INSIDE AND OUTSIDE VIEWS OF CHINA’S MIGRANT CHILDREN:

MIGRANTS AND NON-MIGRANTS WHO VIEWED PHOTOGRAPHS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN INTERPRET THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN BACKGROUNDS

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ABSTRACT

It’s the sweat and sacrifice of migrant workers, who left their homes in the countryside and moved to cities in search of work and a better life, that contributes to China’s prosperity. Unfortunately, perceptions of migrant workers as poor, dirty, and uneducated are rooted in the minds of many urban residents. As an outsider of China’s migrant workers and their children, I was worried that my photographs of them might be based on stereotypes. To present an in-depth portrayal, I taught a group of migrant children aged 8-12 photography for three months, then spent eight months photographing them. A photo elicitation study was used to examine my photographs by interviewing six migrant workers (insiders) and six non-migrant workers (outsiders). I learned that the outsiders were more likely to provide stereotypical responses, which mainly focused on the poverty, whereas the insiders paid more attention to the interactions among the people pictured. With the comparison, I was able to better understand migrant children and their families, and focused more on the vitality of their lives, which made my coverage more balanced.