviewed with Aabil in a coffee shop by Zhou’s RA, August 11, 2011.
22. Interviewed by Tao Xu on March 18, 2009.
23. Interviewed by Tao Xu on March 26, 2009.

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