

CHINA'S MIGRANT CHILDREN: LACK OF CULTURAL CAPITAL AND HUKOU
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by
NAN LI
Dr. Peggy Placier, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled
CHINA'S MIGRANT CHILDREN: LACK OF CULTURAL CAPITAL AND HUKOU POLICY

presented by Nan Li

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Jerry Valentine

Professor Juanita Simmons

Professor Keith Jamtgaard

Professor Peggy Placier

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ABSTRACT

This study documented sojourn experiences of Chinese rural-urban migrant children and their parents living in the host city of Chengdu, China. Previous studies on the migrant workers and their children tended to look at large-scale survey aggregate data on the migrant children's schooling experience in urban China. Common themes were identified in the previous studies such as migrant families' feeling discriminated, lack of sufficient money of living in the host city, migrant children's difficulties in attending local urban public school, etc. My study were informed by the previous studies but used a new theoretical lens--- cultural capital theory, to reveal deeper understanding of migrant families' life in the host city, especially migrant children's public schooling experience in the city of Chengdu.

Participants in this study were 10 migrant parents, 10 local urban parents, 5 local urban children, and 5 migrant children. Qualitative analysis of conducting comparison multiple case studies, document analysis, and coding interview transcripts were applied using the cultural capital theory to identify differences and similarities of life of migrant children and their urban peers in Chengdu.

Results indicate that there was huge difference between migrant children's life style and their urban peers' life style, thus, leading an unequal childhood between these two groups. Although the Chinese central government has issued a number of proactive polices of helping migrant children attend local urban public school since 2003, the negative effect of *Hukou* policy still impacts migrant families' sojourn life in Chengdu, in particular, there exists an entrenched urban-rural divide in Chengdu between local urban residents and rural-urban migrant families.

This study yielded a new perspective of improving migrant children's schooling and life experiences in urban China. Implications are offered for improving quality of life of migrant families in the host city and a change of local urban residents' attitude towards migrant workers is called upon to fully integrate migrant families into urban community.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Ever since the Chinese central government took the market-driven economic reform in the late 1970s, China has seen various rapid social changes during its urbanization process. Among those radical changes, the most significant one is the internal rural-urban migration. This dissertation attempts to provide a detailed account of migrant workers' motivation to moving to Chengdu---this study's research site, their sojourn experiences in the city, in particular, their children's schooling experience in Chengdu, local urban residents' attitudes towards migrant workers' migration to Chengdu, and the Chinese governments and public's responses to dealing with challenges and issues accompanied by the internal migration. This introductory chapter will provide the background knowledge of the research topic, the research framework, purpose of the research, and the research procedure.

Background to the Proposed Study

Background of rural-urban migration and its accompanying problems

China began experiencing a large wave of internal migration in the urbanization process after adopting free market economic reform beginning the late 1970s. According to statistic released by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2004, there were 114 million rural surplus laborers who moved from their rural hometowns to urban areas seeking employment opportunities. Accompanying this rural labor migration, China is experiencing a rapid rate of urbanization. Between 1980 and 2000, 268 million Chinese migrated from their rural hometowns to urban areas (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2008). In comparison to the Chinese population component of 80%

rural population before the 1970s, nowadays, of the 1.26 billion people in China, 36.02% live in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2001).

With this large -scale internal migration happening during China's urbanization process, laws and regulations established before China's economic reform did not match the needs of the free market economic reform and the fast pace of the urbanization process. Therefore, the institutional barriers in urban areas put Chinese migrant workers in a disadvantaged position in the urban society, making their adaptation process to urban life full of challenges and hardships. Migrant workers were constantly criticized for burdening urban resources and infrastructure and engaging in crimes (Cao, 1995; Solliger, 1999). Although migrant workers provide cheap labor to fuel China's urbanization process, they were excluded from many benefits and public services that urban governments provide to their urban residents. Lu (2005) stated that migrant workers lacked access to subsidized housing, health and unemployment insurance, and the urban public education system that prioritized urban residents only.

Migrant workers or *Nongmin gong* (in Chinese literal translation), as the name implies, carries a derogatory meaning indicating their peripheral position as farmers and sojourners in the Chinese urban society. Migrant workers in urban areas belong to neither their rural hometowns nor the host cities where they work as transient workers. Their marginalized position in urban stratification is reflected in the following multiple ways.

Economically, migrant workers' income is low compared to that of their urban peers. Furthermore, their employment is focused on manual jobs or in low-paying service industry sector (Luan, 2003).

Politically, migrant workers do not have power to form unions or mobilize organizations although they are the outcast class in urban society (Cheng, 1994).

Socially, they were excluded from micro-level community participation activities such as getting access to local public education systems in host cities for their children, and on the macro-level being turned down by the urban public service system due to their rural *Hukou* (rural identity) (Wang, 2007).

Under the *Hukou* system, Chinese citizens are divided artificially into two groups: urban residents (those who are born in urban areas) and peasants (those who are born in the countryside). One purpose of China's *Hukou* policy is to manage the resource distribution between rural and urban areas. In 1958, the Chinese central government established the *Hukou* policy with its original purpose of restricting rural-to-urban migration. In other words, it was extremely difficult for farmers to move to cities to seek job opportunities before China's economic reform due to the Chinese government's tight control of social mobility and rigid centralized market economic system adopted before the late 1970s'. Meanwhile, the Chinese government traditionally allocated more public-service funding to urban residents than that to rural residents. For example, urban residents were entitled to a comprehensive social welfare system---including subsidized housing, affordable medi-care, unemployment insurance, and subsidized public education system (Leung & Nann, 1995). In contrast, rural residents did not receive much support from the state's funding to finance a comprehensive welfare system. And in fact, the funding channel for the rural social welfare is locally-based, getting limited funding from less affluent rural communities (Leung & Nann, 1995). Disparity of public resource utilization between urban residents and migrant workers is a hotly-debated issue in current China when a large number of migrant children encounter great difficulties in attending school in urban areas after they move from their rural hometowns to the host cities with their parents.

Migrant workers and their families live a marginalized life in the host cities. One of the most salient problems that migrant families have been experiencing is that they undergo obstacles in sending their children to public school in the host cities. Lu & Zhang (2004) outlined three elements that contribute to migrant children's difficulties in getting access to public education resources: *Hukou* policy, *Jiedu* fees (educational rental fees), and urban-rural divide.

First, the *Hukou* policy, a household registration system, draws a clear line between one's rural or urban identity. The existence of this policy plays a significant role in resource distribution in terms of who has access to mandated public education. According to *Hukou* policy, the local district's sole responsibility is to educate children who are born in their judicial administration areas; it does not extend its responsibility to those not registered in their district. Since migrant children are not originally born in the host cities, they are usually turned down by public schools in the host cities. However, some public schools in urban areas want to raise their revenue, so they set aside a certain quota to enroll a small number of migrant children by charging them additional tuition fees.

Secondly, *Jiedu* fees (educational rental fees) are too high and often out of migrant families' affordability. According to Kwong (2004), a migrant family may pay an additional 3480 Yuan (\$535) in addition to the 300 to 400 Yuan (\$60) tuition fees every local student is charged. Yet, the average income for migrant families is only about 600Yuan (\$92.30) per month. Furthermore, Nielsen, et al. (2006) found in their research that household income was a major determinant in students' school attendance.

Thirdly, migrant workers and their children are often excluded by their city peers from daily social interactions. Lu and Zhang's (2004) study demonstrated that a common feeling of marginalization and humiliation was found among a majority of migrant workers and their

children in urban areas. Their early exposure to the marginalized life experiences in the host cities also influenced their psychological well-being. One child in the authors' study wrote in his composition that: "I know my father does not make money easily. I know this society is unfair" (p.62). For this reason, migrant workers especially hope their children will receive good education for future social mobility. China is a country with a long history of valuing education and viewing education as key to future success. Being placed at the lowest social and economical status in the host cities, migrant workers have taken a self-help approach of building schools for their children in urban areas. This special type of school is referred to as migrant children's schools. However, there is a plethora of problems in the migrant children's schools.

A survey conducted by Han (2004) indicated that non-certified teachers, a large class size (84 students in one classroom), dangerous school environments, and inadequate curriculum were frequently found in migrant children's schools. As a space set aside solely for migrant children, the local governing structures are not compelled to ensure school quality and to make certain that it provides comparable benefits offered in the local public schools. This fact creates a *de facto* exclusion for migrant children from receiving quality public education and interaction with their urban peers in the host cities.

Although migrant workers contribute a lot to the urban economy by working in the host cities, their rights are limited. They can be sent back to their rural hometowns any time by urban local policemen if they fail to show the local police station their temporary residence permit, their identification card, or any other relevant paper work (Goodkind & West, 2002). Urban residents tend to look down upon migrant families. Zou, et. al.'s study (2005) in Beijing indicated that some local parents viewed migrant children as inferior. One Beijing parent told the researchers that: "Migrant children do not have good personal hygiene habit and they may pass

diseases to urban children.” Another parent said: “If urban public schools enroll too many migrant children, the quality of the school would drop” (p. 6). Despite these discriminatory stereotypes, migrant workers continue to move to urban areas. In 1995, among 80 million migrants throughout China, there were 2 to 3 million migrant children (Wang, 2007). One study by Zhou (2000) indicated that by 2000, among 100 million migrants, there would be between 7 to 10 million migrant children.

Issues and challenges of Chinese migrant children’s urban schooling experiences in host cities have gone far beyond the school gate. Since China’s free-market economy reform adopted beginning late 1970s, peasants and their families are allowed to migrate to urban areas with conditions under *Hukou* policy. According to statistics from the State Council Research Office Task Force (2006), in the year of 2004, there were 120 million migrants working as transient workers in China’s urban areas. Froissart (2003) conducted a survey among migrant families in Chengdu and found that out of 102 sampled rural-urban migrant families, 36% brought their children along. Meanwhile, China is becoming concerned about education inequality between urban areas and rural areas. In China’s 2020 Education Reform Strategy (2010), Wang Dinghua, Deputy Director to China’s Primary Education stated that one of the four strategies that the Chinese government will try to achieve is to provide quality education to all children.

Rationale for the Proposed Study

Chinese governments’ responses to the large influx of rural -urban migration

A primary motivation for rural farmers’ move to the host cities is the opportunity to earn more money (Goodkind & West, 2002). The problems that migrant workers and their children encounter in the host cities have attracted much attention from the Chinese governments. Since

1996, the Chinese governments have made a number of regulations with an intention of helping migrant children in getting access to public education resources. According to Wu and Liu (2007), the Chinese governments' policy change towards migrant families reflected in those regulations had undergone a change from restricted to relaxed, from unregulated order to standardized services, and from discrimination to fair treatment.

The earliest regulation concerning migrant children's education is Temporary Regulations on Schooling of Migrant Children issued in 1996. This regulation was a trial measure made by the Ministry of Public Security and State Education Bureau. In this regulation, there are three salient points worthy of researchers' attention. The first one is the definition of migrant children. Article 2 of this regulation defined migrant children as children of migrant workers who have the capability to study. The interesting part of this definition lies in the language of "have the capability to study." One can infer that when the government officials wrote this regulation, they had already assumed that some migrant children did not have the capability to learn. The second point worthy of mentioning in this regulation is about the extra tuition fee charge. Article 15 of the Regulation stated that public schools that enroll migrant children were allowed to charge them extra tuition fees according to the corresponding educational cost. The third point is about migrant children's educational placement location. Article 6 of the Regulation said clearly that if there was a guardian in the migrant child's hometown, this child must go back to his/her rural hometown to receive compulsory education. The 1996 regulation sent a discriminatory message to the public in a sense that migrant children, at least some of them, were viewed as incapable of study, and their parents had to pay extra tuition fees to send them to urban public schools. Meanwhile, migrant children had no freedom in choosing to attend urban public school if they had a guardian back in their rural hometowns,

which explained why many rural children remained in their rural hometowns with their grandparents after their parents moved to the host cities as migrant workers. The 1996 regulation certainly did not recognize migrant children's right to receive compulsory education in urban areas. And in fact, it even legitimized the extra tuition fee charge practices of the urban public schools which enroll migrant children.

In 1998, the State Education Bureau and the Ministry of Public Security issued Provisional Regulations for Schooling of Migrant Children. The 1998 Regulation is similar to the 1996 regulation with one salient difference in adding a residential time frame in defining migrant children. Article 2 of this regulation delineated "migrant children and juveniles" as children who had lived in the host cities with their parents for 6 months or more, and their age ranges were between 6 to 14 or 7 to 15, and had the capability to study. It is obvious that this definition creates a gap in migrant children's schooling process. One can infer that when a migrant child moves from his/her rural hometowns to urban areas with their parents, he/she has to stay at home in the host city for at least 6 month before he/she can apply for urban public school in order to fulfill this 6 month residential time requirement. This institutional barrier of the 6 month residential requirement may explain why migrant children experience educational discontinuity when their parents move from their rural hometowns to the host cities.

On September 17th of 2003, the State Council issued the Decision of Reform and Development of China's Elementary Education. This 2003 Decision stated clearly that the local host city should assume the major responsibility of educating migrant children. We can see that the Chinese central government used a decentralized approach by urging local governments to assume the responsibility of educating migrant children in the corresponding host cities. Due to this decentralized approach toward funding compulsory education adopted by the Chinese

central government, implementation of the policies regarding migrant children's education varies greatly among various geographical areas (Guo, 2009). This gap between the policy making and the policy implementation finds its full expression in China's nine-city survey on migrant children's life and schooling experiences conducted in 2005 by China Child Center and China Women and Children Working Committee affiliated to the State Council.

Problems that migrant children face in their schooling experiences in urban areas

The 2005 survey covered nine metropolitan cities including Beijing, Chengdu, Wuhan, etc. It took one year for the researchers to interview over 7800 children and legal guardians/parents of over 12000 migrant children. The study seemed to support a hypothesis that after the issuing of 2003 Decision, a majority of migrant children were able to obtain access to urban public schools. The survey indicated that 81.40 % migrant children went to urban public schools in comparison to 18.5 % attending migrant children's schools or other types of private schools. However, this survey revealed a high drop-out rate among the migrant children who were at school age. According to this survey, among the 6-year old migrant children, 46.19 % of them did not attend school; the survey also found that the smaller the city, the higher the drop-out rate among the migrant children. For example, in Shenzhen, the drop-out rate is 4.6 % in comparison to 13.3 % in Shaoxing (Shaoxing is a small city in China's east coastal area of Zhejiang province). Among the migrant children who attended schools in urban areas, their ages often exceeded that of their urban peers within the same grade. The survey also found that about 20 % of the 9- year old migrant children were attending grade one in elementary school (Note: the Compulsory Education Law in China requires that a child should attend elementary school starting from age of 6 or 7).

One most salient point found out in this survey was the reason why migrant children dropped out of school. 50.80 % of the parents chose the response “my children did not want to attend school”, 48.9 % of them chose “the high cost of attending school in host cities”, 34.10 % of them chose “my children did not earn good grade at school”, and only 16.5 % of them chose “going to school is useless”. Another astonishing fact was that only 30 % of the migrant parents thought *Hukou* was the factor which influenced their children’s opportunity of continuing to attend urban public schools (Zou, et. al, 2005). From those statistics, we may infer that institutional barriers such as the *Hukou* policy have been more relaxed after the governments issued a number of proactive ordinances and regulations; however, there were other factors influencing migrant children’s motives of attending urban school such as how well they performed in public schools and the cost of attending public school in the urban areas.

Other factors affecting migrant children’s schooling experiences in urban areas

Huang and Xu (2006) stated that the problem of migrant children’s education was caused by multiple factors such as migrant children’s high mobility in urban areas due to their parents’ job instability, the imbalanced resource distribution pattern in migrant children’s residential enclave where there was scarce educational resource, and the disadvantaged migrant family background. In their study, Huang and Xu found that the educational level of migrant children’s parents was generally low, and they worked long hours, which prevented them from helping their children with their school assignments. The authors also found that 44.6 % of the parents were not able to help their children with their homework due to their low educational level. 20.3 % of the parents indicated that they were too busy with their work to tutor their children when they needed help in their studies. Huang and Xu’s study revealed that family environment and parents’ education level seemed to impact children’s educational experiences.

My previous literature review indicated that the issue of migrant children's education in China has gained much attention among Chinese scholars and researchers. Many of these researchers focused their studies on examining relevant education law and the *Hukou* policy. Others conducted surveys nationwide in big cities to explain a general trend of migrant children's educational issues such as high drop-out rate and mobility among migrant children when their parents move to follow their unstable jobs. To date, no researchers have used a cultural capital theory lens to exam the unique educational challenges that migrant children face during China's urbanization process.

Research Framework and the Research Questions

In the Western literatures, cultural capital theory has been widely used in examining a potential causal relationship between students' performance in school and the cultural capital which the students possess from their parents and the family environment. One classical example is DiMaggio's study (1982), in which he conducted a survey among around three thousand grade 11 students. His survey study found that cultural capital had a significant impact on students' schooling performance.

Although the concept of cultural capital was first mentioned by the French sociologist Bourdieu and later widely used in Western educational studies, I take a position that China's current social stratification system can be supported by Bourdieu's core argument that cultural capital can be converted into social resources which largely decide one's future social mobility. In China, migrant families are situated in a peripheral class in urban society. They are expected to possess the least cultural capital which is recognized and valued by the Chinese urban society. Therefore, my research raises a question that lack of cultural capital is perhaps one major factor

that poses obstacles in migrant children's schooling experiences in urban China, especially after the *Hukou* policy was relaxed and the issuing of a series of proactive policies on migrant children's education from the Chinese central government.

My research is framed within the cultural capital theory lens (Bourdieu, 1986) to explore patterns of migrant families' sojourn experiences and how an urban compulsory education system reinforces the pattern of the de facto segregation of migrant children's schooling and life experiences in the host city of Chengdu, China. *Hukou* policy is examined with special attention of explaining this policy's role in creating a rural and urban divide between migrant families and their urban peers.

Two research questions are addressed by my research:

What does "cultural capital" mean to migrant families and local urban families in Chengdu? In other words, in what forms that the "cultural capital" takes and how it influences life of the local urban children and migrant children living in Chengdu?

What are some factors influencing migrant families' decision of sending their children to receive compulsory education in the host city of Chengdu? In contrast, what are those factors that local urban families take into consideration when they send their children to school?

Research Design and Method

I use a multiple comparison case study design to conduct my research. "Case studies concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation. They are problem centered, small scale, and entrepreneurial endeavors." (Shaw, 1978, p. 2) In my research, two particular groups of people I am going to study are migrant workers who move from their rural hometowns to Chengdu to seek jobs and

the local urban residents living in Chengdu. Rural-urban migrant workers encounter specific problems in urban areas such as experiencing discrimination and stringent financial situation, specifically, challenges and issues that migrant workers face in sending their children to urban public schools (Lu & Zhang, 2004). A central problem which I attempt to examine in this multiple case study is to find out why migrant children encounter great difficulties in receiving compulsory education in the host city, especially after the Chinese central government has issued a serial of proactive policies with an intention of helping migrant children and their families gain educational resources in the urban areas.

Throughout my research, the term “migrant workers” refers to individuals who move from rural areas to urban areas to seek jobs without a permanent urban residency identity (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2001). “Migrant children” refers to children of those migrant workers. All the migrant children in my study were born in their rural hometown and migrated with their parents to Chengdu. Migrant children and their parents are situated in a complex urban environment where conflict of interest is so visible in their daily life in the host city of Chengdu, China. A qualitative study approach is most appropriate to explore this complicated social problem of migrant children’s difficulties in having access to educational resources in the host city of Chengdu. According to Yin (1994), case study is a design suited to situations in which various variables are embedded in the phenomenon under a certain context. My study exploring migrant families’ lived experiences in urban China is embedded in a social context in which it is impossible to separate Chinese government’s policies, China’s free-market economic reform, and China’s mass media’s attitude towards migrant workers, etc. The case of a migrant family and their interaction with the urban environment is a finite unit. However, its social context has multiple variables. Therefore, I chose case study as my research design.

My study will be a “multiple case study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). I am going to compare five migrant families with five urban families in the host city of Chengdu. I will use semi-structured open-ended questions to individually interview five migrant families (each family is composed of mother, father, and a child) and five upper-middle class urban families (each family is composed of mother, father, and a child). Home visits will be conducted to collect data on each participating family’s home environment. Document analysis such as examining newspaper articles and updated government ordinances and regulations will be adopted to see whether there is a gap between policy making and the policy implementation at local level of Chengdu, where my research site is situated.

Sampling procedure and sample characteristics

I will gain access to participants through criterion sampling and theoretical sampling methods (Patton, 2001). The former sampling method allows me to gain access to a small number of carefully selected migrant families in Chengdu. In order to get access to the participants, I will contact a local construction company’s manager in Chengdu by submitting a brief letter informing the manager of my research purpose and the sample-choosing criteria. The manager will recommend five qualifying participating families to me. I will choose the participating families via the following criteria: the family monthly income is below 2500 Yuan (about \$356), both husband and wife are migrant workers, and at least one child in the family attends a local public school. I will gain access to five urban upper-middle class families via convenience sampling procedure. The five urban families live in the same apartment complex where my mother lives. All these five urban families are composed of two parents and a child who goes to a local urban school in Chengdu. I chose these five urban middle-class families as

my participants with an intention of comparing their home environment with that of the five participating migrant families.

I will conduct individual semi-structured interviews with all the families in their homes. Through the ten participating parents, I will ask them for their permission to interview their children respectively.

In Chapter 2, I will review the origins of cultural capital theory and its application in the Western educational studies. *Hukou* policy and other relevant laws and ordinances regarding management of migrant children's schooling experiences are also examined in this chapter. Finally, conceptualization of cultural capital theory within the current Chinese urban society is defined in this chapter as well.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction of Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a review on the concept of “cultural capital” upon which the conceptual framework of this study is based. Grounded upon the understanding of cultural capital theory applied in educational studies, I argue that rural -urban migrant workers and their children moving into Chengdu, the host city, have been discriminated against in getting access to public goods and service such as obtaining a well-paying job, having access to health care, and attending public schools. This discrimination is reflected through Chinese governments’ policy-making and implementation process at institutional levels.

Origins of the cultural capital theory, concept of social capital, and its application in educational studies

The translation of French sociologist Bourdieu’s (1977) work *Reproduction in education, society, and culture* introduced the cultural capital theory into the Western literatures. Prior to his work, capital was often interpreted from a materialistic point of view, mainly related to the development of human capital (Portes, 2000). According to Bourdieu, social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, P. 248). Having a social network is very important in the typical Chinese citizens’ lives. For instance, if the parents know a certain official in a quality school where they want to enroll their child, there is a big chance for the child to be accepted by the school even the child does not

live in that school district. It is not hard to see that migrant workers lack this social connection compared to their city counterparts because they are not born in the cities.

Bourdieu (1977) further argued that economic capital alone could not explain discrepancies in educational achievement among children of different social classes. Instead, he suggested that a combination of cultural resources, in addition to economic and social resources, contribute to the academic success of children. Although Bourdieu's writing on cultural capital does not give us a clear and specific definition of cultural capital (Kingston, 2001), he argued that schools used an institutionalized "criteria of evaluation" to favor a particular group of children from an elite class possessing cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This rings true in the current Chinese urban public schools' admission procedures for migrant children who wish to enter a local public school in the host city. Many public schools in China set up arbitrary entrance exams to sift out migrant children. Furthermore, these exams reflect what schools value most in a child's knowledge span. For example, in the current Chinese society, being able to speak English and use computers are viewed as two essential skills for being well-educated. Thus, computer skill training and English are two core courses in the Chinese elementary school curriculum. In contrast, poor quality rural schools do not offer these two core courses. When migrant children moved to the host city and took the entrance exam set by the urban public school, they found themselves not be able to meet this expectation from the urban public education system because their rural life background was far from what the urban school intended to test in the exam.

Bourdieu (1986) further argued that cultural capital exists in three forms. The first is the "embodied form," in which cultural capital is reflected in the person through the dispositions of his mind and body. For instance, a person's intelligence and skill can fall into this category. The

second form is called “objectified state.” This form refers to material goods. For example, books, music CDs, calculators, study maps, and any assistive learning machines or equipment can be viewed as objectified cultural capital. Thus, an affluent family is more likely to purchase this kind of cultural capital for their children than a working-class family who would not have the resources or even the knowledge to obtain these materials. The third form of cultural capital exists in the “institutionalized state.” Kingston (2001) concurred with Bourdieu that “schools reflect and are responsive to the cultural orientation of the dominant class” (p. 89). Hence, children from elite or upper-middle class are well-prepared before going to school as they possess dispositions which are rewarded by schools’ cultural orientation. In the contrast, children from working class or poor families do not possess cultural capital which fits into the “cultural biases of this institution” (Kingston, 2001, p. 89).

I believe that this “institutionalized state” of cultural capital rings especially true in the current Chinese society with a formal educational system and highly stratified social class, i.e. wage-making migrant workers vs. well-paid urban government employees. I believe part of the reason that migrant children encounter difficulties in getting access to urban public schools is due to urban public school teachers’ viewing migrant children as lacking cultural capital (e.g. mastering computer skills and being able to speak English) valued by urban schools’ screening mechanisms.

Bourdieu (1977) also argued that cultural capital was originally passed down from the family to the children. For example, in one study exploring issues of cultural capital among immigrant families, Rueda, et al. (2003) pointed out that those immigrants from Hispanic background came to the United States with less cultural capital than that possessed by their White peers. Thus, the school practices and service delivery model in a mainstream culture has

created unequal social and economical power between the immigrants and dominant class of Anglo Americans. Hence, the cultural capital theory argues that the culture of a dominant class is reflected through its education system. In other words, the higher a person's social class is, the more benefits he/she can obtain through a society's schooling system. Schools function as a mechanical system which reproduces the social stratification system (Bourdieu, 1977). Migrant families in China would be kept in a lower social and economic stratification system in the host cities if migrant children continuously encounter obstacles when they apply to enter public schools in urban areas.

In *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*, Bourdieu (1986) posited that cultural capital is tied to one's social class. Thus, migrant children, as a peripheral class in host cities, carry on their specific "cultural capital", which is tied to their social identity. For example, one study conducted by Lu and Zhang (2004) found that compared to their city peers, migrant children tend to be mature earlier and possess resilience in a harsh economical situations. For those upper/middle class urban children, it is common for them to attend special summer school programs and extracurricular activities. Most urban parents are willing to send their children to such private tutoring schools to learn additional skills or subjects outside or tied to public schools' prescribed curriculum. Those subjects include but are not limited to: playing piano, drawing, ballet, English, computer, etc. Tuition fees charged by those schools vary from 15 dollars per summer semester to a highly expensive charge of 20 dollars per hour, such as for learning piano. Obviously, migrant children's parents cannot afford this additional tutoring fee for their children's education. Meanwhile, skills or knowledge learned in the private summer schools are highly valued and rewarded by public schools. One practice that urban public schools do is to give their admission priority to *Te Chang Sheng* (students with a special talent). It is a

common practice for China's urban public schools to set up special quotas to admit this special group of students.

Obviously, for migrant families who struggle in making ends meet in the urban areas, their children are already outcast even before entering the public schools. Thus, the role of a third form of cultural capital existing in an "institutionalized state" comes into play. As mentioned earlier, urban public schools value and award a child's skills and knowledge in certain extra-curricular subject areas such as being able to play a musical instrument, knowing how to use computer, or being able to speak English, etc. For those students who can play piano, schools would score them bonus points when evaluating them in comparison to other non-piano player students. Thus, it is through a school's official screening process that the school selects the "best students" according to the school's values and evaluation system. A child's educational qualification is judged by these institutionalized criteria. Furthermore, public schools' admission procedure of evaluating a student's additional academic skills is so widely known and understood by urban parents that they are eager to send their children to one of those many summer enrichment programs.

Cultural capital is a frequently used social construct in Western educational studies. Since its inception, a number of scholars have expanded the definition of cultural capital, which simultaneously obscured the definition. Paul DiMaggio (1982), for example, conducted a quantitative study examining the relationship between students' high school grades and cultural capital. In his study, DiMaggio defined the independent variable, cultural capital, as reading literature, visiting art galleries, drawing, photography, arts attendance, cultivated self-image (DiMaggio, 1982). Thus, DiMaggio defined cultural capital as "prestigious" cultural practices or a social class's particular life style or taste (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The results of his

research showed that measured cultural capital had a significant influence on students' high school grades. Echoing DiMaggio, Robinson and Garnier (1985) measured cultural capital as "a cultural environment that fosters the development of the kinds of speech patterns, tastes, and interpersonal skills that the educational system rewards with its credentials" (p. 251).

Lamont and Lareau (1988) addressed this concept through their definition of cultural capital as "institutionalized, i.e, widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusions" (p. 156). Throughout my paper, I adopted Lamont and Lareau's definition of the cultural capital through which to examine Chinese rural-urban migrant children's schooling experiences in the city of Chengdu. Lamont and Lareau's (1988) definition clearly points out that one function of cultural capital is for intentional "social and cultural exclusions" (p.156). For example, migrant children in China are often refused admission to public schools in the host cities by school teachers and administrators because they are viewed as less prepared for school (e.g., they lack English and computer skills; two skills valued by Chinese public schools and society in general). By barring migrant children from entering their schools, the institutions are also preventing migrant children from obtaining educational resources which are essential for their future career advancement. Meanwhile, those urban children who already possess "cultural capital" valued by schools have advantages from the institutionalization of "criteria of evaluation" set arbitrarily by the urban public schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

It is clear that in order to become upwardly mobile, it is important for migrant children to have access to public education. This ideology is consistent with Confucianism, that education is the key to achieving high social status. However, migrant families' stringent financial situation has limited their priority in providing quality education to their children. Sa's survey (2004)

conducted in Beijing found that the average annual tuition fee for public schools was 4093 Yuan (about \$500), while the average annual income of migrant families was only 12,750 Yuan(\$1,555). The annual tuition of \$500 was one-third of a migrant family's yearly income. This tuition charge did not include school supply fees (e.g. purchasing school uniform), field trip fees, extra-curricular tutoring fees, etc. Clearly, making ends meet in the host cities is migrant family's priority; therefore, providing quality education to their children is put secondary when the migrant family has to deal with heavy burden of daily expenses by living in the host cities.

In current China, research on the cultural capital theory is almost nonexistent except one most recent quantitative study carried out among four hundred couples living in China's four big cities by Wang, et. al.(2006). In this study, the authors conceptualized cultural capital narrowly as book-reading habits as measured by genres of the books and names of the literary authors. They found that education and class gauged by one's skill and property significantly impacts one's book reading habits and cultural taste. By contrast, working-class people such as migrants from rural areas are less actively engaged in book reading. Therefore, the authors concluded that the current Chinese society is divided by different cultural consumptions as showed in the dissimilar book reading habits from their study. Meanwhile, this disparity of having different cultural knowledge partially defined the boundary of social classes in current China. I disagree with the authors' approach of defining cultural capital by using book reading habits as an indicator, because cultural capital has its "market values" and is "broadly accepted" by mainstream society (Kinston, 2001, p. 89). I argue that in the current Chinese society, book-reading is not a widely shared cultural signal. Instead, I hold that a more culturally relevant conceptualization of cultural capital needs to be clarified before embarking on any study of cultural capital across cultures. However, Wang et. al.'s study is indeed the first empirical

attempt of integrating the concept of cultural capital into studying social stratification and inequality in the current Chinese urban society.

In contrast to scarcity of Chinese studies on cultural capital, western educators and sociologists have used this concept frequently in their educational sociology studies. One of the most authoritative studies on how cultural capital plays its role in children's education in the Western literatures is Lareau's (2003) ethnographic study on different parenting styles among middle and working class families. By studying twelve families (six Black, five White, and one interracial) with children aging between 9 and 10 years old, the author stated that middle class families intend to develop their children's social skills and cognitive development in "a pattern of concerted cultivation" (p. 5) while the working class families experience a daily struggle of providing food, clothing, shelter, etc to meet the basic need for their children given their stringent financial situation. Their parenting style is characterized as a natural growth approach. Lareau further argued that children raised in a concerted cultivation family background gain advantages in negotiating with society, while children raised in a natural growth approach are more likely to encounter constraint in interacting with society. Furthermore, the author pointed out that the unequally distributed family resources are transferred across generations in a stratified society. I agree with the author that one's social status has an enormous impact on one's daily life experiences. It is my understanding that education takes place beyond the school gate. In concurring with Lareau's social reproduction model of cultural capital, I argue that problems that Chinese migrant children encounter in China's urban areas can be partially explained by the cultural capital theory.

Romanowski(2003) conducted a qualitative study in a summer migrant education program by interviewing school personnel and Mexican migrant students in grade 5 –grade 12.

The purpose of his study was to find out what differences there are between migrant students' perspectives on their cultural capital and that of their school teachers. The author documented three salient findings: first, there are ideological conflicts between migrant students' cultural capital and values held highly by the school. Secondly, the knowledge and curriculum taught at the school challenges the migrant students' cultural capital. Thirdly, the high mobility of migrant families makes migrant children feel out of control of their lives, which contributes to their low academic performance. Romanowski's findings find corroboration in a research report conducted by the NESSE network (2008) which is focused on developing strategies in integrating immigrant children into European schools and societies. According to this report, immigrant children's cultural capital is devalued through the process of migration because "many forms of cultural capital are heavily dependent on the context and society in which and for which they have been acquired" (p. 27). As immigrants' cultural capital is often not recognized in the new destination country, this puts their children in a disadvantaged position in future societal competition. The report further pointed out that those immigrants lack not only economical capital but also cultural capital which is essential for socialization and education in the destination country.

Devine's study (2009) of immigrant children's process of negotiating and placing themselves in the host country Ireland's educational system confirms that: "cultural capital has particular currency in the field of education" (p. 522). Having interviewed 41 immigrant children of 9 to 12 years old and 13 immigrant parents in several public schools in Ireland, the author found that among the immigrant parents, those who have professional jobs are able to provide support to their children such as helping with homework and help them gain cultural capital via participation of school activities. In the contrast, those immigrant parents who hold low-paying

jobs tend to cluster in a social network of their own ethnic background in the host country, but lack social support and cultural resources such as being able to speak English fluently. It is clear that family life does play a significant role in helping children adapt themselves to their school life in the host country. Thus, the family functions as a key agent in transmitting cultural goods and values to their children while they settle down in the host country.

The key role of family habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) was supported in another study of examining relationship between cultural capital and educational attainment carried out in England. Sullivan (2001) used regression analysis to exam the relationship between parents' cultural capital and students' cultural activities by surveying 557 students in 1998. The author found that there was a significant correlation between parents' cultural capital and students' cultural activities. In other words, Bourdieu's statement that cultural capital transmits from parents to children is supported in this study. The author further found that students' cultural capital composition varied among different social classes; however, this variation of the component of the cultural capital was completely mediated through parents' cultural capital. Again, Bourrdieu's viewpoint that "parental cultural capital is inherited by children" (p. 895) is confirmed in Sullivan's (2001) study.

In my study, I hold that Western scholars' perspectives on approaching immigrant children's schooling experiences via the cultural capital theory can apply to Chinese rural-urban migrant children's educational experiences during China's rapid urbanization process. Furthermore, I see similarities in the peripheral status of Chinese migrant children living in urban areas and Mexican immigrant children in the United States. In particular, both groups are marginalized in the mainstream culture.

There are two major laws related to educating Chinese migrant children. One is the Compulsory Education Law/CEL (*Yi Wu Jiao Yu Fa*). The other is *Hukou* policy (Regulations on Residential Registration of the People's Republic of China).

The Compulsory Education Law (*Yi Wu Jiao Yu Fa*) was originally established in 1986 to ensure the smooth implementation of China's nine-year compulsory education system, which requires that all Chinese children beginning age of 6 or 7 obtain six years of elementary education and three years of junior high school education. The Compulsory Education Law requires parents to send their children to school, beginning at the age of six or seven. However, in some rare cases, families living in rural areas tend to send their child to school late at the child's age of 8 or even 9 to begin the elementary level education. Even the child starts going to school late, the Compulsory Education Law would still require this child to complete 9 years of schooling. Furthermore, the Law strictly defines that it is the parents/legal guardians' obligation to send their child to school. Similar to schooling-zone laws in the United States, a child is supposed to attend a public school within his/her residential place to avoid an extra tuition charge. This schooling-zone requirement is defined specifically by the *Hukou* policy (Regulations on Residential Registration of the People's Republic of China).

Hukou policy was established in the 1950s by China's central government. The original purpose of establishing this policy was to prevent rural people from moving to urban areas. Basically, *Hukou* registered each individual's birth place and birth date. If an individual needed to leave his/her birth place (e.g. a rural village) to go to college or take a job in a metropolitan city, he/she had to obtain relocation permission from the local urban police station. Furthermore, the Compulsory Education Law requires a child to go to a school located within his/her birth place once a child reaches age six or seven if the family does not want to pay additional tuition

fees charged by private schools or schools which are located outside the family's neighborhood . Hence, a child's school site is closely tied to his/her place of origin.

Although the Compulsory Education Law was established in 1986, the core stipulations in this Law still hold up to now. For example, for those children attending their neighborhood schools, the tuition fee is much lower than what a private school or a public school outside of the residential boundary would charge. For migrant children, the Compulsory Education Law adds pressure to paying more fees for attendance in the host city schools because migrant children are not born in urban areas where educational resources are funded locally by the host city governments. If migrant children choose to go to private school or public school which is willing to enroll them, their parents have to pay a *Jiedu Fei* (an additional out-of-province tuition fee) which usually amounts to much larger than the fees paid by local urban residents. The *Jiedu Fei* puts a huge burden on migrant families, leading to decisions that often require the sacrifice of the child's education in place of survival in the host city.

Due to a large influx of migrant families entering the host cities, the Chinese government updated the original Compulsory Education Law in 2005 with an intention of accommodating migrant children's schooling needs in urban areas. In Article (12) of the updated law, it says:

For school –age children or adolescents whose parents are working or dwelling at a place other than their permanent residence, if he(she) receives compulsory education in the place where his(her) parents or other statutory guardians are working or dwelling, the local people's government shall provide him(her) with equal conditions for receiving compulsory education...

According to Xia (2006), the letter and the spirit of the law clearly indicate that it is the local governments' major responsibility of educating migrant children. However, there exists a

wide range of discrepancies in how local governments respond to the new law. For instance, while Wuhan and Shanghai (two metropolitan cities in China) took prompt actions to accommodate migrant children in their local public schools, the Beijing government was slow to take an action to implement the new Law (Kwong, 2003). One Beijing official expressed his concern on who should be responsible for educating the migrant children by stating that: “these parents should think of their children’s welfare, and should not be moving around like that” (p. 1082).

Lack of funding is another factor which makes the new law hard to implement at local levels. According to He & Li (2003), the highly centralized policy-making process is in conflict with the decentralized funding management system. The authors listed Shenzhen city, one of China’s special economic zones adopting the free market economic model as early as in the 1980s as an example: in Shenzhen, there were 297,400 migrant students who did not hold Shenzhen *Hukou* in 2004. If Shenzhen government considered enrolling all of those migrant students into public education system, the government needed to build 118 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, and allocated additional RMB 4.34 billion Yuan (one US. dollar equals 6.67 Yuan RMB) into compulsory education funds. Therefore, the Shenzhen government faced a great deal of pressure in mobilizing this huge amount of funding while more and more migrant workers flocked to Shenzhen. The central government’s good intention of encouraging migrant children to attend local public schools was far from problem solving because the most urgent need to problem solve in Shenzhen was to mobilize enough funds to ensure the policy implementation at local level.

Due to the new law’s fuzzy language in designating sufficient funding and specific assignment of responsibility, many local public schools constantly use *Hukou* policy to prevent

migrant children from entering public schools. In this paper, I use a simplified term of *Hukou* policy (household registration system policy) to illustrate in what way *Hukou* plays its role in migrant children's life in the host cities. *Hukou* literally means household unit in English.

Hukou Policy and its impact on migrant families

China is largely viewed as an agricultural country. According to the Fifth National Census in 2000, among China's 1.26 billion people, 63.98 % of them were rural (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2001). The rural-urban divide of Chinese people is recorded and managed through the *Hukou* policy. The *Hukou* policy is found to be the root of the migrant children's exclusion from public schools in the host cities (Xia, 2006).

Cheng and Seldon (1994) described *Hukou* policy as a system that was "integral to the collective transformation of the countryside, to a demographic strategy that restricted urbanization, and to the redefinition of city-countryside and state-society relations" (p. 644). The key to understanding the *Hukou* policy was state control of its residents' mobility and freedom. This household registration system tremendously restricted individuals' freedom of residential and work choice. *Hukou* policy was also tied to one's access to public services and public goods.

As Cheng and Seldon (1994) observed, "urban areas are essentially owned and administered by the state, and their residents are the state's direct responsibility. The state budget must supply urban areas with employment, housing, food, water, sewage disposal, transportation, medical facilities, police protection, schools, and other essentials and amenities of life" (p. 644). Although the Chinese governments have less restriction on carrying *Hukou* policy by allowing rural surplus laborers to move to cities to fuel China's urbanization process since early 1980s, state control of resource distribution still stays the same. The most significant impact of *Hukou* policy on China's migrant families is reflected from their access to public education resources in

urban areas. According to the *Hukou* policy, the local district's sole responsibility is to educate children who are born in their judicial administration zones; it does not extend its responsibility to those people not registered in their district. Thus, local governments in the host cities have no obligation to provide educational resources to migrant children who have no urban *Hukou*. Since migrant children are not originally born in the host cities, they are usually turned down by the local public schools. Although there is no close connection between the *Hukou* policy and the Compulsory Education Law, "provision of public education in urban areas remains closely related to one's urban *Hukou* status." (Sa, 2004, p.6).

The existence of *Hukou* policy plays a significant role in resource distribution in terms of who has access to the public education. Ngok (2007) stated that: "rural migrants are excluded from the state distribution and welfare regimes such as regular jobs, social security, assisted housing, subsidized education for their children, health care, and social assistance." (p.154). Furthermore, this policy has a strong stigmatizing effect on migrant families' daily lives. Since migrant families do not hold a local *Hukou*, they are excluded from the desirable and highly-paid jobs available to urban residents (Fan, 1999). Instead, migrant workers often take low-paying, labor-intensive, and long hour manual jobs which urban residents are not willing to take. This creates a lowest social stratum within the host cities.

Marginalization

Migrant children and their families constantly feel marginalized in the host cities (Han, 2004; Kwong, 2003; Lu & Zhang, 2004; Ngok, 2007). Several studies done by Chinese scholars reported that migrant families had encountered discrimination at work as well as in public.

Lu and Zhang (2004) found that migrant families perceived themselves as placed in a peripheral social stratification between rural and urban residents. They conducted a survey study of one hundred and fourteen schools in Beijing in 1999. The authors interviewed individual migrant children to learn about their schooling experiences in Beijing. According to their study, a main theme was the extreme poverty experienced by migrant children and its tremendous impact on their attitude towards schooling and life in general (Lu & Zhang, 2004). A migrant child attending local public school stated in his composition that : “ I think when I grow up, I must make a lot of money to take care of father and mother... my family sells vegetables, and although we are poor, I must study hard, excel” (p. 60).

As indicated in the above-mentioned migrant child’s description of his poor life in the host city, the average migrant family’s low-economical status certainly limits migrant children’s educational choice. Meanwhile, the low income of the migrant workers tends to motivate their children to study hard to get out of poverty. According to Kwong (2004), a migrant family has to pay an additional 3480 Yuan (\$535) in addition to the 300 to 400 Yuan (\$60) tuition fee which is charged to every local student if a migrant child is allowed to attend public schools in the host cities. Unfortunately, the average income for migrant families is only about 600 Yuan per month (\$92.30). It is clear that high cost of attending public school prevents migrant children from gaining access to public education offered in the host cities.

Meanwhile, in the traditional Chinese cultures, education is the only way for a person to achieve social mobility. In other words, being able to receive good education is an important indicator to predict one’s future social status. Migrant workers and their children are constantly ridiculed by their urban peers because they are poorly-educated. In her study of migrant schools in Beijing, Kwong (2004) found that local governments viewed the migrant community as “a

source of trouble and believe that because the parents brought the children to the urban areas, the children are the parents' responsibility and not the urban government" (p.1082). Migrant workers have already lived a harsh life, and they want their children to be successful. Huang and Xu's survey study (2006) of over two hundred migrant families in Hangzhou (Hangzhou is a big city in the east coastal area of China) indicated that 72.3% of the surveyed migrant workers wish their children to receive college or above education.

China has a long history in valuing importance of education. When migrant families encounter great difficulties in accessing public education resources in the host cities, many migrant parents have to look for alternative ways to educate their children. In general, migrant workers have two choices. One choice is to pay an additional "education rental fee" (*Jiedu fee in Chinese*) to the public schools and the second choice is to send their children to poorer quality private schools established primarily for migrant children. The first choice is often out of reach for migrant families because public schools charge an extremely costly fee to students who are born outside the geographical area of the school district. Due to the expensive tuition fee charged to non-local residents, a large number of migrant children's schools have been established and developed in the host cities. However, there are a plethora of problems existing in such schools. In addition, local government's unsupportive attitude towards migrant children's schools also complicates migrant students' schooling experiences in the host cities (Ding, 2004 & Han, 2004).

Development of Migrant Children's Schools and Their Problems

There were several survey reports studying the development of schools for migrant children in China. Consistent themes found in those studies were rapid expansion of the migrant children's schools in the host cities, poor quality of the migrant children's schools, and the local

government's ineffective management of these schools. Although there were many problems existing in the migrant children's schools, migrant parents usually strongly supported the existence of this type of schools (Ding, 2004; Han, 2004; Kwong, 2004; Lu & Zhang, 2004; Nokg, 2007). Ding's study listed several reasons why migrant parents supported existence of the migrant children's schools----relevant curriculum, relatively low tuition fee, and school personnel's feeling sympathetic towards "fellow townspeople" (p.14). One needs to be aware that most migrant children's schools are established by migrant workers themselves.

Han (2004) conducted a survey of fifty migrant children's schools in Beijing. The survey report indicated that migrant children's schools were rapidly established after 1997. According to Han, 36% of the surveyed schools had about 100 to 200 students. Eleven of the schools (22% of the surveyed schools) had between 200 and 300 students. The largest migrant children's school had 1976 students. Han further pointed out that in their initial establishment stage in 1993, there were only preschools and three years of elementary schools for migrant children, however, by 1999, junior high schools had been established. The rapid development of the migrant children's schools was reflected not only from the number of the enrolled students but also the increasing number of such schools. Ding's study (2004) of migrant children's schools in Shanghai showed the similar pattern found in Han's report in terms of school's rapid expansion. Ding found that in Pu Dong New District of Shanghai, there existed 59 schools for migrant children in 2002 in comparison to only 11 such schools in 1998 entailing an increase of 436.4%. According to Ding (2004), the first migrant's children school appeared in 1993, and then in 1995, there were three such schools, in 1997, the number increased to 18. In the year of 1998, there were 25 migrant children schools. This rocketing number of migrant children's schools clearly revealed that there was an imperative need for educating migrant children. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of the

migrant children's schools also indicated a large influx of migrant children moving from their rural hometowns to the host cities with their parents. Although migrant children's schools developed in a rapid way, their quality was poor compared to that of public schools in the host cities (Han 2004; Kwong 2004; Lu & Zhang, 2004).

Kwong's (2004) study in Beijing identified the following two salient common problems that migrant children schools were facing: first, the school environment was not safe. Kwong found that many schools were housed in makeshift sheds with poor lighting and inadequate air circulation earning the schools a label of "shanty schools" (p. 1079). This is consistently found in Donohue's study. According to Donohue (2008), "the school consists of several single-story brick buildings; some of the most dilapidated ones are surrounded by corrugated metal with warning signs..." (p. 2). Secondly, the schools lacked qualified teachers. Kwong (2004) further pointed out that: "65 percent of the teachers had no teaching experience in a study of 114 migrant schools in Beijing" (p. 1079).

Poor conditions of migrant children's school were consistently found in Han (2004)'s survey study carried out in Beijing. According to Han, the maximum number of students enrolled in one class was 84. 11.6 % the surveyed schools enrolled more than 70 students in a single classroom. Han also pointed out that the inadequate curriculum in such schools covered only two basic courses of math and Chinese language. Han further stated that even if English and computer skill courses were offered, the school lacked qualified subject teachers and adequate equipment.

Another survey study conducted in Beijing by Lu and Zhang (2004) identified the following three problems existing in migrant children's schools: the first problem is the poor management of such schools. According to Lu and Zhang, a majority of migrant children's

schools in Beijing were not operated legally. They further pointed out that: “these schools operate behind closed doors with very little contact among themselves or, because of systematic barriers, among the schools and Beijing municipality’s educational departments” (p. 78). These schools were operated underground with no one in charge. Similar to Lu and Zhang’s findings about the illegal status of migrant children’s schools in Beijing, Ding’s (2004) study of Shanghai’s migrant children’s schools revealed the same nature of illegal status as that of Beijing’s migrant children’s schools: these schools did not meet Shanghai’s standard for establishing safe private schools. Furthermore, they were neither approved nor examined by the Shanghai government. The second problem was related to the school’s poor funding. Ding listed the migrant students’ low income level as an indicator of the “school problems.” This was probably because migrant children’s schools were operated mainly by private funds such as private donations rather than funding from local governments. The third problem was inadequate teaching equipment in such schools. In their study, Lu and Zhang (2004) found that migrant children’s schools lacked essential teaching facilities and their existing teaching equipments were crude with no school library.

One can see clearly that although migrant children may get access to migrant children’s schools, this special type of school obviously cannot provide a same quality education that public schools can offer to students who are born in the host cities. Poor quality of urban migrant children’s schools is one indicator showing that migrant workers and their children are not able to get adequate education resources through public education in the host cities.

Chinese Scholars’ Perspectives on Migrant Children’s Schooling Problems

Many Chinese scholars and researchers expressed their concern on migrant children's schooling problems from various perspectives. Shen (2006) stated that there were major problems in migrant family education and lack of societal concern about migrants in urban areas. Shen pointed out that migrant parents did not possess any cultural resources and they failed to create a proactive learning environment for their children at home due to their out-of-date family education philosophy. The author further stated that migrant parents ignored the role of family education and did not have a harmonious communication style with school. Shen also viewed migrant children's schooling problems from a child's family environment which was in line with Bourdieu's view on family functioning as a habitus for a child's interaction at school and in society later in his/her life.

Li and Huo (2007) looked at migrant children's schooling experiences from a sociological conflict theory. They pointed out that migrant children were discriminated against in urban schools. This discrimination was reflected from the following aspect: they did not enjoy an equal educational opportunity from the very beginning when they started school, their educational experience was full of unfairness, and there were unfair regulations and disciplines regarding migrant children's education. Furthermore, this unfairness would create a marginalized group in urban society, because their marginalized status in host cities would pass down from generation to generation. Similar to Li and Huo's view, Zhang and Wang (2008) held that there were many societal practices which discriminated against migrant children when they went to school in urban areas. For example, migrant children did not receive adequate educational facilities and resources; migrant families' values and ideology were not recognized by their urban counterparts, which led to an ultimate result of their not being able to obtain an equal educational opportunity in host cities.

Generally speaking, Chinese scholars thought the major reasons for migrant children's schooling problems were the *Hukou* policy, unsound financing system, and societal discrimination (Li & Wang, 2009). Liu (2004) pointed out that the most direct reason that obscured migrant children's schooling experience in urban areas was the institutional barrier. This institutional barrier required migrant children to go to public school within their permanent residential place stipulated by *Hukou* policy. Meanwhile, the decentralized funding channel of compulsory education's financing system also contributes to migrant children's difficult schooling experiences in host cities. The traditional educational resource distribution strategy has influenced migrant children's entitlement to receiving public education. What is worthy of mentioning here is that in China, resource distribution including educational resource is not evenly distributed and in fact urban areas receive more government funding than rural areas. Obviously, the old compulsory education law and *Hukou* policy do not match China's economic reform pace any more when a large number of rural laborers migrate to host cities with their children.

Prior to the mid-1990s, migrant children were discouraged to attend public schools due to the rigid *Hukou* policy. However, as China's urbanization process developed rapidly, the Chinese governments realized the importance of maintaining a rural-urban labor pool. Starting the mid-1990s, a series of regulations on managing migrant children's schooling problems were issued in 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2003 respectively.

Chinese Governments' Policy Responses to Migrant Children's Schooling Problems

The formation of these four regulations issued in 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2003 moved the policy process from unfairness to near fairness, from using abstract and discriminatory language

to sending positive messages via encouraging migrant children to attend public school in urban areas.

The 1996 regulation showed the Chinese central government's initial awareness of migrant children's schooling problems. In this regulation, the government held that only those migrant children who had the capability to learn could attend urban public school. The 1996 regulation carried a discriminatory image of migrant children, by questioning their learning capability.

The 1998 regulation stipulated the 6-month minimal residential period of living in the host cities for migrant children who wished to attend urban public schools. Again, this regulation did not give migrant children full freedom to attend urban public school immediately upon their arrival at the host city with their parents. So the 1998 regulation was far from proactive to migrant children's schooling experiences in urban areas because of this rigid 6-month residential time requirement.

The 2001 regulation expressed the Chinese central government's wish of implementing compulsory education among all children regardless of their *Hukou*. For instance, in the 2001 regulation, the Chinese central government did admit that it was the State's responsibility of ensuring educational rights for all children, however, there was not any clear language in the regulation to define concrete responsibilities and duties among various government branches and local governments in assisting migrant children to obtain access to urban education resources.

Finally, the 2003 regulation is the most effective policy among the others to solve migrant children's schooling problems, because this regulation stipulates concrete responsibilities assigned to various government branches. The 2003 regulation also points out

that it needs team efforts among various government branches to ensure migrant children's smooth schooling experiences in the host cities.

The following paragraphs described key points of each regulation according to its issuing chronological order:

Since 1996, the Chinese government has issued ordinances and regulations in dealing with problems which migrant children have encountered when attending school in host cities. The first ordinance----Temporary Regulations on Schooling of Migrant Children (Trial Measures) was issued on April 2nd, 1996 by the State Education Bureau and the Ministry of Public Security. Two articles in this ordinance were worthy of mention. Article 3 gave the definition of "migrant children" referred to children aging from 6 to 14 years old (or from 7 to 15 years old) and who had the capability to study. One interesting point of this definition lies in the language of "have the capability to study." I view this language as carrying derogatory meaning inferring that some migrant children are not smart enough to attend public school in urban areas. Article 6 pointed out the role of *Hukou* policy which played out in migrant children's educational placement. Article 6 stated that:

For the migrant children who have guardians in their place of origin where their *Hukou* (birth place record and its corresponding house hold registration record) is issued, they must go back to their original birth places to receive compulsory education, if there is no guardian in their original residential places, they shall receive compulsory education in the host city.

From the language of Article 6, one can see clearly that migrant families do not have freedom in choosing their children's educational placement in urban areas due to their rural *Hukou* (rural identity). Fan and Ma (2008) pointed out that migrant children's educational problems were rooted in *Hukou* policy which had created a divide between "urban us" and "rural

others.” This institutional barrier can explain why migrants are discriminated against in urban areas in spite of the future efforts that Chinese government has been making to help them overcome obstacles in their sojourn experiences in host cities.

On March 2nd, 1998, State Education Bureau and Ministry of Public Security issued Provisional Regulations for Schooling of Migrant Children. This ordinance added a new condition in defining migrant children and revealed a power relation between migrant families and local urban governments. Article 2 defined “migrant children and juveniles” as those children aging from 6 to 14 or 7 to 15 years old, who had lived with their parents or guardians in the host city for 6 months or more, and who had the capability to study. One can see that this 6 month residential period brought migrant children’s education a sudden stop once they moved from their rural hometowns to the host cities. One cannot help wondering who is going to take care of these migrant children if they must stay at home for 6 months before applying for public school in the host cities. Article 8 gave the detailed procedure on how a migrant family could approach the urban public education system if the family wished to send their child to a local public school. Article 8 stated that:

For those migrant children who wish to receive compulsory education in the host city, their parents/guardians should receive approval from the county/township-level government where their children’s permanent residential permit (*Hukou*) is issued. Then they can apply for admission to schools which are close to their temporary living quarters in the host city. After the school approves migrant children’s application, then they can be allowed to audit the class.

Again, the *Hukou* policy plays a vital role in migrant children’s educational choices in urban public schools. The language of Article 8 also reveals a certain power relation between migrant families and local urban governments in a sense that migrant families have to receive

approval from two governments ----- their rural hometown governments and urban governments. Education should be regarded as a right to every child according to the spirit of China's Constitution which announces that every citizen has a right to receiving education. However, this 1998 provisional regulation puts migrant families in a subordinate situation in that their children's fate of whether being able to attend public school in urban areas is held in hands of the governments rather than their free choices.

On March 22nd, 2001, State Council issued National Development Program for Children's Wellbeing (2001 to 2010). The major theme of this program was to ensure promulgating nine-year compulsory education comprehensively, ensuring all children's entitlement to receive education, and to basically ensure access of the nine-year compulsory education to migrant children. This program further stated that the governments should take practical measures to guarantee providing nine-year education to orphans, students with disability, and children of migrant workers. From the letter of this program announcement, we can see that the Chinese central government wanted to implement compulsory education among all children. However, children of migrant workers were placed in a same peripheral group as people with disability and orphans. According to the Western tradition in legal studies, people with disabilities are historically discriminated against and thus need more scrutiny when their right is violated. This is the same case as Chinese people with disability. From this, we can make an inference that children of migrant workers must have experienced discrimination the same way as people with disability do in China. The last key idea that this program promulgated was to provide educational opportunity and facility to all children and to ensure educational justice and equity among all children, especially at the compulsory education stage.

In September of 2003, the General Office of the State Council issued a Circular of the Opinion on Bettering Education of Migrant Children. I believe that this is the most important and detailed government document on how to deal with migrant children's schooling problems. This circular spelled out specifically whose responsibility it was, among various government branches, to ensure educational rights of migrant children. For example, the circular stated that:

The host city should be responsible for educating migrant children. The local public schools and local education administration bureau need to establish comprehensive system to ensure and improve migrant children's schooling experience in receiving compulsory education. Local public schools should try their best to enroll migrant children and integrate them into daily school activities treating migrant children the same as local urban students. Schools should enhance communication with migrant children's families and learn about their family condition, help the migrant children overcome psychological barriers and help the migrant children adjust themselves to the new learning environment.

The 2003 Circular is different from any other ordinance in that for the first time, the Chinese central government requires local governments at various levels or different government branches in the same city to cooperate with each other and guarantee not only migrant children's right to receive education but also enhance quality of their schooling experiences in the host cities.

It seemed that the 2003 Circular would meet migrant children's schooling needs in a satisfactory way. However, researchers found that problems still existed in migrant children's schooling experiences in urban areas.

Operationalization of Cultural Capital in Analyzing Migrant Children's Schooling Problems

The current literature continues to describe problems migrant families encounter in the host cities. A number of survey and interview studies were conducted since 1999, but the result of those studies only captured a limited picture of migrant children's schooling experiences either from the policy/law enforcement perspective such as *Hukou* policy and Compulsory Education Law, or from a social exclusion perspective of describing migrant families' marginalized experience in the host cities. Meanwhile, recent government ordinances and regulations issued from the Chinese central government obviously proposed a number of proactive strategies in helping migrant children obtain public education in urban areas. In reality, migrant children still experienced much difficulty in accessing public education resources, having high drop-out rate and poor linkage of education (Xia, 2006).

Wang (2008) indicated that although the Chinese central government had issued "liang wei zhu" policy (this policy means that the migrant children's education should be taken care of mainly by the host city and its public school system), but in reality, migrant families still faced new problems even after the proactive policy had been issued. Wang specifically mentioned that some public schools intentionally refused to enroll migrant children by using excuses such as the school's small-class size teaching strategy or no enough seats for taking any more students. This way, some public schools bypassed the new policy of integrating migrant children into urban public school systems. Some teachers even indicated that they were worried of the declining quality of education if many migrant children flocked to their school.

From the school side, we can see that migrant children were viewed as less ready for attending urban schools. Interestingly, Wang (2008) found that migrant workers' income level, their identity, and high mobility of their job decided their way of choosing educational placement for their children in the host cities. For example, migrant families were less likely to afford the

“hidden fees” charged by urban public schools. Those “hidden fees” included lunch fee, school uniform fee, class activity fee, internet access fee, extracurricular fee, etc. Private migrant children’s schools did not have these many “hidden charges.” Furthermore, urban public schools only enrolled students in fixed terms such as spring and fall. However, migrant children moved frequently with their parents due to their mobile jobs, and thus it was extremely difficult for migrant children to transfer in the middle of the semester when they had to move. In contrast, private migrant children’s schools had a more flexible enrollment date, which matched migrant family’s high mobility life style in the host cities.

Wang’s (2008) analysis of the new problems which migrant children face in their schooling experiences in urban public schools indicates that family background can be a deciding factor in children’s educational experiences. As Wang mentioned earlier, migrant workers move frequently to follow the job opportunities, which means their children have to transfer between schools in the middle of a semester. Urban children do not have this issue due to their parents’ permanent urban residential housing property and stable jobs held in the host city. Family background is highly related to concept of “cultural capital” theory. Therefore, I will apply “cultural capital” theory in my study to investigate and analyze migrant families’ sojourn experiences in urban areas, especially migrant children’s schooling experiences in the host cities.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to fill the gaps in our knowledge identified in the previous chapter, a qualitative multiple-case study design has been adopted in this research. This chapter will explain the conceptualization of cultural capital in the current Chinese society, the rationale for adopting a multiple comparison case study research design, the sampling process, steps taken in data collection and analysis, and development of interview questions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of the rural-urban migrant families who live in Chengdu, China, particularly, the schooling experiences of migrant children who have lived in Chengdu with their parents for at least 6 months. Through semi-structured individual interviews of five migrant families composed of mother, father, a child and five local urban families composed of mother, father and a child, I will focus my study on comparing the home environment and parenting style of migrant children and that of their urban peers in Chengdu.

Conceptualization of Cultural Capital in Contemporary China

Wang (2007) operationalized the concept of “cultural capital” within the current Chinese society by stating that when cultural capital was used to indicate habitus as a way of promoting social production, the concept of cultural capital should be viewed as an examining tool for differentiating class differences in parenting style and the children’s manners and values cultivated within certain family background. My study is based on Wang’s (2007) conceptual framework of defining the concept of cultural capital in a specific Chinese urban environment.

Wang's conceptualization of cultural capital within the current Chinese urban society fits my research purpose well for the following reasons:

First, due to China's urbanization process and adoption of a free market economical model, China has become a society with distinctive class differences or social stratifications. In urban areas, the upper-middle class includes doctors, professors, government employees, etc. These people are permanent residents with property such as houses, owning private vehicles, and holding well-paying stable jobs. A lower social class in urban areas includes laid-off urban residents who may depend on social welfare money or run small family businesses. But their identity is still permanent urban residents because of their birth of origin in the urban areas. The lowest social stratification class refers to rural-urban migrant workers who do not hold urban *Hukou* and come to the host cities seeking job opportunities. Those rural-urban migrants rent apartments in the host city and move along with their unstable jobs. They have no right to vote and they have limited access to public goods and services offered by urban governments. I take the stand that it is these sharp class differences that impact migrant workers' family interaction and parental style in bringing up their children in the host city.

Secondly, education is long thought to be the most important tool to achieve social mobility according to traditional Chinese cultural values. Regardless of one's economic and social status, generally speaking, Chinese parents want their children to receive a good education and attend college so that they can secure a stable and well-paying job for their future success. Therefore, in contemporary China, being able to receive quality education carries paramount meaning in one's future career development. In other words, one's educational credential is equivalent to a pass for achieving social mobility. From this perspective, being able to get access to quality education is "cultural capital" in and of itself.

Guided by these two ideological points of view on what cultural capital means to ordinary Chinese in contemporary China, I specifically seek answers to the two major research questions in my case study:

1) What are some factors influencing local urban families and migrant families' decision of sending their children to receive compulsory education in Chengdu? By asking this first research question, I may find out whether *Hukou* policy is a major factor influencing migrant families' decision of their children's educational placement. I may also find out that migrant families' low income level may be a consistent factor which prevents them from sending their children to urban public school. In contrast, the local urban families may not view money as a deciding factor when they send their children to school. I may find that local urban families are willing to pay a considerate amount of tuition fee to send their children to quality private schools.

2) What does the concept of "cultural capital" mean to local urban families and migrant families? In other words, does cultural capital entail the same meaning to migrant families and their urban counterparts such as taking children to parks at weekend, or sending children to participate in extra-curricular activities in summer time? This second research question is open to many options and the possible answers may intrigue intensive exploration.

Answers to the above-mentioned two major research questions will help bridge the current research gap of examining migrant children's schooling problems from a broader social scope of using the "cultural capital" lens, especially from the migrant children's family background and migrant families' parenting style, and further analyze the problems migrant children face in urban public schools and urban environment at large.

My study is situated under an environment in which China has been experiencing rapid urbanization. Accompanying this process, a new social stratification class of rural-urban migrant workers has appeared in China's urban areas. My previous literature review documented a consistent finding that migrant children in China had constantly encountered difficulties in their experiences of receiving compulsory education in the host cities (Kwong, 2004; Lu & Zhang, 2004; Xia, 2006). Since 1996, the Chinese central government and China's Security Bureau have issued various ordinances and regulations to help solve migrant children's problems in getting access to public education resources in the host cities. Among those regulations, stands out one significant government circular--- the General Office of State Council forwarding the Circular of the Opinion on Bettering Education of Migrant Children from State Education Bureau and Other Departments issued on Sep. 17th, 2003. This circular has made a serial of proactive regulations in helping migrant children attend local urban public schools. However, the pilot study data which I had obtained through phone interviews in the summer of 2009 indicated that there were variations in migrant children's schooling experiences due to varying duration of the migrant workers' residency time in Chengdu, their different economical status, their education level, and other factors such as types of employment and the migrant children's age and grade in school.

Previous Chinese researchers tended to look for aggregate data through survey studies in China's major big cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. To date, there have been no specific in-depth case studies looking at individual migrant families' sojourn experiences in a single medium size city. Meanwhile, "Case studies concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation. They are problem centered, small scale, and entrepreneurial endeavors."(Shaw, 1978, p. 2) The particular group of people studied in my research is migrant workers who move from their rural hometowns to

Chengdu to seek jobs. This group of migrant workers encounters specific problems in the urban environment such as experiencing discrimination and stringent financial situations (Lu & Zhang, 2004). A central problem I am going to examine in my research is to find out why migrant children continuously encounter great difficulties in receiving compulsory education in the host city, especially after the Chinese central government has issued a serial of proactive policies with an intention of helping them gain access to public education resources in the host cities.

Growing up in a marginalized urban environment, migrant children are constantly ridiculed by their urban peers due to their parents' low social and economic status in the host cities. Some schools even falsely hold that children whose parents are vegetable vendors or construction workers have negative influences on urban children if both groups study together (China Yearbook, 2004). Migrant children are found, generally speaking, unable to assimilate and interact with local children. There are a wide range of social problems such as bullying and juvenile delinquency among urban migrant children who live in the cities. Many migrant children encounter great difficulties while trying to adapt themselves to the urban environment (Wu, 2004). My migrant family participants are situated in a complex urban environment where conflict of interest is so visible in their daily life in the host city of Chengdu, China. A qualitative multiple comparison case study approach is most appropriate to explore this complicated social problem of Chinese migrant children's schooling experiences in Chengdu city.

According to Yin (1994), a case study is a design suited to situations in which various variables are embedded in the phenomenon under certain context. My research exploring migrant families' lived experiences is embedded in a social context in which it is impossible to separate Chinese government's policies, China's market- economy reform, China's mass media's attitude towards migrant workers, etc. The case of a migrant family is a finite unit; however, its context

has multiple variables. Therefore, a case study approach can capture all the involved variables and reveal the multiple factors influencing migrant families' lived experiences in the host city of Chengdu.

By comparing the lived experiences of five urban children and those of five rural-urban migrant children, I expect to see their different life style, explore why those differences are in existence, and investigate how the differences impact those children's outlook on schooling and their future life in general. Although Merriam (1998) stated that the inclusion of multiple cases was to enhance generalizability of one's research findings, my intention of conducting a multiple case analysis is not to generalize the lived experiences of migrant or urban families, and in fact, I want to look into whether there is difference of life style between rural-urban migrant children and typical local urban children growing up in upper-middle class families.

Facts about this Study's Research Site-----Chengdu

Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province, is located in the Southwest of China covering an area of 12,390 square kilometers. Up to the year of 2000, the city zone of Chengdu is 208 square kilometers. Chengdu is located inland, 1600 kilometers away from East China Sea and 1090 kilometers away from South China Sea. Chengdu is the major economic, cultural, and political center in Southwest China.

According to Sichuan information website, Chengdu has a population of 12.58 million people including 1.46 million migrant workers as in the year of 2007. The administration divisions of Chengdu are composed of 16 urban districts, 2 counties with 289 towns and villages. Chengdu has established two sister cities with Phoenix, AZ and Knoxville, TN. As in 2007, Chengdu's GDP per capital is RMB 26,527 (about \$ 3790).

Chengdu's rural –urban integration reform (*Cheng Xiang Yi Ti Hua Gai Ge*) started in 2003. Since then, Chengdu's economic development has been growing steadily. According to Chengdu Statistics Bureau (2006), as in the year of 2006, industry and service sectors accounted for 14.1% and 48.9% of GDP respectively. Agriculture only accounted for 7.0% of the total GDP. The combined 63% GDP in service and industry sectors provided ample job opportunities to rural-urban migrant workers. Restaurants, hotels, construction sites, hospitals, shopping malls are common places where migrant workers find their job in Chengdu. Four of my five participating migrant workers used to work or are currently working as construction site workers, restaurant waitress, hospital care-takers, and urban residential janitors. One migrant family owns a private food business. Although Chengdu is not a coastal city like Shanghai or Guangzhou which is the busiest urban area that receives rural-urban migrant workers, there are more than two hundred counties and villages which are near Chengdu and within Sichuan province. Most migrant workers living in Chengdu are from those rural villages close to Chengdu. All of my migrant worker participants come from a rural town or village which is at most a four-hour drive to Chengdu on the express-way.

Sampling Process

My study is a “multiple case study” (Merriam, 1998, p.40). I compared five rural-urban migrant families with five local urban families living in Chengdu. All the ten families were recruited from a social connection network of my father who lives in Chengdu. Purposive sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) method was applied to select participants who are most likely to provide data about the experiences/phenomena which are of interest to me.

In China, it is very difficult to approach participants through government branches or public schools. Chinese people more than likely to avoid sensitive topics related to ethnicity, Chinese politics, democratic reform, etc in Chinese society. For this reason, I intentionally avoided contact with the schools. I recruited my migrant worker participants through my father's trust-worthy friends who are in constant contact with rural-urban migrant workers in Chengdu city. Once my father called those potential migrant worker participants, I made a phone call telling them what my research was about and had a semi-structured interview with them later in their home.

I gained access to the five urban families via convenient sampling procedure (Patton, 2000). All the five urban families live in my mother's neighborhood where a majority of those residents are doctors, business men, school teachers, and government officials. Each of these five urban families has a monthly income of between 8,000 Yuan to 12,000 Yuan (around \$1300 to \$2000). All of them have purchased a house in Chengdu. Three families own a car (Note: in current China, owning a car is not a necessity in ordinary Chinese families' lives). In each family, both parents work and their only child goes to a local elementary school in Chengdu. The five migrant families were recruited from a local construction company's manager who is a former student of my father. I selected these five migrant families through criterion sampling procedure. For example, the monthly income of each family is below 2500 Yuan (about \$ 357); both parents work in Chengdu as migrant workers; each family has at least one child who goes to a local urban public elementary school; each family has lived in Chengdu for at least six months.

Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

After initial contact to each family via phone, I invited the family to a local tea house and later visited the individual's home to conduct my interview. After interviewing the parents, I asked their permission for me interviewing their children. I contacted urban families the same way as I did with the migrant families. After establishing rapport with my participating families, I visited their homes to conduct field observations during the weekend time. It took me four weeks to contact my participants, conduct interviews, and do the field observations. Besides interviewing individual families, I conducted additional field observations in the participating families' homes. Memo writing and note-taking techniques were applied to collect additional data supplemental to the original interview transcripts. Other artifacts examined in my study included migrant children's compositions, parent-teacher exchange journals, and school newsletters to parents.

Given the purpose of my study, I used multiple methods to collect my data including literature reviews, semi-structured interviews, field observations, document analysis, etc. The purpose of my study is to describe rural-urban migrant families' lived experiences, particularly, migrant children's schooling experiences, in the host city of Chengdu, China. Merriam stated (1988) that "the end product of a case study is a rich and 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 29). Via conducting individual semi-structured interviews, I gained insights of the lived experiences of migrant families and their children and local urban families' life routines. Each interview lasted between forty minutes and one hour. All the interviews were conducted at the participants' home in Chengdu dialect. All the interviews were tape-recorded, translated, and transcribed by me immediately after the interviews. I used grounded theory approach to code the transcripts and identify potential preliminary theoretical categories or emerging themes (Charmaz, 2006).

The choice of the grounded theory approach to collecting and coding data was decided by my research questions, along with consideration of the applicability of interpreting the data in a complex social context where my participants were situated. One research question that I asked in my study was: what are some factors influencing migrant families' decision of sending their children to receive compulsory education either in their rural hometowns or in the host city of Chengdu? This research question was not to test or confirm a hypothesis or an existing theory, but to explore participants' life experiences and help the public better understand migrant workers and their children's life experiences in the host city of Chengdu.

Grounded theory approach requires researchers to adopt constant comparative method in the data collection and analysis process (Dey, 1999). One purpose of my interviewing families is to make comparisons of parental roles and family environment between urban upper-middle class families and the rural-urban migrant families. Thus, the constant and concurrent data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) emphasized in the grounded theory approach well fits the purpose of my study.

According to the grounded theory, coding is a defining stage of the data analysis through which the raw data can be connected to each other and generate categories/themes which have explanatory meanings (Charmaz, 2006). My literature review indicated that migrant workers constantly undergo discrimination in the host city and this discrimination finds full expression in their children's schooling experiences in urban public schools (Kwong, 2004). Therefore, the theme of "feeling discriminated" can be viewed as a preexisting theme before the actual data collection process starts. By using the open coding strategy commonly seen in the grounded theory approach, I may confirm this repeated theme of "feeling discriminated" from the raw data

or my participants may tell me a different picture of their own life experiences which do not reveal the theme of “feeling discriminated”.

As my study is designed to explore the lived experiences of a specific social group in urban China, grounded theory coding strategy seems to be a most suitable and practical approach in conceptualizing any possible findings of this study. The grounded theory approach allows researchers to use background assumptions or preconceived ideas to start their initial research journey to look for certain possibilities in their data (Charmaz, 2006). The open coding strategy of the data analysis allowed me to compare the categories constructed from my literature reviews and to explore possible relationships among those categories gained from my transcripts. This way, the data collection and analysis was an exploration process through which the coded categories served as “the building blocks of theory” (Glaser, 1978, P. 55).

Development of Interview Questions

In order to keep consistency of the questions asked to the participating migrant families and the local urban families, a majority of my interview questions remained the same. These questions were developed with a purpose of gaining information on family interaction style, the family’s major way of entertainment during holidays and weekends, and what a typical family week-day looked like in their daily routines. The interview questions were attached at the end of Chapter 5.

As my research was framed within the cultural capital theory, some interview questions reflected on the objective form of cultural capital theory. For example, one question was: “What do you and your child do after he/she is off school during weekdays?” In China, it is a common practice for urban upper-middle class parents to send their children to after-school programs such

as piano lessons, Chinese chess club, ballet lesson, Chinese calligraphy class, etc. Therefore, one aspect of understanding the cultural capital theory in contemporary China is to define concrete content and the tuition fees of the extra-curricular activities that Chinese children participate under a highly competitive educational system in urban China. This way of constructing my interview questions is important in a sense that through asking common and concrete questions about children's spare time and the extra-curricular activities, migrant families would be able to tell me what the concept of "cultural capital" actually means to them without me mentioning the highly abstract academic term of the cultural capital theory.

I also developed my interview questions with stimulation from Lareau's (2003) ethnographic study of twelve racially diverse families across three social classes in North America -----upper-middle class, working families, and poor families. Through intensive observations and actively socializing with a group of nine/ten-year olds and their parents, Lareau and her research team found that there were two distinctive parenting styles between the poor/working class families and the upper-middle class families-----the accomplishment of natural growth approach and the concerted cultivation approach. Furthermore, Lareau argued that race did not play a salient role in children's schooling experiences, and in fact, the power of financial resources, for example, education, shaped behavior of the children and expectations from the mainstream society. Therefore, the concerted cultivation approach practiced in the upper-middle class families benefited their children in the long run and also built a solid foundation for the children to negotiate their space in society for their future success. In contrast, the natural growth approach observed in the poor and working families was not valued by the U.S. schools and society.

Lareau's study on the parenting style among families' from a diverse social class background relates well with Chinese parents' role in their child-raising practices and function of schools in contemporary China. Due to the limited scope and funding of my research, I was not able to conduct an ethnographic study as Lareau and her research team did in exploring family interaction style across American families from a wide range of economic backgrounds. However, via using the cultural capital theory lens, it is feasible for me to compare family environment and parental roles of a limited number of migrant children and that of their urban peers in Chengdu. Many of my interview questions are targeted on obtaining information on the parents' education level, their occupation, and how family members spend their weekend time together, etc.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

In this chapter I will report the findings of my study, first providing a general profile of the participants and then presenting the results of the thematic analysis. Six themes emerged from my research findings: 1) different home environment, 2) rural-urban divide, 3) initial migration experiences full of “Ku” (“hardships” in English), 4) migrants’ motivation for migrating to Chengdu 5) different school practices in admitting migrant children, and finally 6) unequal childhoods (Lareau, 2003). For each theme, I will focus on two particular families, one rural and one urban, but also summarize the findings for all families.

General Information about the Ten Participating Families

I interviewed 10 families: 5 rural-urban migrant families and 5 urban families. Each family consisted of father, mother, and one school-age child. It is common for Chinese couples to have only one child due to China’s one-birth only policy adopted in the late 1970s. However, among the five interviewed migrant families, two of them have two children. Only one child was present at the time of interview. All five migrant families have lived in Chengdu for over ten years. They come from all walks of life: cook, construction site supervisor, hospital custody, and small family business owner. All the migrant children participating in my study go to a local public elementary school in Chengdu. These children have lived in Chengdu with their parents for at least three years. I tried to obtain information on the migrant families’ income level at the time of my interview; however, they either gave me inconsistent information about their income (e.g. the husband and wife marked a different level of monthly income when they filled out a basic demographic information card) or they were reluctant to let me know how much money

they made from their current jobs. I was only able to guess their financial situation by observing their home environment or from indirect inquiry about their plans for future life.

In contrast, I had no difficulty in obtaining information on the urban participating families' income level. The average monthly income of the five urban families ranged from 8000 Yuan (\$1143) to 15000 Yuan (\$2143). Their occupations covered public school principal, bank executive, dentist, accountant, salesman, etc. This places them in the upper-middle class in urban Chengdu. According to what they had told me during the interviews, they lived a comfortable life and enjoyed their life very much.

I interviewed each family separately in their home. Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. The atmosphere of the interview can be described as harmonious and casual. I asked them prescribed questions on the interview protocol and gave them ample time to respond to each question. Their child was allowed to air his/her opinion freely, even though I interviewed them in their parents' presence. I translated and transcribed all the interview recordings and compared the transcripts to see whether there were similarities or differences in the responses of my participants. I found that each family had its unique characteristics, but several themes captured the major similarities and differences.

Different Home Environment

I found there were huge differences between urban children's home environments and those of the migrant children. These differences are reflected in their physical living environment (spacious urban high-rise apartment building units vs. crowded dilapidated migrant enclaves), leisure activities (travelling vs. visiting rural relatives), and family network (supportive and close urban family ties vs. migrant workers' strong obligation to their rural relatives).

Migrant workers' physical living environment can be described as crowded, segregated, and lacking basic household facilities such as warm water and an independent bathroom commonly seen in urban households. In contrast, a typical upper-middle class urban resident's home environment is spacious, fully furnished with upper-scale facilities and nice furniture, and is located in an expensive neighborhood close to the downtown area of Chengdu. One 10-year-old girl named Ling whom I interviewed is from a family of dentists. Ling, her parents, and grandma live in a more than 100-square-meter three-bedroom apartment unit located at the most expensive commercial belt in the downtown area of Chengdu. 80% of the residents in that apartment building are either attorneys or government officials. The family's entire apartment unit is furnished with solid cherry-wood floors, and equipped with a Japan-made bathroom facility. Their huge kitchen is installed with German-made cabinets and sinks. Migrant families' living conditions are quite the opposite.

Ke is a 10-year old migrant child. His parents migrated to Chengdu in 1994. Ke's mother is a cook and his father is an electrician. This nuclear family lived in a 12 by 12 foot basement. Inside the basement room, there were one twin-size mattress and one full size mattress leaning against two walls. In one corner of the wall, there was an old desk computer. On the dusty cement floor, there was an old TV. The room was so crowded that I had to sit on one of the mattresses to conduct my interview with them. During my interview, I could clearly hear people's talk while they were passing down the hall way of the building. After finishing my interview, I left the basement room and happened to see Ke's uncle and aunt cooking stir-fry jalapeño in the hall way area right in front of the entrance of their tiny basement room.

This crowded living arrangement even holds true for a migrant couple, Lian and Jian, who earn handsome money in Chengdu through their tofu-selling business. When I visited this

couple's home, I found that the couple used half of their apartment unit space to store beans, rice powder, potato powder, etc. After my visit with Ke's family, it was no surprise to me that I sat on a mattress in their living room when I recorded my interview conversations with the family. The couple indicated to me that they had bought this apartment unit because it was close to the free market where they both worked as tofu vendors. I cannot imagine how anyone could feel comfortable in doing her/his homework in such a crowded environment. The couple told me later that at least half of the residents who lived in their apartment building were vegetable and meat vendors at the same free market where they sold tofu. Migrant workers' enclave living arrangements and their poor work conditions in the host cities made their social network mainly limited to interacting with their country fellows and relatives. Rural-urban migrants tend to maintain a tight kinship to their relatives in both the host city and their rural hometown (Solinger, 1999). This strong attachment to kinship meant that rural-urban migrant workers' social network is limited to either their country fellow men in the host city or their relatives back in the rural hometown.

Several migrant workers expressed their "guilty" feeling that they were not able to take care of their aging parents back in their rural hometown. They felt a strong desire to fulfill family obligations by remitting money back to their rural relatives. Lau and Huang (2003) indicated that migrant workers' annual remittances to one poor county in Sichuan province were more than 5 times of county's revenue. One migrant worker father named Yan told me that he was the oldest child in his family so he needed to assume responsibility for taking care of his siblings. Yan did hint to me that each month he would remit some money back to his mother and two younger brothers who lived in the countryside. Another migrant worker called Xin working as a cook in

Chengdu told me that no matter how busy she was, she would make time to visit her parents and in-laws in her rural hometown during the Chinese Lunar New Year.

Migrant families seemed to spend much money on their relatives living in the rural hometowns. As one young female migrant worker told me, she needed to earn money so she could remit money home to help cure her father's eye disease. Meanwhile, I did not find this strong family obligation feeling among my local urban resident participants. All five participating young urban couples receive all sorts of support from their parents. For example, Yi, a 37-year-old dentist, lets her mother take care of her daughter Ling. Yi's mother cooks for Yi's nuclear family and is responsible for picking up Ling to and from school every day. Yi's father in law runs a dental clinic. He sponsors his granddaughter Ling's summer travelling every year. Another young urban couple who work for a big bank in Chengdu enjoy a hearty dinner at the husband's mother's house every Friday evening. It is obvious that my local urban participants (all of them are in their middle or late 30s at the time of my interview) have extra money to spend on themselves and their parents are able to provide both financial and psychological support to the young couple. In comparison, rural-urban migrant families' relatives live physically away from them in the backward rural areas and without financial resource even to adequately support themselves. This difference in the family resource/family network among migrant workers and local urban residents leads to differences in children's leisure activities.

I found from my interviews that all the five participating urban children attended at least two extra-curricular activities on weekends. Travelling regularly at school breaks is another characteristic of the urban children's life style. In contrast, there was only one migrant child who attended painting and English classes on weekends. To migrant children, summer and winter

breaks are time for them either to go back to their rural hometown or watch TV, killing time at home. To most participating urban children in my study, their summer time was well-spent in occupying themselves with extra-curricular activities, enjoying weekend outings with their parents, and travelling within China. To have a better understanding of a typical urban child's life situated in a middle-class home environment, let's take a look at the life of the dentist's daughter Ling.

Ling is a 10-year-old 5th grader attending a prestigious urban public elementary school in Chengdu. She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Both of her parents are dentists. Her grandpa is a dentist too. The grandpa runs a private dental clinic in a small town which is one hour drive from Chengdu. Ling's father co-runs the clinic with the grandpa, while Ling's mother Yi works at Chengdu No. 5 Children's Hospital. Ling's parents own two properties in Chengdu and one villa house in an outskirt area of the city.

Born into an affluent family, Ling was enrolled into all kinds of extra-curricular programs early in her childhood by her wealthy parents. Ling started piano lesson when she was only six years old. She has a piano of her own at home. When Ling was three years old, her parents spent an annual 9000 Yuan (about \$1286) to send her to a quality preschool. She started to learn English at that preschool. Before she graduated from the preschool, several administrators from private elementary schools and quality public schools came to Ling's preschool and invited the parents and students to tour their schools. When Ling was five years old, her parents had already decided to send her to a quality public elementary school which was located outside Ling's neighborhood. The cost for Ling to attend this elementary school is a one-time fee of 25000 Yuan (\$ 3573) plus tuition fees and other school activity fees for each semester.

Education is not viewed as a public good any more in contemporary China. Since 1993, China started to establish private schools in coastal areas such as Shanghai and Guangzhou where a large number of private-sector industries or services took shape. Most of these private schools hire native English speakers to teach their students English, a subject highly valued by the Chinese education system. Wealthy parents choose to send their child to this type of private schools with a hope of setting a solid foundation for their child's future academic success. In contemporary China, it is also a trend that upper-middle class parents have a tendency to send their child abroad such as Europe, Australia, and North America for study as early as at a child's junior high school stage. That said, it was no surprise to hear that Ling's parents hired a private tutor in English for her when she was only seven years old.

Ling lives a busy life, attending various extra-curricular activities and travelling during winter and summer breaks. Generally speaking, she is able to take only one day off each week. Ling attends English, Chinese cultures, Chinese reading and composition classes on Saturdays. She goes to piano lesson on Wednesday evenings. She practices playing piano every evening for about 40 minutes. Ling travels frequently in the summer and winter breaks. At the age of ten, she has already visited Xi'an, Hainan, Beijing, Kunming and Xining. All these five cities are famous tourism spots in China. Xi'an is world known for being home to its terracotta men created in the Qin dynasty, a frequent subject included in Chinese children's world history textbooks. Hainan is called China's Hawaii full of beautiful beaches and tropical scenery. Beijing is China's capital city as well as political and cultural center. Kunming is called "spring city" because of its pleasant weather year around and diverse ethnic groups living there. Xining, located in Northern part of China, has a mild climate in summer.

This summer, Ling is going to Shanghai to tour around World Expo. Last winter break, Ling went to Yibin city for three days with her parents and cousins to see “Bamboo Sea”, a state-run bamboo forest resort located in Yibin, which consists of over 500 bamboo-covered hills with an area of more than 120 square kilometers. Ling’s “highbrow” life style of regularly travelling echoes Dimaggios’ (1982) notion of an “elite status culture” being able to afford time and money in traveling every year has certainly become a cultural symbol indicating one’s well-to-do status (“Xiaokang” in Chinese) in the current Chinese urban society.

Ling’s parents have a fixed work schedule from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. At weekends, Ling’s mother Yi helps occasionally in the family dental clinic. Yi enrolled Ling at a local children’s club called “Little Journalist Club” organized by Chengdu Pioneer Youth Committee, a government branch for recruiting future communist party members in China’s primary and middle schools. One major activity organized by this club is to take registered members to museums, parks, and science exhibitions within Chengdu. Ling’s mother shared with me that the average cost of attending such outings was inexpensive only 50Yuan (about \$ 7) for a half-day trip. However, it is safe to say that most urban working families in Chengdu would not regard paying 50 Yuan as a good buy for their child’s outings for only half a day. Obviously, Ling’s family has abundant financial resources allowing her to attend whatever extra-curricular activities she likes. When I asked Yi how she knew about such additional education resources, she told me that one of her friends’ son was a member of the “Little Journalist Club”, that was how she enrolled Ling into this club as well.

Money does play a significant role in what kind of extracurricular activities a child can attend. Mimi, a 9-year-old migrant child, was eager to attend a child’s creative writing club but

her father Yan was not able to afford the 10 Yuan (\$1.43) per session (40 minutes) fee. Here is Mimi's sad story:

Mimi attends a local public elementary school in Chengdu. Mimi's father Yan came to Chengdu in 1995. He met his wife, Cui, at a small restaurant in Chengdu where she worked as a waitress. Yan is currently a construction site supervisor and Cui works as a custodian at a local hospital in Chengdu. The couple owns a small three "bedroom" apartment unit (the total area of that entire apartment unit is only 37 square meters). Yan and Cui rented two "rooms" out to two young couples who were also migrant workers. Yan told me that they used their monthly rental fees to pay off the mortgage. Yan purchased a minivan in 2008 to commute between his workplace and home. After finishing my interview in one sunny afternoon in this April, Mimi offered to escort me back to my home (I live a 7-minute walk away from their home). So I got an opportunity to talk to her more.

Mimi told me that she had never celebrated Children's Day (June 1st) because dining outside was very expensive plus her parents were too busy to spend time in taking her out for dinner or lunch. During one promotion event offered by a private education resource service company, Mimi was able to attend a trial creative writing club activity three times but after the trial participation, she and her father Yan were asked to pay ten Yuan (\$1.43) per session for the remaining classes. Yan thought it was too expensive and did not let Mimi continue to participate in this activity. But Mimi told me that she really enjoyed the activity because she was able to meet other children of her age and teachers gave them goodies in the class. I asked Mimi what she would do on her birthday (Mimi's birthday falls on early May, just one week away from the time of my interview). She said her mother would cook her favorite dish for her stir-fried pork with leek. When I asked her whether they would dine out on her birthday, she indicated that she

had never dined out. Mimi currently did not attend any extra-curricular activity. She got off school around 4:30 p.m. After school, she went home, doing her assignments and then watching TV. In comparison to Ling's family background, Mimi's stringent family financial situation would not allow her to participate in the extracurricular activity which she had enjoyed much.

You may think as long as one has money, his/her child can attend extracurricular activities and benefit from them. Let's look at what Li (an 11 year old migrant girl whose parents run a tofu business in Chengdu city) usually does during weekends and school breaks.

Li's parents came to Chengdu seventeen years ago. Li has an older sister who runs a tofu counter at a supermarket in Chengdu. Li currently attends an urban public elementary school called Sunflower School where 90% of the students are children from migrant families. Li's mother told me that Sunflower School happened to locate in a free market area where lots of migrants stay to run small businesses such as selling vegetables, operating small restaurants, and holding food stands, etc. According to China's school zone law, children living in this market area are qualified for attending Sunflower School, a former public school for urban children before Chengdu city started the urbanization process in the early 1990s.

Li's parents have an extremely busy schedule. They get up at 3:00 a.m. and are off work at 7:00 p.m. in winter or 8:00 p. m. in summer. Since they are in the food industry, they do not have holidays or weekends. Instead, holiday seasons are their busiest times of the year since Chinese holidays are always associated with a variety of food. Li's parents can take only one day off (the day after Chinese Lunar New Year Day). Li's family sells tofu to a majority of grocery stores in Chengdu and they also sell tofu to dining halls of Chengdu's government branches and big companies. Their hard work certainly pays off. Li's parents purchased a two-bedroom apartment unit in Chengdu in 2002. They also own a mini-van. This was their third vehicle by

the time I interviewed the family in April of 2010. With ample financial resources, Li's parents are able to afford to send her to all sorts of extracurricular activities. When I asked Li what kind of extracurricular activities she was participating, to my surprise, Li's mother responded:

Li does not go to any extracurricular activity now. We used to send her to every single extracurricular program which we knew of. We first sent her to Math and Chinese composition clubs, later to a painting class. But she seemed not to enjoy any of them and even never stayed in any program. When she was three years old, we sent her to a private preschool for three years before she started elementary school. The point is that she is not made for schooling, but she is good at doing business (Li's mother smiles when saying this). I could see this from the way she helped us sell tofu at weekends...

We hope she can go to college one day. Her Dad and I will support her to go to school as far as she can go. However, her grade is not so good at all. Her Dad bought books and tapes to help her learn English, but we have never seen her use those books and tapes...

Li just kept silent when her mother made such comments on her not-so-good grades. Li further told me that she wants to help with her family business like her elder sister does. When I asked Li's parents whether they were able to supervise Li's study, Li's mother responded:

It is impossible for us to tutor her study. I went to elementary school for only four years without graduating from it. Her Dad went to a rural junior high school. Furthermore, we are too busy and we do not have time to tutor her

Li's family is a typical example showing that although a family has enough economic capital, they may not have sufficient knowledge, time, and a decent level of education to help with their child's study even at the elementary school level, as in this particular case. Obviously,

Li's parents do not have cultural capital such as knowing where to look for resources to motivate their daughter Li to learn. Li's parents' busy work schedule as tofu vendors in Chengdu also determines that Li could not travel intensively as Ling does even though her parents are able to afford travelling expenses. The bottom line is that Li seems to lose at the very beginning by attending a migrant children's school in comparison with the dentist's daughter Ling who is born in Chengdu and has parents who know all the educational resources around Chengdu.

Furthermore, Ling's parents make time to supervise Ling's piano lesson practice and put much effort in driving her around to attend Math, English and Chinese culture extracurricular programs on weekends. Ling has a positive outlook towards school life and seems to enjoy it. When I asked Ling whether she liked her tight schedule, she smiled naughtily and responded: "I am used to this busy schedule already. I felt I lived a fulfilling life." In contrast, when Li encountered low motivation in learning, her parents showed a helpless attitude by indicating their busy work schedule and low education level. However, Li's parents were proud in telling me that Li was capable of doing business. Li's parents' incapability of motivating Li to learn seemed to be common among migrant families due to low education levels of migrant workers and their busy schedules for making ends meet in urban areas.

In my pilot study conducted in the summer of 2009, one migrant worker grandfather shared with me that his 15-year-old grandson Miao did not like going to school at all. After finishing junior high school education in 2008, Miao decided to help his parents sell vegetables at a local vegetable market in Chengdu. When I asked the grandfather what he thought of his grandson's decision of not continuing education after graduating from junior high school, he responded: "It all depends on him. If he does not want to study, we cannot force him. Even his previous teacher encouraged him to go to high school but he did not want to go to school. We

cannot do anything about it.” This grandpa seemed to take a “natural development approach” of raising his grandson as described by Lareau (2003).

Rural-urban migrant families’ possession of less cultural and economical capital made their children less likely to attend extra-curricular activities in the host city of Chengdu. In my study, I also found that there was an artificial urban-rural divide between local urban residents and the migrant workers and their families. In other words, in the host city, migrant families belong to neither rural residents nor urban residents; they are like an invisible social class living in their own enclave in the host city of Chengdu.

Rural-urban Divide

I found there existed an obvious “insiders/us” vs. “outsiders/them” divide between local urban residents and rural-urban migrant workers. My participating urban residents and migrant workers use “us” and “them” in their conversations with me indicating that they do not belong to each other’s social circle. It is true that migrant workers are allowed to live in the host cities temporarily for their transit work, but when we look at their living and work environment, we can see that they live in a completely different social space (*habitus*) from that of their urban residents’ life. All the five participating migrant workers’ jobs are similar in nature in a sense that almost all those jobs are labor-intensive, low-skilled, poorly-paid, and a few of them even potentially hazardous, which urban residents are not willing to take. In comparison, local urban residents would not want to take poorly-paid jobs probably because they have more choices by having enough financial support to take time in searching for a desirable job, and since they have families and friends nearby for support. As Sonliger (1999) pointed out, the undesirable jobs that migrant workers held in the labor market put them in an inferior position in urban society. Meanwhile, migrant workers are constantly viewed as a source of “urban crowdedness” and

“intensive job competition” as expressed by the participating urban families in my interviews. Mei, a 41-year-old female personal banker attributed Chengdu’s “crowdedness” to migrant workers’ large influx of migration to Chengdu. Here is Mei’s story:

Mei and her husband Zhang work for a major bank in Chengdu. They live an upper-middle class life. Their daughter Niu attends a private boarding elementary school in Chengdu. The couple seldom cooks at home. They receive free breakfast and lunch at their work place’s dining hall. The couple dines out every day at dinner time. They pick up their daughter Niu on Friday afternoons and then the entire family would drive to Zhang’s mother’s house to have a family meal. On Saturdays and Sundays, they either drive to Chengdu’s outskirts for a one-day trip or Mei takes Niu to visit museums, watch movies, go to shopping malls, etc. Mei and Zhang own two housing properties in Chengdu and one Japan-made sedan. Their daughter Niu travels every summer. Last year, Niu and her classmates went to Singapore for seven days. This summer, she is planning to visit Xi-an, a well-known ancient city where terracotta army men were unearthed. This sounds like a happy and affluent family. However, I was much surprised when Mei told me how much pressure she had felt when finding herself surrounded by so many people. According to Mei, migrant workers are the “so many people” who have directly caused Chengdu’s “over-crowdedness.”

When I asked Mei how she thought of migrant workers’ move to Chengdu in recent years, she responded:

I think the development of Chengdu needs those migrant workers but I also feel that a large number of migrant workers’ coming to the city brings inconvenience to our life. For example, I had a hard time to get on the bus after I am off work around 5:30 p.m. every day. The problem now is not about traffic jam any more but about the fact that there is

no way I can get on the bus because there are often at least 5 or 6 layers of people waiting for the bus in the downtown area between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. I feel surrounded by people everywhere when I go shopping or dine out. Before, I felt Chengdu was a relaxing leisure city, but now I feel it is too crowded and Chengdu becomes a city without convenience. I also feel depressed when seeing so many people around me.

Mei seemed to be very concerned about Chengdu's "crowdedness." Furthermore, she believes this "crowdedness" is brought by the migrant workers who flock to Chengdu city to seek job opportunities. Another young local urban resident called Hong working for Chengdu Grid views migrant workers as adding competitiveness to the already tight job market in Chengdu.

Hong is a 36 year old government staff working for Chengdu Grid. Her husband Gang is an airport shuttle driver. Hong and Gang have a 7-year-old daughter called Lan. The family owns a sedan and a 3-bedroom apartment unit in the Northern part of Chengdu city. Like the typical work schedule of government officials, Hong works from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Gang works for 24 hours per shift. After one shift, he takes two days off. Therefore, he works for only ten days each month. The young couple, together with their daughter Lan, lives with Hong's parents. Hong's parents cook and do other house chores for the couple while they are at work. In China, it is common to see a young married couple live with their aging parents due to expensive urban housing and the couple's busy work schedule. In addition, most Chinese grandparents are happy to live with their married children and enjoy taking care of their grandchild.

From my conversations with Hong and Gang, I found that they both enjoyed their life in Chengdu and had easy-going personalities. Hong and Gang told me that at their work place,

there were many migrant workers but they never developed friendship with each other beyond their working relationship. When I asked the couple what they thought of migrant workers' migration to Chengdu, Hong responded:

At work, we have co-workers who are from the nearby countryside areas of Chengdu. Their salary is quite low and just enough for making ends meet, but we purchase health insurance for them. They do not have housing property as we do. I also feel that once migrant workers come to Chengdu, the competition of seeking a job becomes fierce. However, since I already got a job, I really do not care about that much.

Hong's husband Gang added:

Over 60 to 70 percent of the employees in my work place are from outside Chengdu. I get along with them. People in Chengdu are very tolerant of outsiders and we do not discriminate against them. As you know, in Shanghai, people in Shanghai discriminate against migrant workers. We are not like those Shanghainese. Chengdu people are very tolerant...

Gang's comments on typical Shanghai residents' discriminating attitude towards migrant workers are consistent with Feng, et al.'s survey (2002) findings that rural-urban migrant workers are segregated from local urban residents. Feng, et al. further argued that the social divide between urban and rural areas in Shanghai may contribute to "the formation of a dual society in urban China" (p., 520).

It was interesting to see Hong and Gang deliberately emphasized Chengdu people's "tolerance" of migrant workers, but meanwhile Hong thought migrant workers came to the city to grab "their" (local urban residents') rice bowls. It is obvious to me that there is a certain boundary between urban residents and migrant workers in the host city of Chengdu. Among the

five migrant families with whom I had interviewed, none of them claimed that they had made friends with local Chengdu residents either. One 12-year-old migrant girl called Hua even used the word “disturbance” to describe the far distance between her family and her urban neighbors. Here comes Hua’s story:

Hua is currently a 5th grader at Sunflower School. She is going to graduate from elementary school in this September. Hua’s parents migrated to Chengdu in 1993. They run a clock/watch-fixing store in downtown area of Chengdu. Hua has a younger brother called Jun. Jun is eight years old and attends the same school where Hua goes. Hua, Jun, and their parents live in a rented two-bedroom apartment unit located in a vegetable and meat market in the downtown area of Chengdu.

Hua’s father Ren is thirty-four years old. He came to Chengdu when he was only seventeen. Ren learned how to fix watches and clocks from his brother-in-law who came to Chengdu in 1991. At the age of twenty-one, Ren opened his own clock/watch fixing store in Chengdu. I visited their store once. It was tiny with an area of about 12 square meters. Ren told me that his store had never moved. He and his wife Luo have run this family store for almost thirteen years. I feel that Ren and Luo must have stable financial resources; otherwise, it would be very difficult to raise two minor children in an urban area such as Chengdu. Ren and Luo have a fixed work schedule from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day. Luo indicated that most of their customers were local urban residents. When I asked Luo whether she and her husband made friends with them, she said no.

I further asked the couple’s daughter Hua about how she had felt about her urban neighbors, this 12-year-old girl responded wittily: “We do not know any urban neighbors here. After we get home, we all close our doors. We do not disturb each other.” Hua’s mother Luo

added later: “Our personalities are easy-going. We do not fight with others for getting our own benefits so we get along with urban people.”

It was interesting to see that urban people use the word “tolerance” to describe how they feel generous about migrant workers’ moving to Chengdu. Then this migrant family used the words “easygoing” and “do not disturb each other” to indicate they really “get along” with their urban peers. It is obvious that although migrant workers and urban residents live in the same city, Chengdu, they live separately in their own life circles.

This rural-urban divide translated to migrant children’s lives is shown through their attending segregated schools in Chengdu. Three out of five migrant families in my study send their children to Sunflower School where 90% of this school’s students are migrant children. The other two migrant children went to an urban public school near their living quarters. However, four out of five local urban children attend private school. One urban child goes to a quality public school outside her neighborhood after her parents pay an excessive “school selection fee” of 25000 Yuan (\$ 2851). The Sunflower School is located near a vegetable and meat market. Before the market was established, a majority of its students were local urban children. However, after the market was established in the middle 1990s, a large number of migrant workers sought job opportunities in this market and they brought their children along. Now Sunflower School has earned a reputation as “a school for migrant children.”(*Nongmin gong zidi xiao*).

I would assume there was an “urban flight” when local urban residents saw the increasing number of migrant children enrolled at Sunflower School. Otherwise, it was impossible for this urban public school to reach a 90% enrollment rate of migrant children; especially because Sunflower School was originally established as a public school near the downtown area of Chengdu. Sunflower School is not viewed as a quality public school in local urban residents’

eyes and even in some migrant workers' eyes. Ironically, one migrant worker mother named Xin was willing to pay a school selection fee of 5000 Yuan (\$714) to send her son to a better quality public school when her son was randomly assigned to Sunflower School due to the school zone law. Here is Xin's story:

Xin and her husband Tang came to Chengdu in 1994. Xin now works as a cook in a construction company, and Tang is an electrician. They have a 10-year-old boy called Ke. Xin, Tang, and Ke live in a basement room. The room is very small with no bathroom or kitchen inside the basement. I considered Xin to be eloquent given her limited junior high school education level. Like many migrant workers, Xin and Tang had experienced many hardships when they first moved to Chengdu from their rural hometown. Xin came to Chengdu in 1994, first working as a fruit vender. Before Tang received his electrician certificate, he worked various manual jobs such as porter, gardener, and driver.

I was surprised in finding out that Xin and Tang chose to send Ke to a quality public school called Willow School located outside their residential neighborhood. Ke was originally assigned to attend Sunflower School, but Xin told me that they would never want to send Ke to that school "because that school was full of naughty migrant children." I was amazed to see that Xin deliberately avoided sending Ke to Sunflower School even though Xin and her husband are migrant workers themselves! I was intrigued to want to know why the couple decided to do so. Xin gave me the following reasons:

The quality of Willow School is much better. We paid one-time nonrefundable deposit of 5000Yuan (\$714) for the "school selection fee." Most important of all, my son likes Willow School. We took him to visit three schools including Willow School. We also considered the class size when making a decision. The average class size at Sunflower

School is 60 students per class, but at Willow School, only 30 students per class.

Sunflower School has too many naughty children. When we visited Sunflower School, we saw several students climbing on the school building wall. I want my son to enter a good junior high school in Chengdu in the future, so we are willing to pay extra school selection fee to put him in a better quality elementary school as a good start.

Unlike other migrant children participating in my study, Ke attends two extra –curricular programs. On Saturday mornings, he goes to Chinese composition classes. On Sunday afternoons, he takes English class. When I asked Ke whether he liked those programs, he responded positively that he liked to learn new things and played with his peers in those classes. I asked Xin how come she knew about all those programs. She told me that one of her urban co-workers sent her son to the English classes. At the end of our conversations, Xin especially expressed her hope of wanting to send Ke to college, so he would earn good money in White-collar profession and not like her and her husband in the poorly-paid manual jobs.

In the traditional Chinese cultures, education is regarded as an important factor influencing one's social mobility. Generally speaking, the more education that one receives, the more likely he or she will achieve a high social status in society. Xin is a unique migrant mother in my study in a sense that she is determined to provide a better education environment to her son. She also invested her limited resource to her son's education. Xin was the only mother among all other migrant worker parent participants who made the voluntary decision of paying the extra school selection fees to send her child to a better school. Xin's story is far from typical though. In urban residents' eyes, migrant children do not have good family education and their parents do not know how to discipline them (D. Wang, April 22nd, 2010, personal

communication). Qiang, an urban public school principal, shared with me about what he thought of migrant parents and their children. Here comes Qiang's story:

Qiang is 40 years old. His wife named Ping is a senior accountant at a local tobacco company in Chengdu. They have a 12- year-old son who goes to a private school near their neighborhood. Due to his work as a school principal, Qiang shared with me about his interactions with migrant students and their parents at his school:

In my school, over 80% of the students are migrant children. Their *Suzhi* (in Chinese, this word means a person's education level, mannerism, and personality, etc.) is not good. That is why some urban families do not want to send their children to my school being with those migrant children. In my school, the average class size is 50 students per class. Many children do not have good study habits. Some wealthy parents just send their children to a private school in our neighborhood. The class size at that private school is only 20 students per class. Furthermore, there are differences between migrant worker parent group and typical urban families-----migrant worker parents either do not want to come to school or they do not pay much attention to their children's school performance. The way they dress is rude. Last semester, one migrant worker father showed up in a parent-teacher meeting without his shirt on! When our teachers approach the migrant worker parents, they view us as trouble-seekers. Secondly, they seem not to have time to learn about their children's performance in the school.

What is worse, many migrant children just come to school to kill time, and they do not submit their assignment no matter how hard our teachers push them to do so. Their parents do not know how to deal with their children's bad study habit either. Such things rarely happened among my urban students while I was teaching science class to 4th

graders last year at another public school where a majority of my students were urban children.

Qiang is not alone in viewing migrant worker parents as less interested in their children's school performance. One of my former college friends, working as a biology teacher at a public junior high school, told me that she simply did not believe migrant worker parents were really concerned about their children's academic performance because they themselves did not finish junior high school (Rong Liu, personal communication, March 16th, 2010). It is a fact that generally speaking migrant workers have a lower education level than that of local urban residents. The average time length of schooling that my urban resident participants received is 16 years. In contrast, the average time that my migrant worker participants received is only 7 years. During my interactions with those migrant families, I do believe that besides migrant workers' limited education level and their busy work schedule, they tend to face bigger pressure in making a living in the host city than their local urban peers who hold well-paid jobs, have sufficient family support, and manage a less crowded work schedule. It is safe to infer that when a family has to struggle daily in making ends meet, this family would less likely consider other things in life as their priority, such as meeting a child's schooling needs.

Initial Migration Experiences Full of “Ku” (hardships)

Urban residents have little understanding of the lives of migrant workers, because of the social and cultural divides between the two groups. All my participating migrant families used the word “Ku” (hardship in English) to describe their initial migration experience to Chengdu. Although four out of five migrant families had relatives coming to Chengdu prior to their migration, they told me that they largely depended on themselves upon their arrival in Chengdu.

The couple running a tofu business shared with me that the husband's brother would not tell them how to make tender tofu because he was afraid that once he and his wife learned this skill, he would lose the advantage of earning money in the tofu-selling market. Another migrant worker couple shared with me that they stayed in the wife's sister's rented apartment for only two nights before they found a basement to stay in the Eastern outskirts area of Chengdu. Since migrant workers' social network is limited to migrants from the same part of the countryside, and their relatives themselves are also struggling in the host city, the help that migrant workers could receive from their relatives/friends in Chengdu is minimal. With the limited or even no social network in the host city, no doubt, migrant workers' initial migration experience in a new urban environment is full of hardships.

Those hardships include being separated from their family members, worrying about their job uncertainty, making new adjustments to the host city, and encountering difficulty in finding an affordable apartment in the host city. In order to set their foot in the urban environment, migrant workers tend to take whatever job which comes their way when they first arrive in the host city. Those jobs are often poorly paid and require long hours. To save every hard-earned penny, some migrant workers are willing to live in make-shift accommodations. One young migrant worker told me that she and her husband used to live in an elevator chamber room. Now the couple moved to a basement. A young migrant woman named Xue who had come to Chengdu to join her husband shared with me their initial experience of living and working in Chengdu.

Xue is young, stylish, and loves to talk. At the age of 30, she is already a mom of an 8-year-old boy named Dong. Xue moved to Chengdu in 1999 to join her husband Ding. Ding came to Chengdu two years earlier than his wife's arrival time. Ding currently works as a construction

site supervisor. It occurred to me that Xue and Ding lived a financially secure life. The couple purchased a 3-bedroom apartment unit with a total area of 86 square meters. They bought a Japan-made sedan in 2008. Their only son Dong goes to a local public elementary school. Dong's grandma came to Chengdu to live with this nuclear family in February of 2010. The Grandma now takes care of Dong. She sends Dong to school every morning at 8:00 o'clock and goes to pick him up at 4:30 p.m. Xue had stayed at home since Dong's birth in 2002. She just returned to the labor force two months before I interviewed her and her family in May of 2010. Xue explained to me that she had to stay at home for a while because Dong was too little at that time. During the interview, I found it difficult for me to connect Xue's current stable financial situation with her description of how hard she and her husband had tried to save money by living in a booth at a construction site located in the Eastern part of Chengdu.

When my husband first came to Chengdu in 1997, his salary was not so good. He got paid at only 600 Yuan per month (about \$85.40). His job was to supervise construction site work at a local construction company. He lived in a construction site booth. The booth was built with plastic and oil-paper cloth. Inside the booth, it was cold in winter and hot in summer. I did not come to Chengdu at that time. By the time when I joined my husband in 1999, he changed to a different construction company. He was paid 1000 Yuan (\$143) per month in that new company. Because of my arrival, we rented an apartment unit close to his work place. Later, when the building which he was supervising took shape, we decided not to rent that apartment unit anymore and moved together into the construction site booth again. We did this on purpose in order to save the monthly renting fee of 300 Yuan (\$43). (Note: A construction site booth provided

only basic facilities for a household: cold tap water and a small water closet (the toilet and shower facility combined together)

When I looked at Xue's bright-red lips and her stylish navy blue miniskirt, I couldn't image she used to live in her husband's construction site booth for almost two years. When some urban residents complained about migrant workers' grabbing their rice bowls, they probably did not know how much sacrifice that those migrant workers had made to find their niche in the urban society. I wondered what had motivated those migrant workers to come to the urban area and especially what had encouraged them to stay in the city even though their initial migration experience was full of hardships and uncertainties. I found two major reasons for migrant workers' moving to the host city: one is to "earn money" and the other is to "learn new things and skills." The latter reason is more commonly seen among younger migrant workers who have relatively higher education level than the older -generation migrant counterparts do.

Motivation of Migrating to Chengdu

According to migrant family participants in my research, a backward economy and cruel living conditions were the two major reasons that they decide to move to the host city of Chengdu to seek job opportunities. Several migrant worker participants indicated that their villages were so poor that there was only one school within one commune in their village. My findings also revealed that the poor quality of rural schools was one important reason that migrant workers brought their children along to the host city so that their child could benefit from better facilities and quality education offered at urban schools. However, it took a long process for migrant children to be able to attend urban public schools due to the institutional barrier of the *Hukou* policy (Xia, 2006).

All the five migrant families participating in my study indicated that they came to Chengdu because “there were more opportunities in Chengdu for earning money.” As a peripheral group in urban areas, migrant workers’ road of making a living in the host city is not an easy one. To earn more money, it is common to see migrant workers hold several jobs at the same time to make ends meet in the host city. Minimal pay and long working hours are the two most salient factors of their work conditions that I found from interviewing my migrant worker participants. One migrant mother called Cui told me that she was forced to work as a very busy baby-sitter with low pay when she first arrived in Chengdu because she “needed money badly” to support her family back in her poverty-stricken rural hometown. Cui shared her story with me:

I get up at about 6:00 a.m. every day to prepare breakfast for the entire family. I make fresh steaming- bun from scratch, stir-fry peanuts, and simmer rice porridge. This would take me at least one hour. After the child finishes his breakfast at 7:40 a.m., I need to walk him to school before 8:30 a.m. and then come back to eat my breakfast. After I finish my breakfast and clean up the dishes, it would be about 9:30 a.m. Then I have to head for the free market to do grocery shopping and preparing lunch and dinner for the day. It takes me one hour to finish grocery shopping. I start cooking lunch at 11:00 a.m. The child’s grandparents love to eat vegetables, so I have to cook at least two or three vegetable entries for each single meal. After the lunch, I started washing dishes, cleaning up the house, mopping the floor, dusting the furniture, etc. At 4:00 p.m., I walk to school again to pick up the child. At 5:00 p.m., I start cooking dinner before the child’s parents get off work between 6:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. We often have dinner around 7:00 p.m. I only get a couple of hours off in the evening. However, in the summer, I hand wash the entire family’s clothing. So in the summer, I would work even longer hours in the

evening time. Sometimes, I wanted to quit my job, but whenever I think of the debt my mother owes to the hospital, I would keep working although I feel so tired every day...My family needs money and I have no other choice...

Cui's story is typical among many migrant workers, especially for those who just moved to host cities and were not familiar with the new urban environment. Her husband Yan shared with me: "We just took whatever job we could find in order to earn money when we first got here." Yan moved to Chengdu in 1996. His first job in Chengdu was to move bricks from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. every day at a construction site. At that time, he earned only 25 Yuan (\$3.57) per day. It is a fact that all the migrant workers' original purpose of moving to Chengdu is to better their life via seeking work opportunities. However, some younger migrant workers did mention that they found their sojourn experiences had made them turn into well-rounded people. To younger rural-urban migrant workers, "earning money" is not the only incentive for them to stay in the host city; living an urban life, learning new skills, and enriching their life experiences are also important reasons for their stay in the host cities (Luo 2007; Wang, 2001). One young migrant worker mother called Xin shared her migration experience with me:

Moving from my rural hometown to Chengdu really turned me into a well-rounded person. Of course, I had encountered many hardships in Chengdu, especially for the first two years after my moving to Chengdu. However, I have learned many new skills. I initially was a fruit vender when I first came to Chengdu in 1994. After over 10 years of staying in Chengdu, I had learned how to do gardening work from my husband, how to baby sit, and now I work as a cook cooking meals for 20 plus people. I learned cooking by myself. Thinking back, I never cooked a single meal at home when I was in my hometown. My mom always cooked for me. Now, if I am given any job opportunity, I

can learn the new skill pretty quick. As long as you are willing to learn, I am sure you would be able to take any job when an opportunity comes along your way...

Xin's confidence of learning new skills in the host city indicated that migrant workers faced both challenges and opportunities in adjusting themselves to the new urban environment. Meanwhile, her positive attitude of "willing-to-learn" certainly set her at an optimistic mental mindset to compete in the local urban labor market. Maybe because of Xin's positive outlook of her sojourn life in Chengdu, her husband Tang had learned how to do gardening work, driving commercial trucks, and he even self-taught himself knowledge of electricity-installation. Now he is a licensed electrician. Another motivation factor that I found out from my participating migrant workers was their wish to provide their children with a better education in the host city. It surprised me that when some urban school teachers complained about migrant workers' indifference to their children's schooling, I knew this was not a true picture. Xin told me that: "earning money was important but it was more important in taking good care of my son Ke." She further shared with me:

It is better for Ke to attend school in Chengdu. In our rural hometown, there is only one school in each commune, which means children have to walk at least one hour for a single trip from home to school. We do not have good transportation in the countryside...

When I was young, I loved to go to school. But my family was too poor to support me to attend senior high school. I did not want this same thing to happen to my son again. Now my financial situation was much better than when I was a child, so as long as I can afford it, I will make sure my son receives good education. Even until now my father still felt regretted that our family was too poor to send me to high school. But I

would not blame my father. It was not him who did not want me to study but it was because we were too poor at that time...

Xin certainly wanted her son to receive quality education and she also viewed schooling in urban areas as a better choice than that in the countryside. Cui, another migrant worker mother told me the similar point of view regarding urban public schools being a better choice than rural schools. She shared with me that “the study environment in Chengdu’s schools is much better than that in the countryside schools. Here in the city, there are quality teachers.” Since all my participating migrant children attend public school in Chengdu, I was interested in finding out why their parents send them to a particular school in Chengdu. Responses to this question have not much variance: “This school is close to our living quarter,” “my child was assigned randomly to this school by computer system operated by the local education bureau,” “this school is not expensive,” or “urban public school is much better than the school in our rural hometown.”

To my surprise, but in a nice way, all the participating migrant workers in my study did not list “high cost” as one factor influencing their child’s schooling experience in the host city of Chengdu. I learned from them that the Chengdu government had opened its door to support migrant children attending local public school within their residential area since the year of 2000 (Q. Gan, personal communication, May 17th, 2010). Intrigued by the Chengdu government’s positive attitude towards migrant children’s schooling in Chengdu, I asked all my migrant worker participants about their interaction with teachers and administrators in their child’s school. It occurred to me that different schools had different practices when it came to migrant children’s enrollment procedure. Some schools require migrant families to show more paper work to the school administration than other schools. Other schools, such as Orange Garden School, ask migrant families to show paper work repeatedly in the beginning of every fall

semester when school starts. Orange Garden School and Red Star School were two schools that I looked at closely. Although I did not visit these two schools in person, I obtained information on these two schools' enrolling procedure for migrant children from two reliable participants: one is a school principal (I called him Qiang) at Red Star School; the other is a migrant worker mother called Xue who had some unpleasant experiences when enrolling her son at Orange Garden School.

From my interviews, I found that migrant families seldom mentioned "*Hukou*" as an obstacle to their children's getting access to public school in Chengdu, however, they did indicate that they needed *Hukou* to register their child to a public school randomly assigned by Chengdu Education Bureau. One migrant worker father used the word "complicated process" to describe his experience of gathering all relevant paper work to enroll his child in a local public school, while two others expressed that the enrolment process was a smooth one for them, and another migrant worker mother hinted that his son's school still used Chengdu *Hukou* as a potential tool for gouging out extra tuition fee charges from her pocket. One interesting thing is that from one school personnel's point of view, he believes that the school has tried its best to enhance migrant children's education experience in the host city. However, among migrant worker parents, there are split feelings: some feel satisfied with their child's school practices; while others view the school as a potential money solicitor. Here are some highlights indicating the various school practices:

Various Enrolling Experiences of Migrant Children in Local Public School

Qiang, an urban resident who is also a public school principal shared with me about his school's procedure in enrolling migrant children:

In the recent year, the policy is more relaxed for migrant children coming to urban schools for study with some limitations. There is a process of accommodating migrant children's schooling needs in the urban areas. The school that I am currently working for has enrolled a large number of migrant children. And actually 80% of the students in my school are from migrant families. My school is located at a shoe-making industry area where many migrant workers work and live. Those migrant workers believe they have made contributions to Chengdu's economic development, therefore their children should be treated the same as local Chengdu children being treated. They sent this message to the local government. Previously, migrant families had to pay extra tuition fees. Later, the government pays attention to their needs.

Between 2004 and 2005, the government took action in banning public schools' practice of charging migrant families extra tuition fees and issued a new policy indicating that as long as the migrant family satisfied the following three criteria, they may apply to the local public school without paying extra tuition fees. These three paper proofs are a) a temporary living permit issued by the local community committee or police bureau in Chengdu, b) either parent is from the countryside. This information can be confirmed from their *Hukou*, and c) the most important one, a local labor contract or the permit for running business in Chengdu.

In 2004, when we first opened our door to migrant children in our school district, there was certain chaos. Some migrant workers even showed us fake paper work. For instance, one young migrant worker showed me a photo-copied work contract signed probably by his fellow country man. However, we still tried our best to enroll the

qualified migrant children. They can only apply to the school where their living quarters are located at...

We can see clearly, from Qiang's description that his school has tried its best to accommodate migrant children's schooling needs in the host city of Chengdu. But some migrant workers seemed to take advantage of this policy by showing fake paper work to the school. However, one young migrant worker mother named Xue told me that she was asked by her son's school to show the paper work in every fall semester so her son could attend the school without paying extra tuition fees. Xue viewed this redundant requirement of presenting the paper work to the school every single year as the school's deliberate intention of trying to get money from her. Here is Xue's story:

My son went to school in the fall of 2008. Since we had purchased a housing unit here in Chengdu, we were granted a Chengdu *Hukou*, and we did not need to pay any extra tuition fees. Otherwise, we would pay the so-called educational rental fee (*jiaoyu zanzhu fee*) to the school. To enroll Dong at Orange Garden School, I have to show three forms of paper work every year to his teacher: Dong's *Hukou* book, our housing property purchase proof, and the permanent residential permit issued by Chengdu Police Station. Dong's school asked us to show all the three paper work every year. Their intention is to set up obstacles so if we fail to show this paper proof to them in a single year, they would get big money by charging us extra educational rental fees (*jiaoyu zanzhu fee*). For example, if your *Hukou* is not in Chengdu and you are not able to show the permanent residential permit in Chengdu and other relevant paper proof to the school, when you enroll your child in that school, they would charge you extra educational rental fees of up to 20,000Yuan (\$2857). Furthermore, the school would ask you to sign a form

indicating that you are willing to pay this extra fee to sponsor the development of the school. But you know actually you have no other choice except for paying the extra fee if you wish to send your child to that particular school.

According to Xue, Orange Garden School was still trying to charge extra tuition fees to migrant students and their families if they failed to provide the school with relevant paper proof. At the Orange Garden School, *Hukou* seemed to stand out as a deciding factor of influencing enrollment of migrant children. In contrast, Sunflower School seemed to be more tolerant of enrolling migrant children in a sense that as long as migrant families could show the required paper work at the time of the enrolment of their children only once (at the beginning fall semester of Grade 1), then the child can attend school for the next consecutive five years (from Grade 1 to Grade 6) without being charged the extra tuition fees. Jian, a tofu-business runner and his wife Lian shared with me that they did not have any trouble in enrolling their daughter Li at Sunflower School. Here comes Jian and Lian's story:

When we enrolled our child, we showed three paper proofs to the school: our license of running a business, our work permit, and the social registration number. With the three paper proofs, we were able to send our child to Sunflower School and the tuition fee was charged at the same rate as paid by the local urban families. It was easy for us to go through this process. However, things have started becoming more complicated now... Migrant families need to show 5 proofs: permit for giving birth to a baby, a local labor contract signed in Chengdu, *Hukou*, a signed agreement between the laborer and the employer, and the permit for living in Chengdu, so all together five proofs. I had my paper work done at my residential neighborhood committee and corresponding government branches years ago...

Jian mentioned the 5 paper proof requirement, however, Qiang, the school principal at Red Start School mentioned only three paper work for enrolling migrant children in urban public school. To clarify this confusion, I later called a friend named Min who worked as an assistant to her school's principal. Min said: "nowadays, we only require three proofs: *Hukou*, migrant workers' contract, and the family's temporary living permit issued by their local police station or community officials." Min's answer is consistent with Qiang. I would assume it might be Jian and Lian has a second child or the school in his living quarter takes different enrollment practices for migrant children. In China, if a couple wants a second baby, the couple indeed needs to get a permit from relevant officials who supervise implementation of the one-birth only policy. I take the stand that the major enrollment procedures for migrant children are carried out by the "three paper proof" confirmation described by Qiang and Min.

During my conversations with Jian and Lian, I felt that this couple seemed to be satisfied with Sunflower school. Lian told me: "Nowadays, the government tried their best via TV news, newspaper briefs, and community conferences, etc. to notify us of what paper work we need to show in order to make sure our children can go to school here. This situation is much better than that of before." However, her husband Jian did mention that current migrant families needed to show more "complicated paperwork" of enrolling their children in the local public school. This seemed to be confirmed by one migrant worker father's experience in enrolling his son to a local Chengdu public school when I was doing my pilot study in the summer of 2009. I called this participant Hai. Here is Hai's story:

Hai was 35 years old with only four years of elementary school education. Hai and his wife owned a small tea shop near the outskirts of Chengdu. The couple had lived in Chengdu for about eleven years by the time I interviewed him in the summer of 2009. Hai shared with me

that starting from fall of 2007, all migrant children living in Chengdu did not need to pay extra tuition fees, however, he was not able to provide the required paper proofs to the school before school semester started, so he and his wife had continuously paid additional tuition fees for one more semester until they finally had gathered all the required paper work (the entire family's *Hukou*, his wife's labor contract, and their temporary living permit in Chengdu, etc.) stamped and approved by their neighborhood community committee. Hai further explained to me that it was a "complicated process" for him and his wife to have their paper work stamped because he often needed to visit a single office at least two or even three times before he could get things done. According to Hai, it took him one month to have all his paper work stamped by the multiple offices.

Perhaps to those migrant workers who have lower education level, understanding and obeying government policies would be a challenge, especially when the government issued new policies regulating their work and life in the host city. However, those with relatively high education level might be more likely to understand the new policy. Jian, the tofu-business man, had a junior high school diploma. He told me that he loved to read newspapers and watched TV news channels; therefore he was well-informed of changes in the policies and regulations pertinent to his life. To many urban families, this tuition fee waiver was just a given. In contrast, migrant families had to provide complicated paper work to local school in order to enjoy the same education benefits their urban peers were entitled to. Rural-urban migrant workers' social origin (born in China's rural areas) was so entrenched that no matter how long they had been living in the host cities, they were still not able to fully integrate themselves into urban community. Here is one example:

One participating migrant family (Xue is the hostess's name) purchased an apartment unit in Chengdu in 2002. Because of this, the entire family automatically obtained Chengdu *Hukou*. Technically speaking, Xue's son Dong's enrollment process at the local urban public school should be the same as that of local Chengdu children. However, Xue was asked to show their property purchase receipt to the school every fall semester in order to establish Dong's "Chengdu *Hukou*" status. In contrast, to children born in Chengdu, their parents only needed to show their *Hukou* just once at the first time of applying to school. This disparate treatment that Dong and his parents received during his enrollment process at the urban public school vividly reflected the *Hukou* policy's haunting effect on ordinary Chinese people's rural/urban "citizenship" status.

From this story, we can also see clearly that although the Chinese government is more relaxed in implementing the *Hukou* policy in comparison to the 1970s', the negative effect of *Hukou* policy on migrant families still permeated their life experiences in the host city of Chengdu. For example, in the traditional Chinese cultures, one's *Hukou* status decides one's social origin (either rural/urban resident), the way he talks (speaking standard Chinese/with an accent), and even his future opportunity of entering a higher education institution (students born in Beijing are allowed to enter college with a much lower entrance score than that of students born in other parts of China even though the contents of the test are the same). Migrant workers' peripheral status in the host city originally created by the *Hukou* policy certainly influenced their children's sojourn life experiences in the host city as well.

Unequal Childhoods

The title of this summary section echoes the title of Lareau's (2003) book on low income versus middle class American children's life experiences. Although I did not directly ask migrant

workers the question of what cultural capital meant to them, their children's life and schooling experiences in Chengdu already revealed their answers to this question. For example, among all the five migrant children, only one is currently attending extra-curricular activities of attending Chinese composition class and English class at weekends. In contrast, all five local urban children attend at least two extra-curricular programs such as learning a music instrument, dancing class, English, etc. It is not hard to assume that cultural capital (e.g. having adequate knowledge of urban public school system) and economic capital are two deciding factors in school choice (elite private school vs. neighborhood public school).

Generally speaking, migrant workers do not have income that is disposable at will compared to their urban counterparts. For example, Yan, a construction site supervisor told me that: "it was expensive for me to pay 10 Yuan (\$1.43) per class for my daughter's writing club." Yan's daughter Mimi ended up quitting the writing class in the middle although she enjoyed it much. In contrast, Yi, an urban dentist, told me that "paying 50 Yuan (\$7.14) for a half-day outing trip in Chengdu is cheap." During school breaks, all the five participating urban children went travelling with either their parents or school teachers. One of them even travelled to Singapore. All my five migrant children either went back to their rural hometown or stayed at their enclave living quarters in the host city "watching TV and doing homework" during the summer break. Travelling was simply not a word in those migrant children's life dictionary.

The physical living environment between migrant children and urban children is quite different as well. All the five participating urban children in my study live in a spacious privately-owned apartment with an area of at least 100 square meters. In contrast, three of the five migrant children live in a rented apartment unit with an area of less than 50 square meters. One migrant child lives with his parents and grandma in their own apartment unit with an area of

86 square meters. Another migrant girl lives in a privately-owned apartment with less than 40 square meters.

In my study, I also found that migrant children tended to go to school in a segregated environment. This segregation is reflected in the formation of a “school for migrant children” within the urban public school system. As mentioned earlier, Sunflower School, a former public elementary school for urban children, has transformed to a “school for migrant children” with a student body of 90% migrant children. With the development of private schools in contemporary China, well-to-do urban residents choose to send their children to the private schools. As one public school principal told me:

After my school started taking lots of migrant children, many former local urban students in my school chose to transfer to a nearby private school. Without telling me why, I knew they did not want to study with migrant children. This was so obvious. Now the student’s body in my school is composed of 80% migrant children.

Local urban residents with much knowledge of urban public school system and steady financial resources elect to send their children to elite private schools or boarding schools. Four out of five urban families participating in my study sent their children to an elite private school, whereas only one migrant worker mother paid one-time fee of RMB 5000 Yuan (about \$714) to send her son to a public school with smaller class size than that of Sunflower School which was originally assigned to her son by the local education administration bureau. As mentioned earlier, English is regarded as an important survival skill in urban China; all the participating local urban parents sent their child to English tutoring classes at weekends. Only one migrant child attended English tutoring class on Saturdays. Nowadays, to China’s urban upper-middle class families,

sending one's child abroad for study seems to be a trendy goal in both parents and students' mind.

One interesting thing that I found out from my interviews was that local urban parents seemed to be confident about asking me information on attending American higher education institutions while only two migrant worker parents asked me about this similar information. Furthermore, when they approached me with this topic, they showed a timid and hesitant attitude before actually opening it up. I remembered that at the end of our conversations in one interview, Yan, a migrant worker father, wanted to ask me a certain question but he showed much hesitation. After I reassured him three times that he should feel free to ask me any questions, then he asked me about the cost of attending graduate school in the U.S. and how I got accepted by my current academic program. After sharing my schooling information in the Midwest with Yan and his wife, I asked them whether they wished their daughter Mimi to go to graduate school in the US someday. The couple laughed and said: "We do not know. It costs money. It all depends on her if she has that talent and is able to receive a scholarship." In contrast, urban parents participating in my study seemed to have already included sending their child abroad for study as part of their parenting plan.

Tao and Lu, a typical urban middle-class couple shared with me why they decided to send their son Meng to a private English boarding school. English here means this school's strength is to provide a quality curriculum in English-teaching.

We wanted Meng to go to North America for study in the future. His aunt lives in Canada working as a lab technician at a public university there. Meng's current school is well-known for English teaching. This boarding school's high school department has a specific class called overseas high school prep program. 90% of the students in that class

go to either Britain or North America to finish up their third- year high school education.

We want Meng to take advantage of that opportunity when he enters high school stage in the future...

When I asked Meng whether he would like to fulfill his parents' expectation, he responded me with a smile: "I did not know and it was too early to say." Tao and Lu, like many Chinese parents, already planned their child's future for him ahead of time. Another young urban couple, working as administrative personnel at a local bank, expressed their similar wish of wanting to send their only daughter Niu to study overseas in the future:

We compared several private schools before sending Niu to May View International School. This school is located close to where we live; meanwhile, this school is featured in hiring native-English speakers to teach children English from early on. We want Niu to have a good foundation on English. We want her to go to North America for study when she grows older. But you know, all we can do now is to create a supportive study environment for her, and she needs to do the rest of the job...

Niu's parents later asked me some questions about my own overseas study experience in the Midwest. It occurred to me that urban children are provided with many high quality education resources by their parents from early in life. Meanwhile, migrant children and their families are more concerned about getting access to a certain amount of public education resource in the host city. When migrant children and their parents compared their "segregated school" located in Chengdu to the backward rural school in their hometown, they felt content with the urban public school where their child attended. In contrast, local urban middle-class residents compared their children's education with that of developed countries such as Britain and US. Obviously, those local urban parents have higher expectations for their child's future

schooling needs even when their child currently attends elite private school. Migrant children and local urban children's different home and school environment in the host city seemed to set a tone in forming their unequal childhood.

In the traditional Chinese cultures, an objective environment in which children are brought up is critical for their future success. One ancient story of an exemplar mother's frequent move for seeking a better education environment for her son illustrates this point well. This story entitled "Meng Mu San Qian" ("Meng Zi's Mother Moved Multiple Times for Meng Zi's Education") is so well-known that almost every Chinese household is familiar with this story. Here is a brief summary of this ancient story:

Meng Zi (B.C. 372- B.C. 289) is a great philosopher and educator in ancient China. It is safe to say that Meng Zi's position in Chinese history is only next to Confucius. Meng Zi's father died when he was three years old. His mother never married again and raised him all by herself. To create an enticing learning environment for Little Meng Zi, Meng Zi's mother moved twice and finally settled down in a neighborhood which was next to a school established by the Emperor's court at that time. Before their first move, Meng Zi and his mother initially lived in a place which was close to a cemetery. Little Mengzi imitated people crying and holding ceremonies for the dead. Meng Zi's mother did not think this environment was good for her son. So the mother decided to move to a new place which was near to a meat and vegetable market. Meng Zi started visiting the market every day and imitated vendors to sell vegetables and meats. Obviously, Meng Zi's mother did not feel satisfied with this neighborhood either. They then moved again. This time, they moved to a place which was close to a school established by the Emperor's court where many well-educated people live. There, Meng Zi started to obey orders

and like going to school. Meng Zi's mother felt that a school environment was best for Little Meng's Zi's future development. So they finally settled down in that school neighborhood.

Latter people believe that it is because of Meng Zi's mother's careful education of Meng Zi that makes him a great philosopher in the Chinese history. Although this story is traced back to over two thousand years ago, it still carries guiding meaning for a child's bringing-up in the traditional Chinese cultures. This ancient story sent a clear message that a person's social environment would have direct influence in his future success. Although I am not an environmental determinist, I do take the stand that a child's immediate environment plays a critical role in his/her early stage of development. This "environmental influence" factor is equivalent to the Western concept of social capital situated in the context of family, community, and school.

A Chinese government report entitled *Education for All (2000)* stated that migrant children did poorly at school because of their unfavorable family environment and their parents' busy schedule. Although this can be one barrier to migrant children's education, government should not place the chief responsibility on migrant families themselves. Compulsory education should be viewed as a public good; therefore, it is the State's major responsibility of making migrant children's transition to urban schooling a smooth process.

Lopez et. al.'s (2001) qualitative study showed that a successful migrant-impacted school district in Texas reached out to local communities and other agencies to meet migrant families' needs therefore migrant parents actively participated in the school's parental involvement programs. This successful lesson of Texas school district's efforts in helping migrant parents get involved with their children's school activities can be applied to the migrant children's educational experience in urban China.

In summary, migrant workers are a peripheral group in the host city. Their marginalized status is reflected from their poor work condition, crowded-living environment, and challenges in dealing with urban public school system when they enroll their child to local urban public school. Although *Hukou* policy has been relaxed for allowing peasants to migrate from their rural hometown to urban areas for finding work, the social divide created by the *Hukou* policy put migrant families in a disadvantaged position in the host city -- they lack social networks and support in the urban community and their children are not fully integrated to urban public school environment either.

In a highly stratified environment in the current Chinese urban society, educational problems that migrant children encounter cannot be solved by a single agency or only by schools. The state needs to establish sound and effective regulations to protect migrant families' rights including their children's right to receive public education in urban areas. Urban public school teachers need to step outside their classrooms and visit migrant workers' home so to better understand the migrant children's home and community environment. It occurs to me that, in order to ensure an equal educational opportunity to migrant children who reside in a host city, the first and most important strategy is to improve quality of life of migrant families if we truly want to give migrant children an equal opportunity of receiving quality public education in the host cities. In the following final chapter I will interpret these findings in light of other studies and make recommendations for both further study and policy changes.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This qualitative multiple case study explored the factors that lead to differences between the lives of rural-urban migrant families and urban families, especially schooling experiences of children, in the host city of Chengdu, China. The theoretical framework of cultural reproduction, in particular the concept of cultural capital, was applied to analyze issues and challenges that rural-urban migrant families encountered in their daily life while living in Chengdu as transient workers. Previous literature implied that *Hukou* policy, *Jiedu* fees (educational rental fees), and urban-rural divide were three salient elements contributing to migrant children's difficulties in getting access to public education resources in host cities (Lu & Zhang, 2004). According to thirty participants interviewed in my study, the *Jiedu* fees (educational rental fees) are no longer the obstacle to migrant children living in Chengdu who wish to attend urban public schools since 2007. However, the negative effect of the *Hukou* policy and the urban-rural divide within urban areas were found to be the most important indicators causing problems in migrant children's schooling experience in the host cities. For example, urban residents' attitude of viewing migrant workers as "country bumpkin" is so entrenched that some school administrators would require migrant families to show their urban *Hukou* in the beginning every new semester even though they had established their urban *Hukou* identity by purchasing a housing unit in Chengdu.

While migration experiences varied as to individual migrant families, findings in my research produced six themes commonly found in rural-urban migrant families' sojourn life in the host city of Chengdu: different home environments of migrant children and their urban peers, the rural-urban divide, initial migration experience full of "Ku" ("hardships" in English), motivation for migration, variations in urban public school practices, and finally, unequal childhoods of migrant children and local urban children in Chengdu.

Chapter Five concludes this study. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part of this chapter will revisit the study's theoretical framework of cultural capital presented in Chapter Two, in particular, how cultural capital theory explains the current Chinese urban society and the urban public education system. This section will also wrap up the meaning of cultural capital to migrant families in comparison to their urban peers. To answer the first research questions, cultural capital entails different forms but with similar meanings to migrant families and local urban residents. For instance, to both groups, cultural capital means "cash value credentials" such as holding a college education diploma. But at the same time, concrete forms of cultural capital vary between these two groups. Urban families view travelling and attending extracurricular activities as important cultural capital. Migrant families view sending their child to urban public school as an important way of building up cultural capital. The second part will recapitulate and further interpret the findings presented in Chapter Four. With regard to the second research question of exploring factors that influence migrant families' decision of their children's educational placements in the host city, the study finds that the participating migrant families take geographical distance between school and their residential place as a major factor rather than quality of school emphasized by local urban families when they made a decision of sending their child to certain school. Furthermore, historical effect of the *Hukou* policy brought upon ordinary Chinese citizen's life will be discussed in this chapter, and policy recommendations will be made accordingly.

Definition of cultural capital and its operationalization in the host city of Chengdu, China

Bourdieu's (1986) cultural reproduction theory proposed that family environment and parents' education strongly influenced children's academic performance. In other words, a child

from an upper-middle class family has a greater chance to receive quality education than a child from a working family. Furthermore, schools systematize this educational inequality among children from different social classes. Having much interest in exploring how Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can be used in conducting educational research in settings outside France, Lamont and Lareau (1988) defined cultural capital as "institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusions." (p. 156) I adopted this definition of cultural capital throughout my study.

In the current Chinese urban society where an intensive social stratification system (e.g. rural-urban working-class migrant workers vs. local middle -class urban residents in the host city of Chengdu) is taking place, Bourdieu's cultural capital theory can be productively utilized to analyze challenges and issues that Chinese migrant children and their families encounter in their sojourn life in urban China in the following ways:

First, urban public schools appraise migrant children through a predominant "urban way" such as expecting students to be able to speak English before entering school and knowing how to use computers, etc. This is an example of "institutionalized signals" (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 156). In my study, I found that migrant children had no way of acquiring English and computer skills in their rural hometown before entering urban public school in Chengdu. In contrast, local urban children, as clearly indicated from all the five participating urban children in my study, have computers at home and have learned English for at least one or two years before entering primary school. Furthermore, those urban children live a distinctive life style characterized by travelling intensively both within China and abroad (e.g. Singapore), participating in at least two extracurricular activities (e.g. taking piano lessons, dancing classes,

etc), and spending leisure time with their parents at weekends, etc. In contrast, all five migrant children informants have never travelled outside Sichuan province (note: Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan province) and only one migrant child takes English tutoring classes as an extracurricular activity on the weekend. This sharp contrast of the differentiated lifestyle and cultural capital existing in these two groups of children implies that rural–urban migrant children have already become outcasts even before their entering the public school system in Chengdu.

Secondly, migrant children do not possess the “widely shared” knowledge of being able to speak English and using computers that the urban public school expects to see from their incoming urban students, therefore, they are automatically viewed as less prepared for school. That said, cultural capital’s role of being used as “social and cultural exclusion” comes into play. Obviously, migrant children might know more about farm work or nature than their urban peers do. However, this expertise in farming work will not be valued in the urban public school system. In fact, urban residents may look down on “farmers.” Meanwhile, due to migrant workers’ busy work schedule, they are less likely to meet urban public schools’ expectation for parents’ assuming a satisfactory parental role in supervising their children’s study at home. For instance, one urban public school principal told me that migrant workers seemed not to show concern about their children’s performance at school and their children had bad study habits. This was just one side of the story. My migrant worker participants indicated that although they desired to see their children do well in school, their limited education level and hectic work schedule did not give them the capacity for helping with their children’s school studies.

This finding is consistent with the previous literature showing that 72.3% of the surveyed migrant workers wish their children to receive college education (Huang & Xu, 2006). In other words, migrant workers do care about their children and want their children to be successful in

school. But rural-urban migrant families face much financial pressure while living in the host cities (Luan, 2003). Perhaps, those migrant children's parents view putting food on the table as their priority in daily life. Blaming victims and complaining of students' undesirable home environment is not going to help educate migrant students, especially because they are a peripheral group and their parents, as migrant workers, have the least societal support and limited resources in the urban society.

Thirdly, although there is general consensus regarding migrant workers' limited education level and tendency of not being able to access public education resource in urban areas (Xia, 2006), there are indeed variations among individuals due to their work experience or specific knowledge they intend to seek in order to better their child's educational experience. In my study, I found one "outlier" -- a young migrant worker mother who elected to send her only son Ke to a quality public school by paying an extra 5000 Yuan (\$714) as the school selection fee. She also sent him to English tutoring classes on Saturday mornings. I was intrigued to find out more about why she did so. After having further conversations with this migrant mother, I realized that her work environment was unique in that all her urban co-workers held high education credentials because they were certified civil engineers or architects. No doubt, exposed to such "high status cultural signals" (Lareau, 1988, p.156), this young migrant worker mother tried to provide as much as she can to support her son's education. At the end of my interview with her, she indicated to me that she was willing to invest as much as possible so long as her son could receive a quality education. In her eyes, a good education is the very commodity of "cultural capital" translated into to a highly-paid job in the future. As she said, "I hope my son can have a white -color job in the future, get paid well, and not like me and his dad, we did not have much schooling, so we could only take poorly-paid manual jobs."

To many migrant workers, perhaps the term cultural capital would be an abstract concept difficult for them to comprehend. However, this young migrant worker mother vividly illustrated what “cultural capital” meant to her and her son. That is, cultural capital has cash value--when one acquires good education and knowledge (expertise and credentials recognized by society through schooling), he/she will have a chance to be rewarded by monetary gain (capital). Another migrant worker father expressed the same wish of wanting his younger daughter to acquire English skill -- a popular form of “cultural capital” that urban schools and society value. In order to help his daughter to acquire English skill after her attending the regular English lectures at school twice a week, this migrant worker father purchased English textbooks, learning tapes and a tape recorder for his daughter. If we place this group of migrant children in rural schools where English is simply not included in the curriculum I believe their parents would probably not even think of “pushing” them to learn English. Therefore, it is safe to make the inference that migrant families have been influenced by the “urban way” consciously or unconsciously, and they may feel forced to keep up this “urban way” of life. I also found that there seemed to be a discrepancy in the way local urban residents and migrant workers had helped their children gain “cultural capital” respectively.

Let’s take a quick look at what consists of “cultural capital” to the local urban resident participants in my study. To this group of people, enrolling their child in more than one weekend extra-curricular activity and travelling with their children during long holidays are part of the routine in their parental practice. Rich data about family interactions provided by my local urban resident participants in Chengdu reminded me of Lareau’s (2003) detailed case study in observing various parenting styles and family interactions of families from different social classes in North America. Lareau concluded that “concerted cultivation” (p.1), typical of middle-

class parenting (e.g. after-school programs) tend to prepare children well for entering society in the future, whereas, the “accomplishment of natural growth” (p.1) approach of child- raising practices commonly seen in working-class families, seemed not to prepare children to have adequate social and negotiation skills for upward mobility.

In my study, I did find that my urban participants attempted to invest more time and energy in accompanying their children when they participated in those extra-curricular activities. In contrast, although migrant worker participants were willing to spend money on purchasing study materials or paying tutoring fees for their children, they were less likely to spend much time in “pushing” their children to participate in those programs. And in fact, the most frequently-heard words in my interviewing with the migrant family participants were: “self-management” (Zi wo guan li in Chinese) liberally translated into English as “it is up to him/her”-this is exactly the core of Lareau’s (2003) “accomplishment of natural growth” parenting style. This similar pattern of parenting style found in Lareau’s ethnographic study and my research indicated that the Western construct of cultural capital can be used in analyzing education issues that Chinese migrant children have been encountering. Future research can be directed to researchers spending a longer time in observing daily life of the migrant families and their urban peers and increasing the number of participating rural-urban migrant families and local urban families while conducting a multiple case study between these two groups to see whether the pattern of “concerted cultivation” vs. “accomplishment of natural growth” is still in evidence. I take the stand that in contemporary urban China, social class distinction does have an impact on children’s schooling experiences. This impact has been manifested in the children’s daily schedule, their home environment, which school they go to, etc.

Limited Social Capital Network

Throughout my interviews with the rural-urban migrant families and the local urban residents, I find the most salient difference that exists in migrant families' life is their limited or no access to social connections with the urban community. In contrast, local urban residents have easy access to the local social network, which makes their life much easier than that of migrant workers whose social connections are mainly limited to either their fellow country- men living in the host city or relatives who remain in the rural hometown. It is my understanding that migrant families' limited social network with local urban residents in the host city of Chengdu separates them apart from a larger urban mainstream culture.

Migrant workers seldom form friendships with their urban peers whether in their work environment or in their neighborhood. One migrant girl used the words of “not to disturb each other” to describe how she and her family did not interact with their urban neighbors and they just closed their doors once they got home from a day's work or school. When hearing this, I knew how deeply this rural-urban divide was entrenched in those children's young hearts. I also wondered what psychological effect this “feeling separated” would bring to those children when they grew up in the host city as “second-class citizens.” This demarcation line between local urban residents and the rural-urban migrant families was found in my interviews with *all of my* urban participants too. All the ten urban participants told me that their interaction with migrant workers was only limited to their work environment and they seldom communicated with each other outside work.

In China, having social connections (*Guanxi* in Chinese) is so important in one's life that sometimes it decides one's fate. To put it another way, *Guanxi* is like air existent everywhere in Chinese people's life. For example, if you want your child to attend an elite school, you need to have *Guanxi* in that school. If you want to find a desirable job in government sector, you need to

have *Guanxi* in the government sector. Without *Gaunxi*, it is safe to say that your life would be at least not convenient if not unpleasant. Migrant workers' limited social network with their urban peers is in a sense intentional, in that their urban peers choose not to maintain connection with the migrant workers except at work. Throughout my interviews with the ten urban residents, I can feel their unwelcoming attitude towards migrant workers via the subtle language that they use in describing how they feel about large-scale migration happening in recent years in Chengdu. An urban mother who worked in the government sector indicated to me that migrant workers' move to Chengdu had made the job market more competitive. It occurred to me that there was a divide (whether visible or invisible) between migrant workers ("them") and urban residents ("us"). This social divide between urban residents and migrant workers makes it impossible for the two groups to form a mutual social network with each other. It could therefore be inferred that migrant workers' social network remains disconnected from the local urban community, and they have not been integrated into urban society successfully.

Equally important, schools function as an early mini society in which children of similar age groups interact with each other. When adults (migrant workers and their urban peers) form an artificial divide between each other, their children are dragged into this artificial divide too. As mentioned earlier, the unique "urban flight" phenomena created a segregated school setting for migrant children in the host city where their urban peers were sent to elite private schools by their better-off urban parents when they saw a large number of migrant children flock to their school, which enrolled only urban children before China's urbanization process took shape. This "urban flight" phenomenon was born out of China's economic reform, in particular, viewing education as a commodity and allowing free school choice by parents' paying extra tuition fees to send their child to their preferable school. One needs to be aware that Chinese people have

more trust in well-known public schools than private schools. Therefore, Chinese people including upper middle class families would not abandon support for public education. The social stratification in the current Chinese society is caused not by “urban flight” itself but by China’s free-market economy reform--- choosing a nice school district by purchasing an expensive apartment unit in a particular area. Thus, urban flight is the result of the social stratification under a free-market economy model not the cause of it. Formation of the rural-urban divide within the host city reflected what social capital had brought to people of different social status within the urban environment. Although social capital is less studied in school settings compared to its sister concept of cultural capital, the social network certainly serves its role in children’s schooling experience.

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources which is linked to possessing a durable social relationship network (Note, if I do a literal translation of the “social relationship network”, this means precisely *Guanxi* in Chinese). This social relation network (*Guanxi*) may exist as material exchanges and in certain conditions, and is convertible into economic capital. Therefore, Bourdieu saw social capital as a certain investment by the dominant class to maintain its group’s dominant position (Lin, 1999). Bourdieu (1998) also viewed social space as a field of struggles and forces between different interest groups. This field is full of game rules, which are not explicit. This “game rule” concept sounds especially true for migrant children and local urban children’s educational placement decisions. For example, when a large number of migrant children are allowed to attend their neighborhood’s urban public school (e.g. Sunflower School in my study), those wealthy urban residents just choose to send their children to private schools with support from their social network (knowing important people in the elite school) and paying big money. In this specific

case, the advantage of having a social network with a certain elite school could help urban children to obtain desirable educational placements. Thus, each person from a distinctive social class (e.g., rural-urban migrants vs. local urban upper middle-class residents) brings his/her own dispositions (*habitus*) to the social field interaction (Bourdieu, 1986).

One migrant worker told me that she was able to find an English tutoring class among many other similar English programs in Chengdu for her son because one of her urban co-workers' daughter enjoyed this program and the girl's mother highly recommended it to her. Three urban families shared with me that they knew some important people in the elite private schools, so they were able to secure a seat for their child when there was a long waiting list of wealthy parents who were willing to pay big money to send their children to that particular school. The school selection fee for going to an elite private school in Chengdu is averaged at an annual tuition fee of between 15,000 Yuan to 20,000 Yuan (between \$2143 and \$2857). This fee is far too expensive for ordinary Chinese people. However, without the social network of knowing certain crucial persons in the private schools, those urban parents who have enough money may not be able to secure a seat for their child in one of those highly-sought private schools. Thus, whom your parents know and who your neighbors are all matter in a child's education experiences.

From this example of whose child can attend certain desirable schools, we can see clearly how social capital has been used to maintain a predominant position of a certain class in the host city of Chengdu. Thus, wealthy or upper-middle class urban parents have all the resources they need to send their children to elite schools. Then after their children get out of school, they land well-paid jobs, obtain high social status, and they establish families, have children, etc. The same cycle would repeat. Therefore, schools function as apparatuses to reproduce social class from

generation to generation. This is the essence of using a cultural capital lens to examine educational issues (e.g. education inequality) among children of various social classes in North America. While the U.S. and China are countries with dramatically different histories and political systems, the similarities here are also dramatic.

Coleman (1990) defines social capital as social resources embedded in social relationships. In the family context, social capital refers to bonds among family members, for instance, the time spent in interacting between family members or adults supervising children's studies at home. For a majority of rural-urban migrant workers, their immediate family members or siblings live in the countryside while they reside in the host city for the goal of "earning money". Obviously, they would not be able to receive extended family support when they encountered difficulties in the host city. And in fact, migrant worker participants in my study came to Chengdu in their early 20s, and none of them got married until after they had stayed in Chengdu for several years and met their spouses either in Chengdu city or back in their rural hometown. For example, Xin, Cui, and Yan moved to Chengdu in their early 20s all by themselves. Their spouses were either peasants in the same rural hometown area or they themselves were migrant workers in Chengdu city. None of the migrant worker participants in my study married local Chengdu people.

Such findings indicated that migrant workers belonged to a distinctively social group in urban areas --- they are neither "rural people" nor "urban residents" in the host city. And in fact, due to the historical influence of the *Hukou* policy, migrant workers' migration to the host cities has created a distinctive urban-rural hierarchy in urban China referred to as the "two-class urban society" coined by Chan (1999). Migrant workers were long regarded as a cause of urban "crowdedness" although they contributed their labor to the host city's burgeoning development

(Solinger, 1999). This distinctive social space which migrant workers occupy in the host city is also confirmed by findings from Feng et al.'s study (2002) showing that migrant workers in the urban areas maintained their social network mainly through other rural-urban migrant workers working in the same city. Four out of five migrant families participating in my study told me that they came to Chengdu because their relatives had found jobs first here, so with help from their relatives, they migrated to Chengdu to seek job opportunities. Migrant workers' close tie with their country fellow people has practical implications for policy-makers regarding in what way the host city could help to make migrant workers' migration to the host city a smooth transition.

For example, the local police station (note, this is the official government branch in China which manages Chinese citizens' household registration record/ *Hukou*) should be able to establish a network composed of migrant workers from a same rural town or county who live in the same urban community after their migration. Once new migrants from that same rural area arrive in the host city, the local police station officer could contact the "old" migrants to see whether they have time to guide the new comers in ways to settle down in the host city. In this way, new migrant workers are less likely to feel they are losing control of their life, with help from their own country fellow people in a new urban environment.

Migrant workers' moving to the host city and especially their initial migration process in a new city is not easy. All of my migrant worker participants used the word "*Ku*" (hardships in English) to describe major characteristics of their initial migration experience to Chengdu. Those hardships include separation from their families left in the rural hometown, finding a place to stay, having inadequate financial resources, starting to look for a job in a new urban setting, etc. Despite all those hardships that rural-urban migrant workers had to encounter in the host city, the uneven regional economic development and the fast urbanization process in China's

urban areas created a massive rural –urban internal migration in China in the past decade (Fan & Stark, 2008; Wang & Zuo, 1999). This is consistent with what my migrant worker participants shared with me, that the major reason for their migration was the poor economic situation in their rural hometown. The Chinese government has been known for allocating more resources to urban areas than to backward rural areas. In my study, I take the stand that although the *Hukou policy* was not viewed as an obstacle to migrant children’s access to urban public schools, the newly found rural-urban divide between migrant workers and the local urban residents in Chengdu was originally created and continuously maintained by China’s notorious *Hukou policy*--an institutional barrier of unfair resource distribution system adopted by the Chinese government since the 1950s. In the following section, I will explain the historical effect that *Hukou policy* has brought to ordinary Chinese people’s life since its implementation.

Historical Effect of the *Hukou* Policy and its Impact upon Migrant Families

The *Hukou* policy was originally established in 1958 by the Chinese central government with an intention of dividing Chinese people into two categories based on their geographical birth locations: urban residents and rural residents. Furthermore, between 1950s’ and early 1970s’ when food and basic living materials were scarce in China, the *Hukou* policy decided one’s access to food, clothing, medical care, and other social welfare. For example, during the 1970s, if one did not carry a *Liangpiao* (food ration ticket), one could not buy food outside his home city or village. When I went to college in 1994 in Chongqing (a metropolitan city located in Southwest of China), a majority of my classmates were from small rural towns near Chongqing city. They were worried that if they could not find an employer in Chongqing, they would have to return to their poor rural hometowns by the time we graduated in 1998.

Obviously, almost all of them would want to stay in the city of Chongqing as it offers more to its residents.

Starting from the 1980s, the Chinese government has relaxed in allowing Chinese citizens to move freely within China to look for employment opportunities because of Chinese urban areas' need for surplus laborers for their rapid urban development. However, the label of "country-bumpkin" (*xiang ba lao* in Chinese) differentiating one's rural origin and rural identity is still entrenched in Chinese people's minds. This could explain why an artificial divide of rural "outsiders" (them) and urban "insiders" (us) was formed in the host city of Chengdu as indicated from my research findings.

I suspect it is because of this artificial rural-urban divide originally created by the *Hukou* policy that four out of five participating migrant families in my study were not sure about whether they would want to permanently settle down in Chengdu since there were so many "uncertain factors" in their life. Those rural-urban migrant workers' attitude towards urban life is half bitter and half sweet. "Mixed feeling" is an accurate way of describing their attitude towards living as sojourners in Chengdu city. Among the five rural-urban migrant families participating in my research, three of them purchased housing property in Chengdu, but only one young migrant worker mother expressed her wish of never wanting to return to her rural hometown. The other two migrant worker couples who owned urban housing property listed the expensive expenditures for receiving medical service in Chengdu as an obstacle which prevented them from settling down in Chengdu permanently.

The previous studies tended to find extreme poverty in rural-urban migrant families, especially in the bigger city such as Beijing (Han, 2004). In my study, I did not find the extreme poverty among my migrant worker participants. This could be that all my migrant worker

participants have stayed in the host city of Chengdu for over ten years. I suspect that the length of migrant workers' stay in the host city could be an indicator reflecting their potential income level and disposable financial resources.

When asking the migrant workers what had motivated them to move to and stay in Chengdu, on the one hand, they thought that their migration to Chengdu had allowed them to earn more money and learn new things in urban areas, while on the other hand, they felt certain obstacles that they could hardly overcome -- expensive Medicare and the prohibitive price of apartment units in urban areas. In Chengdu, the average lowest cost for purchasing an apartment unit is about 4500 Yuan (\$ 643) per square meter (Zhou, personal communication, June 1st, 2010). In contrast, the average family monthly income of my migrant worker participants is around 2500 Yuan (\$357).

Although migrant workers live a marginalized life in the host city, they feel a strong obligation of remitting money back to their poor relatives living in the rural home town. According to Huang and Zhan (2005), the average annual remittances sent by migrant workers to their rural relatives amounted to between 3000 and 4000 Yuan (\$429 and \$571). Cheng and Zhong (2005) reported that in the year 2005, Chinese migrant workers remitted 249 billion Yuan (30.7 billion USD) back to their rural home. From my conversations with the five participating migrant families in this study, I also found that they seemed to take a self-assuming role of trying to change their relatives' poor life conditions in the countryside via sending money home. Therefore, I was not surprised in learning about a migrant worker father's unwillingness to pay 10 Yuan (\$ 1.43) per session (45 minutes) for her daughter to join a creative writing club since he probably needed to save every penny to send his extra money back to his mother and two younger brothers who lived in the countryside.

Another thing worthy of mentioning is that in contemporary China, it is impossible for a three-member family to live on only one income in urban areas. Therefore, both parents have to work to support raising a child. This imposes a practical issue of who is going to supervise a child's study and take care of the child when he/she is off school in early afternoon. Most of my child participants in this study get off school around 4:30 p.m. Local urban residents can easily receive help from their retired parents. And in fact, in my study, four urban couples let their parents send and pick up their child to and from school every day. One urban couple is rich enough to send their only daughter to a private boarding school. In contrast, four out of five migrant children participants in my study did not have grandparents around in their sojourn life while living in Chengdu and they self-managed themselves after school. We can see clearly that this huge difference of receiving family support between local urban couple and the rural-urban migrant workers would most likely influence a child's academic performance.

It is interesting to see how migrant children view their sojourn life in Chengdu, where a clear urban-rural divide is in existence. Several migrant children told me that their urban peers laughed at their Mandarin with a rural accent. One migrant girl indicated that she missed playing with her cousins when she went back to her rural home with her parents in the winter break. Meanwhile, those migrant children enjoyed urban facilities such as convenient urban public transportation. To policy makers, especially urban public school teachers, how to facilitate communication and interaction between local urban children and migrant children in the host city is an essential step in helping establish rapport between these two groups of children. A program similar to the host family stay program popular in some American higher education institutions could be applied to facilitate this sort of communication. For example, urban public schools could help migrant children to secure a host family in the host city. This host family is

ideally a local urban family with a child of similar age to this migrant child. The host family is not responsible for this migrant child and his/her family's financial costs of living in the host city. Instead, the host family functions as a local connection for this migrant child. For example, during the holiday season, the host family could invite the migrant child and his/her parents to celebrate the holiday season. Or the local urban family could take this migrant child along with their own child to weekend outings such as visiting a museum, dining out, watching a movie, etc. This way, the local urban child can be exposed to a diverse urban environment and learn about the less fortunate children's life. Such program of pairing a migrant worker family with a local urban family would benefit both migrant children and urban children in that they could learn how to share and negotiate with each other.

Due to China's one-birth only policy, in contemporary urban China, many children do not have siblings and they become the focus of attention of parents and grandparents. They do not know how to share or get a chance to interact with their peers on a daily basis. Some educators in China have a saying that nowadays children (here mainly refers to children born in affluent middle-class family in urban areas) are rich in material life but poor in psychological well-being since they grow up lonely without any siblings around. By pairing up a migrant child with a local urban child and his/her families, both children could learn about each other's life and share their hobbies and experience. In the same vein, urban children could also visit the migrant child's rural hometown when such an opportunity rises. It is common to hear today's urban parents complain about their picky child who does not want to eat certain food or spends too much time in playing computer games. I am sure that migrant children's generally- poor home environment in the countryside would simulate those urban children to cherish what they have now rather than taking things for granted----an attitude generally found in urban children who

grow up in affluent families. As a result of visiting the countryside they might also gain new knowledge of agriculture, nature, and culture.

In my research, I also find that parents play a key role in their children's extra-curricular activities. Parents with higher educational level and more financial resources tend to go all the way to seek information about quality extra-curricular programs. Furthermore, urban parents are more likely to make time from their busy schedules to participate in their children's weekend outings and extra-curricular activities. For example, the dentist mother who participated in my study had learned the basics of playing piano with her daughter in her first three months' training in the piano lessons. Another young urban mother, a personal banker, took her daughter to museums, parks, or karaoke clubs at weekends. In contrast, migrant worker participants in my study either had no time (or some would say they did not make time) or did not know where to look for information on extra-curricular activities. In my interviewing with the migrant worker families, all of them expressed their wish of hoping to help their children learn at school. Several migrant worker parents mentioned buying study materials for their child; however, their child seemed not to be interested, and then they did not know what to do next. This gave me an impression that the migrant worker parents lacked access to urban education resources or public information.

For example, all my urban participants were quite aware of which extra-curricular activities were good and where to send their child for participating in those activities. In Chengdu, every local resident knows of the Children's Palace, a weekend school administered by Chengdu Youth League and Chengdu Education Bureau. This school charges reasonable fees for providing classes such as English, painting, chess club, dancing, and etc. to Chengdu children. Interestingly, all the urban children in my study participated in the Children's Palace

clubs or classes in certain period of their life. Whereas, no migrant children in my study had ever attended Children's Palace classes except for one migrant boy who went to a private weekend English tutoring class. From this example, I feel that although the migrant worker participants in my study have lived in Chengdu for over ten years, they do not really know urban education facilities that Chengdu offers to its residents. Children's Palace is just one of them. Also none of my migrant worker parents mentioned museums when I asked them what activities which they usually did with their children at weekend. In contrast, four out of five urban parents told me that visiting museums/parks at weekend was a common family routine for their child.

Migrant Families' Sojourn Life of Living in a "Separate World" in Chengdu

My interviews with migrant workers did give me an impression that migrant workers and their children seemed to live in a separate world of their own in the host city of Chengdu. This "separate world" is reflected in their job conditions, home environment, and the way they spend their family leisure time, etc. A general trend that I found in my migrant worker participants' description of their sojourn life in Chengdu was their hard work ethic and extremely busy schedule. This theme is consistent with a previous research conducted by Chinese scholars who had investigated rural-urban migrant workers' life conditions in four major cities in China. According to information provided by Jian & Huang (2009)'s 720 sampled migrant workers in their survey, 78.8% of those migrant workers find employment in manufacturing and construction sectors, two of the most labor-intensive work fields that urban residents are unwilling to work in. Furthermore, the average working time for their surveyed migrant workers are 6.5 days per week and 10 hours per day. "Working over-time is becoming a normal state for migrant workers." (p. 4, 2007) As I mentioned earlier, spending time together with parents and

other family members is an important and integrated part of a child's family education. It seemed that migrant children automatically lost this part of their childhood experience once their parents became migrant workers in the host cities. Urban school teachers who complain about migrant parents' indifference to their children's study, may not be aware of migrant workers' daily schedule which is so different from typical urban upper-middle class parents' 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. work schedule. Urban school teachers may not understand why migrant worker parents are unable to attend parent-teacher conferences during their daily work time. It is my understanding that school teachers need to learn basic information about their students' home environment -- what their students' parents do for a living, whether they are fed and appropriately clothed, whether they grow up in a two-parents home, whether they have siblings, whether they need to do house chores after school, etc.

To gain basic information on students' home environment bears specific meaning in the case of migrant students. For example, Kevin Sieff, a staff writer at Washington Post presented a vivid picture of a typical migrant student's home environment in Virginia's Winchester area apple orchard. According to Sieff (2010), those migrant students originally from Mexico lived in the orchard's cinder block building used for housing German POWs during World War II, and were exposed to a physical environment where drunken men and prostitutes were common scene in their daily life. I assume that this unique home environment may be out of school teachers' expectation or even imagination. Delgado-Gaitan's study (1992) on the physical environment of Mexican-American homes indicated that "parents' economic and social resources are important factors in shaping their children's learning environment in the home." (p. 506) Therefore, it is necessary for school teachers to learn about their students' home environment to enhance communication between parents and teachers regarding educational issues which students

encounter at school. Current teacher training programs in China could include relevant information about migrant families in urban settings in their curriculum. This way, pre-service teachers would be better prepared for meeting unique needs of rural-urban migrant students in the host cities.

Considering the unique home environment of migrant children, policy makers in China could issue regulations/laws encouraging urban employers to give migrant workers flexible time when necessary allowing them to leave for their children's school meetings even if they work in labor-intensive fields. But in reality, due to migrant workers' low education level, many of them may not be aware of their legal rights at work. One common practice against migrant workers' labor rights in the host cities is that most migrant workers have to work long hours without overtime pay (Lan, 2009). If this situation continues, it would only deepen the divide between rural-urban migrant workers and local urban residents in the host cities.

It seems a universal aspect of human nature for people to seek better economic opportunities in urban areas to improve their life conditions. In my research, I found Chinese migrant workers' internal migration experience within China shared similarities with international immigrants' experience. Massey and Capoferro (2006) stated that the high drop rates in wage and employment opportunities in Peru produced a big increase in Peruvian migrants to other countries for seeking jobs overseas. When looking at the migration pattern in the United States, I found that one of the three basic reasons for early settlers migrating from England to the United States was economic opportunity (Henderson & Olasiji, 1994). "Harsh economic conditions also drove Chinese migrants to seek survival in America." (Takaki, 1993, p. 1992) Although rural-urban migration in China is internal migration instead of immigration, I

did see similarities between immigrants in the United States and China's rural-urban migrant workers

Given China's large scale rural –urban migration, achieving education equity among urban children and migrant children was not an easy task -- it calls for the entire society's awareness of this peripheral group of migrants living in the host cities, and it also requires collaboration between government branches such as public welfare office, urban school districts, local police station, etc. The bottom line is that only when migrant workers' quality of life is improved, for example, through having a clean home environment, and when the divide between "rural others as migrant workers" and "us as local urban residents" disappears, can education equity for Chinese rural-urban migrant children be achieved in the host cities.

Limitations

This study is a qualitative case study so it is not designed to make generalized conclusions regarding rural-urban migrant workers' life situations in a city such as Chenddu, with a population of 2.16 million officially-registered migrant workers as in the year of 2008 (Zhuang, 2009). All the ten migrant worker participants in my study came from poor rural areas near Chengdu city prior to their migration to Chengdu. By the time of my interviewing with them, they have lived in Chengdu for more than ten years, so their financial situation would be better than that of those new migrant workers who resided in a host city for less than three years. Migrant workers' residential duration time in the host city does matter. Liang and Chen's study in Guangdong province (2007) found that migrant children who lived in the host city for less than one year had a school enrollment rate of only 60%.

Another limitation of my study is that my research is targeted on the compulsory education stage (six years of elementary school and three years of junior high school). Actually, all the five participating migrant families expressed their wish of wanting to send their children to the local public high school in Chengdu. However, current policies regulating migrant children attending local high school in Chengdu is non-existent. This policy gap poses a potential research direction of exploring how those migrant students fare after graduating from the local junior high school in the host city. Therefore, a longitudinal study of keeping track of migrant children's whereabouts after they graduate from local junior high school in the host city can be a meaningful and new area to conduct research. My current research only shows that the first generation migrant workers are economically upward mobile in comparison to their previous stringent financial situation in the poor rural hometown; however, whether their children (the second generation) would be able to achieve upward mobility in the urban society needs further study with additional data on interactions between local urban children and rural-urban migrant children in/outside of school in the host city.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions for migrant workers:

Tell me something about your family?

What is your age?

What is your highest education degree?

When did you and your families come to Chengdu?

What's your job?

How much is your average annual income?

Why did you and your families come to Chengdu?

How do you like your life in Chengdu?

Where does your child go to school?

Why do you send your child to this particular school?

What does your child's typical school day look like?

What does your typical work day look like?

What do you and your child do after he/she is off school during weekdays?

How do you and your child spend your weekend time?

How often do you go back to your rural hometown?

Do you plan to settle down in Chengdu permanently?

Interview questions for the urban upper middle class families:

How many members are there in your family?

What is your average annual income?

What is your highest education level?

What does your typical work day look like?

Which school does your child go to?

Why do you send your child to this school?

What does your child's typical school day look like?

What do you and your child do after he/she is off school during weekdays?

How do you and your child spend your weekend time?

What does your child often do during the school break like summer break and winter break?

How do you like your life in Chengdu?

What do you think of migrant workers' moving to Chengdu?

Interview questions for school teachers:

Please tell me a little bit about your education background.

How long have you been teaching in ***** school?

What subject do you teach?

How many migrant students are there in your class?

What does your typical school day look like?

What are the extracurricular activities that your school provides to students?

How much is the tuition fee and other fees that a student would pay on average for each semester?

What are some differences which you might have perceived between migrant students and urban students in your teaching career?

What are the quota and the typical procedure for recruiting Te Chang Sheng (students with special talent) in your school?

10. What is the typical procedure for your school to enroll a migrant child?

VITA

Nan Li was born in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. Before she came to the University of Missouri to earn her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Studies, she earned her Masters' degree in Applied English Linguistics and Early Childhood Special Education.

Nan's current research interest lies in China's internal migration, in particular, how the rapid urbanization process influences Chinese people's life. The pilot study of Nan's dissertation had been presented in the American Educational Study Association's annual conference.

Besides research, Nan enjoys teaching. She used to teach Mandarin and Chinese cultures in German and Russian department at the University of Missouri, Columbia.