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THE STRUCTURATION OF CHINESE MIGRANT WORKERS: INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITIONS, LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

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THE STRUCTURATION OF CHINESE MIGRANT WORKERS:
INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITIONS, LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SUBJECTIVE
EXPERIENCES

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College and Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Fayin Xu

Lexington, Kentucky

Directors: Dr. Thomas Janoski, Professor of Sociology

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE STRUCTURATION OF CHINESE MIGRANT WORKERS: INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITIONS, LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Chinese migrant workers are workers who (1) migrate from the countryside, where they continue to have the right to contract farm land, work in agricultural production, and build houses on allotted residential site, and (2) work in the non-agricultural sectors of cities and towns, where they don't receive the same educational and urban welfare benefits as local urban residents. Chinese migrant workers are characterized by their *dagong* lifestyle, which means "leaving their home in rural villages, going into cities, and working for others in order to make money." Though this group of people emerges in the rural-urban migration process associated with the rapid industrialization and urbanization in contemporary China, they live between the countryside and cities and are neither complete migrants, nor typical farmers, nor standard workers. The emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers have contributed to the rapid economic growth of China in the past decades. The future of Chinese migrant workers is not only relevant to their life conditions, but also to the future of China as a whole. While radical scholars see Chinese migrant workers as resisting the current social institutions, conservative researchers argue that Chinese migrant workers will peacefully become urban citizens with economic restructuring and institutional transitions. This study finds that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a new working class in contemporary China, which means that they are a group of workers, who (1) exist in a large number, (2) possess a stable proportion in the population structure, (3) have a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) exist for a relatively long period of time. In other

words, they are not a transitional group that will go away soon. Rather, they make up a stable social stratum in the social structure of contemporary China. This structuration process is supported by both macro-institutional arrangements and micro-subjective experiences.

At the macro-level, the interaction between the state and market in the process of institutional transition has created several innovative institutional arrangements, which have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. These institutional arrangements include (1) the development of **household autonomy system** in rural villages, (2) the encouragement and regulation of **informal employment relationship** in cities, (3) the maintenance of **differential citizenship** with migrant workers receiving less in the cities, and (4) the strengthening of **identity-based market ideology**. All of these institutional arrangements have affected the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, through framing their identities and conditioning their working and living conditions. Specifically, related to the land tenure system in rural villages, the household autonomy is directly related to their identity as family members. The regulated informal economy shapes their identity as guests in cities. In the background of differential citizenship between rural and urban residents, their semi-citizenship in cities leads to their identity as rural residents. Their Hukou-based market ideology causes their identity as lower-level workers with less human capital.

At the micro-level, all migrant workers have their motivations to *dagong* and tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Though their motivations are stratified in different manners, four ultimate motivations are personal honor at home, personal future in cities, household needs at home, and family development in cities. While personal honor and personal future are individualistic motivations, household needs and family development are societal motivations. While personal honor and household needs are geographically rural-oriented, personal future and family development are urban-oriented. Treating

dagong as a means, Chinese migrant workers' attitudes to this *dagong* lifestyle depend on whether it can meet their ends. Therefore, their attitudes are shaped by comparing the *dagong* lifestyle with its alternatives (education, agricultural production, and businesses and so on). The comparison may make them more optimistic or depressed about the *dagong* lifestyle. Four types of Chinese migrant workers are identified according to their motivations and attitudes: (1) **Adventurous** migrant workers want to settle in cities but do not accept the *dagong* lifestyle; (2) **Optimistic** migrant workers want to settle in cities and accept the *dagong* lifestyle; (3) **Instrumental** migrant workers do not want to settle in cities and treat *dagong* as a means to meet family needs; and (4) **Retreating** migrant workers do not want to settle in cities or accept the *dagong* lifestyle.

Furthermore, their motivations and attitudes are changing with their working and living conditions during their migration process. These changes may be radical or conservative. Senior migrant workers, who have earned better working and living conditions in cities, will develop a strong desire to settle in cities, which is called **radicalization**. By contrast, family burdens might reduce the desire to settle in cities and make them focus on family needs, which is called **conservatization**. As to their attitudes, when they fail to find alternatives, they tend to form a high degree of acceptance of the *dagong* lifestyle, which is called **justification** (becoming optimistic). By contrast, when they feel depressed for the *dagong* lifestyle and find alternatives, they tend to become negative toward the lifestyle, which is called **depression** (becoming pessimistic). Out of the four processes, the processes of conservatization and justification become the two main micro-level dynamics of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers.

To conclude, this research argues that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a new working class with a distinctive lifestyle in China. As the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers involve many aspects of the contemporary Chinese society,

this research also has theoretical and empirical implications for studying urbanization, informal employment, migration, social stratification, labor movement, and citizenship.

KEYWORDS: China, Chinese Migrant Workers, Rural-Urban Migration, Structural Transformation, Institutional Transition in China, Structuration

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Chapter One:

Introduction

In 2013, there was an especially stuffy summer in Beijing probably because of considerable air pollution caused by rapid economic growth. Sweat would saturate people even though they only rested under a tree. In the scorching sun, Tai was making concrete outside the building, in which I lived¹. He was mixing sand, water, lime and other materials, using a shovel. After he prepared the material, he put some concrete in plastic buckets and moved the 35-pound buckets by climbing to the third floor of the building without elevators. Some other construction workers then wiped the concrete on the walls to whiten them. Tai had worked there for two months before I met him. When I left for America, he also moved to another construction site in Beijing. After he finished his work in the building in which I lived, one of his friends introduced him to another boss, who contracted a project in Xidan Area of Beijing. In addition, Tai had worked in many cities for twenty years after he graduated from a primary middle school.

He told me that he worked in Zhongnanhai—the location of the power center in China—before he came to work in the community I lived in. However, after he worked in Zhongnanhai and before he came to work in the community, he went back to his hometown in Shandong Province, where his parents, wife and two children lived. His family contracted a small farm of about six mu's in his home village². When he worked outside his hometown, other family members took care of the land until harvest season when he went back to his home village and helped his family harvest wheat. His only son went to a local primary school. He said he was unable to bring his family to Beijing,

¹ Tai is one of my informants. However, in order to follow the principle of privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in this dissertation.

² A mu is about 666.7 square meters, or 0.1647 acres. So his farm is less than one acre.

because that would cause a double loss—his family would not earn the money through agricultural production, and he would have to spend more money supporting the family, especially when his wife would not be able to work. Tai is not alone; rather, he is only one of the 268.94-million migrant workers in China (NBS 2014). This group of people has existed in China for more than three decades and generations of rural residents have joined in this group. This study answers two questions about this group of people: (1) what will Chinese migrant workers' future be like, and (2) why has this group of people existed such a long time, even though their working and living conditions are unfavorable?

This study argues that Chinese migrant workers have formed a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle for four reasons. First, this group of people has a large number of individuals, possesses persistent proportion in Chinese social structure, and has existed and will exist for a long period of time. Second, stable institutional arrangements have maintained the existence of Chinese migrant workers by shaping their life conditions, identities, motivations and attitudes, and these institutions include the development of household autonomy system in rural villages, the encouragement and regulation of informal employment relationship in cities, the maintenance of differential citizenship with migrant workers receiving less in the cities, and the strengthening of identity-based market ideology. Third, Chinese migrant workers' motivations have justified their *dagong* lifestyle even when their desire to permanently stay in cities has been blocked, and these motivations include personal honor at home, career future in cities, household needs at home and family development in cities. And fourth, they tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle, especially when they fail to meet their needs by returning to agricultural activities, starting their own businesses, and/or pursuing further education.

All of these four factors and processes have contributed to a structuration process of Chinese migrant workers in contemporary China.

These findings can be summarized by a class-structuration theory of Chinese migrant workers³. These workers are important to understanding the rapid and continuous economic growth in China because Chinese migrant workers have provided most of the labor force for China's economic growth, gave it a competitive advantage, and made it a world factory. These findings are significant in explaining the social stability of China because they can reveal Chinese migrant workers' response to their life conditions and social institutions. These findings also have significant implications for state policies for removing the migrant-worker class because the logic of their emergence and existence in this study points out the underlying forces maintaining this class, which must be abolished or ameliorated in order to eliminate the discrimination against the migrant-worker class and integrate them into new or existing cities.

Definition and History of Chinese Migrant Workers

Before going further, this section will critically examine three previous definitions of Chinese migrant workers and then present the definition used in this work. Then, I will present a brief history of Chinese migrant workers.

Definition

While Chinese migrant workers have existed for more than three decades, there has not been a definitive version of the term "Chinese migrant worker." Three types of

³ The term "structuration" used here has two meanings. First, it refers to a substantial social change of Chinese class structure. That is, a new migrant-worker class has emerged in contemporary China. Second, this emergence of a new working class in China is based on the interaction between structural-institutional arrangements and social actors' experiences, which is the meaning of "structuration" in Giddens' sense (1984).

definitions can be identified, all of which have been employed by some researchers in this field and can point out some important characteristics of Chinese migrant workers.

The first type of definition is the one that emphasizes the status of Chinese migrant workers in Chinese industrial structure. Like many other countries in the world, China has been experiencing industrialization and urbanization processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. So, Chinese migrant workers have been considered as an intermediary group between agricultural farmers and industrial workers. For example, Wu (2009) argued that in the transformation from a traditional-agricultural society to a modern-industrial society, farmers would gradually change to semi-industrial workers and finally become industrial workers. Similarly, He and Zheng (2007) also argued that Chinese migrant workers were a temporary form of workers who appeared during the transformation from agricultural to industrial production.

The second type of definition concentrates on Chinese migrant workers' double statuses and identities that are related to both their economic activities and institutional arrangements, especially the Hukou system. As to their economic activities, some migrant workers work in both the agricultural and industrial sectors. Regarding their Hukou statuses, Chinese migrant workers are assigned as rural-agricultural residents, even though some of them don't live in rural villages or work in the agricultural sector (Liu, 2004; Cai and Chan, 2009). So in this definition, Chinese migrant workers are characterized by their double occupations—farmers and workers—and double social statuses—rural Hukou status and semi-urban resident.

The third type of definition focuses on Chinese migrant workers' behavior and lifestyle. This definition usually calls Chinese migrant workers as “*dagongzhe*”—those

who *dagong* in cities and towns (Gongyouzhijia, 2013; Wang Ying, 2005). Literally, “*dagong*” means leaving their homes in rural villages, going into cities, and working for others in order to make money⁴. This is a more descriptive definition, though it doesn’t include the structural transformations and institutional arrangements that have caused the *dagong* lifestyle associated with Chinese migrant workers.

All three definitions have grasped some characteristics of Chinese migrant workers. First-generation migrant workers have all of these characteristics, which have become the basis of these traditional definitions. However, further changes of Chinese migrant workers require redefining their key characteristics. First, some second-generation migrant workers have never worked in the agricultural sector (Liu, et al., 2009; Institute of Labor Movement in China, 2011). So, the definition of Chinese migrant workers based on their occupation or industry might exclude these migrant workers, though they have the other two characteristics. Second, Chinese migrant workers’ identities have gone beyond their Hukou status and the reforms of the Hukou system have changed the value of the various Hukou statuses (Solinger 1999; Zhan, 2011; Huang, 2011). So, the definition of Chinese migrant workers derived purely from their Hukou status has become inadequate to understand their working and living conditions.

To better describe the common characteristics of Chinese migrant workers, this study tries to focus on their behavioral characteristics and integrate their occupational and social characteristics. Chinese migrant workers are defined as those workers characterized by their *dagong* lifestyle, whereby *dagong* means leaving rural villages, where they have the rights to contract farm land and build houses, and work in towns and

⁴ In Chinese, “*dagong*” can be a noun or a verb. Here I use “*dagong*” as a verb and use “*dagong* lifestyle” to describe the common characteristics of the migrant workers’ life condition.

cities, in which they work for others in order to earn wages. This *dagong* lifestyle has also led Chinese migrant workers to unfavorable life conditions. They commute between rural and urban areas, especially during traditional festivals and harvest seasons (Wang 2005). They concentrate in physically demanding jobs where they work long hours under severe working conditions, but their wages are usually higher than workers in the villages but lower than most city dwellers (Wang et al. 2002; Hannan 2008). Even though their work is legal and vital to the economy, they work without formal job contracts (Lee 2007; Meng 2010). Most of them have no health insurance, retirement insurance, injury insurance, unemployment compensation, and other welfare benefits or social services (Zhan 2011; Meng 2010). Their living quarters are very small and most of them have to live separate from most of their family members (Lü 2013). Their jobs are neither secure nor stable (Chan 2010b). Furthermore, these unfavorable life conditions often cause psychological problems, such as depression (Mou, et al. 2011; Qiu, et al. 2011). In sum, these workers constitute a particularly vulnerable section of Chinese society without the same citizenship rights as urban residents (Solinger 1999; Fan 2002; Lee and Meng 2010; Taylor 2011).

A Brief History of Chinese Migrant Workers

Chinese migrant workers emerged in the late 1970s when China launched its Reform and Opening-up Policies. In 1978, when China initiated its economic reform, 82 per cent of the total population in China was rural population, who worked in agricultural sectors with extremely low productivity and income (Li 2008). This part of the Chinese population had been collectivized into communes in agricultural production before 1978 by the communist party-state (Unger 2002). Furthermore, the Hukou arrangement had

been developed to tightly control rural people's movement from agricultural sectors to non-agricultural sectors and from the countryside to cities (Chan 2009).

Economic reforms started first in rural areas, which were characterized by the spread of the household responsibility system. This new system allowed rural households to contract land with the local government and to have their own rights to manage agricultural production, and this undermined the rigid commune system. The rural reform featured by the de-collectivization of land provided a strong incentive for the rural household to produce more efficiently, and, with the improving agricultural productivity, a large number of surplus laborers were released from agricultural production. From 1978 to the mid-1990s, these surplus labors were mainly absorbed by the Township and Village-Owned enterprises (TVEs), which represent the development of rural non-agricultural sectors, with the government's strategy emphasizing on the development of small towns rather than large cities (Wu 2012; Li 2008).

The rural urbanization process represented by TVEs came to an end with the ownership transformation in the mid-1990s (Putterman 1997; Kung and Lin 2007; Shen and Ma 2005). However, the rural-urban migration didn't decrease, but increased more rapidly because the reformed SOEs (State-Owned Enterprises) and the development driven by foreign investment in industrial and export zones replaced the Sunan model characterized by TVEs (Wu 2012; Li 2008). At the same time, the government started removing many controls on labor migration and gave local governments the rights to formulate their own policies on the arrangements of Hukou system (Chan 2008).

Because of the economic growth and institutional reforms since 1978 when Chinese government launched the project of Reform and Opening-up, the number of

migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades. The number of long-distance migrant workers has been increasing by 56% from 104.7 million in 2002 to 163.4 million in 2012 (See Figure 1 in the end of this chapter). The total number of migrant workers (including local migrant workers) also has been increasing by 16% from 225.42 million in 2008 to 262.61 million in 2012 (Figure 2).

The Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

The main argument of this study is that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle in contemporary China. This structuration of Chinese migrant workers is supported by some characteristic institutional arrangements in contemporary China, which have shaped Chinese migrant workers' life conditions, motivations and attitudes. This section will review the relevant literature about the future of Chinese migrant workers, institutional arrangements related to them, and their subjective experiences, and introduce the main arguments of this study in detail.

A Social Class of Chinese Migrant Workers

With respect to Chinese migrant workers' emergence and future, most previous studies have adopted a transitional perspective; that is, previous studies explicitly or implicitly assume that the phenomenon of Chinese migrant workers is a transient phenomenon and this group of people will disappear soon. This transitional perspective can be divided into two schools of research: structural analysis and institutional analysis.

In structural analysis, because the internal rural-urban migration in China involves the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the frequently referred point is W. Arthur Lewis' "dual sector model" (Altmann 2011) in development economics. For Lewis, in developing countries, there are two economic sectors: the traditional

agricultural sector composed of subsistence farming, handicraft workers and petty traders; and the modern industrial sector including mines, plantations, manufacturing companies. The starting point of his reasoning is the unlimited supply of unskilled workers because of a limited amount of land and no capital from subsistence economy. However, because of rising capital investments, expanding labor productivity, and increasing profits and capital accumulation, the rising labor demand and higher wages above subsistence level together would draw the surplus labor from agricultural sectors (Lewis 1954). By considering the contextual characteristics of Chinese political economy, this Lewis model has been creatively applied to analyzing and predicting the development of Chinese economy and labor markets. A paradigmatic paper was published by Fang Cai (2007), who distinguished the factors that have contributed to the economic growth in China in the past. These factors include the gain from demographic dividends, the improvement of total factor productivity, and the realization of comparative advantage in the global economy. However, tracing these factors is not his aim; rather, what he wanted to say is that the economic growth in China is approaching the Lewis turning point, at which point of time the surplus labor force would be completely absorbed by the modern industrial sector. This is because the demographic transition has reduced the demographic dividend and the resulted shortage of migrant labor will promote a unification of labor markets.

In institutional analysis, two viewpoints about their future could be distinguished: conservative and radical. Conservative scholars believe in the effect of institutional transitions, in which the state has reformed and will continue to change the barriers to job creation and labor participation, and the market will play a more fundamental role in regulating the employment relationship, labor mobility and wages (Cai, et al. 2008). The

market mechanisms, especially the price lever in the interaction between demand and supply of labor, will gradually increase migrant workers' bargaining power and employment terms. For example, migrant workers' higher turnover rate has been treated as a kind of strategy by migrant workers to improve their market status and wage levels (Han 2011; Wang and Wu 2010). Radical scholars argue that capitalist development and the marketization process has made a new working-class of rural migrant workers as China becomes the "World' factory," the process they called "semi-proletarianization" (Ngai and Lu 2010). Furthermore, both state policy and market exchange have contributed to the labor struggles initiated by the new-working class. For example, Ngai et al. (2009) argued that this state-driven economic development was accompanied by a state withdrawal from the areas of social reproduction and social protection. Lee (2007) argued that the migrant workers in the Sunbelt of China have gradually recognized their legal rights and become a Marxist-type working class, which has caused labor movements to rise up against the capitalists and local governments. From a global perspective on the struggle between capital and labor, Silver applied her framework of the relationship between globalization and the workers' movement to China. She thought China was an emerging epicenter of labor unrest because "where capital goes, conflict follows," as spatial fix and technological fix have made China a part of global capitalist system (Silver 2003; Silver and Zhang 2009).

The problem with this transitional stance is their explanatory deficit, which is related to their ideological assumptions. That is, the transitional stance could not explain why the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades with the high rate of economic growth and urbanization. If this increase could be

defined as a stage of a long-term transformation, then how long will the transition be? How long could it be defined as a “transition” or “transformation” process? Whether the institutional reforms were trustable or believable is still a controversial issue. Some have argued that the Chinese reforms have been trapped in a “partial reform equilibrium,” which means that a small group of ruling elite has captured the fruit of economic growth and will prevent further fundamental reforms that might benefit migrant workers (Pei 2006; Hellman 1998). Finally, nearly all scholars on labor protests admit that “labor rebellion largely remained tame and nonmilitant” because of the institutional arrangements such as household responsibility system in rural villages and strong state controls on union organizing (Lee 2007: 204).

These explanatory deficits of conservatives and radicals are closely connected to their ideological frameworks. The structural analysis and its associated conservative viewpoints believe in the market mechanism and argue for the urbanization associated with industrialization, while the radical viewpoints advocate for social equality and rights of Chinese migrant workers.

The transitional perspectives cannot explain why the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades. I argue that Chinese migrant workers are not a transitional or transient phenomenon. Or, at least we could see that the Chinese migrant worker should not be understood as a transitional or transient phenomenon because Chinese migrant workers have made up a structural stratum in the social structure of China since late 1970s when China began its reform and opening-up policies. This process can be called the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. Here, my structuration theory means the emergence of a social class, who (1) has large numbers,

(2) possesses stable proportions in the Chinese social structure, (3) has a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) has existed and will exist for a long period of time. Generally speaking, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers means that there are a number of social positions occupied by a group of people, which have existed and will last for a certain historical period. Specifically, this structuration has two aspects.

Macro-Institutional Basis of the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

First of all, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers is embedded in the structural disparities in contemporary China. Corresponding to the two general trends of the internal migration in China—from rural villages to cities and from less-developed regions to more-developed regions—there are two structural disparities that were thought of as relevant to the emergence of Chinese migrant workers: the division between urban and rural areas and the disparity between different regions. The two macro-level structural disparities have created “push” and “pull” factors for Chinese internal migrations.

The problem with structural analyses is that the “push” and “pull” facts derived from structural disparities can only provide the emergence of Chinese migrant workers with a possibility of moving, without acknowledging how policies can intervene to show what the terms of their move might be. In other words, though these analyses point to necessary conditions, these conditions are far from sufficient conditions. Comparative studies on different countries confronting similar structural conditions have suggested the importance of institutional arrangements besides structural disparities. For example, the research by Meng and Manning (2010) indicates that though China and Indonesia face similar structural transformations, their different state policies have led to different

consequences: in Indonesia, free rural-urban migration have resulted in a large number of urban poor people, who take jobs in informal sectors and live in urban slums; in China, an internal “guest worker” system with state control on the migration process has prevented the emergence of a large class of urban poor people and made a huge number of rural migrant workers (i.e., the floating population) who maintain some connections with their home villages. This is also the case for the difference between China and India (Smart, et al., 2013). So, previous structural analyses are not enough to understand the logic of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. It is necessary to investigate the institutional arrangements in China in order to understand the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers.

According to Fan (2008: 11), the “Hukou paradigm” is a dominant framework for explaining the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. The Hukou paradigm argues that population movements were tightly controlled and restricted through the Hukou system in the Maoist era. However, after economic reforms in the late 1970s, the tight control of population migration through the Hukou system has been gradually loosened but not unleashed. With respect to the extent of Chinese migrant workers’ migration, the Hukou system still limits the welfare benefits to migrants and educational benefits to their children. So they will become a group of migrant workers staying in the city because they still cannot enjoy the same state-provided benefits as urban residents. So, the continuation of the Hukou system hinders the urbanization or permanent migration of Chinese migrant workers (Wang 2005; Fan 2008; Chan 2008; 2009; Cai, et al. 2008; Cai 2011).

Reforming the Hukou system and loosening migration control are prerequisites to the emergence and existence of a large number of Chinese migrant workers because they are almost never allowed to establish urban citizenship in the cities even though they may work there. Consequently, the partial reform of the Hukou system still makes it too hard for Chinese migrant workers to settle down in the cities and to permanently migrate.

However, this Hukou paradigm does not tell the whole story. First, the Hukou system is by no means a primary social institution. Its establishment, reform and function depend on the interaction between the state and markets. Fan (2008) argues that the transition of labor regimes is more than the Hukou paradigm which is only a part of a larger labor regime. During the Maoist period, the allocation of labor was monopolized by the state, in which the Hukou system was used to divide labor forces between agricultural and industrial sectors. However, the introduction of market mechanisms in labor allocation ushered in a new labor regime of migrant workers. The migrant labor regime channels and constrains migrant workers to specific sectors and jobs based on their Hukou status. So, the partial reform of the Hukou system has to be understood in the context of the mutual constitution between the state and labor markets. Second, the Hukou paradigm emphasizes structural and institutional constraints on Chinese migrant workers' living conditions. Though this paradigm has investigated how the Hukou status has affected Chinese migrant workers' life conditions, it largely fails to examine how the Hukou system has shaped their identities, motivations and attitudes. In other words, relying only on the Hukou system misses the other reforms and how all of this has been perceived by Chinese migrant workers. Furthermore, because the Hukou system is so complex that everything can be included in the Hukou system, the Hukou paradigm

doesn't elaborate how the Hukou paradigm has influenced Chinese migrant workers' life conditions. I argue that the essential elements of the Hukou system are migration control and differentiated citizenship between rural and urban residents.

Considering Chinese migrant workers' immediate living conditions, identities, motivations, and attitudes, the interaction between the state and market has led to four institutional arrangements, which have shaped both Chinese migrant workers' living conditions and subjective consciousness. Furthermore, most institutional arrangements are related to the Hukou system because they involve some legacy of the Hukou system. These institutional arrangements include (1) the development of household autonomy system in rural villages, (2) the encouragement and regulation of informal employment relationships in cities, (3) the maintenance of differential citizenship with migrant workers receiving fewer rights in the cities, and (4) the strengthening of identity-based market ideology. All of these institutional arrangements have affected the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers by framing their identities and conditioning their working and living conditions. Specifically, related to the land tenure system in rural villages, the household autonomy is directly related to their identity as family members. The regulated informal economy shapes their identity as guests in cities. In the background of the differential citizenship between rural and urban residents, their semi-citizenship in cities leads to their stronger embrace of identity as rural residents. Their Hukou-based market ideology confirms their identity as lower-level workers with less human capital.

Micro-Subjective Basis of the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

Second, it is important to examine Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes in order to understand their emergence and existence. Previous institutional analyses indicate that the market is the main mechanism through which China's rural-urban migration happened in the three decades (Li 2008; Cai, et al. 2008), as the government didn't force Chinese farmers to relocate as it did in the communistic era (such as the Intellectual Youth Movement) (Wang and Liu 2006; Fairbank, et al. 2006). This is true despite the fact that the state policies and development ideology, especially the reform policies since late 1970s (including the reforms of the Hukou system), have contributed to the huge rural-urban migration and that the situation of labor market is still controversial (Fan 2008; Ngai, et al. 2009). This means that Chinese migrant workers make their own decisions to migrate without straightforward physical coercion to do so⁵.

Theoretically, it is also necessary to investigate Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes because this investigation can elaborate how structural and institutional factors have contributed to their emergence and existence. Structural analyses have pointed out the "push" and "pull" factors relevant to the huge internal migration in China and institutional analyses have mentioned several institutional arrangements contributing to the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. However, these analyses don't elaborate on how these structural disparities and institutional arrangements have influenced Chinese migrant workers' personal life conditions, motivations and attitudes. It is an irony that all structural and institutional analyses start with descriptions of Chinese migrant workers' unfavorable life conditions,

⁵ In more colorful symbolic interactionist terms, this involves "cooling the mark out" or making migrant workers accept their positions without much in the way of labor unrest. This is especially how this study differs from radical or Marxist accounts such as Ching Kwan Lee's *Against the Law* (2007).

but they tend to overlook the relationship between macro-level conditions and micro-level experiences. So, this study tries to figure out the mechanisms that connect macro- and micro-level analyses.

Practically, it is important to examine Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes because they will affect their responses to their life conditions and the society at large. As to the future of Chinese migrant workers, both conservative and radical perspectives seem to consider Chinese migrant workers as a transitional phenomenon. So they are inconsistent with the current situation of Chinese migrant workers, especially the increasing number of them. The increasing number of migrant workers indicates that (1) the majority of them have not adapted to urban communities or become urban residents and (2) they have not launched effective resistance against the institutional arrangement, in the past three decades. As a result, there are three possibilities. First, will migrant workers adapt and integrate into urban society as conservative scholars have argued? Or second, will migrant workers resist and force the government to change the current institutional arrangements to satisfy their desire to permanently migrate as the radical perspective contends? Or third, will migrant workers simply accept their migrant-worker lifestyle and the discrimination that goes with it, in order to balance out an urban and rural life? In order to answer these questions, investigating their motivations and attitudes toward their *dagong* lifestyle is necessary and in response I will present a "middle way" theory to describe these Chinese migrant workers.

With respect to Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*, the permanent migration paradigm assumes that all migrant workers have a strong desire to settle down in cities, and the household strategy paradigm argues that they just treat *dagong* as a

household strategy to diversify household income and reduce future risks. This study found that not all Chinese migrant workers have a desire to settle down in cities. Even for both migrant workers with such a desire and those without it, the nature of the desire or lack of the desire to do so is different. Four types of the desire to permanently migrate were distinguished. “No desire” which indicates that some migrant workers didn’t have a desire to settle in cities, because they emotionally felt it impossible to do that. “Lost intention” means that some migrant workers didn’t hold a goal to settle in cities because they thought it impossible based on their rational thinking about the possibility. For those with such a desire, the “hopeful desire” is largely an emotional force, while the “expected desire” is based on rational thinking about the possibility and meaning of settling down in cities.

More generally, four types of motivations were identified. Geographically speaking, Chinese migrant workers’ motivations can be rural-oriented or urban-oriented. Socially speaking, their motivations can be personal or social. According to the two dimensions, four types of motivations are constructed: “personal honor at home” is a personal and rural-oriented motivation; “personal future in cities” is a personal and urban-oriented motivation; “household needs at home” is a social and rural-oriented motivation; and “family development in cities” is a social and urban-oriented motivation.

As far as Chinese migrant workers’ attitudes toward their lifestyle are concerned, all migrant workers treat *dagong* as a means to achieve their needs. However, motivation is not the only factor shaping their attitudes. It was found that another factor is comparing *dagong* with its alternatives with respect to whether they can achieve their needs. Possible alternatives will reduce their acceptance of the *dagong* lifestyle, while having

few other options will make them accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Combining Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes, four types of Chinese migrant workers are distinguished. Adventurous migrant workers want to settle in cities but do not accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Optimistic migrant workers want to settle in cities and accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Instrumental migrant workers do not want to settle in cities and treat *dagong* as a means to meet family needs. And retreating migrant workers do not want to settle in cities or accept the *dagong* lifestyle.

To conclude, Figure 3 summarizes the main approach and findings of this study. First, after the removal of tight migration control through the Hukou system reforms, there are four institutional arrangements contributing to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers: household autonomy, differentiated and partial citizenship, informal employment, and market ideology. Furthermore, these institutions contribute to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers by shaping their life conditions, identities, motivations and attitudes. The chapters that follow will provide qualitative and some institutional evidence of these assertions that are quite different from the previously mentioned conservative and Marxist arguments of urbanization and labor protests.

Theoretical Perspective: an Analytical Structuration Theory

In order to examine the inter-influence between Chinese migrant workers' experiences and broader structural-institutional arrangements, I used an analytical structuration theory. This theory is constructed on a critique of Giddens' and Bourdieu's structuration theories from the stance of analytical dualism. This section will first introduce the characteristics of structuration theory and then present the four mechanisms involved in the interaction between structure and agency.

Characteristics of Structuration Theory

According to Parker (2000), structuration theory emphasizes the similarity and consistence between social structure and social agency. Therefore, he treats both Giddens' and Bourdieu's theories as structuration theory. Though Bourdieu didn't use the term "structuration," as Giddens, he also emphasizes the embodied nature of social structure through social actors' mental and motive structures (Lòpez and Scott, 2000). At least four characteristics of structuration theory can be identified, as Giddens' and Bourdieu's theories indicated. First, they both try to solve the dualism between structure and agency. Second, structure and agency are interrelated in process. Third, both theories have an implication of social reproduction. Finally, unconscious factors are emphasized in the assumption of duality.

First, though different terms are used, both Giddens and Bourdieu try to criticize and solve the dualism between structure and agency through the concept "duality." For Giddens (1994), in sociology and philosophy, structure and action usually appear as a pair of opposite concepts. Those theories emphasizing social actions are difficult to deal with structural factors and social causality; on the other hand, functionalism and structuralism give priority to social objects or structure, rather than social subject or agency. He argued that structure is not external to action, because memory can save structure and structure can only be embodied in social practice, and thus structure is internal to social action (Giddens, 1984). Similarly, Bourdieu (1990) criticized objective structuralism and subjective constructionism and tried to transcend their opposition. He used the concept "habitus" to illustrate how objective structures are maintained in social actors' stable mental and motive structure. Habitus, as a kind of embodied structure, is

consistent with and corresponding to objective social structure (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Second, both Giddens and Bourdieu emphasize the importance of process. So, they don't use "structure" as a noun, but as a verb. They also use such terms as "structuring," "structured" and "structuration." Giddens (1984: 17) said,

"Structure thus refers, in social analysis, to the structuring properties allowing the "binding" of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them "systemic" form" (Giddens, 1984: 17)

Similarly, Bourdieu (1977) argued that habitus is both a structured product and a structuring force. This nature of habitus can especially be found in his emphasis on practice. He said, practice happens in time and practice and time are inseparable (Bourdieu, 1990).

Third, their theories have an implicit assumption of social reproduction or social continuity⁶. According to Giddens (1984), social science focuses on those stable social practices which transcend time and place. He defined social system as composed of social actors who are reproducing social relationships binding time and place. Similarly, Bourdieu (1977) emphasized the role of habitus for social reproduction, because habitus is a structuring force, which reproduces social structure. For him, habitus are stable norms that regulate actions in concrete situations. The practices regulated by habitus tend to reproduce the stable and internal norms of social structure, which in turn are the preconditions of those norms.

⁶ Both theorists have analyzed social change. However, social reproduction and social continuity is a characteristic of their theories, rather than their substantive studies.

Finally, social reproduction involves unconscious elements. In his stratification model of the agent, Giddens (1984) said social actors might not be conscious of their motivations, though they could tell their intentions and reasons through their rationality. Similarly, Bourdieu (1977) argued that, in habitus, social structure had become a second nature of social beings. In practice, habitus becomes a nature through historical process. However, social actors reject this historical process. This unconsciousness is the result of forgetting history.

Toward an Analytical Structuration Theory

Though these characteristics of structuration theory have made it able to combine the long-standing chasm between objective structuralism and subjective constructionism, both its ontological basis and theoretical orientation have been questioned especially by post-structurationists. Ontologically, the central conflationism of structure and agency has been criticized from the perspective of analytical dualism. Parker (2000) identified four stances with respect to the relationship between objective structure and subjective construction. Objective structuralism emphasizes the importance of social structure. Subjective constructionism gives priority to agency. Structuration theory argues for duality or identity of structure and agency. Finally, analytical dualism advocates the non-identity and interaction of structure and agency. For post-structuration theorists, to combine structure and agency doesn't necessarily mean to reject the difference, dualism and non-identity between structure and agency. Theoretically, the conservative orientation of structuration theory to social reproduction and social order has been considered as unable to explain social changes. Related to this theoretical orientation to the above ontological assumption, Mouzelis (1995, 1997, 2008) argued that to assume the

difference between structure and agency can help analyze not only social reproduction, but also social change, because to analyze these problems requires assuming the independence, objectivity and continuity of social system.

In order to solve these two problems with structuration theory, I propose an analytical structuration theory to describe the interplay mechanisms between structure and agency involved in traditional structuration theory and argue that these mechanisms can be applied to both social reproduction and social change. This analytical analysis of structuration theory results in the following four mechanisms between structure and agency: resource-shaping, cognition-framing, motivation-orienting, and disposition-conditioning.

First, both Giddens and Bourdieu criticized the assumption of social consensus in structural functionalism and borrowed some elements from social conflict theory. This can be found in their analyses of the equal distribution of resources and domination relationship. Giddens (1984:33) identified two distinguishable types of resources: allocative resources and authoritative resources. While allocative resources are capabilities to generate command over objects, goods and material phenomena, authoritative resources are the transformative capacity to generate command over persons or actors. The two types of resources constitute the domination relationship. Bourdieu (1986; 1984; 2004; 2005) distinguished many kinds of capital, including cultural capital, social capital, economic capital, technical capital, and scholastic capital and so on. He also applied these concepts to analyzing different kinds of field. Based on the conceptualization of resources, they emphasize that their unequal distribution have shaped social actors' life conditions.

Second, both of them stress the role of social actors' mental structure, which will frame their perception of their surrounding world. Giddens (1984) used the term "interpretative scheme" to describe social actors' account, interpretation and communication. As classification models in their knowledge storage, these interpretative schemes can be applied again and again in different time-space situations. Furthermore, these schemes developed and existed in stable social systems. When he analyzed Algerian farmers' perception of their future, Bourdieu (1979) also described how their life conditions have framed their rationality. Specifically, he argued that only with stable material livelihood can they rationally predict their future, or they would remain in their habitual reasoning.

Third, both Giddens and Bourdieu emphasize the role of normative components in social actions, which are oriented by social institutions. As Giddens (1984) pointed out, social actors would have to legitimate or justify their actions. A normative system of social rights and responsibilities is available to them, which are used to evaluate and sanction social actors and their actions. Similar to interpretative schemes, these social norms are also involved in the reproduction of social systems. This also refers to what Bourdieu (1972; 1979) said motive structure, another component of habitus. He argued that the motive structures are different in traditional society and modern society. For instance, in traditional societies, labor is for a sense of honor, and is not merely for survival; in modern societies, employment becomes a way of livelihood.

Finally, disposition-conditioning is a stabilizing process, or a habituating process, through which their mental and mental structure become taken-for-granted in social actors' disposition. This process is closely related to what Giddens said unconscious

factors and practical consciousness. He also used routinization and regionalization to describe this process. For Bourdieu (1972), this is a process of forgetting history, in which social actors become unconscious of how their habitus has developed. However, social actors' unconscious disposition is gradually developed through living under the abovementioned conditions for a long time.

I apply this analytic approach to structuration theory in this study of Chinese migrant workers, which results in the following four mechanisms between structure and agency in the following way: (1) Chinese migrant workers' living and working conditions have been shaped by the differential and partial citizenship and informal employment relationship, (2) their motivations to *dagong* have been oriented by household autonomy and traditional family culture, (3) their attitudes toward their life conditions have been framed by the market ideology, and (4) during their migration process and life course, they tend to reduce the desire to settle in cities and tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Furthermore, these structuration mechanisms provide for the creation of a new structure of a permanent class of migratory workers; that is, the four mechanisms have also contributed to the change and maintenance of Chinese class structure. In this way my work follows Giddens and Bourdieu, but bypasses pure reproduction and has more emphasis on the construction of a new class of Chinese migratory workers.

Research Methods

This research combines descriptive interpretation of Chinese migrant workers' own perspectives and critical examination of the institutional contexts which have shaped their subjective consciousness. So, interpretative and critical qualitative methodologies are integrated in this research. This section will introduce the interpretative-critical

qualitative methodology and the specific techniques of contacting participants, data collection and analysis.

An Interpretative-Critical Qualitative Methodology

Lather (1992) distinguished three post-positivist paradigms: interpretative, critical and postmodern qualitative research. Merriam (2002) elaborated them as three paradigms of qualitative research. An interpretive qualitative research focuses on the meaning developed by people in their interaction with their surrounding world. A critical qualitative research emphasizes the social, cultural and political situations and how they have affected people's construction of reality. This study will investigate migrant workers' subjective experiences in the migration process, especially their changing desire to permanently migrate and degree of accepting the migrant-worker lifestyle. They are meanings attached by migrant workers to their life experiences. Qualitative methods in general and interpretative qualitative methods in particular are good at interpreting meanings and process. Second, this study will investigate how institutional factors influence migrant workers' subjective experiences. The critical approach could figure out the roles of family, state, market and social exclusion from the migrant workers' own perspective.

Moreover, I think interpretation and critique are only analytically distinct. An interpretative-critical qualitative methodology practically integrates the two approaches. That is, the interpretation is an inherent part of criticism, while the critique is an integral element of interpretation. In the interpretative-critical research of Chinese migrant workers, the critical examination of institutional context (family, state, market and social exclusion) will be justified by the interpretation of migrant workers' subjective

experiences, and the interpretative investigation of migrant workers' subjective experiences would be confirmed by the critical analysis of its institutional background. That is, in practice the interpretive and critical approaches are not distinct, but mutually beneficial.

Theoretical and Snowballing Sampling

In order to include all kinds of Chinese migrant workers in this research, a theoretical sampling method was employed. However, the principles for sampling are gradually developed in the research process. Four theoretical principles—gender, family life, migration distance and industry—were adopted, because these characteristics influence migrant workers' motivations and attitudes (Table 1). The three main industries in which migrant workers work—service, manufacturing and construction—were included. Because men and women have different life courses, so both male and female migrant workers were included in this research.

This study includes a more balanced view toward its subjects. For the three types of household structure, I use single, married and married with dependent children, and elder with independent children. Because these household structures are consistent with the stages of the family life course, these household structures can also help examine the influence of the many changes in family life. Furthermore, according to the consistency between household structure and family cycle, I select informants at different ages, because they have different household structures and family life conditions. So, this principle could include the information of age, family life and life course at the same time.

This study also considered both short- and long-distance migrant workers. Short distance is defined as the distance within local city or nearest city, while long distance is

the distance between cities or provinces. I conducted research in three cities—Liaocheng, Jinan, and Beijing (Figure 4), which correspond to three administrative levels—local, provincial and national. Furthermore, in cities of different administrative levels, migrant workers' migration distances are different. In Beijing, for example, there are more long-distance migrant workers from other provinces.

At first, this study was to include 36 ($3*3*2*2$) types of informants according to theoretical principles. However, I didn't find single girls working in the construction industry in both long- and short-distance migrant workers, or elderly women working in far-away cities in service and manufacture sectors. So, there are only 32 types of migrant workers were included in this study, though there might be more than one informant in certain categories. This points to some limitations on young and older women's occupational choices.

As this study involves my intense interactions with my participants, it is extremely important to get each participant's trust. Combining theoretical sampling, snowballing sampling was employed to select participants, which has made it easier to get participants' trust. Fortunately for this research, I was born and raised in a rural village. Nearly all my relatives, friends and classmates have some experiences as migrant workers. Moreover, they work in different cities, industries and occupations. So their relatives, friends, coworkers and classmates could provide interviews with people who represent all types of migrant workers defined by the theoretical principles for sampling. In order to create personal trust, I firstly contacted my relatives, friends and classmates. Some of them have become my informants and we have personal trust because of common life experiences. My relatives and friends have also introduced their own

relatives, friends and coworkers as my informants. Through their introduction, I could construct personal trust with those persons whom I have never known⁷.

Data Collection and Analysis

As this research tries to combine macro- and micro-level analyses, two types of data are included. At the micro-level, semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended interviews were used to get information about Chinese migrant workers' values, motivations and attitudes. Because this research also focuses on the changes in Chinese migrant workers' working conditions, family lives, and subjective consciousness, interviews were organized in two ways. If a migrant worker has worked in less than three cities or companies, the interview was organized by life events of his/her family. Then, his/her working conditions and subjective consciousness were asked at each stage of his/her family lifecycle (Table 2). If a migrant worker has worked in more than three cities or companies, the interview was organized by his/her working places. Then his/her family life events and subjective consciousness were organized through each workplace (Table 3).

At the macro-level, secondary data were used to analyze structural and institutional factors, which have influenced Chinese migrant workers' experiences and consciousnesses. Statistics by governments and scholars were used to outline the characteristics of the industrial structure, the regional uneven development, and the rural-urban disparities in China. As to the institutional transitions in China, legal documents,

⁷ There may be some disadvantages to interview people whom I know well, which is why I asked for many referrals. In either case, I carefully monitored how my kinship status (uncle, aunt or cousin) might affect my interviews. However, I do not believe my kinship status affected their answers about their own life conditions. The main bias might be that they wanted to look successful to a more educated relative. But I did not detect any such bias, perhaps because they knew that I was in a position to discover any exaggeration. On the referral side, the "presentation of self" by relatives to those I did not know was mainly on the basis of helping a Chinese student from America to complete this research study.

official speeches and government reports were used to understand the history of state policies related to Chinese migrant workers.

Data analysis is conducted through three levels of coding—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, which were proposed by Corbin and Strauss (1990). Three specific analysis strategies will be adopted: conceptualization, categorization and connection (Maxwell 2005). Conceptualization means labeling and defining the same phenomena taking place in different sites and cases. This method is especially useful for summarizing the similarities of migrant workers' subjective experiences in the migration process. Categorization is to classify concepts by comparing similarities and differences. This method could help categorize different paths of migrant workers' subjective experiences. Connecting strategies could connect events, categories and contexts. So, connection methods could (1) connect the events in a certain migrant worker's experiences; and (2) connect the migrant workers' personal experiences with their institutional contexts.

The Presentation of Arguments in What Follows

The following chapters are divided into two parts. The first part is composed of Chapters two to four focusing on the structuration of Chinese migrant workers and its institutional basis. The second part, from Chapters five to seven, concentrates on Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle. The structural and institutional factors in the first part are the background of Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes in the second part, while the motivations and attitudes in the second part elaborate on the influences of institutional arrangements in the first part.

Focusing on the current situation and future of Chinese migrant workers, chapter two will critically examine two transitional perspectives—structural transformation theories and institutional transition theories—with respect to: (a) their explanations of the emergence of Chinese migrant workers, and (b) their predictions about their future. Because of the explanatory deficits and ideological assumptions in these transitional perspectives, this chapter presents empirical evidence for the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. This part of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers means the emergence of a group of human beings, who (1) have a large number, (2) possess stable proportions in Chinese social structure, (3) have a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) have existed and will exist for a long period of time. In other words, they are not a transitional group that will go away soon. Rather they make up a stable stratum in the social structure of contemporary China.

As “the Hukou paradigm” is a dominant paradigm for studying Chinese migrant workers, chapter three discusses the Hukou system and its reforms. It argues that the Hukou system has been dramatically reformed to support the party-state’s new development strategy of lifting the tight restrictions on migration. So, the reforms of the Hukou system have contributed to the emergence of more Chinese migrant workers. Moreover, in a socialist market economy, the Hukou system still maintains differential citizenship between rural and urban residents in China, which continues to negatively influence migrant workers’ working and living conditions.

Chapter four goes beyond the reformed Hukou system and focuses on other institutional arrangements developed out of the interaction between the state and markets. It argues that the Hukou system alone could not explain the emergence and existence of

Chinese migrant workers. Four institutional arrangements are emphasized, as all of them have influenced Chinese migrant workers' identities, working and living conditions. The household autonomy system derived from the rural land-tenure reform reinforced their identities as family members; differential citizenship between rural and urban residents and migrant workers' "semi-citizenship" in cities strengthened their identities as rural but migratory residents; regulated informal employment in cities supported their identities as guests in cities; and identity-based market ideology enhanced their identities as low-level workers.

Part two examines the bottom-up or micro-aspects of the structuration process. As the permanent migration paradigm is another dominant paradigm in studies on Chinese migrant workers' consciousness, chapter five examines migrant workers' desires to settle in cities. It finds that not all migrant workers want to settle in cities. However, the reasons for not having the desire are different: while some migrant workers never thought about settling down in cities, some thought it impossible to settle in cities. For migrant workers with the desire, the nature of their intention is also different: some of them only had the hope of settling in cities, while some have developed specific plans to do so. So, four types of desire to settle in cities are identified: no desire, lost intention, hopeful desire and expected intention.

As not all Chinese migrant workers have the desire to settle in cities, chapter six investigates their motivations to *Dagong* or stay in what amounts to be an in-between state. Although the finding that the permanent migration and family needs are two ultimate motivations to *Dagong* is consistent with previous permanent-migration paradigm and household-strategy paradigm, it also finds that permanent migration could

be an end or a means. While permanent migration is treated as a means, family life becomes the ultimate motivation. Furthermore, household strategy could be a strategy of an individual as a family member and a strategy of household as a whole. Finally, the motivations are changing with the alterations of their working and living conditions and family lives.

Chapter seven concentrates on Chinese migrant workers' attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle—whether they accept this lifestyle or not. As all migrant workers treat *dagong* as a means to achieve their ends, their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle are investigated through their own emotions and calculations. Comparing *dagong* with its alternatives has shaped their attitudes. *Dagong* has become a reasonable choice for Chinese migrant workers when they failed to achieve its alternatives. Though they also compare their lifestyle with urban residents and new urbanized citizens, they think that their lack of human capital and opportunities make it hard for them to integrate into city life.

Finally, chapter eight concludes this study by summarizing main findings and reviewing the implications and limitations of this study. I show that my approach is a middle road between “permanent transition” and mounting “labor protest.” Instead the structuration of migrant workers is a macro- and micro-process that reveals a number of motivational processes that change over time. This leaves a large and evolving social class that Chinese workers and policy makers will have to deal with over time. Though Chinese migrant workers are constantly moving, they are not going away soon.

Table 1. Principles for Theoretical Sampling

Family structure	Migration Distance			
	Short-distance migration		Long-distance migrant workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Single	Construction*		Construction	
	<i>Hu</i> **	Service	<i>Qian</i>	Service
	Service	<i>Jing</i>	Service	<i>Ping</i>
	<i>En</i>	Manufacture	<i>Di</i>	Manufacture
	Manufacture	<i>Yan</i>	Manufacture	<i>Juan</i>
	<i>Shun</i>		<i>Gang; Jun</i>	
Married and married with children	Construction	Construction	Construction	Construction
	<i>Long</i>	<i>Ju</i>	<i>Tai; Laosi</i>	<i>Hong</i>
	Service	Service	Service	Service
	<i>Ling</i>	<i>Hua</i>	<i>Yang; Ye</i>	<i>Li</i>
	Manufacture	Manufacture	Manufacture	Manufacture
	<i>Laoge</i>	<i>Mi</i>	<i>Liao; Wang</i>	<i>Hui</i>
Senior migrant workers	Construction	Construction	Construction	
	<i>Yao</i>	<i>Na</i>	<i>Laoshao</i>	
	Service	Service	Service	Service
	<i>Qiang</i>	<i>Lan</i>	<i>Su</i>	<i>Yu</i>
	Manufacture	Manufacture	Manufacture	
	<i>Qiao</i>	<i>Yue</i>	<i>Ning</i>	

*construction, service and manufacture are three main industries in which migrant workers work

**italic words are interviewees' pseudonyms

Table 2 Interview Outline (Type I)

This type of interview is used for those migrant workers who have worked in more than three cities or companies. These migrant worker's life experiences could be organized by the cities or companies in which they used to work.

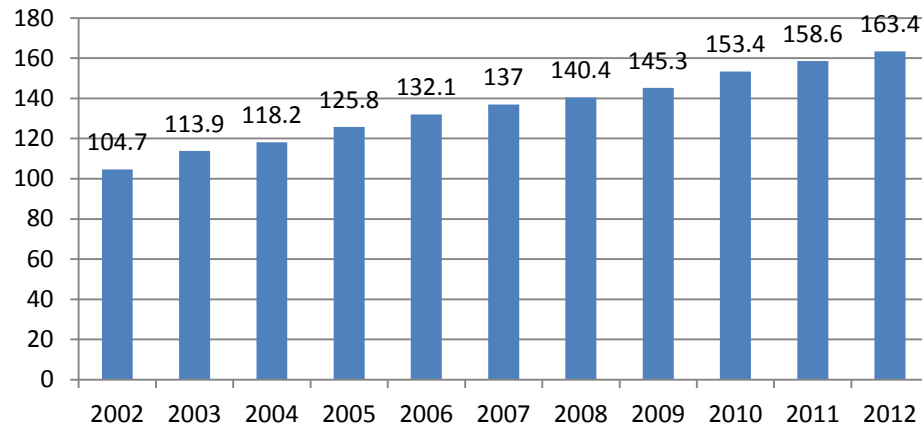
Where did you work?	How is your family like then?	How was your working condition?	Why did you work there?	What was your plan about future?

Table 3 Interview Outline (Type II)

This second type of interview note is used for those migrant workers who have worked no more than two cities or companies. These migrant worker's life experiences could be organized by the changes in their family life.

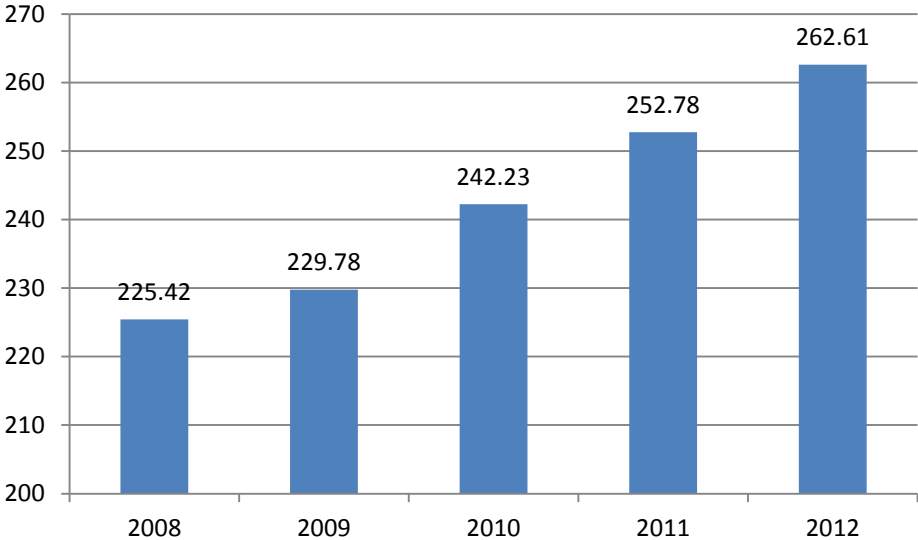
When did you graduate.....?	How is your family life like?	Which city or company did you work then?	How was your working condition?	Why did you work there?	What was your plan about future?
Graduation from school					
Starting work					
Engagement					
Marriage					
Children's birth					
Children's education					
Children's independence					

Figure 1 The Number of Long-Distance Migrant Workers (millions), 2002-2012



Note: Long-distance migrant workers are those who work outside their local cities and cannot commute between workplaces and homes every day.
Source: the numbers of long-distance migrant workers from 2002 to 2008 are from Cai and Chan (2009); the numbers of long-distance migrant workers from 2009 to 2012 are from the National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Figure 2 The Total Number of Migrant Workers (millions), 2008-2012



Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Notes: These numbers are total numbers of both long-distance and local migrant workers. Though migrant workers are able to commute between cities or towns and villages every day, some of them don't commute in reality.

Figure 3 The emergence and Existence of Chinese Migrant Workers

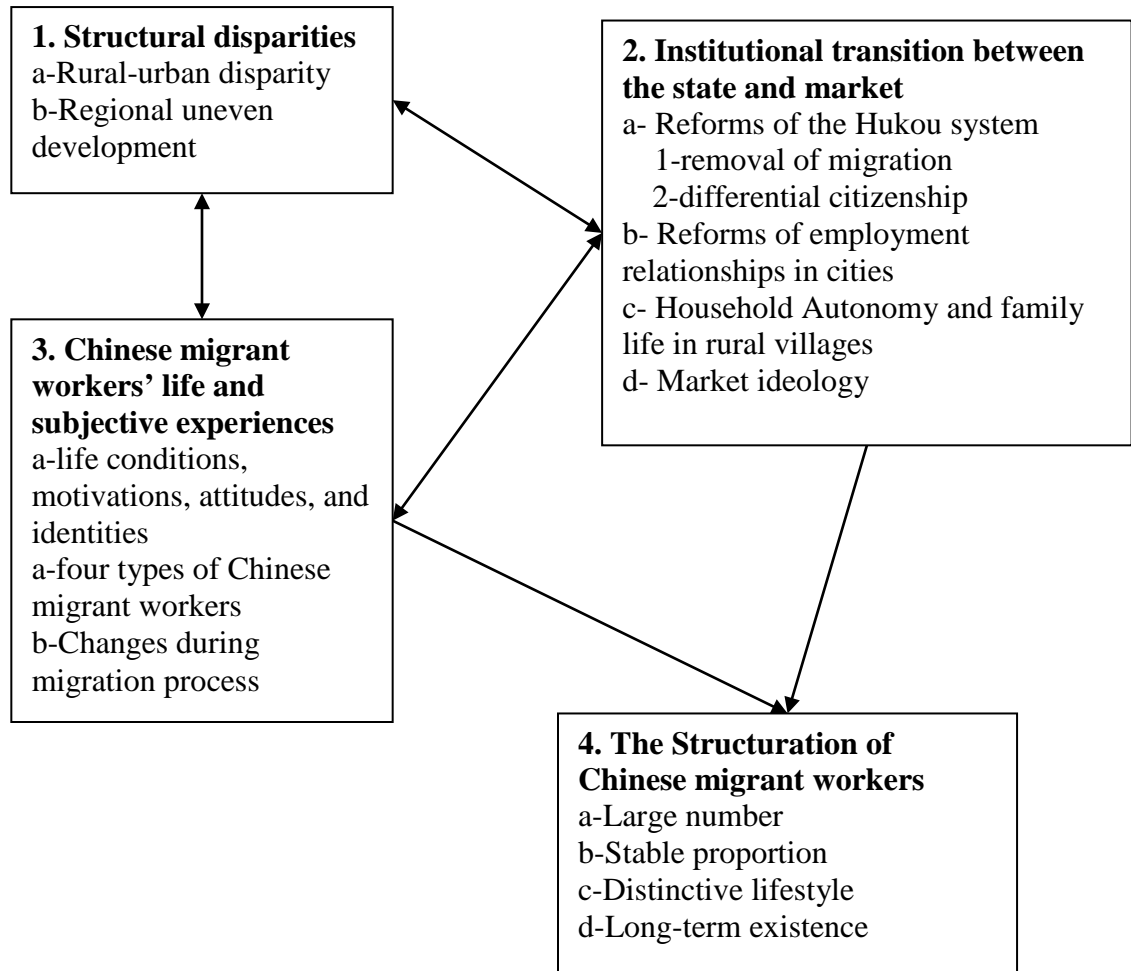


Figure 4 Interview Sites



Note:

The three stars in this map mark the three cities where I conducted my interviews. The largest star marks the capital city of China, Beijing. Beijing, at the top administrative level, has more long-distance migrant workers from other provinces. The intermediate-size star corresponds to Jinan, the capital city of Shandong Province. Jinan, at the intermediary administrative level, has both long-distance and short-distance migrant workers. The smallest star indicates Liaocheng, a municipal city. Most of migrant workers in the city of Liaocheng are short-distance migrant workers.

Part One:

Structure and Institutions

Focusing on their behavioral characteristics and integrating their occupational and social characteristics, Chinese migrant workers have been defined as those workers characterized by their *dagong* lifestyle, whereby *dagong* means leaving rural villages, where they have the rights to contract farm land and build houses, and work in towns and cities, in which they work for others in order to earn wages. Because of the economic growth and institutional reforms since 1978 when Chinese government launched the project of Reform and Opening-up, the number of migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades. According to the latest national statistics, the number of Chinese migrant workers has reached 268.94 million in 2013.

Why have generations of rural residents joined the army of migrant workers, even if their working and living conditions are unfavorable? What would the future of this group people be like? This part will argue that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle. This process is called the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, which means the group of people (1) has a large number, (2) possesses stable proportions in Chinese social structure, (3) has a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) has existed and will exist for a certain period of time.

Why Chinese migrant workers have constituted a stable group of people? Though all countries have experienced or are experiencing industrialization and urbanization processes, it seems that only in China these processes have produced a social class of Chinese migrant workers. So, it is important to examine the unique institutional arrangements in China, which have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant

workers as a social class. Related to the Hukou system, the differentiated citizenship between rural and urban residents and the partial citizenship of migrant workers in cities are still relevant to Chinese migrant workers' life conditions and identities. Beyond the Hukou system, household autonomy in the countryside, informal employment in cities and towns, and market ideology also have shaped migrant workers' life conditions and identities.

Chapter Two:

The Structuration of Chinese Migrant-Worker Class

As the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades, this group of people didn't become urban citizens immediately after they worked in cities or launch revolutionary resistances against the institutional arrangements. Then, what will Chinese migrant workers' future be like? In this chapter, two dominant perspectives on Chinese migrant works—structural transformation theories and institutional transition theories—will be critically examined, with respect to: (a) their explanations of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, and (b) their predictions of the future of Chinese migrant workers. Based on criticizing the transitional assumption of the two dominant perspectives, this chapter will argue that Chinese migrant workers, as a social class, have been gradually structured into the political and economic structure, even though some migrant workers have successfully become urban citizens in the processes of industrialization and urbanization. This process is called the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, which means that Chinese migrant workers have gradually constituted a social class, who (1) exists in a large number, (2) possesses stable proportions in Chinese social structures, (3) has a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) stably exists for a relatively long period of time.

Transitional Perspectives on Chinese Migrant Workers

The previous studies on the rural-urban migration and migrant workers in China could be divided into two categories—structural analyses and institutional analyses, despite the variations within each perspective. While structural analyses focus on the structural disparities of scarce resources, institutional analyses focus on the mechanisms

by which scarce resources are distributed. However, the distinction is only analytical and they are in fact overlapping with and complementary to each other.

Structural Transformations and Migrant Workers' Future

Because the internal rural-urban migration in China involves the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the frequently referred point is Lewis' "dual sector model" (Altmann 2011) in development economics. For Lewis, in developing countries, there are two economic sectors: the traditional agricultural sector composed of subsistence farming, handicraft workers and petty traders; and the modern industrial sector including mines, plantations, manufacturing companies. The starting point of his reasoning is the unlimited supply of unskilled workers because of a limited amount of land and no capital from subsistence economy. However, because of rising capital investments, expanding labor productivity, and increasing profits and capital accumulation, the demand of more labor and the higher wages above subsistence level together would draw the surplus labor from agricultural sectors (Lewis 1954).

Even though the Lewis model has been criticized, revised and elaborated by other scholars (Ranis 2004), this model still became popular to Chinese scholars, not only because its theoretical relevance to China's development, but also because its prediction of so-called "Lewis turning point." By considering the contextual characteristics of Chinese political economy, this Lewis model has been creatively applied to analyzing and predicting the development of Chinese economy and labor markets. A paradigmatic paper was published by Fang Cai (2007). Cai distinguished the factors that have contributed to the economic growth in China in the past. These factors include the gain from the demographic dividends, the improvement of total factor productivity, and the

realization of comparative advantage in global economy. However, tracing these factors is not his aim; rather, what he wanted to say is that the economic growth in China is approaching the Lewis turning point, at which point of time the surplus labor force would be completely absorbed by the modern industrial sector. This is because the demographic transition has reduced the demographic dividend and thus led to a shortage of labor, all of which will promote a unification of labor markets. Cai and Wang (2008) continued to argue that there is no longer a large pool of surplus laborers in rural China, after most of them have become urban citizens or migrant workers during the past three-decade economic growth.

Since then, whether China has reached the Lewis turning point has become a hot topic in academic research, which focuses on whether China still have surplus labor in the countryside. Kwan (2009) indicates that there are still a large number of surplus labors in rural China. Knight, Deng and Li (2011) indicate that while there are migrant labor scarcities and rising migrant wages, there is still a considerable pool of relatively unskilled labor available in the agricultural sector. However, the basic logic underpinning these studies is same. As to the explanation of the emergence of Chinese migrant workers, it argues that the surplus labors in rural-agricultural sectors are drawn to the urban-industrial sectors by the higher wages in cities. As to the future of Chinese migrant workers, it implies that Chinese migrant workers will integrate to the industrial sector when the balance between supply and demand of labor is stricken. This logic also supported other concepts such as “under-urbanization” and “incomplete urbanization,” which also argued that the urbanization process should go exponentially with the industrialization process (Chang and Brada 2006). The question is that why surplus labor

from the countryside has become migrant workers with *dagong* lifestyle. Another question is that whether migrant workers from countryside will shed their *dagong* lifestyle when there is a balance between supply and demand. Of course, there is still a question about the definition and number of surplus labors in rural sectors.

Institutional Transitions and Migrant Workers' Future

Actually, the structural analysis did not ignore the institutional differences in different countries. The Lewis model also has its institutional assumptions—"the faith and optimism in market-driven capitalist development" (Huang 2009: 414). Those scholars assessing the number of surplus labors in rural sectors also considered the institutional arrangements in the countryside (Knight, et al. 2011; Kwan 2009; Tao, et al. 2011; Chan 2010a). However, the importance of institutional analysis derives from the fact that though industrialization will draw on the labor force of rural primary to secondary and tertiary industries, institutional arrangements might cause different paths of urbanization. For example, Meng and Manning (2010) indicate that though China and Indonesia face similar structural transformations, the state policies have led to different consequences: in Indonesia, free rural-urban migration has resulted in a large number of urban poor people, who take jobs in informal sectors and live in urban slums; in China, an internal "guest worker" system with state control on the migration process has prevented the emergence of urban poor people but made a huge number of rural migrant workers who maintain some connections with their home villages. As to the explanation of the formation of Chinese migrant workers, the institutional analyses emphasize the institutional transition since the late 1970s when China started the Reform and Opening-Up policies.

Analytically, structural analyses focus on the distribution of scarce resources among different groups of people, while institutional analyses concentrate on the mechanisms through which the scarce resources are distributed in such a way that social actors might accept the unequal distribution of income and rights. With respect to Chinese migrant workers, three mechanisms or institutions were emphasized in previous studies. The mechanism of markets has been stressed by the market transition theory. From this perspective, Zhan (2011) argued that the importance of Hukou has declined substantially due to Hukou reforms and other socioeconomic changes, and that the market has become the most important factors in limiting migrant workers' life chances. Though the market has played a positive role of peasants by helping them get improved means of making a living, the market also places them in a disadvantaged position because most of them have limited marketable resources, as compared with urban residents. Specifically, migrant workers lack two important types of resources: human capital, including education and marketable skills, and economic capital, including income and property. The mechanism of the state is emphasized by the state policy theory. As to the labor market for the migrant workers, the state industrialization strategies have been treated as the fundamental, influential factor because changes of state industrialization strategy have influenced the Hukou reform, rural policies, urban policies, economic organizations and so on (Solinger 1999; Chan 2008; 2009). Related to state industrial strategy, Hukou system and its reforms have direct influences. Fan even treats "Hukou system" as a paradigm to explain the internal circular migration in China (Fan 2008). The mechanism of social culture is stressed by the social exclusion theory. Zhan (2011) pointed out that besides markets social exclusion is another factor that

determines the migrant workers' life chances in cities. Specifically, identity-based exclusion and separated social networks reduced migrant workers' economic opportunities. It has become a commonsense that migrant workers have become an integral part of cities in present China. Social exclusion happens through labor market segmentation, with migrant workers concentrating in labor-intensive industries, such as construction, manufacture, service and so on (Wang, et al. 2002).

These institutional analyses were also related to the viewpoint about the future of Chinese migrant workers, because whether they accept these institutions would determine their responses. Two viewpoints about their future could be distinguished: conservative and radical. Conservative scholars believe in the effect of institutional transitions, in which the state has reformed and will continue to change the barriers to job creation and labor participation, and the market will play a more fundamental role in regulating the employment relationship, labor mobility and wages (Cai, et al. 2008). The market mechanisms, especially the price lever in the interaction between demand and supply of labor, will gradually influence migrant workers' bargaining power and employment term. For example, migrant workers' higher turnover rate has been treated as a kind of strategy by migrant workers to improve their market status (Han 2011; Wang and Wu 2010).

Radical scholars argue that the capitalist development and marketization process had made a new working-class of rural migrant workers as China becomes the "World' factory," the process was called "semi-proletarianization" (Ngai and Lu 2010). Furthermore, both state policy and market exchange have contributed to the labor struggles initiated by the new-working class. For example, Ngai et al. (2009) argued that the state-driven economic development was accompanied by a state withdrawal from the

areas of social reproduction and social protection. Lee (2007) argued that the migrant workers in Sunbelt of China have gradually recognized their legal rights and become a Marxist-type working class, which has caused labor movements to rise up against the capitalists and local governments. From a global perspective on the struggle between capital and labor, Silver applied his framework of the relationship between globalization and workers' movement to China. She thought China was thought as an emerging epicenter of labor unrest because "where capital goes, conflict follows," as spatial fix and technological fix have made China a part of global capitalist system (Silver 2003; Silver and Zhang 2009).

Comments on Transitional Perspectives

The two analytically distinct perspectives—structural analysis and institutional analysis—are not only complementary, but also based on a common foundation: both adopt a transitional stance with respect to the future of Chinese migrant workers. For example, in both perspectives, it has become popular to distinguish old-generation (or first-generation) from new-generation (or second-generation) migrant workers to describe the heterogeneity within the group of migrant workers (Yue, et al. 2010; Ngai and Lu 2010). This distinction has pointed to the changes of migrant workers' consciousness and actions, which implies that the migrant workers will take actions to resist the institutional arrangements and thus change their working and life conditions. Speaking in a milder tone, Wang Xingzhou (2008) argued that new-generation migrant workers had posed a challenge to both company management and social structure, because they have a weakening connection with rural villages, a lower identification and evaluation of social condition, a better knowledge of law, and a clear awareness of their rights. More radically,

some argued that in the process of proletarianization new-generation migrant workers, as a new working class, have become more and more conscious of their interest and rights and thus participate in various forms of interest-based or class-oriented labor protests (Chan and Ngai 2009; Lee 2007).

The problem with this transitional stance is their explanatory deficit, which is related to their ideological assumptions. That is, the transitional stance could not explain why the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades with the high rate of economic growth and urbanization. If this increase could be defined as a stage of a long-term transformation, then how long the transition will be. How long could be defined as a “transition” or “transformation” process? Whether the institutional reforms were trustable or believable is still a controversial issue. Some have argued that the Chinese reforms have been trapped in a “partial reform equilibrium,” which means that a small group of ruling elite has captured the fruit of economic growth and will impede further fundamental reforms (Pei 2006; Hellman 1998). Finally, nearly all scholars on labor protests admitted that “labor rebellion largely remained tame and nonmilitant” because of the institutional arrangements such as household responsibility system in rural villages (Lee 2007: 204). These explanatory deficits are closely related to their ideological assumptions. The structural analysis and its associated conservative viewpoints believe in the market mechanism and argue for the urbanization associated with industrialization, while the radical viewpoints advocate for social equality and rights of Chinese migrant workers.

The above analyses about the study on Chinese migrant workers also indicate a paradigmatic shift from migration and urbanization to class process. As class-formation

analysis demonstrated, Chinese migrant workers have started to constitute a social class in the Thompsonian sense with their consciousness and protests (Lee, 2007; Thompson, 1966; Chan and Ngai, 2009). However, the exclusive focus on the process of developing class-for-itself has narrowed down the scope of class analysis, for example, how about the class-in-itself nature of Chinese migrant-work class? So, it is helpful to treat Chinese migrant workers as a new working class. However, this requires recognizing various class processes besides the class-formation process. Though there are different conceptualizations of the term “class” in academic and popular spheres (Crompton, 2008; Savage, 2000), this chapter will treat Chinese migrant workers as a working class with their distinctive *dagong* lifestyle, which distinguishes them from other workers like traditional SOE workers and influences their life chances and social interactions.

Empirical Evidence: the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

The transitional perspectives cannot explain why the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades. It is reasonable to say that the group of Chinese migrant workers is not a transitional or transient phenomenon. Or, at least we could see that the Chinese migrant worker should not be understood as a transitional or transient phenomenon, because Chinese migrant workers have made up a structural stratum in the social structure of China since late 1970s when China began its reform and opening-up policies. Here, the structuration means the emergence of a social class, who (1) has a large number, (2) possesses stable proportions in Chinese social structures, (3) has a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) stably exists for a relatively long period of time. Generally speaking, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers means that there are a number of social positions occupied by a group of people, which have existed

and will last for a certain historical period. Specifically, this structuration has three aspects. Economically speaking, Chinese migrant workers have become a structural element in both external and internal labor markets in China. Socially speaking, Chinese migrant workers have become a group of people who are characterized by their distinct lifestyle. Politically and speaking, Chinese migrant workers have been defined as a group of people by state and scholars, and based on this definition, many state policies aim to deal with the problems of Chinese migrant workers. On the other hand, Chinese migrant workers have become a regular force to influence state policies and make the government continuously be reforming institutional arrangements.

The economic dimension of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers

The existence of a group of people needs material goods to feed them; that is, the existence of Chinese migrant workers is first of all their economic existence. Chinese migrant workers exist as a kind of worker in China; that is, Chinese migrant workers earn their living through working. As Althusser (1971: 127) said, “every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production...the process of production sets to work the existing productive forces in under definite relation of production.” The Chinese migrant workers also need means of production to work and feed them.

“Fortunately,” the economic growth in China since late 1970s has produced the productive forces and enabled Chinese migrant workers to work and feed themselves. In the institutional transition process since the late 1970s, there are four main sources of capital—Township and Village-Owned Enterprises (TVEs), private enterprises, foreign investment and reformed State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), all of which have provided means of production for migrant workers and thus contributed to the structuration of

Chinese migrant workers. One cannot say more on the role of TVEs to absorb the surplus labors from agricultural sectors.

Within Chinese industrial structure, migrant workers concentrated in labor-intensive industries, including manufacturing, construction and service industries (Wong, et al. 2007). Furthermore, this industrial distribution didn't change much in the past decades. In 2002, Wang Feng et al. investigated rural migrant workers in Shanghai and found that migrant workers concentrated in sale/trade/restaurant services, manufacturing, and construction. According to the latest survey by the National Bureau of Statistics, the industrial distribution of migrant workers largely remains the same, despite a few changes across years (Table 4). All of these indicate that Chinese migrant workers have become a structural element in Chinese industrial structure in the past decades.

On the supply side, the employment opportunities described above have attracted surplus labors from rural agricultural sectors, which produced both rapid urbanization and increasing migrant workers. It should be noted here that some migrant workers have become urban residents, but the personal social mobility that might have happened didn't influence the structuration of Chinese migrant workers because social structure largely exist independent from personal mobility. The proportion of migrant workers out of total urban employments could be used as an indicator to describe that Chinese migrant workers have grown to be a structural element of Chinese labor forces (Table 5).

The social dimension of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers

All kinds of workers are not merely workers, who just exist as labors at the moment of production. Matthew Watson (2005) criticizes and goes beyond the "states and Markets" approach, arguing that economic agents are moral agents along with Adam

Smith. He agrees with Thorsten Veblen on the habituating effects on action of life. He adopted the concept of social embeddedness of individuals from Karl Polanyi. Similarly, Althusser (1971) also emphasized the social existence and social reproduction of labor power. As to Chinese migrant workers, Ching Kwan Lee also adopted Michael Burawoy's notion of "Labor regime" to describe the holistic existence of Chinese labor forces, as this notion could link "state regulations of labor and the social reproduction of labor power to workplace control of workers' capacity for resistance" (Lee 2007; Burawoy 1976; 1983). Examining the migrant workers' personal experiences, here it is argued that the Chinese migrant workers have been structured as a social group of people with their distinctive lifestyle, which includes their life conditions at the moments of both production and reproduction.

Various rural connections All migrant workers are from agricultural sectors and have some connections with rural villages. The connections with rural villages is also the reason why migrant workers move between their hometowns and cities more or less frequently. This connection could be of economic nature, which could contribute to the social reproduction of labor power. As Ching Kwan Lee's (2007) case studies indicate, when plant closure or relocation happened, the financial pressure could drive migrant workers to go home for a short term visits, which could at least guarantee subsistence. According to Lee, what makes this possible is the system of land use rights and land contracts in the household responsibility system which emerged in the late 1970s and gradually extended nationwide. The continued connections with rural villages are also of a social network phenomena maintaining solidarity. The split household strategy adopted by rural families usually involves leaving some family members in rural villages. The

separation of family members is the main source of especially strong social connections of migrant workers with rural villages. For example, C. Cindy Fan and Wenfei Winnie Wang distinguished three models of division of labor employed by migrant workers' households, including "inside-outside" model, "dual migrants" model and "second generation" model; all of these models involve some household members working in cities and other staying behind in villages; furthermore, all of these models have led to the high circularity of migrant workers between rural and urban areas (Fan and Wang 2008).

However, migrant workers' connections with rural villages are of double nature. As to the land use right, migrant workers treat it as both an asset and a liability (Lee 2007). When treated as an asset, the land use right is a kind of privilege or entitlement which could serve as a social protection and state provision. When treated as a liability, the land use right could be a burden which made them not completely abandon their rural lives and migrate to cities. As to the relationship with rural villages, social ties could be both a place of protection and a force of exclusion. For example, in Pun Ngai and Lu Huilin's (2010) case study, the informant returned to his hometown because he wasn't treated like a human being in Shenzhen and felt he had no prospects. He went back to his hometown hoping that he would receive treatment as a human being and start his own business. Though some of his relatives and neighbors supported his plan, his father, a typical farmer, knew that there was no future in agricultural production and opposed his plan. Finally it turned out that his father was right and he returned to cities.

Marginalized urban life Migrant workers go to cities to work, but their jobs are marginalized jobs as they are distained by urban residents. As to migrant workers' jobs,

they concentrate in physically demanding jobs or they work as manual labors, which are usually disdained by urban residents (Wang, et al. 2002). So, the occupations taken by migrant workers have low prestige, such as domestic worker, security staff, porter, and construction worker, and so on (Li 2012). Their jobs are very unstable, with some of them being day labors and some of them changing jobs for many times a year. The working conditions at workplace are usually not clean and safe. They work over-time frequently (Lü 2013; Loyalk 2013; Pai 2012; Luyn 2008).

Migrant workers' life conditions in cities are also marginalized, with respect to their consumption, residence, and children's education. Taking living conditions as an example, most local migrant workers commute between the countryside and the city every day. Especially in TVEs, migrant workers work in towns in daytime but live in villages at night (Larus 2010; Wu 2012; Li 2008). For those long-distance migrant workers, there are two residence models: dormitories provided by factory and informal settlements they rent from local residents (Lü 2013). Wherever they live, they are largely separated from the mainstream city life. So, in cities, a rural-urban dualism has transformed into a new dualism in the cities, because a fragmented spatial form of Chinese cities could be found: on the one hand, migrant workers live in informal settlements in urban villages (*chengzhongcun*); on the other hand, urban citizens live in modern apartments surrounded by shopping malls, supermarkets and office buildings (Wu 2012; Fan 2011; Madrazo and Kempen 2012; Zhang 2011).

To conclude by Li Qiang's (2012) concept of "ternary social structure" caused by Chinese migrant workers. According to Li, in the whole Chinese history, there has been a rural-urban differentiation in Chinese social class structure, especially after the

establishment of the Hukou system in 1950s. However, the emergence of rural migrant workers resulted in a ternary social structure, which was composed of three social groups: urban residents, rural residents, and migrant workers. He didn't think migrant workers as a class, but as a status group; but Chinese migrant workers could be thought as a social class, if we define a social class as a group of people who have a distinctive lifestyle and relation to the mode of production. Furthermore, the lifestyle includes nearly every aspect of their lives. For example, Gan Mantang described the main dimensions of Chinese migrant workers' lifestyle (table 6).

The Political Dimension of the Structuration of Chinese migrant workers

Politically speaking, Chinese migrant workers have become a part of political discourse, a target of state policies and a force to influence state actions.

The definition of Chinese migrant workers by the state In order to avoid the confusion of the logic of things with the things of logic and the confusion of theoretical group with practical group, Bourdieu (1987: 13-15) announces that he “finds again, but in a completely transfigures form, the problem of the ontological status of social class, and, for that matter, of all social groups,” that is, it is through an “endless work of representation,” “the definition of the boundaries between groups” and “the very definition of the groups” that a social group could exist and become a political force. Practical groups or functioning groups depends on the groups defined as such. So how Chinese migrant workers have politically become structured depends on a cultural definition about them. Politically and culturally speaking, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers could firstly be found in the definition of Chinese migrant workers as a social group by both the state and academic scholars. Actually, the structural and

institutional analyses could be treated as the definitions of Chinese migrant workers presented in the academic field. Those definitions have a paradox in common: on the one hand, there is a characteristic group of migrant workers that has emerged in China's industrialization process and, on the other hand, Chinese migrant workers are a transitional or transient phenomenon, which would disappear with structural transformation, institutional reform or labor struggles.

How has the state defined "Chinese migrant workers"? There are two discourses, which are to some extent contradictory and dialect. First, the state re-emphasized the goal of four modernizations—modernization in the fields of agricultural, industry, national defense, and science and technology—on December of 1978 at the Third Plenum of the 11th Central committee.⁸ Since then modernization, development, industrialization, and urbanization have become the dominant discourse in China, though the wording and contents of this discourse have changed. Under this development discourse, the rural development, the improvement of agricultural productivity, and the labor movement are good things for China's modernization project. This is also why the state has adopted more and more open policies to migrant workers. On the other hand, the gradualist transition from a planned economy to a market economy also needs social stability. So, more practically, the state issued regulations to manage migrant workers' movement, for the reasons of the lack of urban capacity to bear a larger population, traffic jam, urban poor, and increasing crime rate and so on (2011). However, since the beginning of the reform in late 1970s, the migrant workers, as a group of people, have been in the eyes of policy makers, which make the existence of migrant workers in political agenda. For

⁸ The "Four Modernizations" was initially announced by Zhou Enlai (the Premier at that time) to the first session of the Third National Congress in the December of 1946.

example, in the November of 1977, the State Council has approved the document “On Dealing with Hukou Transformations” proposed by the Ministry of Public Security.

State policies towards Chinese migrant workers The government also introduced regulations particularly targeted at migrant workers. However, there are three stages of policy making toward migrant workers. However, all of these policies are to permit and serve the existence of migrant workers, rather than to eliminate migrant workers by pre-reform system or completely remove that system. The first stage is the pendulum between permission and limitation. The symbolic documents of the first stage are the No. 1 Document of 1984 and the No. 1 document of 1985. Both documents admitted the positive role played by migrant workers and gave the approval of migration and work to migrant workers. However, the second stage, from permission to management, immediately started by the “Temporary Regulation on Urban Temporary Residents,” which require those who live for more than 3 months to get temporary-residence permit. The end of the second stage is signified by the “Announcement on Completely Canceling Fees for Migrant workers” jointly issued by the National Planning Commission and the Treasury Department, which eliminated seven fees collected from migrant workers.

Since then, the third stage started, which characterized by the transition from managing to serving migrant workers. A typical event during this period is that the in 2003 Premier Wen Jiabao helped a migrant worker (Xiong Deming) to get her wage from her employer, which led to a famous photo “The Premier Helps Me Get my Wage.”⁹ In the November of 2003, the General Office of State Council issued an “Announcement on Effectively Solving the Problem of Wage Arrears for Migrant Workers.” And in the

⁹ http://news.ifeng.com/history/zhongguoxiandaishi/detail_2011_07/06/7463853_0.shtml?_from_ralated.

February of 2004, the Department of Construction made an urgent announcement on “Further Solving the Problem of Wage Arrears for Migrant workers.” Since then, the rate of wage arrears has dropped dramatically as many surveys indicated. According to a survey in 2001 and 2005, Sun Meiyuan found that the rate of wage arrears decreased from 12.0%¹ in 2001 to 2.38% in 2005. According to the statistics by the National Bureau of Statistics, the rate of wage arrears has been decreasing (figure 5). There are other service policies for migrant workers, including employment service, children’s education, urban planning, working conditions, and living conditions and so on. Though these policies didn’t change the basic institutional arrangements (Li 2012; Chan and Buckingham 2008; Huang 2011), they indeed helped “migrant workers” and maintained the existence of this group of people.

Chinese migrant workers’ bottom-up political pressures There are more and more studies on migrant workers’ resistance. How should we conceptualize this resistance? Do they mean that migrant workers are not structured in Chinese structure, or have they contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers? Existing studies indicate the resistances launched by migrant workers are another mechanism through which Chinese migrant workers were structured.

First, the resistance particularly launched by “migrant workers” indicates that migrant workers have some common working and life conditions, which also have led to shared perceptions, attitudes and actions. Labor protests initiated by migrant workers have become a type of labor protests because of their common life experiences and institutional background. For example, Ching Kwan Lee (2007) distinguished two types of labor protests in contemporary China: protests of desperation in rustbelt launched by

laid-off workers in State Owned Enterprises and protests against discrimination in sunbelt launched by migrant workers in new industrial zones. Some others directly pointed out that migrant workers' struggles indicate a new working-class was in making, based on E. P. Thompson's (1966) idea that class happens when some men feel and articulate their interests against others (Ngai, et al. 2009; Ngai and Lu 2010).

However, the structuration of migrant workers not only means that a social group exists, but also that the group of people exist for a relatively long period of time. If migrant workers' resistance suggests the existence of a new group of people, will their resistance revolutionize the institutional arrangements that underlie their existence? Evidences show that the group of migrant workers might exist for some time. On the one hand, nearly all studies indicate that migrant workers' resistance was still at the initial stage, which also implies that this resistance could not change the basic institutional arrangements within a short-term period. The protest processes indicate that their resistance is still largely autonomous and not well organized, usually based on factory or cross-factory level. Especially, they do not have their own trade unions to protect their legal rights, as the existing trade unions are affiliating to the All Federation of Trade Unions and are usually led by managers. The reasons or purpose of resistance is targeted at their wages, working conditions, factory relocations, and other specific interests. The activists would be promoted or disposed by the factories after emergent events (Cooke 2005; Chan 2008; Chan and Ngai 2009). More importantly, their everyday life is still to work hard or eat bitterness to make money (Loyalk 2013).

Third, resistance could serve as a signal to the state, which could develop corresponding policies to solve the problems causing resistance. But as analyzed above,

these state policies might not change institutional arrangements and eliminate the group of migrant workers. From the beginning, the transition from a planned regime to a market economy took a gradualist approach, which different from the shock-therapy approach employed by some Eastern countries (Pei 2006; Larus 2012). This could be found in Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic idea of "crossing the river by feeling for the stones." Ahlers and Schubert (2011) argued that China developed an "adaptive authoritarianism" characterized by continuous, problem-oriented institutional and ideological reforms. Ching Kwan Lee (2013) calls it bargained authoritarianism, which includes three micro-foundations of Chinese authoritarianism—protest bargaining, legal-bureaucratic absorption, and patron-clientelism—to deal with social unrest. In the gradual reform process, the state has taken counter measures to solve the problems involved in migrant workers' resistance, so that some migrant workers treat the central government as their protector against the corruption of local governments and the exploitation of their employers (Wright 2010; Cai 2010).

Table 4. Industrial Distribution of Chinese Migrant workers (%), 2008-2012

Industries	Year			
	2008	2009	2010	2012
Manufacturing	37.2	36.1	36.7	36.0
Construction	13.8	15.2	16.1	17.7
Transportation and logistics	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.6
Retail	9.0	10.0	10.0	10.1
Restaurant	5.5	6.0	6.0	5.3
Community service	12.2	12.7	12.7	12.2

Source: The National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Table 5. The Composition of Urban Employment

Year	Employment in Urban Area		
	A. Migrant workers	B. Urban employments	A/B
2002	104.7	251.6	41.62%
2003	113.9	262.3	43.42%
2004	118.2	272.9	43.31%
2005	125.8	283.9	44.31%
2006	132.1	296.3	44.58%
2007	137.0	309.5	44.26%
2008	140.4	321.0	43.73%
2009	145.3	333.2	43.60%
2010	153.4	346.9	44.22%
2011	158.6	359.1	44.16%
2012	163.4	371.0	44.04%

Sources: the numbers of migrant workers from 2002 to 2008 are from Cai and Chan (2009); the numbers of migrant workers from 2009 to 2012 are from the National Bureau of Statistics (2013); the numbers of urban-Hukou workers are from the China Statistical Yearbook¹⁰.

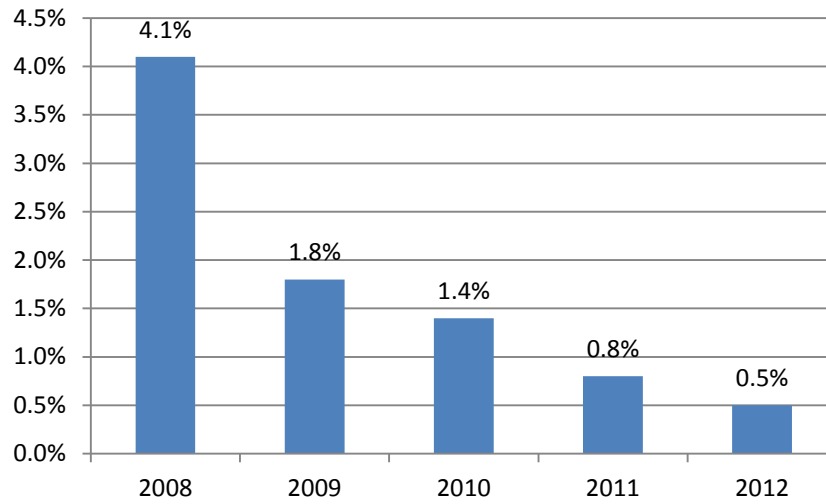
¹⁰ <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2012/indexeh.htm>. This is a table updated based on Cai and Chan's table. However, the numbers of urban-hukou workers used here are different from theirs, because the China Statistical Year book in 2013 was also updated. However, they thought the numbers of urban employment are the numbers of urban-hukou workers; but these numbers are total urban employments, including part-time workers, second-job workers and temporary workers.

Table 6. Basic Conditions of Ternary Social Structure

Dimensions of lifestyle	Residents		
	Urban residents	Migrant workers	Rural residents
Employment	Mainly in state-owned enterprises	Mainly in non-state-owned enterprises or self-employed	Agricultural
Income resources	Institutional wages and work-unit welfare	Market wages, no work-unit welfare	Agricultural sectors
Unemployment insurance	Yes	No	No
Labor insurance	Yes	No	No
Pensions	Social	Family	Family
Residence	Welfare apartments, or apartment bought under government help	Rent, dormitory or apartment bought through market price	Self-built
Medical insurance	Public insurance	Self-support	Self-support
Education	Obligatory	Extra fees	Obligatory

Source: Gan, Mantang (2001)

Figure 5. The Rates of Wage Arrears, 2008-2012



Source: The National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Chapter Three:

Hukou System Reforms and the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

According to Fan (2008: 11), the “Hukou paradigm” is a dominant framework in explaining the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. For this research, this argument is significant because the emphasis on the Hukou system direct the research on Chinese migrant workers to institutional analyses. Institutional analysis is important because the same industrialization and urbanization processes can lead to different results as a result of institutional differences. This chapter and the next one will focus on institutional transitions and arrangements, which are related to migrant workers’ life conditions and consciousnesses. This chapter will focus on the influences of the Hukou system, because of its importance for explaining the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers.

However, there is a controversy on the role of the Hukou system for Chinese migrant workers’ existence and future. Most scholars have argued that despite its reforms, the Hukou system is still an institutional barrier to migrant workers’ urbanization and a main cause of their hard lives in cities, because the agricultural Hukou status still affects their welfare benefits (Solinger 1999; Fan 2002; Zhang 2012). However, Zhan (2011: 248) argued that “in fact, Hukou now plays such a small role that abolishing the remnants of the system will not improve the life chances of migrant workers significantly” because the value of Hukou statuses has been declining with its reforms.

In order to solve this puzzle, this chapter will firstly examine the nature of the Hukou system and its reforms. Then, it will examine the influences of the Hukou system and its reforms on the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. It argues

that the Hukou system, even after its reforms, still has strong influences on Chinese migrant workers' emergence and existence, though some of them might not have consciously criticized this institutional arrangement. However, it also emphasizes that the "Hukou paradigm," which tends to treat the Hukou system as the only institutional factor influencing migrant workers' emergence, existence and future, is not enough to understand the structuration of Chinese migrant workers as a social class.

The Nature of the Hukou System

In order to understand the nature of the Hukou system, this section will briefly examine its origin, operation, purpose and value.

The first aspect of the nature of the Hukou system is its origin: where did the Hukou system come from? Wang (2005) traced the origin of the Hukou system to China's early history: the earliest Xia dynasty (21st-16th century B.C.) has initiated a population census and household registration, and since then household registration system have gradually become complex and perfect. However, the more recent Hukou system developed after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 has its own characteristics, which are also this research's focus. In 1949, there was no such a Hukou institution. The de facto first constitution of PRC—the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)—guaranteed its citizen's rights of the freedom to migrate. At first the Hukou management was just a provisional means to maintain social order and was first established in cities (Wang 2005; Li 2012). In August 1950, a "Provisional Regulation on the Management of Special People" started the Hukou system. In 1951, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) issued "Provisional Regulations on the PRC Hukou Management." In 1953, new rural Hukou

files were created to facilitate the previous urban Hukou system. However, the provisional regulations gradually became a permanent arrangement (Lu 2003; Cheng and Selden 1994). In 1955, the State Council of PRC required local governments to establish permanent Hukou system. Finally, on January 9, 1958, the ninety-first meeting of the Standing Committee of the First National People's Congress passed the "Regulations on Household Registration (Hukou) in the PRC," which was considered as the starting point of a mature Hukou system. This analysis on the origin of the Hukou system indicates that the Hukou system is a state project, an institutional arrangement created and reinforced by the state.

The second aspect of the nature of the Hukou system is its operation. At its surface, Hukou is a classification system of individuals based on their family origins and geographical locations. More generally, Wang (2005) pointed out four ways to divide (and exclude) the population of a country: according to "who you are," "what you have," "where you are," and "what you do/did." He also thought China's Hukou system is a division based on "where you are." In the Hukou system, Chinese nationals' personal Hukou was categorized by two criteria—Hukou type and residential location. The Hukou type was divided into agricultural and non-agricultural Hukou and residential location is the place of Hukou registration with respect to administrative units in the central-local hierarchical structure (Attané 2002; Chan 2009; Lu 2003). Besides the Hukou types and residential location, Hukou registration also distinguishes permanent and temporary Hukou and records the history of migration. There were special bureaus of public security in charge of Hukou registration at each administrative level (Lu 2003; Wang 2005).

The third aspect of the nature of the Hukou system is its purpose. If the Hukou system is created and implemented by the state, then why did the state build the Hukou system? It is important because its design, functions and consequences mostly depend on the meaning attached by its designer and implementer, though there are unexpected consequences. If the Hukou system was just to make it easy to collect information, then its design would be very simple, its function would be to collect more accurate information, and its consequences for citizens' lives would be limited. However, the purpose of creating the Hukou system was much broader than information collection. Generally speaking, after the foundation of PRC the communistic state's purpose of institutional designs is to control all of the population, materials, power and thoughts in the country so that the state could organize them (White 1993; Naughton 2007; 2008; Brandt and Rawski 2008). The Hukou system is originally designed to control population migration so that they could maintain social order, as the industrialization has led a large number of peasants to leave the countryside for cities, but they were defined as "blind flows" in official documents (Chan 2009; Liu 2008; Li 2012). For example, the conversion from agricultural to non-agricultural Hukou was only possible through state-owned enterprises employment, land expropriation, higher education, administrative promotion, crises-caused relocation, army recruitment (Chan 2009).

The fourth aspect of the nature of the Hukou system is the value of Hukou statuses. If the purpose of the state to make the Hukou system was to control population migration, did a person's Hukou status influence their life conditions? The value of Hukou statuses refers to these influences. This question also involves other social institutions which, together with the Hukou system, have affected how other resources

are distributed between populations with different Hukou statuses. Zheng (2003) argued that the Hukou system was just a secondary social institution, which divided the China's population to status groups together with class statuses, employment statuses, and property-ownership. According to Yang and Cai (2003), Hukou system was an integral part of the Big Push industrialization strategy. In order to promote industrialization, the socialist state adopted three institutions, which mutually supported one another. The three institutions are the compulsory procurement and the monopoly of sales of farm products, the rural collective system, and the Hukou system that controlled population mobility. Chan (2009; 2010) treated the Hukou system as a major institutional pillar underlying the deep rural-urban chasm in China. So, together with other social institutions of economic production, social redistribution, and political organization and so on, the Hukou system has caused a system of dual citizenship between rural and urban residents. This is true for all four types of citizenship rights and responsibilities outlined by Janoski (1998), including legal, political, social, and participatory rights and responsibilities.

To conclude, the Hukou system is a state project, through which the state has tightly controlled the population's migration in the communistic era, and which also provided a basis for the state to organize its citizens and other resources. This definition emphasizes its role of controlling population migration, but the value of Hukou statuses depends on other institutional arrangements. So, this definition distinguishes the Hukou system from other institutional arrangements such as the economic organizations, social redistributions, employment relationships, and educations in both rural and urban areas. Figure 6 illustrates this nature of the Hukou system in China by emphasizing its role of migration control and linking the migration control to other social institutions. Though

nearly all aspects of rural and urban residents' lives have been divided by their Hukou statuses, other institutions and the Hukou system are different, because even though the Hukou system remained the same, other institutional arrangements in both rural and urban areas have been changed, especially before the state launched the Reform and Opening-Up policies in 1978. For example, when the state started to control population migration, the commune system in rural areas and work-unit system in cities hadn't been developed. Similarly, when the Household Responsibility System was implemented in rural areas in early 1980s, the Hukou system remained the same (Larus 2012; Unger 2002).

This definition and distinction are also important for explaining the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. The "Hukou paradigm" tends to treat the Hukou system as the only institutional arrangement relevant to migrant workers, if the Hukou system was defined broadly by including all other institutional arrangements. This tends to underemphasize the role of other institutional arrangements in explaining the emergency and existence of Chinese migrant workers, because they are only accessories to the Hukou system in the tendency.

Focusing on the role of the Hukou system for migration control, the following sections will examine its reforms and their influences on Chinese migrant workers. The next chapter will talk about other institutional arrangements and their effects.

The Reforms of the Hukou System

The above investigation only focuses on the Hukou system constructed after the foundation of the PRC and before its reforms in early 1980s. How about its reforms? Because the Hukou system was a state project, its reforms are also state actions which

have changed the system. Because the Hukou system was to control population migrations, its reforms were also relevant to population migrations. There are four main trends of its reforms: the control of population migration was loosened, the value of Hukou statuses was reduced, the administration of Hukou registration was localized, and the purpose of the Hukou system was re-directed.

As to migration control, in 1978 and 1979 measures were taken to tighten migration approval procedures and to limit contract workers from countryside in cities (Lu 2004; Chan 2009). However, in the 1980s a series of regulations and decrees were issued to adjust the Hukou system. A landmark document in the history of the Hukou system is the “Notice on the Issue of Peasants Moving to Reside in Small Towns,” published by the State Council on October 13, 1984¹¹. This notice created a new kind of Hukou status—Hukou with self-supplied food grain, which was the Hukou for farmers migrating to small towns without state-provided grain distribution. The creation of this new type of Hukou status indicated that farmers’ migrations were allowed. On July 13, 1985, MPS (Ministry of Public Security) made “Provisional Regulations on the Hukou Management of Temporary Urban Residents,” which built temporary urban-resident permit and officially allowed those temporary migrants with legitimate businesses or employments to migrate to cities. Since then, the control of population migration has been lifted up, even though the Hukou system still existed. On May 6, 2013, the new

¹¹ On January 1, 1984, the “Decisions on Works in Rural areas in 1984” by the Central Committee of CCP has said, each province, autonomous regions and direct-controlled municipalities were allowed to build test sites, in which farmers could get Hukou with self-supplied food grain in towns.

Premier Li Keqiang chaired a State Council Executive Meeting, on which he proposed a “Residence Permit System” and “reforming the Hukou system categorically”¹².

The value of Hukou statuses have declined. As pointed above, the value of Hukou statuses depends on other institutions, which have related resource distributions to Hukou statuses. However, as markets played more and more important roles in resource distribution and the state retreated from several social areas, the values of Hukou statuses—associated resources with Hukou statuses—have been declined. For example, in 1992 the policy of food grain rationing was ended, which means the social welfare benefits associated with Hukou statuses had been reduced. However, there are still many social welfare benefits associated with Hukou statuses, which will be discussed in the part of “differential citizenship” and “semi-citizenship” of the next chapter.

The management of Hukou system has become localized and hierarchical. In August, 1992, MPS published the “Notice on Locally-Effective Hukou Statuses,” which allowed the local governments to make their own policies with respect to Hukou registration and conversion. This has led to a new “blue Hukou document” to distinguish from nationwide “red Hukou document.” This also caused the phenomena of selling and buying urban Hukou during 1990s (Solinger 1999; Liu 2008). Comparing with traditional Hukou system, these policies have made it possible and easier for citizens to migrate to and live in cities. However, the Hukou policies are also differentiated according to the administrative levels of cities. Since beginning, population migration and Hukou conversion were only allowed in small towns. Gradually, these policies were extended to middle-sized cities. At present, migration control and Hukou conversion are still strictly

¹² General Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic China, http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-05/06/content_2396810.htm.

limited in large cities. In November, 2013, the decisions of the third plenum of the Eighteenth Congress of CCP still regulated that population growth in large cities should be strictly controlled¹³. However, those cities at higher administrative levels are also places where migrant workers are concentrated.

Finally, the purpose of the Hukou system was re-directed to economic development. Correspondingly, the criterion for Hukou conversion was also changed to economic standards (Chen 2008). Huang (2010) and Pei (2008) argued that the predatory government in China had led to local governments' informal practices for economic profits. These predatory practices are to promote economic prosperity. So the local governments lower the labor cost to promote investments. One of the measures to lower the labor cost is to control the farmers' permanent migration from other areas, so that they could reduce their public spending.

The Hukou system and the emergence of Chinese migrant workers

From the above analysis, we find that by and large, the problem of internal migration is the problem of Hukou system in the People's Republic of China, because the Hukou system was initially design to control internal migration between urban and rural areas and between different locations. It is the creation of Hukou system that internal migration was restricted; it is the change of Hukou system that internal migration was encouraged; and it is the future of Hukou system that reflects further economic development, state capacity and internal migration. As the reforms of the Hukou system have removed the barriers to population migration, some scholars argued that the Hukou system is no longer relevant to the life chances of Chinese migration workers (Zhan 2011). Furthermore, the value of the urban Hukou has been declined, especially in more

¹³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c_118164235.htm

developed areas, so some migrant worker do not want to change their Hukou statues (Chan 2010; Wen 2002; Zhu 2007).

Somewhat consistent with these studies, this research also finds that the reforms of the Hukou system have gradually lifted the barriers to population migration. This has made the *dagong* lifestyle a possible way for rural and migrant people to meet their needs. This is true both for the first- and second-generation migrant workers.

Qiang was fifty years old and was a first-generation migrant worker. As most other migrant workers, he used to work for many companies and in many cities. He first worked in Liaocheng City in 1988 for a state-owned construction company. He told me in the communistic regime nobody worked in cities except for the command from above. When I asked him why he didn't work in the city before, he said,

“There was almost nobody working in cities at that time. I thought I was the one of a few who firstly worked in cities (...) I don't know why only few people work in cities, probably there were no opportunities (...) Before I worked in cities, I was a carpenter in the production team of my village. I could work as carpenter to earn units of work, which determined a family's benefits (...) Sometimes, I was required to work outside the commune and worked together with other skillful farmers. At that time I knew several friends, some of whom were technicians from the city (...) Then, a friend I knew introduced me to work in the construction company.”

As he was a craftsman in the commune, I asked him why he didn't do something else to earn money by his own skill. He mentioned the organizational arrangements in rural communities, which were an integral part of the communistic institutional. He said it was forbidden to exit the production team and work in cities in the Maoist era:

“We craftsmen were also organized into the production team. The organization assigned task to us. If the team didn't have anything for us to do, we still need work on farm land. I was not allowed to do anything else.

Everything I did was assigned by the production team, who might also have followed the order from the village or commune.”

For the first-generation migrant workers, to *dagong* is an acceptable means based on their personal experiences of the reforms of migration policy. Qiang was forbidden to freely move at first, and then he was allowed to work in cities. It was the loosened migration control that enabled him to work in cities. However, we can also find that migration control goes beyond the Hukou system and involves economic organization in both rural and urban areas. This also implies that it is not enough only to examine the Hukou system, in order to understand the institutional background of the emergence of Chinese migrant workers.

For the second-generation migrant workers, to *dagong* becomes acceptable because they treat it as an alternative to education and agricultural production. Even before they become migrant workers, they have felt that to *dagong* is their only choice because they thought they lacked human capital. For example, Long was born in 1984. He has worked in cities for ten years. After he graduated from the primary middle school, he went to the local city and worked as a migrant worker. I asked him why he didn't continue his education. He gave me two reasons: first, he didn't like studying, and second, he thought education is useless.

“I took the entrance exam to a higher middle school. But I failed. I got a very low score. It is impossible for me to pass the exam (...) I think at that time I just didn't like studying. So, I didn't study (...) Probably, not [higher education cannot give him a brighter future]. You know, now even college students are hard to find jobs. Some of them even become cashiers (...)”

On the other hand, even when he was at school, he has learned about the *dagong* lifestyle as a reasonable alternative to education. I asked him “did you

have any plan before you graduated, when you felt that you were tired of studying?” He said,

“To *dagong*. To make money (...) It seemed that I had no other choices if I could not continue my education. My parent told me I would have to *dagong* if I didn’t work hard. My teacher said to me that I had to work hard if I didn’t want to *dagong*. Actually, I was ready to *dagong* even before I graduated (...) They are right because I can only go to *dagong* if I could not continue my education. But they are wrong because one might be unable to find a good job even if s/he went to colleges. But to *dagong* can bring money to me.”

I also asked about his opinion on agricultural production. He expressed a kind of superiority because he had more options.

Fayin: “How about agricultural production?”

Long: “I felt I would feel more comfortable doing agricultural production than to study in schools.”

Fayin: “How did you think about to *dagong*, compared with agriculture?”

Long: “At least, I have another choice besides agricultural production. To *dagong* can make more money.”

Long is a second-generation migrant worker, who was born after the state launched the Reform and Opening-up Policies. So, he didn’t personally experience the tight migration control in the communistic regime. However, reforms of the Hukou system, especially loosened migration control, also influenced his choices. Furthermore, as migration control was lifted, to *dagong* has become a reasonable and inevitable choice for adolescents even when they are still in schools. However, the Hukou system and its reforms are not the only factor which can explain the emergence of migrant workers. The case of Long indicates that education and culture also matter (Wills 1977). It seems that a culture has developed. In this culture, to *dagong* is an unavoidable and natural outcome because of the lack of human capital. As schooling is thought as boring, some students have become ready to become migration workers before they left school. Both schooling

and parents have told children the possibility to *dagong*, which would become reality if they could not continue their education.

The Hukou System and the Existence of Chinese Migrant Workers

If the emergence of Chinese migrant workers is related to migration control through the Hukou system, their existence is related to the value of Hukou statuses, which depend on associated social institutions with the Hukou system. According to Han (2007), there were two futures for migrant workers: to become farmers or urban citizens. This implies that the existence of migrant workers means they are not complete farmers or typical workers. How has the present Hukou system contributed to the existence of migrant workers? How has the present Hukou system kept them from becoming rural farmers or urban citizens? As migrant workers are defined as workers who still have the possibility to do agricultural production and the reforms of the Hukou system have removed tight migration control, the problem of their existence is why they could not settle in cities and become urban citizens. How has the current Hukou system contributed to the existence of Chinese migrant workers?

Of course, the right to migrate and the freedom to seek economic opportunities is the key value associated with Hukou statuses in the Hukou system. However, there are many other functions and values of Hukou statuses. For example, before the reforms of the Hukou system, Hukou statuses influenced Chinese citizens' economic organization, food rations, employer-provided housing benefit, health care, education, marriage permits, etc. So, besides the geographical division between rural and urban citizens, they are also divided in political, economic and social terms. With institutional reforms in various social spheres, the value of Hukou statuses has declined for both rural and urban citizens

(Mallee 1995; Sia 2010; Chan 2009; Lu 2003; Solinger 1999; Wang 1997; Chan 2010c). There is much quantitative research on the influences on migrant workers' income, working conditions, psychological health, social welfare benefits, and living conditions in China and so on (Han 2007; Huang 2011; Zhang 2012; Bao, et al. 2009; Mackenzie 2002; Chen and Guo 2010). By contrast, this qualitative study is good at figuring out how migrant workers themselves have thought about their life conditions which have been affected by the Hukou system and its reforms.

First of all, most migrant workers knew about the Hukou system, but they didn't know the details of the differential citizenship between rural and urban residents. That is, they didn't know the exact value of Hukou statuses. When I asked my informants where their households were registered, all of them knew the location of their Hukou registration. But, when I asked them whether they knew detailed regulations of the Hukou system, all of them were unclear. But they indeed feel the differentiation between them and urban residents with respect to their citizenship and life conditions. The following is a part of my conversation with Wang, one of my informants. He was from Sichuan Province and working for an electronics company in Beijing. Like most of other migrant workers, he only graduated from a primary middle school. He was 34 years old. He got married ten years ago and had a nine-year old son. He left his wife and son in his hometown. As all migrant workers are similar on their life conditions and perceptions, I will use Wang as an example to illustrate the influences of Hukou statuses.

He only had a general idea about his Hukou registration but didn't know detailed regulations of the Hukou registration system. I asked him, "Where is your Hukou registration? What kind of Hukou do you have?" He said "It is in my hometown. It is a

rural-agricultural Hukou.” I asked him whether he had anything related to his Hukou status, he said he left his Hukou Registration Book at home and only brought his personal ID with him. But when I asked him whether he had any idea about official and legal regulations of the Hukou registration system, he said “Official and legal regulations? Are you kidding? How can I time to learn these things?”

He didn’t know how his Hukou status had influenced his life, but he could feel the differences between his life conditions and urban citizens’. I asked him “Do you think your life condition is different from urban citizens’?” He said, “Of course. With all aspects, my life is worse than theirs.” Then I asked him what the biggest difference was, he emphasized his immediate life conditions, his family life:

“They could live together with their family. But I cannot (...) I don’t have enough money to support my family. I can only earn 3000 Yuan. This can make me live better in my hometown. But it is impossible for me to live in cities (...) I have to rent a room to live. I have to support my son’s education. I don’t have enough money.”

However, he suddenly recognized more influences of his Hukou status on his life conditions when I talked with him about his son’s education. He seemed surprised when he attributed the limit on his son’s schooling to his Hukou status.

Fayin: “Are these things (including his son’s education) very expensive?”

Wang: “Sure. There is a private school in a near village. But it is too far. Though I can pay for the education, I cannot support the whole family. My wife has to come here to look after the child.”

Fayin: “Why not think about public schools?”

Wang: “I am not qualified because of my Hukou status.”

From outsiders’ perspective, migrant workers have many reasons to know the Hukou system, because their Hukou statuses are still relevant to their life conditions. However, from insiders’ perspective, that migrant workers are concerned with their life

conditions doesn't mean that they are concerned with the Hukou system. This is called the uncoupling of system and life-world (Habermas 1984; 1987).

From the above conversation, we can find that migrant workers don't have specific knowledge about the Hukou system, but they can generally feel the difference between them and urban residents with respect to their life conditions. Furthermore, after thinking about the relationship between their life conditions and their Hukou statuses, they can specifically recognize the influences of Hukou statuses. Then, how do they explain the differentiation? The answer can be found when we talked about his employment relationship. I asked him whether he had work-injury, health, retirement insurance, unemployment compensation and minimum living support. He said his employer only provided work-injury insurance.

“I work and get my pay. When I didn't have jobs, I resorted to my friends and asked them to introduce me new jobs. Sometimes, I go back home and had a rest.”

When I asked him whether other workers had these insurances, he said, “Sure. They are official employees and have “iron rice bowl”¹⁴. Most of them are officially employed. However, I am just temporarily employed.” Then I asked him to explain the reason. He said,

“Most of them are technicians and graduated from colleges. They are skillful. The company depends on them (...) I am a manual labor. I am not as important as those technicians.”

Wang didn't use the work “human capital.” He indeed thought he lacked human capital, compared with technicians in “his” company. Furthermore, the Hukou system

¹⁴ “Iron rice bowl” is used to describe the lifetime employment relationship between urban residents and state-owned enterprises before economic reforms in 1978. Actually, with the reform of state-owned enterprises, the “iron rice bowl” has disappeared. Wang probably didn't know this. Or he wanted to use this phrase to describe the difference between his employment and others' official/informal employment.

still mattered because Hukou statuses still influence migrant workers' life conditions. However, from insiders' perspective, the benefits associated with Hukou statuses are "marketized" because they are thought as rewards to their contributions to their companies. Again, we can find that the Hukou system alone cannot explain the existence of Chinese migrant workers. Especially, the Hukou system cannot explain migrant workers' own interpretations of their life conditions.

For short-distance or local migrant workers, the small cities have fewer limitations on Hukou conversion. That is, they are more likely to move to cities. How do these migrant workers think about the Hukou system? Mi, whom I have talked about her in the third chapter, also expressed her opinion on the Hukou system. She had a strong desire to settle in the city for her child. As shown in chapter three, she recognized the influence of their Hukou statuses on her child's education. The following conversation indicates her attitude to the Hukou system.

Fayin: "Just now, you said that the Hukou system still influenced your family life especially your child's education. Do you think it is acceptable?"

Mi: "No. But I cannot change it."

Fayin: "But it is important to you and your family."

Mi: "Yes. Fortunately, it becomes easier to settle in this city. If we can buy an apartment in the city, then we could send our children to public school. Actually, even if we don't have an apartment, we still have social relationships (networks), which can help us with our child's education."

Fayin: "Is it free?"

Mi: "No, we have to pay extra fee to the school."

Fayin: "Is it fair for you?"

Mi: "No. That is why we want to migrate to the city. I believe within several years we will have enough money to migrate to this city."

Fayin: "Why not migrate now?"

Mi: "It seems that Hukou statuses have become meaningless. Now we have rural Hukou, so my family contract farm land from the village. My parents-in-law help us take care of the land. You know, land is important."

Fayin: “Why is land so important?”

Mi: “At least we have a sense of security if we have some land at home. Furthermore, with industrialization the government is expanding cities. The government also needs land. If the government wants to expropriate farm land, it will give compensation to us.”

Fayin: “If you migrate to the city, will you lose the farm land?”

Mi: “I think we will not immediately lose the land. Rather, our family might not be able to contract so much land if we migrate to city. After all, the land is not enough for such a large population in the village. So the community has to balance the right to use farm land among households.”

Fayin: “What is the requirement for you to settle in the city?”

Mi: “The company I am working for cannot solve this problem. I can only migrate to cities by buying a house in the city.”

Here, we can find that the loosened migration control has made it objectively easier. This objective possibility also leads to a subjective hope of migrating to cities. This resonates Bourdieu’s (1979; 1980) argument that subjective hopes tend to be consistent with objective chances. However, the reduced migration control doesn’t mean migration is free. There are still some limitations of migration. Though the two points might be contradictory, they together have led permanent migration to be one of migrant workers’ goals. Again, this also indicates that the Hukou system alone is not enough to explain migrant workers’ life conditions and consciousnesses. From an objective perspective, the value of an urban Hukou status depends on other institutional arrangements in cities, including the education system. From a subjective perspective, migrant workers’ evaluation of the urban Hukou status is related to the value of the rural Hukou status. On the other hand, the value of rural Hukou status depends on the institutional arrangement in the countryside.

Conclusion: the Hukou Paradigm and its Limits

Because of the dominance of the Hukou paradigm in institutional analyses of Chinese migrant workers, this chapter examined the role of the Hukou system for their

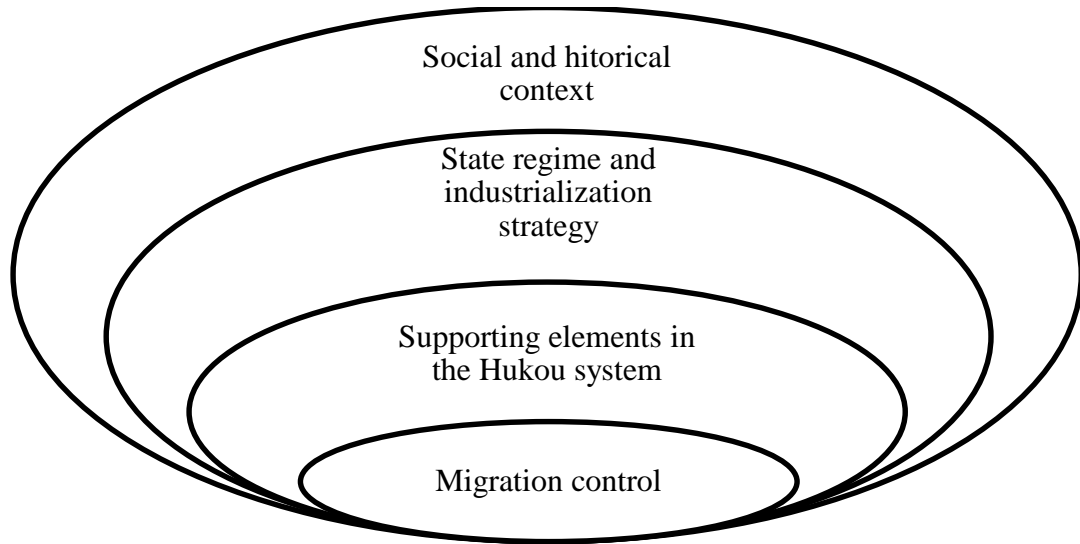
emergence and existence. To conclude this chapter, this section will summarize the main findings about the Hukou system and then discuss its limits.

While the traditional Hukou paradigm tends to emphasize its reforms launched by the state, this study especially focuses on how the Hukou system and its reforms have influenced migrant workers' life conditions and consciousness. This investigation is based on two distinctions: the distinction between the emergence and the existence of Chinese migrations, and the distinction between life experiences and subjective experiences. As to the emergence of migrant workers and their decision to *dagong*, because of the removed migration control and the structural disparity between origin and destination areas, both first- and second-generation migrant workers have thought to *dagong* as a reasonable means to meet their needs, especially the direct goal of making money. Furthermore, after they start working in cities, reforms of the Hukou system also influence migrant workers' motivations and attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle, which has contributed to the existence of the group of Chinese migrant workers. For example, reforms of the Hukou system have lowered the requirement of Hukou conversion, but there are still some values of urban Hukou status, especially children's public education. So, permanent migration became a motivation to *dagong*. After they started working in cities, though the Hukou system still influences their working conditions, most migrant workers didn't know the detail of the Hukou system. However, when they recognized the influences of the Hukou system, they have interpreted state-provided benefits as a part of their work rewards. They think that they could not enjoy those benefits because they lack human capital compared with other workers.

Though reforms of the Hukou system has lowered the requirement of Hukou conversion but maintained some values of urban Hukou statuses, not all migrant workers have developed the motivation to permanently migrate to cities. But facing the structural disparities between rural and urban areas, and between different regions, why didn't they want to settle in cities? This question involves their family lives, which are not only influenced by the Hukou system, but also by the rural institutions, especially land tenure system and household organizations in villages.

After they started working in cities, why didn't they immediately settle in cities? This may be because they cannot earn enough money to support their family especially for long-distance migrant workers. So, this question refers their jobs, employment relationships, and incomes in cities. Furthermore, after they found the differentiation of citizenship between them and urban residents, why do they understand it as a result of human capital? This refers to their interpretive schemes. With these questions in mind, let's go to a new chapter to examine relevant institutional changes more completely.

Figure 6 The nature of the Hukou System in China



Chapter Four:

Institutional Arrangements beyond the Hukou System

As shown in the end of the last chapter about the Hukou system, the “Hukou paradigm” is not enough to explain the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, because this paradigm tends to treat the Hukou system as the only institutional arrangement behind this phenomenon. For example, the loosened migration control, which was achieved through reforming the Hukou system, made to *dagong* a reasonable means for farmers to meet their needs. But this logic doesn’t explicate their needs or motivations to *dagong*. There are three reasons for the limits of the Hukou paradigm, which also requires a broad institutional investigation.

First, the value of Hukou statuses and the operation of the Hukou system depend on other institutional arrangements in contemporary China. As Yang and Cai (2003) said, the Hukou system is just an element of a trinity of state policies to extract agricultural products in the communistic regime. Together with collective commune system and compulsory procurement of agricultural products, the Hukou system became a component of the Big-Push industrialization strategy (Chan 2009). Even if the Hukou system was broadly defined as including all social institutions resulting in the rural-urban divide, it still needs to investigate the complex relationships between these institutional arrangements. Otherwise, other institutions would be underemphasized. The last chapter has adopted the term of “the value of Hukou statuses” to describe the relationship between the household registration, the migration control and other institutional arrangements. Similarly, the meaning and operation of the reformed Hukou system should also be examined in broad social contexts.

Second, the Hukou system is by no means the primary institutional arrangement. The last chapter defined the Hukou system as “a state project, through which the state has tightly controlled the population’s migration in the communistic era, and which also provided a basis for the state to organize its citizens and other resources.” As far as its origin is concerned, the Hukou system is created by the state. So the Hukou paradigm only involves the relationship between migrant workers and the state. However, state policies have to consider social and market forces in order to maintain its legitimacy and survival (Sun 2004; Guo 2010; Larus 2012). The analysis of the Hukou system in the last chapter indicates that other state policies still matter for migrant workers. But state policies are by no means only the Hukou system and its reforms.

Third, though Hukou statuses still objectively contribute to the existence of Chinese migrant workers, Chinese migrant workers might not subjectively and fully understand the operation of the Hukou system. So, the Hukou paradigm is not enough to explain their motivations and attitudes. Therefore, in order to understand how the Hukou system has influenced the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, it is necessary to elaborate the mechanisms through which the Hukou system has shaped their immediate life conditions and subjective experiences.

With this background, it is necessary to examine other institutional arrangements, which have directly influenced Chinese migrant workers’ life and subjective experiences. Four institutional arrangements have directly influenced migrant workers’ life conditions and consciousness: household autonomy, differential citizenship, a regulated informal economy, and an identity-based market ideology. All of them have influenced both migrant workers’ life conditions and identities. The life conditions and identities together

have influenced their motivations and attitudes, and thus their emergence and existence in the labor market. As the chapter two to four have focused on how life conditions have conditioned migrant workers' motivations and attitudes, this chapter will focus on how these institutional arrangements have shaped and framed their identities, which are very important for their attitudes and responses. Household autonomy has strengthened their identity as family members. The differential citizenship between rural and urban areas and the semi-citizenship in cities have reinforced their identity as rural residents. The regulated informal economy has resulted in their identity as guest workers. The identity-based market ideology has led to their identity as lower-level workers.

Household Autonomy

If the reform of the Hukou system involves individuals' freedom to move within their country, the reform of the rural organization is related to rural households' autonomy in a market economy. The household autonomy policy has two aspects: production autonomy and consumption autonomy. The consumption autonomy becomes the motivation to *dagong*, through which households can make money to meet their family needs. Production autonomy releases them from agricultural production with the improvement of agricultural productivity, so that they try other ways to make money. On the other hand, the industrialization and the Hukou reforms have provided an alternative to agricultural production.

Since the foundation of PRC in 1949, the economic organization in rural areas has experienced two transformations, both of which are related to land reform, the most important means of production. The first transformation is from private farming to collective production during the 1950s, and the second is from collective farming back to

household production (Oi 1999). It is the second transformation that is directly related to the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. Before the foundation of PRC, rural reform has been at the top of the agenda of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) because of its rural experiences. Since the late 1940s and the early 1950s, the party had tried several collective organizations in rural areas, including mutual aid groups of a few households, producer cooperatives of about 24 families, collective cooperatives of 40 to 200 households, and communes of many thousands of villagers. However, the disastrous Great Leap Forward forced the party state to reorganize the rural organization and build a relatively viable, stable, and layered system composed of production teams, brigades and communes. At the bottom of this hierarchical structure were production teams containing some 10 to 50 households. These production teams owned some agricultural land and member households working together as a group. Not only was the agricultural production collectivized, but also the social redistribution. Production teams provided a relatively equitable redistribution of agricultural products among households. The village brigades organized key public services, including free health care, elementary schooling, and sustenance of orphans, widows and childless elderly (Chan et al. 1992; Ruf 1998; Unger 2002). To conclude, production and consumption activities of rural households were collectivized in the communistic regime, which also led to the lack of incentives and the low efficiency of agricultural production (Unger 2002; Brandt and Rawski. 2008; Attané 2002).

In the late 1970s, economic reforms started in the rural area, which was characterized by de-collectivization. In the process of disbanding collective agriculture, many experiments were conducted. Finally a household responsibility system spread over

China's villages. At first, households contracted production tasks and were responsible for their allocated plots of land, which was called *bao chan dao hu*. Then, in the stage of *dabaogan*, households could manage the land they contracted from the village and diversify crop plantation (Unger 2002; Attané 2002). After meeting crop-quota, they could sell their remaining products. Finally, they were free to manage their land and just give money to the state. From January 1, 2006, agricultural tax was removed in China. All of these indicate that rural households have become autonomous production unit. The reorganization of labors and production means through the household responsibility system has resulted in an improvement of agricultural productivity and a large surplus labor forces have emerged (Cai, et al. 2008; Han 2007). All of these changes make it possible for farmers to work in cities.

With rural reforms, rural households also became autonomous unit of consumption, which became farmers' own reasons to *dagong*. While an outsider's perspective in previous structural and institutional analysis largely ignored this phenomenon, household strategy theories took it for granted. In the communistic regime, village brigades organized key public services, including free health care, elementary schooling, and sustenance of orphans, widows and childless elderly (Chan et al. 1992; Ruf 1998; Unger 2002). However, after the communistic system collapsed and before a new health care system was implemented in 2008, rural households had to pay for expensive health care expenses. They have to pay for their children's' education. In the communistic system, all households were equally poor and there were not many ways to improve their relative status in the community. Furthermore, the household autonomy has changed both intra- and inter-household relationships. With respect to the inter-household

relationship, family members want to make contributions to their family so that they could earn respect from others. Within rural communities of inter-household relationship, they were more concerned with their relative status in the community which was expressed by their houses, transportation, foods, and clothes and so on.

As households became autonomous, individuals were more concerned with their family life conditions. For this reason, they all thought themselves as family members. This is true for all migrant workers, male or female, long-distance or short-distance, single or married, and younger or older. As the following chapters will show, household autonomy changed people's identities as family members and has provided Chinese migrant workers with three kinds of motivation to *dagong* in cities:

1. To meet the needs of family as a whole;
2. To earn respect from other family members; and
3. To improve their families' relative statuses in their communities.

“Regulated” Informal Employment

If the household autonomy system has given Chinese migrant workers more motivations to *dagong* by strengthening their identity as family members, how would their working and living conditions in cities be influenced by these institutional arrangements? This section focuses on their informal employment in cities, which have reinforced their identity as guest workers.

Informal employment is defined by their illegal and/or unregulated nature. In their article, Castells and Portes firstly defined informal economy through comparing formal and informal sectors:

“The informal economy is thus not an individual condition but a process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: it is

unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated.” (Castells and Portes 1989: 12)

This definition emphasizes the unregulated nature of informal employment as an income-generation process. It is based on comparing formal employment and informal employment. That is, informal employment is defined relative to formal employment, which exists together. With respect to Chinese migrant workers, most scholars have defined the informal employment of migrant workers by comparing their employment relationships with those of traditional, formal SOEs workers in communistic regime, and they held a positive attitude to the contribution of informal employment to the national development and personal life conditions (Li and Tang 2002; Hu 2006).

Castells and Portes also emphasized the illicit nature of informal employment, which was related to legal regulations:

“Some economic activities may be termed informal because of their very nature, namely, because they are defined as criminal by the institutions of society...When the laws concerning them are enforced, such categories often represent sources of economic opportunity outside the pale of institutional regulation. Criminal activities possess, however, distinct characteristics that set them apart from those otherwise termed informal...Those labeled “criminal” specialize in the production of goods and services socially defined as illicit.” (Castells and Portes 1989: 15)

It seems that this definition is only to distinguish criminal employment from informal employment, because the former involves illicit final products and the latter doesn't. However, illegality is treated as the key characteristics of underground economy and informal economy (Losby, et al. 2002; Samers 2004; Wan 2009).

However, the two characteristics—illegality and unregulatedness—are not exclusive to each other, because the illegality might be derived from not being regulated

if the legal regulations exist, and not being regulated might be related to the absence of legal regulations. For this research, informal employment is defined as employment caused by not being regulated by the state, which is distinct from regulated employment relationship by the state. However, informal employment might possess an illegal nature if employment practices are inconsistent with existing legal regulations. On January 1, 1995, a new National Labor Law went into effect. Before that, unregulated informal employment was not illegal because there were not universal, legal regulations as a standard to judge the nature of informal employment. However, after that informal employment was illegal according to the National Labor Law.

But, why is informal employment unregulated? Here we can identify four reasons. First, informal employment might be ignored or not recognized, which can be called “ignored informal employment”. Second, they might be unregulatable, because they are underground, which can be called “unregulatable informal employment”. Third, they might be non-regulated, or even encouraged, which can be called “non-regulated informal employment”. Finally, they might result from deregulation, which can be called “deregulated informal employments”. Deregulated and unregulatable informal employments are largely because of external conditions, while ignored and non-regulated informal employments are derived from policy-makers’ ignorance or encouragements. Deregulated and non-regulated informal employment are based on policy-makers’ proactive actions, while ignored and unregulatable informal employments are passive responses. According to the cause and the role of state, these four types of informal employments represent four ideal types (Table 7).

Chinese migrant workers were informally employed, whether their employment relationships are compared with other workers' employment relationship, or with the legal regulations (Huang and Xue 2009; Wan 2009; Li and Tang 2002). Employers don't construct formal labor contracts with migrant workers. Migrant workers are more likely to work for longer time and not to enjoy national holidays. They usually receive low wages, which may not be guaranteed. Their working conditions are under the standard set by the state. They cannot attend occupational and professional training regulated and provided by the state. They don't have pensions and work-injury and employment insurances.

However, Chinese migrant workers' informal employment is largely caused by the central and local governments' non-regulation and even encouragement. According to Hu (2006), in developed countries, the government tends to neglect informal employment or define them as illegal employment, while the government in China took policies to encourage, help and manage the development of informal employment. This is especially true for the relationship between local governments, employers and workers. After the fiscal reform granted fiscal autonomy of local governments since the middle 1990s, the economic decentralization has provided the local governments with incentives to develop local economies (Montinola, Qiang and Weingast 1996; Lee 2007; Wong and Bird 2008). In order to enhance local economic development, local governments have engaged in informal practices against legal regulations in order to maintain their cooperative relationships with enterprises. One of these informal practices is to reduce labor standards to guarantee enterprises profits, which resulted in a large number of informal employments being filled by migrant workers (Huang 2009; 2010; Wu 2009; Lee 2007).

How has the informal employment influenced migrant workers' identities? In the interviews, I found that most migrant workers treat themselves as temporary workers or guests in the urban economy and community because of their precarious employments and resultant unfavorable working and living conditions. One of reasons for Chinese migrant workers to think their jobs as temporary is that they don't have formal labor contracts and associated employment benefits.

Here is a case, Jun. He was a worker in an electronic factory of Beijing. He came from Shandong Province. He had worked in the factory for three years. He said he came to Beijing to *dagong*, because his job was temporary. Here is a part of our conversation, which illustrate his employment relationship and its influence on his identity.

Fayin: "Why do you think your job is temporary?"

Jun: "I am ready to go back home or change my job at any time."

Fayin: "Why do you go back home?"

Jun: "My family has contracted farm land in my village. We have our own house in the village. My wife and children live in the village. I think finally I will live at home."

Fayin: "Why are you ready to change jobs? At least, you have already worked here for three years."

Jun: "Many of my colleagues have changed jobs."

Fayin: "Why didn't they continue to work here?"

Jun: "Some of them thought they could not earn enough money, so they ask for a higher wage...But the boss directly fired them...At another time, the boss dismissed some of my colleagues just because the hotel didn't have many customers."

Fayin: "Did they launch a strike?"

Jun: "No. Probably the boss only thought they were hard to control."

Fayin: "It seems that the boss could arbitrarily fire workers. Do you have any labor contracts with the boss? I think a labor contract can protect your interests."

Jun: "Not at all."

Fayin: "Have your boss bought insurance for you?"

Jun: "I don't know. But it is said that the boss bought injury insurance for all workers because he doesn't want to spend his own money compensating to injuries."

Jun thought he came to *dagong* in Beijing. Literally, *dagong* means he thought his home was not in Beijing and he just temporarily worked in Beijing. So, he identified himself as a temporary worker or guest in Beijing. Furthermore, this identity is shaped by their informal or unregulated employment relationship.

Differentiated Citizenship between Rural and Urban Residents

Both the household autonomy and the informal employment have influenced Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes through their economic life conditions. The differentiated citizenship between rural and urban residents involves their relationship with the state regarding their legal, political, social and participatory rights and responsibilities (Janoski 1998). This section will firstly discuss the differentiated citizenship between urban and rural residents and then focus on migrant workers' semi-citizenship in cities.

Citizenship rights are differentiated between urban and rural residents, because rural residents are treated as second-class citizens and cannot enjoy the same rights and benefits given to urban residents. Before the market reforms, urban citizens were entitled to lifelong jobs and comprehensive social benefits, including pensions, health care, housing, food and education, while rural citizens relied on collective organizations and only received supplementary relief and development aid from the government (Unger 2002; Wong 1998). This differentiation is also true after economic reforms in the late 1970s, even though the meaning of both rural and urban citizenship has been changed by institutional transitions (Solinger 1999). Differential institutional arrangements still exist at this time with respect to rural and urban residents' residences, land rights, taxations, political participations and welfare benefits. He (2005) uses the concept of "village

citizenship” to describe the rural residents’ citizenship. To have a village citizenship means villagers have a rural Hukou registration, which is associated with the rights to build houses in allotted housing land and to work on farm land contracted from the village. In terms of political participation, a village citizen has the right to nominate and elect public officers of the village and to participate in village decision-making processes and monitor village affairs. With respect to welfare benefits, the state provided different pension, health care, housing and insurances from those of urban residents (Smart and Smart 2001; Branigan 2013; Liu 2007; Wu 2010).

With this background, let us turn to migrant workers’ situation in the two-track citizenship in China. Many policies, measures, announcements and actions have been applied to migrant workers, which have extended their social rights in cities. In March 2003, the State Council issued “Suggestions for Advancing the Reform of the Hukou Administration System in Small Cities and Towns,” which, for the first time, holistically regulated migrant workers’ employment, residence, civil, legal, and welfare rights (Wong 2013). However, because the complexity of the project and the gap between regulations and practices, most scholars argued that there is a long and complicated journey to achieve an urban-rural harmonization (Shi 2012; Cai 2011; Xu, et al. 2011). Based on the survey data from the China Household Income Project in 1988, 1995, 2002 and 2007, Gao, et al. (2013) showed that social benefits system was still divided between rural and urban residents with respect to the size, structure and nature of the two social welfare systems. More importantly, they indicated that migrant workers’ social benefits had been improved mainly through in-kind benefits, such as food and housing. However, their social benefits were provided by their employers to accommodate them and they were

deducted from their salary. So, the social welfare system for migrant workers was almost the same with rural residents', if food and housing provided by their work-units and deducted from their salary were not counted.

According to Janoski (1998), citizenship should include both rights and responsibilities and they should be balanced. Apparently, there is a strong imbalance between Chinese migrant workers' rights and responsibilities in cities. Though they have substantially contributed to urban economic growth by doing dirty, dangerous and demeaning jobs, they work for long hours under poor working conditions. Though they work in and for cities, their rural Hukou status has excluded them from basic social rights such as housing, education, social security and public goods. Through they live in cities, they lack political rights to vote and usually are considered as scapegoats for city crime and congestion. So, they are economically exploited, socially excluded and politically marginalized (Wang 2005; Wong 2013).

Here, we can find that though migrant workers spend most of their time working in cities, they do not have equal civil, political, social and participatory rights and their rights and responsibilities in cities are imbalanced. Even if their rights have been extended after the reform of social welfare system, they still could not enjoy full citizenship in cities. So, they are second-class citizens or semi-citizens in cities. How have the differential citizenship and semi-citizenship influenced migrant workers' identities and attitudes? They usually compare their semi-citizenship in cities and their full citizenship in villages, which have led them to thinking themselves as rural residents and guests in cities.

According to Lü (2013), migrant workers get lost between the countryside and cities. This can be found in the fact that migrant workers build very luxury and beautiful houses (according to local standard), but they work and live in cities and leave those houses void. However, in my interviews, those migrant workers who built houses in their home villages tended to think building houses as one of their privileges in rural villages. For example, Laosi, the migrant worker from Sichuan Province also built a house in his home village. He said:

“Houses in cities are unaffordable for me. I have to have a home (house)...After all, it is much cheaper to build a house in the countryside, because the land for residence is free in the rural villages...I thought I had to build the house, because I could apply for the land of residence at that time.”

So, Laosi didn't get lost between the countryside and cities. Rather, he had his own identity and calculation. Similarly, all migrant workers have participated in the new cooperative health care system designed for rural residents.

The Identity-Based Market Ideology

All the above three institutional arrangements are relevant to Chinese migrant workers' material life conditions, which have “shaped” their identities as family members, guests and rural citizens. This section will focus on market ideology, which has “framed” their identity as low-skilled and low-income workers because of their lack of human capital.

All economic systems are socially defined meaning systems, to which the state also has contributed. Very generally, Richard Swedberg (2001; 2005) argued that economic action is a form of social action, economic action is socially situated or embedded and economic institutions are social constructions. As to market economy, the

meaning of commodities is socially defined (Carruthers and Babb 2000; Zelizer 2001); human beings are socially defined as laborers (; Webster, et al. 2008); land, initially a part of nature, is defined as commodities (Polanyi 2001; Harvey 2010); and the existence and value of money are also socially defined (Polanyi 2001; Ferguson 2008). How the meanings of goods, labor, money and land are defined? Institutional economics emphasized the role of ideology in reducing transaction costs. This function is guaranteed by instilling moral norms and interpretive rules among social members. So, the ideology was called “pre-theoretical ideology,” a set of habits, maxims, codes of behavior that regulate and guide individuals’ everyday behavior (North 1981: 48). Specifically, I think North (1981) distinguished three aspects of ideology: cognitively, ideology provides individuals with a world view for decision-making; normatively, ideology limits and justifies their life conditions; and practically, ideology helps individuals organize their experiences.

As to the labor market, the commodification of human beings and a certain-degree smooth operation of labor markets depend on the extent to which individuals accept the definition of themselves as labor. Althusser (1971: 132-133) put it very plainly:

“I shall say that the reproduction of labor power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission of the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class in words.”

As Wills (1977) said between working-class jobs and working-class labors was a cultural level, which framed their expectations and attitudes. Furthermore, Wills said that the cultural level might be different from official ideology; for example, those working-

class boys just want to show their maturity and masculinity, which made them despise schooling. As analyzed above, household autonomy and family values are also relevant to migrant workers' motivations and attitudes toward their *dagong* lifestyle. What kinds of ideology did Chinese migrant workers hold? It was found that market ideology in general and human-capital ideology in particular had shaped their identity as low-level workers.

Here, I want to distinguish three kinds of ideas about labor markets. That is, conceptions of labor markets could be pre-theoretical, theoretical or political. The theoretical conception of labor markets involves different, complex scientific frameworks proposed in academic fields, including classical economics, Marxist political economy, human capital theory, and segmented labor market theory and so on (Fine 1998). The pre-theoretical conception of labor market is about how labors interpret and assess their life conditions as workers. As North (1981) said, the pre-theoretical conception can influence workers' interpretations, attitudes and motivations. Any knowledge involves power relationship (Foucault 1977; 2006). Furthermore, the power-knowledge relationship could exist in both generalized and particular situations. At the national level, state ideological apparatus will manipulate theoretical conceptions and shape pre-theoretical conceptions.

As to Chinese migrant workers, in the process of market liberalization, the human-capital ideology and supply-demand logic have been spread through mass media and education. These two conceptions also framed their identity as low-level workers, because they think they lack human capital compared with other kinds of workers and there are a large number of surplus labors in the rural area. Furthermore, they feel market forces are beyond their control and success depends on chance. Finally, they also

included the state-provided benefits in the reward from labor market. They think their precarious employment relationships, low pay, unfavorable labor conditions and lack of state-provided benefits are related to their status of lower-level workers.

When I asked migrant workers how they felt when compared with other higher-level workers (managers or technicians), nearly all of them thought that they were lower-level workers, there were a large supply of lower-level workers, and they could not receive the same rewards from labor markets because of their lack of human capital. When I asked them how they thought about those successful migrant workers, who have become managers or migrated to cities, migrant workers thought those successful were lucky in the labor market, the labor market was out of their control, and it was normal for someone to be lucky in labor markets.

Table 7. Four Types of Informal Employment

The role of state	Cause	
	External	Internal
Active	Deregulated	Non-regulated
Passive	Unregulatable	Ignored

Part Two:

Agency: Motivations and Attitudes

Part One has argued that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle. This structuration of a new social class indicates changes in Chinese economic and social structures. Furthermore, besides structural transformation similar to other developing countries (especially industrialization, urbanization and uneven regional development), Part One also identified unique institutional arrangements in contemporary China, which have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers.

However, this is only part of the story. Three questions remain. First, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers depends on that a group of people live a *dagong* lifestyle. Why have migrant workers left home and worked in cities, even though their working and living conditions are unfavorable? Second, if such institutions as household autonomy, informal employment, differentiated and partial citizenship, and market ideology have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, how have they led to this process? Third, to some extent institutional transitions were result of Chinese migrant workers' actions. For example, the Hukou system reforms are the responses of the party-state to the emergence and increase of Chinese migrant workers. Recently, some labor movement researchers have emphasized labor protests launched by migrant workers. How have Chinese migrant workers responded to their life conditions and institutional arrangements at large?

To answer the above three questions, it is important to examine Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes toward their *dagong* lifestyle. This investigation can

help (1) explain the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, (2) elaborate the influences of institutional arrangements, and (3) understand Chinese migrant workers' responses to their life conditions and the society at large.

This part will focus on Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes toward their *dagong* lifestyle. Chapter five will examine Chinese migrant workers' desire to permanently migrate to cities and towns. It tested that not all of them have a strong desire to settle down in cities. Chapter six will investigate Chinese migrant workers' motivation to *dagong* in general. Chapter seven will consider their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle—whether they accept the lifestyle.

Chapter Five:

Migrant Workers' Desire to Permanently Migrate

If their working and living conditions are not favorable, why has the number of Chinese migrant workers been increasing for more than three decades. To answer this question, we need to examine migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*. That is, why have migrant workers left home to work in the cities? Because the dominant paradigm explaining migrant workers' motivation and main ethical concerns of migrant workers' future have derived from the permanent migration paradigm, this chapter will reexamine their desire/goal to permanently settle in cities.¹⁵

Chinese migrant workers' desires to settle in cities have entered into the policy-makers' horizon. On March 17, 2013, in the press conference after the first session of the twelfth National Congress, when the new Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (2013) answered questions about urbanization and the Chinese migrant workers' future, he said:

“The new type of urbanization we emphasize is an urbanization that put humanity at its heart. Now, there are 260 million migrant workers. It is a long-term and complex process to make those with the desire settle down in cities”.

Is it reasonable for government to make policies based on migrant workers' desire or goal to settle down in cities? Besides describing Chinese migrant workers' wishes to permanently migrate, this chapter will also explain this motivation by linking them with their working and living conditions. The next section will review the debates in, and the problems with, previous studies on migrant workers' desires and goals to settle in cities. Then, the meaning of “settling in cities” will be presented from migrant workers' own

¹⁵ Desires seem to be emotional, while intentions sound rational. However, rational intentions are largely based on emotional desires. As shown below, previous studies have examined both desires and intentions of migrant workers, and this study treats intentions as a kind of desires—rational desires.

perspective. The third section focuses on migrant workers without the desire or goal to settle in cities and distinguishes two kinds of situations—no desire and lost goal—in which they don't have the desire to settle in cities. Then, for migrant workers with the desire to settle in cities, the desire is divided to two types: hopeful desire and expected goal. These chapters will conclude by categorizing migrant workers' different kinds of desire or goal to settle in cities and pointing out unsolved problems requiring further investigation.

Debates and Problems

This section will first review the debates on migrant workers' desires and goals to settle in cities. Then problems with previous studies will be discussed.

Debates on Migrant Workers' Desire/goal to settle in cities

The starting point of examining migrant workers' desire to permanently migrate should be the so-called permanent migration paradigm. The basic assumption of this paradigm is that rural labor migrants have the "desire to stay in city and bring their families there" (Fan 2008: 11).¹⁶ This assumption has been supported by many researchers, who found that some migrant workers want to settle in cities (Ye 2011; Li 2006; Xiong and Shi 2009; Cai and Wang 2007). As a paradigm, this theoretical approach also has its own interpretations and applications, besides this basic assumption. Specifically, both development economics and migration theory have provided justifications for the assumption of permanent migration. The structural disparities between rural and urban areas and between regions will pull surplus labors to non-

¹⁶ Fan distinguished two dominant paradigms—the Hukou paradigm and the permanent migration paradigm—with respect to the study of Chinese migrant workers. However, she didn't agree with the permanent migration paradigm and emphasized the nature of migrant as a household strategy. However, her concept of "permanent migration paradigm" summarized a group of studies.

agricultural sectors. It is a reasonable choice for rural laborers to pursue superior wages, social services, job opportunities and consumption patterns in urban and developed areas (Cai, et al. 2008; Li 2008; Unger 2002; Hare 1999; Lewis 1954; Fan 2008).

This paradigm has become a dominant convention, because this assumption has been explicitly or implicitly involved in research on all important questions about Chinese migrant workers. These areas of application include migrant workers' decision to migrate (Lee and Meng 2010), migrant workers' social adaptation (Connelly, et al. 2011), migrant workers' life conditions in cities (Lü 2013), migrant workers' desire to settling down in cities (Li 2006), structural transformation (industrialization and urbanization) in China (Chai 1997; Li 2006), critics of institutional arrangements (Chan and Buckingham 2008; Chan 2009; Huang 2010), and migrant workers' consciousness and responses (Lee 2007; Lo and Jiang 2006).

Permanent migration paradigm has been challenged by empirical studies on household strategies and institutional barriers. Hare examined both their decision to migrate out and return. For him, both migrating out and return are migrant workers' rational responses to an uncertain environment. Especially, Hare argued that household characteristics, including household labor and land endowments, are the main determinants of returning (Hare 1999). Zhu and Fan argued that migrant workers treat *dagong* as a household strategy to diversify and maximize economic opportunities and spread economic risk. Both also pointed out that structural transformation (e.g., industrialization and urbanization) and institutional transition (especially, the reform of Household Registration System) have contributed to the temporary nature of Chinese migrant workers (Fan and Wang 2008; Zhu 2007). In institutional analyses, Huang

argued that the dual institutional arrangements between rural and urban areas, including dual Household Registration system, dual land-tenure arrangements, dual employment institution, and dual social security system, are the dominant barriers for migrant workers' permanent migration (Huang 2011). These institutional arrangements will influence migrant workers' life chances in cities, which might reinforce their desire to return to home (Zhan 2011; Yue, et al. 2010).

However, whether migrant workers have the desire/goal to settle down in cities and to what extent they have the desire are empirical questions. Facing the debate between permanent migration paradigm and its challenges, migrant workers' settlement intentions have become a hot topic in empirical studies. This research implies that permanent migration is at least an option available to Chinese migrant workers. However, the results are very different. Based on his survey in five cities, Huang Qian (2008) concluded that migrant workers in general don't have strong desires to settle down in cities. Zhu and Chen (2010) admitted that the intention of Chinese migrant workers to settle in the cities has increased and argued that the structure disparity between rural and urban areas (including social services, working opportunities, and life conditions) has reinforced their intention to settle down in cities. Tang et al. (2012) argue that migrant workers have strong desire to change their rural Hukou and settle in cities because those who work in large cities choose small cities as their intended places to settle down. In her article of 2011, Fan (2011) also empirically examined migrant workers' settlement intentions based on a survey of migrants in Beijing's urban villages conducted in 2008. On the one hand, she argues that not all migrant workers have the desire to settle down in cities, even when more family members live together in cities; on the other hand, she

admits that younger, more sophisticated, more educated and more socially involved migrant workers have stronger desire to settle down in cities.

Problems with Previous Debates

This study also treats Chinese migrant workers' desire to settle in cities (or settlement intentions) as an empirical question. Though previous studies have moved forward along in this empirical direction, there are still two main deficiencies. From these debates on migrant workers' desire to settle in cities, we can find that the key question of previous studies is "do migrant workers have the desire to settle down in cities." To answer these questions, it is inevitable that previous studies are trapped by the dichotomy of "have versus haven't" the desire to permanently migrate. Even when studies on migrant workers' settlement intentions pointed out alternatives to settling down in cities where they are working, they still didn't go beyond this dichotomy. This dichotomy could be found in the "whether or not" measurements of settlement intention, such as "whether or not" migrant workers are willing to give up their farmland in rural villages, "whether or not" migrant workers are willing to change their Hukou to the city, and "stay or leave" (Cai and Wang 2008; Fan 2011). However, these "whether or not" dualisms tend to conceal the gray areas between the extremes. This research investigates the degree of migrant workers' desire to settle down in cities, with the following two possibilities in mind: (1) even for those treating migration as household strategy and intend to go back, it is still reasonable for them to settle down in cities because of the structural disparity between rural areas and urban areas, and (2) even for those with the desire or intention to settle down in cities, the intensity of their desire or goal might still be different and they may not settle down.

Second, largely because previous studies were based on quantitative data, they focused on such questions as “what proportions of migrant workers have the desire,” or “what kind of migrant workers have the desire.” So, they only selected two important time points of migrant workers’ experiences—the decision to leave home and the decision to return or to settle down in cities. Though these studies were able to single out significant factors which could influence Chinese migrant workers’ settlement intentions at the time when the data were collected, they had two main problems: a descriptive one and an interpretative one. For example, in his elegant Multi-nominal Logistics model, Ye Pengfei (2011) pointed such factors as human capital, regional origin, family life, social relationship, and social insurance, which will influence whether migrant workers would have or would not have the desire to settle down in cities.¹⁷ With respect to the description of migrant workers’ settlement intentions, these studies ignored the possibility that migrant workers’ values, attitudes, and intentions might change during the migration process. As far as interpretations were concerned, they failed to explicate how those factors singled out in survey day had influenced their settlement intentions. Some cases studies have pointed to the possibility that Chinese migrant workers’ migration experiences might change their intentions (Ngai 1999; Loyalk 2012; Pai 2012). This research is conducted along this line of research, tracing the changes of Chinese migrant workers’ desire to settle down in cities.

The meaning of “to settle down”

In my interviews, I asked interviewees to present their understanding of settling down in cities or permanent migration. The informants tend to associate “to settle down”

¹⁷ This multi-nominal logistics model include three values of the dependent variable—having the desire to settle down, have not the desire to settle down, and have no clear intentions. Again, this measurement was based on a “whether or not” logic as described earlier.

with two Chinese terms—“anjia” (安家) and “luohu” (落户). Literally, “jia” (家) can be translated as “home” or “family,” and “hu” (户) is related to “household” or “house.”

As the literal meanings show, for migrant workers, the “home” and “household” are separate and represent two aspect of “settling down,” though not all of them can clarify the differences between the two terms. In retrospect, they use “home” to describe their family life or intra-household relationship, while the word “household” is referred to their community life or inter-household relationship. For those migrant workers who left some family members behind in the rural villages, “family” and “home” are their prominent concerns and their dominant reasons why they didn’t think they haven’t succeeded in moving to cities where they were working even for many years.

For example, Tai was a migrant worker in Beijing. He was from Shandong Province. His hometown is about 800 kilometers away from Beijing. He lived in a suburban village (an urban village) about 30 kilometers from the city center. When I interviewed him, he just came back from his hometown, after finished harvesting wheat in the rural village. His parents, wife and children lived in the rural village. When I asked him about his “home,” he said his home is in Ningyang County of Shandong Province. In other words, he didn’t think of Beijing as his “home.” When I asked him why the rural village in Shandong Province was his home, he emphasized that all his family members were living there. He said:

“You know, in Shandong Province we plant wheat during the winter and harvest in the summer, and plant corn in the summer and harvest in the autumn. (...) Between harvest seasons, my wife takes care of the plants. She also needs to look after my two children. So, I have to go back to help her in the busy harvest season, because other relatives are also busy.”

I also tried to ask him why he didn't consider Beijing as his home. He said he just temporarily worked in Beijing and had to circularly migrate between his hometown and Beijing for family and agricultural production. He said:

“I came here about five years ago for the first time (...) But I went back to my hometown for three or more times during harvest time and Spring Festival.”

Another reason why he didn't think of Beijing as his home is that he thought it impossible for him to bring his family to Beijing. That is, he didn't have such a hope that his family would live in Beijing. When I asked “Why not take your wife and children here,” he said,

“It is impossible. As the children need my wife to look after, she couldn't work here. But they will need money to survive here. So, it seems that I will have double-loss here: earn less but spend more.”

Apparently, Tai emphasized his family or home, when he thought of settlement. For all migrant workers who don't live together with their family members in cities, they tend to emphasize their family connections, whether they are male or female, and old or young. However, for single migrant workers, they not only consider their parents but also their future partner.

For example, Yan was a single and female migrant worker. She was working for a food processing company in Liaocheng. Before worked in the local city, she worked in factories in Hebei Province and Tianjin Municipality. When I asked “why not work in those large cities and settle there,” she said:

“Those cities are too far from my home. Sometimes I missed my parents. After all, I want to work somewhere close to my parents (...) Furthermore, even if I got married in those cities, it is still hard for me to bring my parents there. So, I came back to my hometown... In the future, I want to live in my hometown.”

For those migrant workers who work in the same city with all family members, they are more concerned with the household aspect of permanent migration. These migrant workers are called family-migrant workers (Ji 2012). These migrant workers can live or work together with their family members in cities, but they feel they are separate from the city because their families are not independent members in the urban community. The isolation could be economic or political, but it is more often social and cultural.

I interviewed a family from Jiansu Province, which is about 1000 kilometers far from Beijing¹⁸. Su and his wife (Yu) worked together as a team to do indoor decoration. Their only child (Juan)—a 17-year old girl—also worked in Beijing, making shoes in a factory. Su and his wife lived a modern apartment in an urban village, which was informally constructed by the local residents (Wu 2012). Their daughter lived in the dormitory of her factory. The family used to live together. Only after the daughter became tired of traveling, she moved to the dormitory for free (and the food is also free in the factory). But the family lived together sometimes. I said “it is even better for your family. Your family has migrated to Beijing. Congratulations! Where do you live?” But Su didn’t think so:

“No. You should not say that we migrate to Beijing ...¹⁹ We rent an apartment in Fangshan District. It is in a village originally. Only in recent years, there are apartments in that village. It is far from Beijing. It is not Beijing (...) My daughter lives in the factory, though it is not far from the apartment. But the dormitory is free for her and there is also free food in the factory.”

¹⁸ I interviewed the three members of this family separately, because they represent three types of migrant workers. Su and his wife represent male and female senior migrant workers in service industry, while their daughter is a female and single migrant worker in manufacturing industry.

¹⁹ ...indicates pauses in informants’ presentations.

Then I asked him “Why do you think your family hasn’t moved to Beijing yet?” It seems that he gave me two reasons. One of them is material—having no house—and the other is social—having no sense of community. But both refer to the relationship of the family as a whole with the community.

Su: “We are dagong here. We are here just to make money. We don’t have our own house [he said “home” actually].”

Fayin: “Is a house so important? After all, your whole family works here.”

Su: “I don’t have any relatives here. All my other family members are at my hometown now.” [He has two brothers who were working on farmland. He also subcontracts his land to his brothers for free.]

Fayin: “I think you should have some close friends or other close social relationships after you have worked here for such a long time.” [He said he has worked here for about twenty years.]

Su: “Yes, but all of us come here to dagong and to make money. We are all guests and will go at some time. We are floating. We are not members of this city ... We are working for this city.”

Fayin: “What do you mean “settling down in cities” generally?”

Su: “We should have a stable job and buy a house. So, that we can be equal with the local residents and live a same life with them.”

From the above two cases, we can find that Chinese migrant workers’ understanding of permanent migration not only means they live together with family members (intra-household aspect), but also means they have a equal status with local residents, especially have their own stable jobs and settlements (inter-household aspect). This distinction between “home” and “household” has some important implications. First, some studies implied or pointed that “having more family members in city facilitates the earning of urban wages but is not necessarily indicative of a long-term plan to stay” (Fan 2011: 12; see also, Ji 2012). However, these outsiders’ conclusion fails to reveal the insiders’ logic behind this phenomenon. The distinction of migrant workers’ perception between “home” and “household” could explain why the fact that family members live together in cities doesn’t mean that they have a strong desire to settle down in cities.

Second, outsiders, especially institutional analysts, implicitly tend to confuse migrant workers' perception of "household" with the "Hukou" status.²⁰ While they are inevitably related, they are also different: migrant workers themselves define "household" in the context of an intimate community relationship, but institutional analysts tend to define "household" as represented by the Household Registration System.

Migrant Workers Who don't Have the Desire/Goal to Settle in Cities

At least at the time I interviewed them, not all migrant workers have the desire to settle down in cities. For those migrant workers who don't want to stay in the city, the reasons might be different. For those migrant workers who want to stay in the city, the degree of the desire might also be different. This section will focus on those migrant workers without such a desire, which could be divided to "No Desire" and "Lost Goal." The next section will distinguish "Hopeful Desire" and "Expected Goal" for the migrant workers with the desire to settle down in cities.

Un-thought "No Desires" to Settle in Cities

When I asked the first question²¹ of "have you ever thought about permanently settling down in cities,"²² two typical answers are "No, I have never had such a desire"²³ and "Yes, I used to think about such a thing." If I got the first answer, I asked "why not?"

²⁰ On August 16, 2013, in his presentation for a conference about high-quality urbanization in Beijing, Chan Kam Wing commented on the translation of the title of Doug Saunders' "Arrival City," in which he said that the title should be "get urban houku," rather than "get a foothold in cities."

²¹ Here, "the first question" is not the first question I asked in my interviews. In order to present my result, I singled out the questions relevant to my research topic of this paper. These questions are sequentially arranged in real interviews. So, "the first question" is the first one in a sequence of questions relevant to the research topic.

²² In Chinese, this question is "您有没有想过在城市里定居?" In this question, the verb "想过" (literally, thought about) could be used to ask about both thinking (opinion) "and" feeling (desire). In real interviews, it turned out that some were talking about their desires, while other were talking about their opinions.

²³ As the quotation mark shows, this sentence is given by some of my informants. However, not all informants said as this. However, some other informants expressed the similar opinion or feeling. So, this is a "typical" answer, which represents a kind of answers. Similarly, this also applies to the other "typical answers" I singled out in the following parts.

The answer I got typically started with “I feel.....” which means they haven’t carefully or rationally thought about “settling down in cities.” This kind of un-thought desire to settle down in cities is simply “no desire to settle in cities.” These migrant workers usually just start working as migrant workers (new migrant workers)²⁴. There is a difference between old and young new migrant workers. While old and new migrant workers just want to make money through *dagong*, young and new migrant workers didn’t develop their own clear goals yet.

Old and new migrant workers usually have run their own business in agricultural or other industries. They temporarily work as migrant workers because they don’t have business for a short-term or fail in other businesses. They think they are too old to migrate to cities and just want to make money; or, they will be idle. For example, Yao was 55 years old. He used to raise chicken. After that he transported wheat straw to a papermaking factory by his own tractor. Now, his main business is to harvest agricultural products (wheat and corn) by modern harvesters which were bought with one of his friends. However, between harvest seasons he doesn’t have other business to do than working as migrant workers (in a construction site, then). When I asked about his desire/intention to settle in cities, he said:

“I am a farmer. I never thought of settling in cities. I feel I am too old to migrate to cities. Moreover, I work hard in the rural villages and have my own businesses (...) I didn’t work like this before. Only in recent years, I started work as migrant workers. Even now, I have my regular work [his own businesses] to do. I don’t want to waste my time between harvest seasons (...) Though my two sons have been married and don’t need my money any more, I have to earn more money for me and my wife so that we will not be my sons’ burden (...) I cannot be lazy. That is intolerable.”

²⁴ As the next chapter will show, only some of new migrant workers don’t have the desire to settle in cities.

New and young migrant workers have not been independent from their parents or developed their own worldview and personality. So they didn't develop their own motivations. They feel reluctant to work as migrant workers. Here is a typical case. En was 17 years old. He worked as a migrant worker in the local city. He worked for a private enterprise as an electro-gas welding worker. He dropped out of school at the age of 16, a year before the interview. However, the primary middle school promised to give him a certificate. When I asked him whether he had any clear goal to work in the city, he kept silent, which indicates that he hadn't conscious goals. Then I asked him why he worked in cities. He felt forced to do so, because he had nothing else to do and was not interested in schooling.

“I had nothing else to do when I came back home from schooling (...) I am not interested in studying. I worked hard. But I cannot understand what teachers said. I became extremely tired of studying. There were so many things to learn and to memorize: literature, arithmetic, geometry, biology, physics, chemistry, history, and politics and so on ... Even if I could continue, studying means more burden for me.”

Then I asked him directly about his desire to settle in cities by the question “Have you ever thought about permanently settling down in cities?” He said:

“I feel it is impossible for me to move to cities. You know, I didn't graduate from the primary middle school. I think the first thing I should do is to learn skills. I feel it will be easier for me to do that in the future if it became possible to do that.” [Later, he also said, “I feel my parents don't want to me work too hard,” “I feel urban city is not happy, because there are too many people,” and “I feel somewhat tired of leaving home.”]

In this part of conversation, we can find En's own feelings and calculations in this part of conversation. Emotionally, he was tired of schooling and felt impossible to migrate to cities. However, he also had his own rational calculation: to learn skills. But he seemed also bored of the urban lifestyle,

because he was not completely independent from his parents and not ready to work outside home for such a long time. So, as a new migrant worker, he was still occupied and even confused by his emotions/feelings. Specifically, he did not have a clear goal of his *dagong* life, to settle in cities or to learn skills. With respect to the desire to settle in cities, the answers of “un-thought no” can be called “no desires” to settle in cities.

Unthinkable “No Desires” to Settle in Cities

If I got the second answer to the first question—“Yes, I used to think about such a thing”—I continued to ask the second question: “Are you still thinking about settling down in cities?” Then, one of the two typical answers is “No, I think it unthinkable (unbelievable, or impossible).” Like their answers to the first question, the answers to the second question also began with “I think,” which indicates that these migrant workers have carefully or rationally thought about “settling down in cities.” However, because they almost gave up this desire, I called this kind of “unthinkable desire” as “lost desire.” These migrant workers usually have worked in cities for a long time, have more family burdens, work in unstable and labor-intensive industry, have not receive any promotions in the factories or companies, and don’t see any improvement of their life conditions.

Even after working in cities for many years, it is still hard for Chinese migrant workers to settle in cities. Furthermore, migrant workers have recognized the impossibility, whether the settling in cities means family migration or household settlement. This is especially true for migrant workers in unstable construction industries. Long was born in 1984. He has worked in cities for ten years. After he graduated from

the primary middle school, he went to the local city and worked as a migrant worker. He said of his experiences like this:

“I have to change working places very often. After finish a construction project, I have to move to another one to make money. I have never such a sense of stability (...) I think it impossible for me to settle in cities if one doesn't have a stable job and guaranteed income. Even if I can make some money for a certain period of time, it is still very likely to go back to my rural village because I might not have work to do or money to earn.”

Working in manufacture industries and having relatively stable jobs, migrant workers also recognized the impossibility to settle in cities. Here is a part of conversation with an informant, which indicates this kind of unthinkable desire to settle down in cities. Liao, a migrant worker in Beijing, was 45 years old. He was a carpenter in a private factory. He had been working in Beijing for more than 15 years. Before he came to Beijing, he worked at his hometown in Liaoning Province. But he used to go back home and worked for a while. His wife was working in the same urban village of Beijing. His son attended a private school in that urban village.²⁵ When I asked him whether he ever thought about permanently settling in cities, he said “yes.”

“After I worked in Beijing for a couple years, I went back to my hometown. Then I thought I had enough money to start my own business. I also wanted to settle down in the local county. I tried, but I failed (...)”

But he gave up the idea of moving to cities when I interviewed him, because he thought it impossible. But he continued working in Beijing to save more money for his family.

²⁵ I want to say that there are three kinds of urban villages in China. The first type of urban village developed by industrial development, as worker both work and live in the village. The second type of urban village developed through informal settlement for workers who work in city center. The third type of urban village locates in old center of cities, also developed through providing informal settlement. However, in all three kinds of urban villages, there are specific services (restaurants, housing, department stores, and public transportations) provided for migrant workers.

“I think it is impossible for me to do that ... It was too expensive to move to and live in cities. Here is 30 kilometers far from Tiananmen. But it is impossible to build your own house, because you don't have the local Hukou. It is also impossible to buy an apartment, as the price has been very high (...) I have to make money for my parents and child. My son goes to a school here. Though it is not very expensive, he will need more money if he goes to college (...) I can make more money in Beijing than in my hometown. Furthermore, my son can go to school here and my wife can find a job too.”

First of all, “settling in cities” for him mainly means “household” and “house,” as Liao's family had lived in Beijing. As an experienced migrant worker, Liao has calculated the possibility to settle in cities, which also means the possibility to build or buy a house in Beijing. So, though he also didn't have the desire to settle in cities, this “no desire” is a rational choice. However, he used to think about settling in cities, but he gave up at some time. This kind of “no desire” can be called “unthinkable no” or “lost goal.”

Migrant Workers with the Desires to Settle in Cities

For those who answered “Yes” to the second question, I asked the third question “Do you have any specific plan to settle down in cities?” I got two typical answers: “I hope I could live in cities as my co-worker Hui (or somebody else),” and “I expect that I would buy a house within two years.” The two typical answers are from my conversations with two informants. These two answers represent two kinds of desire to settle down in cities: while the first answer represents a “hopeful yes,” the latter answer signifies an “expected yes.” However, the difference between the two types of desire is not just a matter of wording. The difference between “hope” and “expectation” is significant. As Ivan Illich (2010: 98) said,

“Under the influence of this promise (of development), desires also changed their status. The hope to accomplish the good has been replaced

by the expectation that needs will be defined and satisfied ... Hope orients towards the unpredictable, the unexpected, the surprising. Expectations...orient towards claims, entitlements and demands. Hope appeals to the arbitrariness of a personal other, be he human or divine. Expectations build on the functioning of impersonal systems that will deliver nutrition, health care, education, security and more. Hope faces the unpredictable, expectation the probable”.

So, a hope is largely an emotional wish, while an expectation is a rational goal. As shown below, the two kinds of desire/goal would also influence their attitudes and responses to the social context.

“Hopeful” Desires to Settle Down in Cities

As to the “Hopeful Yes,” migrant workers have a strong desire to settle down in cities, but they haven’t developed a clear plan to achieve that desire. However, as hope is an emotional force, which is oriented to unpredictable things and surprise. So these migrant workers usually want dramatic social change to happen, so that they have more opportunities. These migrant workers are usually young, don’t have many life experiences, and want better life conditions in cities. They are also independent from their parents and want to do something for their families and the society by themselves. They have somewhat of a heroic complex.

Here is a migrant worker, Lin, who had been working as a migrant worker for 13 years when I interviewed him. He graduated from the primary middle school in 1996. He was 32 years old, but he was just married for a year. He had changed his jobs for many times. He used to work in Liaocheng, Jinan, Tianjin, and Beijing. He used to work as security staff, run his own small restaurant, and work for large hotels. He was working for a hotel and cooking western-style food when I interviewed him. When I asked him whether he wanted to settle in cities, he said,

“I have worked and lived in cities for more than ten years. I have got accustomed to urban life. It is impossible for me to go back to do agricultural production.”

Then I asked him whether he had any specific plan to migrate to the city.

He said,

“I want to re-start my own business. But I don’t know when I could do that. [Suddenly he became impatient, anxious and angry] Since I was born I have been working hard, because I have my dream. I want to have a better life. But, it is not my own fault that I still live like this—struggling, struggling and more struggling. There are so many social problems which have influenced ordinary people’s lives, such as capitalists’ cruelty and official corruption (...) I hope there is social revolution, which I think will give us ordinary people more opportunities. [Laughing]”

We find that Lin had worked and lived in cities for more than ten years. It is hard to tell whether he was used to the urban life, but he was sure that he didn’t want to live in the countryside any more. This is also the reason why he wanted to migrate to cities. However, he hadn’t developed any specific plan to settle in cities, though he had affirmed that to *dagong* for others is not viable for him to achieve his desire. On the other hand, he had tried for so many times that he felt somewhat depressed and confused, so he thought he was just following his fate. For him, the only way (at least a possible way) to change his fate is a dramatic social change (a kind of revolution for him). So, his desire to settle in cities is an emotional hope, a “hopeful desire.”

However, female migrant workers who hold a hopeful desire to settle in cities are less aggressive, because they don’t want social revolution. Rather, they try to take some adventurous effort to change their fate, especially through marriage. Jing is a female migrant worker, who was working in the same hotel as Lin. She was still single. When I asked her whether she had a desire to settle in cities, she said yes. But she didn’t develop

any specific plans to do that. Then we talked about whether she had any chance to settle down in cities.

Fayin: “Do you think more education can make you achieve you desire? Do you want to do that?”

Jing: “Yes, but I have been far from schooling for many years. I think it is almost impossible for me to go back to school (...) Even if I can go to private vocational schools, it is said that it is unhelpful to find better jobs.”

Fayin: “Do you think changing jobs can make you achieve you desire? Do you want to do that?”

Jing: “Yes, but it is still hard. After all educational qualification is important.”

Fayin: “How about marriage?”

Jing: “I think if I can marry an urban guy, I can migrate to this city. But I don’t know how possible it is to do this.”

Fayin: “Have you ever tried?” [After I encouraged her, she started to answer this question]

Jing: “It is hard for me to have an urban citizen as my partner. But I think it is possible to find some boys from suburban areas. These guys are not urban citizens. Their educational levels are not too high. But they are likely to become urban citizens because the government will appropriate their farm land (...)”

Jing also only holds a hope of settling in cities, as she has the desire without specific plans to do so. However, she was also trying some less possible ways (marriage) to achieve this desire.

“Expected” Desires to Settle Down in Cities

Those migrant workers with an “expected desire” to settle down in cities are sophisticated migrant workers, who have earned better working and life conditions and had the possibility to settle down in cities. They not only have a strong desire to settle down in cities, but also have a specific plan to achieve that desire. For them, what they need to do is to work hard and carry out their plans. So, they need social stability, especially gradual social reforms which will not break the social order. On the one hand, they want social reforms to remove barriers to permanently migrate; on the other hand,

they don't want revolutionary social reforms which might make their effort meaningless and spoil their own plans.

Li worked in Jinan. She was a female migrant worker in the marketing department of a real estate company. She was 31 years old. She had worked in Jinan for two years. Before she came there, she did a similar job in her local city. Her husband did his own business in Jinan—transporting agricultural product to Jinan from his hometown. As her husband can earn more money in Jinan than in his hometown, she came to work in Jinan too. She had a five-year old baby and left the baby in his hometown. Her family has developed a specific plan to move to Jinan some day. Here is a part our conversation.

Fayin: "Do you want to live in this city permanently?"

Li: "Yes. But we don't want to buy a house now."

Fayin: "Why?"

Li: "We don't need to do that. It is still a burden for us to buy a house. It is cheaper to rent an apartment in suburban areas."

Fayin: "When are you going to buy a house?"

Li: "We planned to buy a house when our child has to go to school. Firstly, we have to make more money. I earn less than my husband. But we can save some money every month. We want to live with our child. We want him to attend a school in this city two or three years later."

Fayin: "Do you think it is still possible to buy a house then? You know, the price of real estate goes up every day."

Li: "I hope the government could control the price of housing. I also hope the schools could operate more formally. Even if we don't buy house or get the local Hukou, my student can still enter schools in this city. I am afraid that even if we have local Hukou, our child still cannot go to good schools."

First of all, we have to consider migrant workers' family conditions. Li didn't earn too much, but her family as a whole had earned a better life mainly through her husband' business. This also made her see the possibility to settle in cities. Based on this possibility, her family developed a specific plan to do that. So, to settle down in the city

is not just an emotional hope, but also a rational plan. Furthermore, the development of a rational plan depends on life conditions.

Conclusion and implications

To conclude, this part will construct four ideal types of Chinese migrant workers' desire/goal to settle in cities, according to (1) whether they have the desire to settle in cities and (2) whether their desires are based on emotion or rationality. Then, the implication of these ideal types for the changes in their desires will be examined. Finally, the unsolved questions with respect to their motivations to *dagong* will be discussed.

Different types of the desire to settle down in cities

I use the term “un-thought no” or “no desire” to describe the first type answer, which indicates that some migrant workers didn't have a desire to settle in cities, because they emotionally felt it impossible to do that. The term “unachieved no” or “lost goal” refers to the second type of answer, which means that some migrant workers didn't hold a goal to settle in cities, because they thought it impossible based on their rational thinking about the possibility. Though both kinds of answer indicate some migrant workers at least have no strong desire to settle down in cities, the natures are different. While the “un-thought no” happened before migrant workers' thinking about the meaning and possibility of settling down in cities, the “unachieved no” took place after migrant workers experienced urban life, developed a meaning of migration, and calculated the possibility of permanent migration. Similarly, the “hopeful desire” is largely an emotional force, while the “expected desire” is based on rational thinking about the possibility and meaning of settling down in cities. Table 8 illustrates different types of the desire to permanently migrate.

The distinction between these different desires have gone beyond previous studies, which only distinguish “have” and “have not” the desire to permanently migrate, because these types also involve a ordinal measurement of the migrant workers’ desire to settle down in cities. Furthermore, the working conditions, living conditions, family life, and migration process will influence migrant workers’ desires.

The changes in migrant workers’ desires to settle down in cities

As above analyses indicate, the different desires are not only synchronical differences, but also diachronical differences. Because the four scenarios also imply that a certain migrant worker might change his or her desire, so it could be used to describe and explain the changes in his or her desire to permanently migrate. Furthermore, the working condition, the living condition and the family life will contribute to the changes in the desire to settle down in cities. Though the previous studies also pointed various factors which have influenced migrant workers’ desire, they tend to ignore the issue of time in the migration process. This analysis emphasizes the importance of the definition of life cycle, urban experiences and so on.

Here it is important to distinguish inter-generational change and intra-generational change of migrant workers’ desire to settle down in cities, because the categorization between first-generation and second-generation migrant workers has become so popular in recent years (Yue, et al. 2010; Wang 2008; Hannan 2008). However, this inter-generational analysis is largely a structural analysis, in which the date of birth (as an independent variable) divides the migrant workers into two groups. This implies that two generations have two kinds of settlement intentions or desires, other things being equal. Though this distinction could help capture the influences of institutional transition on the

inter-generational changes of the group migrant workers,²⁶ it tends to ignore the intra-generational changes of certain concrete migrant workers. However, it is necessary to examine the intra-generational changes to justify inter-generational analysis. An old-generation migrant worker (for example, at the age of 40) might have different desire, compared to a new-generation migrant worker (for example, at the age of 30). This didn't exclude the possibility that when the new-generation migrant worker might have same desire with that old-generation migrant worker, when s/he came to the age of 40.

Future research

Firstly, this chapter only focuses on Chinese migrant workers' desires to settle down in cities. It was found that not all migrant workers have a (strong) desire to migrate to cities and even for those with such a desire, the nature of the desire is also different. If the desire to permanently migrate is not a common motivation to support migrant workers' *dagong* lifestyle, what other motivations do they have? If the desire to settle in cities is changing in the migration process, then what forces other than the desire to settle down will rise in those situations? In order to answer these questions, the next chapter will examine migrant workers' motivation to *dagong* in general.

As the above analyses indicate, though the first-generation migrant workers have different desires to migrate to cities. However, there are some common factors influencing their desire, including family life, working condition and living condition in cities. So, this analysis indicates: (1) it is not very reasonable to say that the second-

²⁶ Actually, it is hard for this approach to distinguish the influences of institutional factors from those of individual factors. For example, the data was selected at a certain point of time, all migrant workers, old- or new-generation, live in the same institutional contexts. So, there is no direct data about the institutional context in the previous era. Therefore, the differences are variations derived from individual factors. As shown below, studying intra-generational changes could complement this approach by considering more about institutional changes through informants' life stories.

generation migrant workers have a stronger desire to settle in cities than the first-generation migrant workers, because they are at different stages of their life cycles; (2) if the institutional arrangements have changes so that different generations have different life cycles, it is reasonable to say that there are differences between the two generations; and (3) if, by contrast, the institutional arrangements didn't change fundamentally, it is possible that the second-generation migrant workers would have the same experiences with their predecessors. If their life experiences will influence their motivations, then what institutional arrangements will influence their life experiences? Have these institutional arrangements changed? If yes, what are the consequences for migrant workers? In order to answer these questions, the second part will focus on the institutional arrangements relevant to migrant workers' life experiences.

Table 8. Different desires to Settling Down in Cities (N=36)*

Basis	The Desire to Settle Down in Cities	
	No	Yes
Emotional	Un-thought “No” (No Desire) (16; 44%)**	Hopeful “Yes” (Hopeful Desire) (8; 22%)
Rational	Unachieved “No” (Lost Intention) (8; 22%)	Expected “Yes” (Expected Intention) (4; 12%)

*The 36 interviewees are selected by theoretical principles according to migrant workers' characteristics. So, these interviewees might not be proportionate to the overall structure of Chinese migrant workers.

**The number and percentage of cases in each category out of selected cases.

Chapter Six:

Chinese Migrant Workers' Stratified Motivations to Dagong

Previous institutional analyses indicate that market is the main mechanism through which China's rural-urban migration happened in the three decades (Li 2008; Cai, et al. 2008), as the government didn't force Chinese farmers to relocate as it did in the communistic era (such as the Intellectual Youth Movement) (Wang and Liu 2006; Fairbank, et al. 2006). This is true despite the fact that the state policies and development ideology, especially the reform policies since late 1970s (including the reforms of the Hukou system), have contributed to the huge rural-urban migration and that the nature of labor market is still controversial (Fan 2008; Ngai, et al. 2009). This means that Chinese migrant workers make their own decisions to migrate without straightforward physical coercion to do so. So, it is important to examine migrant workers' own motivations to *dagong*, in order to understand the emergence and existence of this group of people.

The last chapter indicates that permanent migration is not the motivation for all Chinese migrant workers. Furthermore, the desire to settle down in cities might be a secondary motivation and changing in the migration process. The question is: what is the motivation to *dagong* for other migrant workers? If the desire to settle down in cities is changing, how is the relationship between this motivation and other motivations like? This chapter will firstly discuss the debate between the permanent migration paradigm and the household strategy paradigm, with respect to Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*. Then, this debate will be examined in the context of migration theories, as both paradigms are derived from migration theories in general and the migration motivation theories in particular. With these theoretical debates in mind, this

chapter will empirically investigate Chinese migrant workers' motivations. Two models were proposed with respect to Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*, which deal with the structure and changes of their motivations respectively. First, a stratification model of motivations was used to describe the structure of migration motivations, which integrate multiple-level factors involved in migrants' decision-making. Second, a dynamic model of motivation to migrate is constructed to describe the changes of motivations to migrate, which can go beyond the moment of decision-making and include the following migration processes.

The Debate on Chinese migrant workers' motivation

As far as Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong* are concerned, two dominant paradigms—permanent migration paradigm and household strategy paradigm—could be distinguished, on which other theories were also developed. While permanent migration paradigm assumes that the desire to seek better life conditions in cities is the main motivation for Chinese migrant workers, the household strategy paradigm argues that Chinese migrant workers treat *dagong* life as a way to meet family needs. This section will describe the basic logics of the two paradigms and the next section will examine their roots in migration theories.

Permanent Migration Paradigm

The basic assumption of the permanent migration paradigm is that rural labor migrants “desire to stay in city and bring their families there” (Fan 2008: 11). As a paradigm, this theoretical approach also has its own interpretations and applications, besides this basic assumption. Specifically, both development economics and migration theory have provided justifications for the assumption of permanent migration. The

structural disparities between rural and urban areas and between regions will pull surplus labors to non-agricultural sectors. It is a reasonable choice for rural laborers to pursue superior wages, social services, job opportunities and consumption patterns in urban and developed areas (Cai, et al. 2008; Li 2008; Unger 2002; Hare 1999; Lewis 1954; Fan 2008). This paradigm has become a dominant convention, because this assumption has been explicitly or implicitly involved in research on all important questions about Chinese migrant workers. These areas of application include migrant workers' decision to migrate (Lee and Meng 2010), migrant workers' social adaptation (Connelly, et al. 2011), migrant workers' life conditions in cities (Lü 2013), migrant workers' desire to settling down in cities (Li 2006), structural transformation (industrialization and urbanization) in China (Chai, et al. 1997; Li 2006), critics of institutional arrangements (Chan and Buckingham 2008; Chan 2009; Huang 2010), and migrant workers' consciousness and responses (Lee 2007; Lo and Jiang 2006).

However, the Chinese migrant workers' motivation is an empirical question. If this question was left unexamined, all other research in this tradition would become ungrounded. Based on theoretical challenges to this paradigm and previous empirical investigations on Chinese migrant workers' desire/goal to settle in cities (Hare, 1999; Zhan, 2011; Fan and Wang, 2008; Huang, 2008; Fan, 2011), the last chapter found that not all of them have a strong desire to do that, because some of them "feel" or "think" it impossible. Furthermore, not all migrant workers with the desire have developed a rational plan to do that. So, it still needs to examine their motivations to *dagong* in general. Finally, the continuous migration could be an instrument for migrant workers to bargain with capitalists and protest against governments; therefore, the permanent

settlement migration paradigm has become insufficient to understand migrant workers' own responses in transitional China (Wang and Wu, 2010; Han, 2011).

Household Strategy Paradigm

Treating households as the unit of analysis, the household strategy paradigm argues that migration in general and *dagong* in particular is a household strategy, which is intended not only to pursue the maximization of income, but also to minimize risks associated with labor and product markets (Fan, et al. 2008; Fan 2008; Zhang, 2013). Associated income diversification and risk minimization, the relative deprivation, or the change of relative status of the households in rural community, is another driving force of migration. So, household strategy is not only structured by household structure and economic condition, but also by social contexts, including rural community (Cai and Yang 2002; Li 2003). Consistent with “gender-sensitive approach” to migration (Samers 2010: 98-103), another related issue is the relationship between gender and migration. For Chinese migrant workers, migration as a house strategy is usually associated with the split-household strategy. Influenced by Chinese traditional culture of intra-household relationship, women tend to stay in rural areas and work in the agricultural sector, while men are likely to leave home and work in cities. For a certain family, this split-household strategy has facilitated the man working as migrant workers in cities.

If not all Chinese migrant workers have the desire to settle in cities as the last chapter showed, it is also true that not all of them only treat *dagong* as a household strategy. Then the question is: why did some Chinese migrant workers only treat migration as a household strategy to diversify income resources, rather than as a way to settle down in cities where there are more employment opportunities and higher living

standards? Furthermore, treating migration as a household strategy might conceal the differences in migration experiences between male and female migrant workers. For example, Pun Ngai pointed out that in the process of becoming *dagongmei* (female migrant worker), others (including coworkers, supervisors and so on) defined them as “women,” “farmers,” and “migrant workers” at the same time, which had led to female migrant workers’ distinct identity (Ngai 1999).

The debate between permanent migration paradigm and household strategy paradigm indicates that there are two geographical orientations in Chinese migrant workers’ motivations: urban migration and rural needs. Furthermore, the debate also implies that household structure and family life are important for understanding why some Chinese migrant workers have the desire to permanently migrate and others just treat *dagong* as a strategy to meet household needs in rural areas. However, these two paradigms failed to fully elaborate the meaning of urban migration and rural needs, though they pointed out the two general geographical orientations. This study is to more closely examine the meaning of permanent migration and rural needs.

Migration theories and migration motivations

In order to solve the puzzles involved in the opposition between the two paradigms, it is helpful to return to the broad context of migration theories in general and migration motivation theory in particular, because the two paradigms are directly related to migration theories. For example, the basic logic of permanent migration paradigm is consistent with migration theories focusing on structural disparities, such as push-pull

theory, macro neoclassical economic theory, and dual labor market theory²⁷. The basic reasoning of household strategy paradigm is closely related to such migration theories as behaviorist approaches, new economics approaches, relative deprivation theory, and gender-sensitive approaches.

In migration studies, it is argued that the internal migration and international migration are interrelated. Theoretically, the internal rural-urban migration has some common characteristics with international migration and some theories about international migrations were developed based on internal migration (Dong 2011; Samers 2010; Lee and Meng 2010). Empirically, there might be common forces underlying both internal and international migration, so there is a substantial correlation between internal and international migration (Pai 2012; King, et al. 2008; Korcelli 1994). This section will firstly review migration theories in general by focusing on key questions about migrations and then focus on those theories about migration motivations.

Migration theories in general

There are many theories of, or approaches to, migration (internal or international). Furthermore, in order to understand the reality of migration, these theories are also critically summarized and examined by some scholars. For example, Massey et al. (1993) divided migration theories into theories about the initiation of international migration and theories about the perpetuation of international movement. The former kind of theories includes macro and micro neoclassical economic theories, the new economics of migration, dual labor market theory, and work systems theory, and the latter kind of theories includes network theory, institutional theory, cumulative causation theory, and

²⁷ Many literatures have introduced these theories in detail, so it is unnecessary to repeat these theories. For basic arguments of these theories, see Boyle, Paul, Keith H. Halfacree, and Vaughan Robinson 1998; Samers, Michael 2010; and Bean, Frank D., Susan Gonzalez-Baker, and Randy Capps 2001.

migration systems theory. However, the assumption of this classification is that there has been a migration stream or migration pattern, so that it would be reasonable to say and analyze how the migration pattern was initiated and maintained. The problem is that because migration behaviors are conducted by individuals, it is unreasonable to exclude the theories about the perpetuation of migration from the explanation of the initiation of a certain migrant. For example, social networks would also influence an individual's initial imagination and decision of migration. That is, Massey et al.'s classification is able to deepen our understanding of migration patterns or migration streams, while this meta-theoretical examination doesn't identify the factors involved in individuals' migration behavior.

Another meta-theoretical analysis is Paul Boyle et al.'s (1998) distinction between determinist, humanist and integrated conceptual approaches to migration. While determinist approaches emphasize the objective structures and fail to pay enough attention to individuals' active role, humanist approaches stress the individuals' own choice-making processes, and integrated approaches developed from the interaction between determinist and humanist approaches. Adopting this distinction, Michael Samers (2010) classified ten theories into two categories: (1) determinist theories including push-pull approaches, neo-classical economic analyses, behaviorist approaches, new economics approaches, dual labor market and labor market segmentation approaches, and structuralist approaches; and (2) more integrated approaches including social-network approaches, transnational arguments, gender-sensitive analyses, and structurationist perspectives. However, this classification is also problematic, because, as Samers himself said, "often so-called determinist arguments integrate a number of different political,

cultural, economic, environmental and social processes, and integrative theories can be remarkably determinist” (Samers 2010: 53).

More generally, Boyle et al.’s meta-theoretical construction depends on the history and epistemological differences of migration theories. So, his integrated approaches only listed those theories which are developed later than determinist theories and emphasize the interaction between structure and agency. By contrast, Massey et al.’s meta-theoretical analysis is featured by its problem-orientation—the problem of the initiation and perpetuation of migration patterns. However, the problem of migration pattern by no means is the only problem of migration. Actually, because of their assumption of migration pattern, Massey et al.’s classification could not explain the problem of migration process in general. It should be noted that Massey et al. didn’t treat their analysis as an attempt to integrate various theories. They were just willing to lay groundwork for constructing an accurate and comprehensive theory.

Echoing Massey et al.’s emphasis on the problem of migration pattern, here is another attempt to construct an integrated and comprehensive theory of migration, which is centered on the problems of various migrations. So the approach proposed here is a problem-oriented approach. The logic is: because migration involves more than one single problem, in order to understand migration behaviors, it is reasonable to figure out the important problems, according to which theories are classified and reconstructed. Because of the concern of this chapter, here just outline the basic problems involved in migration processes.

The first problem is the structural possibility. What structural factors have provided the possibility for migration to happen? Or, what are the distributions of

resources that make migration a way to meet migrants' needs? This is not a determinist problem, which argues that structural disparity alone could determine the happenstance of migration. Rather, to answer this question only points out the possibility for migrations to happen. The theories pertinent to this question include push-pull theory, macro neoclassical theories, dual labor market and labor segmentation theories, structuralist and related understandings, and world systems theory.

The second problem is the operational resources. Who can help migrants feel safe to migrate towards a certain destination? What economic, political, social and cultural resources available to migrants to take action? If structural factors only provide a possibility for migration, then operational resources are facilitating tools for migration. Without these necessary resources (for example, travel fund), it is still impossible for migration to happen. Relevant theories are social network theory, gender-sensitive theories, micro neoclassical economic theories, dual labor market and labor market segmentation approaches, institutional theory, cumulative causation theory, and migration systems theory.

The third problem is the decision-making process. The second question actually should be "if some people decide to migrate, what resources are available to them?" That is, if no people want to migrate, structural possibility cannot guarantee migrations and operational resources cannot be utilized. The key questions about this problem are "what motivates people to migrate?" and "what alternatives to migration are available?" Existing theories relevant to these questions include micro neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of migration, relative deprivation theory, network theory, behaviorist

approaches, structurationist perspectives, gender-sensitive analyses and migration culture theory.

The migration motivation in particular

Under the above theoretical background, this section focuses on theories related to the motivation to migrate²⁸. Rather than repeating the arguments of each theory, this section only outlines the basic debates, which have opened the opportunity for further integration and development. These debates include the dichotomy between economic and social motivations, the debate between rationality and irrationality, the controversy between individual and society, and the separation between state and process. As the micro neoclassical economic theory has been involved all these debates, so it will be introduced as a typical individualistic, economic, rational and static approach, against which other approaches were compared (Massey, et al. 1993).

In micro neoclassical economic theory, individuals are the agents who make the decision to migrate. Furthermore, individuals are rational actors who calculate the costs and benefits involved in the migration over time horizon and then make the decision to migrate. The costs and benefits considered are largely economic costs and benefits. Though the potential migrants will take into account the psychological costs, these psychological issues are not motivations, but barriers. Messay et al. (1993: 434-35) illustrate these costs and benefits by this formula:

$$ER(0) = \int_0^N [P_1(t)P_2(t)Y_d(t) - P_3(t)Y_0(t)] E^{-rt} dt - C(0)$$

Where $ER(0)$ is the expected net return to migration calculate before migration; $P_1(t)$ is the probability of avoiding deportation from the destination area; $P_2(t)$ is the probability

²⁸ As this chapter's topic is Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*, so I just focus on the migration theories related to this topic. Additional researches are needed for the other two problems.

of employment at the destination; $Y_d(t)$ is the earnings if employed at the destination place; $P_3(t)$ is the probability of employment in the origin area; $Y_0(t)$ is earnings if employed in the community of origin; r is the discount factor; and $C(o)$ is the sum total of the costs of movement including psychological costs.

As to the debate economic motivations and social motivations, while the micro neoclassical economic theory emphasizes such economic factors as employment possibility and wage differences, the theory of migration culture stresses the cultural meaning of migration attached by the migrants themselves; for example, the Mexican young people might treat migration as a transition to manhood (Kandel, et al. 2002; Gil and Gang 2010). This indicates that migration might have different meanings for migrants themselves, which motivate their migration.

As to the debate between rationality and irrationality, while micro neoclassical emphasizes migrants' rational calculation of costs and benefits, some theories have pointed out the irrational factors involved in their consideration; for example, the behavioral approach points to the irrationality of individual decision-making (Samers 2010). However, it is important to distinguish irrational decision and irrational values. While irrational decision refers to the factual relationship involved in decision making, irrational values are the motivations underlying rational or irrational decision-making process. It is the latter which is the concern of this chapter.

As to the dichotomy between individuals and the society, the new economics of migration and the theory of relative deprivation contrast the micro neoclassical economic theory by focusing on the intra- and inter-household relationships. While the new economics of migration also emphasizes the economic actions of diversifying income

resources and minimizing risks, it argues that households or families (and other larger units) should be the unit of analysis. Relative deprivation theory, which is considered as an application of the new economics, argues that migration could be used as a tool to improve income relative to other households and reduce the relative deprivation (Stark and Bloom 1985; Katz and Stark 1986; Lauby and Stark 1988; Samers 2010; Massey, et al. 1993; Stark and Yitzhaki 1988; Stark and Taylor 1991a; 1991b). The implication is that intra- and inter-household relationships will influence the motivation to migrate, as both could enter the migrants' horizon.

Finally, there is a debate between state and process. Most migration theories only focus on the moment of making the decision to migrate and thus ignore the subsequent processes after they have migrated. For example, though the micro neoclassical economic theory talked about the decision-making process, it failed to trace the changes with respect to information, motivations and values. Social adaptation theory is to some extent complementary to this neglect, because social adaptation theory focuses on the subsequent processes after migration (Jiang 2003; Liang and Wang 2010). This is important for Chinese migrant workers, because they usually don't completely and permanently migrate to cities soon after they decide to migrate. Rather they work and live as migrant workers for a certain period of time or return to their origin areas (Lü 2013; Li 2008).

To conclude, in order to understand migrants' motivations to migrate, the factors involved in the theoretical debates should be empirically examined, including the interaction between rational calculation and irrational values in decision-making process, the interrelationship between economic motivations and social motivations, the

influences of social relationships on individual motivations, and the changes in migration motivations during migration processes. Having these questions in mind, this research examines Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*. As the fourth part will show, Chinese migrant workers' economic and social motivations are stratified in different manners, because of the influence of their family and community lives. Furthermore, Chinese migrant workers' motivations have been changing in their migration processes.

The stratification of migrant workers' motivations to Dagong

In his voluntaristic theory of action, Parsons (1937) distinguished goals from norms, values and ideals. If actors' choices of means are oriented to goals, both goals and means are framed by norms, values and ideals. So, means-selection, goals, norms, values and ideals are stratified in a unit action. Similarly, Anthony Giddens (1984) also identified three levels of agent: reflexive monitoring, rationalization and motivation of action. In my interviews, I continually asked informants about their reasons/motivations to *dagong*. I found that migrant workers' motivations or intentions are stratified. In the stratification structure, both economic and social motivations are involved. Furthermore, there are different numbers of layers in their stratification structures.

Direct ends

“To make money,” “to learn skills” and “to advance personal development” are the three main direct motivations. Most middle-age and old migrant workers simply told me, “to make money.” For example, Hua is a cleaner working for a real estate company in Jinan. She was from a nearby village. Her son was in middle high school. Living in the suburban area, her family only had a small plot of farm land. When I asked her why she worked there, she just told me:

“I want to make some money for my family (...) I have three parents (her mother, mother-in-law and father-in law) to take care of. My son goes to a middle high school in the city. So, his schooling is expensive (...) My family doesn't have much land to work on. After all, I cannot be idle if I don't have agricultural work to do.”

However, young, single migrant workers often told me that they want to learn skills and develop personality. For example, a 20-year old migrant worker Di was single and worked as security staff for an estate company. He told me:

“I cannot communicate with others very well. I easily lose my temper. I cannot stay patient when I worked in a factory. I remembered that I fought with another young man because I thought he offended me. But, now I think it was unnecessary to fight with him then. I think I should control myself and talk with him calmly. So, I think I have not adapted to the social life outside home. Now, I work here to exercise myself and develop my social skills. I try to patiently finish my task and communicate with others, especially my co-workers from different cities. I think I will become mature through working here.”

Di, a novice migrant worker, had very simple stratification structure of ends. He just wanted to train self-discipline. This is also related to his simple life experiences. He just worked in a factory in the local city. He only experienced his inability to communicate with his coworkers, which made him committed to developing his social skills.

Various Stratifications

When I continued to ask why they want to make money, learn skills, and develop personality, migrant workers presented their more indirect ends, including to seek better job, make more money, meet family financial needs, build houses in rural villages, and buy apartments in cities. Moreover, migrant workers have different numbers of layers in, and different types of motivations, in their stratifications of ends. Even new and single migrant workers might have different ends. The following are two novice migrant

workers: Shun and Hu. Their motivations indicate different kinds and stratifications of ends.

Shun, 19 years old, was single and worked as migrant workers just for two years after graduated from a primary middle school²⁹. He worked for a privatized SOE—a lathe factory. When I asked him why he wanted to learn electric welding skill, his reason is much simple:

“At first I didn’t know what to do. I played for several months at home. I want to work, because nobody can live without work. I don’t know much about anything. Now, I work as electric welder because my cousin introduced me to the company.”

Then I asked him “What do you plan to do in the future?” Again his answer is very simple:

“I don’t know what to do next. Just wait and see.”

Hu was two year older and work two year longer than Shun. Different from Shun, Hu had to consider his marriage at that time. When he just started work, he didn’t give his parents the money he earned; rather, he had dinner with coworkers and friends, and bought phones and clothes. However, he gave money to his parents when I interviewed him. When I asked him why he did that, he said:

“Now my parents want to build a new house in my home village. The house is indispensable for young adults to get married...I have to learn skills and make more money. Then, my parents will not be so pressured...I am old enough to help my parents.”

The two cases indicate new migrant workers’ motivations are stratified in different matters. Again, the difference is related to their life courses and experiences.

²⁹ In contemporary educational system of China, after kindergarten, children have the right and obligation to finish nine-year obligatory education, including six-year elementary school and three-year primary middle school. Then, they can go to higher middle schools or lower-level occupational schools. Those attending higher middle school can go to colleges or higher-level occupational schools.

While Shun just worked to learn skills and didn't have any clear plan about his future, Hu had considered his marriage because he was two years older than Xiaoshun and had more life experiences.

Finally, two ultimate motivations emerged as we kept talking about their sakes: to settle down in cities and to meet family needs. This seems to be consistent with permanent migration paradigm and household strategy paradigm. However, as the following sections will reveal, neither of the two paradigms could explain all migrant workers' motivations, and the two ultimate motivations are much more complex than assumed by the two paradigms.

Permanent migration could be an end or a means

The fundamental assumption of the permanent migration paradigm is that all migrant workers have a strong desire to settle down in cities because of the structural disparity between rural and urban areas with respect to living standards and job opportunities. However, not all migrant workers want to settle down in cities, as the last chapter has shown. Furthermore, even for those with the desire to permanently migrate, the nature of the desire might be different. The last chapter identified four levels of the desire to permanently migrate. Besides this, permanent migration could be an end or a means.

Permanent Migration as a Means

For some migrant workers who want to permanently migrate, to settle down in cities is not the ultimate end. Rather, it is more likely to be treated as a strategy to meet family needs. These migrant workers are usually middle-age, married and short-distance migrant workers, whose family burdens are not heavy and working and living conditions

in cities are not bad, because they have seen the possibility to settle down in cities. The major reason to settle down is to provide better education for their children.

For example, Mi³⁰ was a female migrant worker in a casting factory in her local city—Liaocheng. She was 30 years old. Her husband was a cook in the same city. Her child was 10 years old and attended an elementary school in the city. Her family is registered in rural villages about 20 kilometers away from the city. She wanted to settle down in cities for her child's education.

“All citizens are required to finish nine-year obligatory education, including six-year elementary education and three-year primary middle-school education (...) All children have some schools to go for the nine-year education. However, if the children wanted to go to high middle school and colleges, they have to take entrance exam. So, those in better schools are more likely to attend (...) In Liaocheng, the Hukou system has no influence on children's first six-year elementary education now. However, for another three-year obligatory primary middle-school education, children have to take an entrance exam for better schools. If the children were not qualified for better schools, they would go to the schools at the place of Hukou registration. For our child, the school in my hometown [where her family was registered] is very bad (...) if we don't have urban Hukou, my children might go to the bad school and are less likely to attend better high middle-schools and colleges (...) We will work hard and earn more money. If we can buy house in the city, we could move our Hukou registration to the city. Then, our child will have better schools to go.”

Because of her concern with her child's education, Mi had more information about children's education and the influence of the Hukou system. This was also the reason she worked hard to settle in cities. She wanted to have her child receive better education. She also knew how to achieve this goal—to settle in cities. Furthermore, she also saw the future of permanently migrating to cities.

³⁰ It turned out that she graduated from the same primary middle-school at the same year with me. However, she is not my original informant. I contacted a manager in the factory she was working for. That manager, who is also a migrant worker, introduced her to me. Getting her permission, I release my relationship with her here.

Li (in Chapter 2), who worked in Jinan, also treated permanent migration as a means to improve her child's education in the future. Li and Mi have some things in common with respect to their desire to permanently migrate. First, both treat permanent migration as a means to improve their children's education. Second, their ultimate ends (the children's education) can only be achieved in cities. Third, they developed such ends because they have seen the possibility to settle in cities.

Permanent Migration as an end

For young and single migrant workers in the first years of *dagong* life, permanent migration could be an ultimate end. When young and single migrant workers come to the city and experience the better working and living conditions, they feel that cities are better places than their rural villages. They want to live in the cities permanently and enjoy the higher living standards there. On the other hand, most of them have few family burdens, because their parents are healthy and can work, and they don't have wife and children to look after.

For example, Ping was a single girl at the age of 20. She was working for a restaurant in Beijing. She just worked there for half a year. She was from Sha'an Xi Province. When I asked her how she felt about the urban life, she said her life in the city was better than that in her home village:

“The urban life is totally different from the rural life. I have known lots of new things. I can eat foods that I have never eaten in rural village. I can buy clothes that I have never worn in rural village. I can visit museums, shopping malls, and scenic resorts at my convenience. The biggest difference is that the life here is more standard—if you work, you can get money.”

That is why she had a desire to settle in cities, which means, for her, having her own house and family in the city. I asked her “Do you want to settle down in cities? Why?” She said,

“Yes. As I said, the life is better here than in my hometown. I think I have no future if I went back to the rural village.”

Ping didn't have many experiences in cities. Though she wanted to “have her family in cities,” her family was not her burden. She just wanted her family to have a better life in cities. She wanted to settle in cities mainly because of the better life conditions in cities. So, to settle in cities is her ultimate end.

Jing and Lin, who have been talked about in the last chapter, also treated settling in cities as their ultimate ends. All of them have felt the disparity in the quality of life between rural and urban areas, which made them admire urban residents and their lifestyle. Moreover, all of them didn't have many family responsibilities, which make them easy to have the desire to settle in cities.

To conclude, different from the assumption of permanent migration paradigm, to settle in cities is not the motivation of all Chinese migrant workers. Even for those migrant workers with the desire to settle in cities, the desire might be rational choices or emotional wishes and might be a means or an end.

Family Life is the ultimate motivation for most migrant workers

In the last section, we find that even migrant workers with a desire to permanently migrate might treat *dagong* as a means to achieve family needs. For the migrant workers without this desire, family life is the primary motivation to *dagong*. However, different from household strategy paradigm which only focuses on economic life, family life is much more complicated than this. The family needs could be divided into the needs of a

family as a whole, and the needs of an individual as a family member. In the latter case, the family relationship is a social background for individuals and their attitudes. Different from household strategy paradigm which treats household as the unit of analysis, the concept “family life” means household as a whole, intra-household and inter-household relationships, all of which are related to the individual members’ motivations.

The Needs of family as a whole

The needs of family as a whole are very important for those middle-age migrant workers who have heavy family responsibilities, including supporting children’s secondary education and higher education, taking care of their elder parents, and building or buying houses for their children’s marriage, and so on. They don’t have the desire to settle down in cities, because they think it impossible to save money.

The case of Tai represents migration as a strategy to meet the needs of the family as a whole. Tai was forty years old and working in Beijing as a construction worker. He had two parents, one of whom was sick and needed money to see the doctor. He had two children. The elder daughter had worked as a migrant worker in the local city for three years, and the younger son was in the third grade of the best elementary school in his local town. He told me:

“I have to leave home and work in Beijing, because I need money. Two years ago, my father was severely sick. I borrowed money from friends and relatives to treat my father. Now I have to work harder to return the money I have borrowed (...) Though my daughter is working now, I cannot ask her for money (...) My son’s education is not cheap, because I send him to the best school in my local town. Even for the transportation, I have to spend more than 200 Yuan (...) I want him to go to college someday. Then he could live a better life.”

Tai was the mainstay of his family. He also had the whole family in his mind. The above quote indicates that he was thinking about his family as whole and wanted to earn

money to meet the needs of his family as a whole. Because middle-age and male migrant workers are main bread-earners for their family and they also accept this family responsibility, they have their family in their mind and treat *dagong* as a means to meet the needs of family as a whole.

The Needs of Individuals as Family Members

There are some migrant workers who treat *dagong* as a strategy to meet their personal needs derived their roles as family members. Different from those migrant workers with the needs of the family as a whole, these migrant workers are very young or very old or female, which make it not too urgent or necessary for them to take up family responsibilities. They go to *dagong* in order to earn a higher status and more respects within their families. Here is a case of an elder migrant worker, Laoshao, who was sixty-six years old. He was working in a construction site in Jinan, when I interviewed him. His son and daughter-in-law were working in a local factory of Shaoxing, thousands of miles away from Jinan. He already had a grandson. Here are some parts of our interesting conversations:

Fayin: “Does your family still need your money? Does your grandson’s education need your support?”

Laoshao: “No. Both of my son and daughter-in-law are working in local factories (...) They can make enough money to support my family.”

Fayin: “Then why do you leave your home so far and work in an unfamiliar city?”

Laoshao: “Just for fun. I want to experience new places.”

Fayin: “Have you been tourist resorts of this city, such as Daming Lack, Qianfo Mountain and Baotu Spring?” [Daming Lack, Qianfo Mountain and Baotu Spring are most famous tourist resorts in the city where he was working]

Laoshao: “No. I am not familiar with this city. I mainly stay in the construction site and safeguard the construction materials.” [I think “for fun” might be a reason to *dagong*. But “for fun” doesn’t need to leave home so far.]

Fayin: “What do you mean by “for fun”, if you didn’t go the scenic resorts here and just stay in the construction site?”

Then, he kept silent. I didn’t know how to continue the conversation. I was sure that his family didn’t need his money. It seemed that he didn’t have fun in Jinan. However, I really wanted to know why he left home so far. I was thinking: is it fun to leave home because he can avoid something, or he can earn something? So, I asked him “What would you do, if you didn’t come here?”

Laoshao: “I would work in other places.” [Anyway, he would work!]

Fayin: “How would your family members (your son and daughter-in-law) treat you, if you didn’t work? Do you think they will treat you the same?”

Laoshao: “Absolutely not. Probably they would think me as lazy and a family burden.”

Fayin: “You mean you can earn respect from other family members, right?”

Laoshao: “Absolutely right! I leave home and work faraway to make money, which can help me improve my status in my family, right?” [He gave me a thumb-up. Then I said “sorry” for making him embarrassed.]

Laoshao was old and other family members could support him. It seems that he didn’t need to work outside home any more. But, he worked far from his home in order to earn respect from other family members. Laoshao is not alone. If some migrant workers seem not have reasons to *dagong*, they leave home and work in cities in order to meet their personal needs derived from their role of family members.

Simultaneously for family needs and for personal needs

Middle-age and Female migrant workers also tend to treat *dagong* as a strategy both to meet family needs and to earn family respect. Ju is a female migrant worker in a construction site. She has a son in middle higher school. She told me she just started to work outside the village about two or three years ago, because in his home village few

females went to work in cities and only in recent years more and more females went outside the village. When I asked her why she worked outside agricultural sector, she treated herself as a family member to meet the needs of her family as a whole.

“Now more and more females go out to earn money. We women have such opportunities to earn a better life for our family. Why not do this? (...) The expenditure of my family has increased in the past few years, because every family can make more money now. My son’s tuition has become high. The gift exchanges in rural communities and between relatives have become expensive...”

She said she also had to take care of her family’s farm land, so that her husband could work longer outside. So, only when she didn’t have much agricultural work to do, she went to work as a migrant worker. So, I also asked her “if you have to work in land and don’t have much time to work outside, you can have a rest. After all, your husband can earn enough money for your family. Why don’t you have a rest at home?” She said:

“I also want to contribute more to my family. When other women in the village go outside to work, if I have a rest, my husband and others in the village would consider me as a lazy lady (...) I will also feel ashamed. My parents-in-law will not think me as a good daughter-in-law because I don’t assume more responsibilities to relax their son. My son will also not like me because I am lazy (...)”

The case of Ju indicates that some migrant workers treat *dagong* as both a means to meet the needs of the family as a whole and the needs of individuals as family members. The difference is that male and middle-age migrant workers emphasize their role of bread-earner for the family as a whole, while female and middle-age migrant workers also consider their own honor and prestige. However, for those migrant workers (for example, old migrant workers and young migrant workers) who can be dependents and don’t need to work, *dagong* is more considered as a way to earn personal respect from other family members.

Changes of migrant workers' motivations

Chinese migrant workers also change their motivations over their migration processes, especially when they are unable to settle down in cities immediately after they started working in cities. Again this section focuses on the changes of the two ultimate motivations. In interviews, two kinds of processes were found: radicalization and conservatization. The radicalization refers to the process in which migrant workers' desire to permanently migrate increases. Radicalization happens mainly at two points. The first point is when they just start working in cities and experience the disparity of living standards between rural and urban areas. The second point is when they get better working and living conditions in the cities, which might have increased their ambitions. The conservatization process refers to the process in which migrant workers reduce the desire to settle down in cities and focus more and more on their other needs, especially family needs. After radicalization at the two points mentioned above, marriage and children's education might lead to a conservatization process. Because of migrant workers' concern with their family lives and the limitations of their working and living conditions, the general trend is the conservatization process. Here are two cases, which respectively represent the two points of radicalization and the subsequent conservatization. Actually, most of my interviewees had experienced some changes in their motivations to *dagong*. The following two cases represent the two points of time when radicalization and conservatization happened. In term of the desire to settle in cities, most of them used to experience gaining and losing the desire.

The case of Qian indicates that marriage and childbearing might reduce young migrant workers' desire to permanently migrate, which is derived from a feeling of

urban-rural disparity. Qian was 25 years old. He was working for a construction company in Beijing. Before he came to Beijing, he worked for a shipbuilding factory in Jiangsu Province. However, he gave up better working conditions and social insurances³¹ in the shipbuilding factory, in order to make more money in Beijing. When he started work in the shipbuilding factory, he was just 15 years old and he worked there for six years. He felt the better life conditions in the city than those in his home village:

“Urban life is much better than rural life. I made money by myself. My parents almost didn’t ask for my money. So I could buy anything I wanted. But in rural villages, I would have nothing to do and have no money.”

He also developed a desire to settle in cities when he (1) saw the higher quality of life in cities than in the countryside and (2) felt the possibility to do so:

“At first, I just wanted to learn skills and make money. Then I felt I made lots of money, because my wage was much higher than my parents and friends. After I enjoyed enough cell-phones, video games, and good foods, I did start thinking about my future. I felt it was possible for me to buy an apartment in the city. Then I began saving money to be able to stay in that city.”

However, his wage became lower and lower, which made him give up that job because he needs more money. When I asked him why he needed more money, he said,

“I got married two years before I quit. A year later, I had a baby. My wife was not able to work. I had to make more money to support my family.”

Qian became radical or developed a desire to settle in cities after he worked in the shipbuilding factory. When he just started working in the factory, he experienced a better life condition. This made him want to enjoy the urban life for a long time through settling in cities. However, he became conservative or reduced the desire to settle in cities, after

³¹ He said that he had all insurances. But when I specifically asked him what kind of insurances he received there, he could not list those insurances. So, I am not sure whether he had received all insurances. But this cannot change the fact that he quitted his job in the factory.

he got married and had a child. These family events drove him to make more money for his family.

The case of Laoge indicates that children's education could lower the well-off migrant workers' desire to permanently settle down, which is caused by promotions, better working and living conditions. Laoge was 42 years old. He was a manager in a sand casting factory. He got married early—at the age of 20. He had two children: a daughter of 19 years old and a son of 15 years old. His daughter was a college student, studying preschool education. His son just passed the entrance exam to higher middle-school in the local city. He nearly gave up buying houses and thus permanently migrating when I interviewed him. After becoming a manager in the factory, he developed the desire to settle in the city:

“At first, my wage was low. Then I didn't have any thought of buying a house in cities, because I felt that I could only temporarily work here... The boss I previously worked for went bankrupt. (...) Then I became a farmer again. So I thought my job was not stable and I was a farmer. However, it seems that this factory develops very well and my wage has been rising in the past few years. So, I wanted to permanently migrate to the city a couple of years ago.” (...)

He also thought to buy a house (or an apartment) was the main element of permanent migration. However, when I asked him when he were going to buy a house, he said,

“But right now I have given up the idea of buying a house in the city. I sent my son to the best primary middle-school. It was a private and expensive school. So I don't need his Hukou registration to attend schools in the city. Fortunately, he passed the entrance exam to higher middle-school (...) My daughter is attending a college now. At first she went to an occupational school. Then the tuition was low... But now she goes to a college and the tuition is much higher (...) In the coming years, I have to spend my money on the two children's education. I cannot afford an expensive house in the city.”

Laoge was an experienced migrant worker. He had got promotion in the factory. As his working and living conditions improved, he also saw the possibility to live in cities. That is, he became radicalized. Again family needs—his children’s education—made him give up the luxury desire and became conservative with respect to his expectation.

Conclusion

The last chapter and this chapter have focused on Chinese migrant workers’ motivations to *dagong*. The last chapter shows that not all migrant workers have a strong desire to permanently migrate to cities. This chapter presents a stratification model of migration motivations, in which permanent migration and family life serve as two dominant ultimate motivations. Furthermore, both chapters imply or indicate that Chinese migrant workers might change their motivations during the migration process. According to the place of the motivation of permanent migration, two processes were described as radicalization and conservatization. These analyses have both substantial and theoretical significance.

Chinese Migrant Workers’ Stratified Motivations to *dagong*

In my interviews, I continually asked informants’ reasons/motivations to *dagong*. I found that migrant workers’ motivations or intentions are stratified. In the stratification structures, migrant workers have their conscious and direct goals to *dagong*. However, these direct goals are means to achieve indirect purposes. At the lower level of the stratification structure are direct and conscious intentions. When I ask “why do you come here to *dagong*?” informants’ answers are really simple. “To work,” “to make money,” “to learn work skills” and “to learn social skills” are main direct motivations. All of these

direct ends can be considered as economic motivations, because all of them indicate that migrant workers tend to treat dagong as work or investment. They work to earn money or they invest their time to learn skills. When I continued to ask why they came to work in cities, make money, learn skills, and develop personality, migrant workers presented their indirect ends, including “to seek better jobs,” “to make more money,” “to meet family financial needs,” “to build houses in rural village,” “to enjoy urban lifestyle,” and “to buy an apartment in the city.” These indirect motivations can be economic or social. But, it is in these indirect motivations that social motivations become more apparent than in direct motivations. There are two aspects of the social nature. First, Chinese migrant workers don’t just calculate economic costs and benefits involved in migration. They also consider social costs and benefits, including family needs, urban experiences, and social respect. Second, they not only consider themselves as individuals, but also as members of social groups, especially of their families.

The fundamental assumption of the permanent migration paradigm is that all migrant workers have a strong desire to settle down in cities because of the structural disparity between rural and urban areas with respect to living standards and job opportunities. However, it was found that not all migrant workers go to work in cities for permanently settling in cities. Furthermore, putting permanent-migration motivation in the stratification structure indicates that permanent migration can be a means or an end. There are indeed some migrant workers who consider dagong as a household strategy. Household strategy theory argues that migration is motivated by the desire to improve household income and reduce economic risks by diversifying income resources. So, this theory stresses the economic nature of migration as household strategy. However, putting

these economic needs in stratification structures, it was found that these they are shaped by larger social background. For those migrant workers treating dagong as a household strategy, there are two sources of household needs. The first is household consumption needs. These needs are very important for those middle-age migrant workers who have heavy family responsibilities, including supporting children's secondary education and higher education, taking care of elder parents, and building or buying houses for their children's marriage, and so on. The second type of household needs is to maintain household status in rural communities and networks. They have a kind of competitive relationship with other households in terms of family life quality. So, they go to work in cities in order to improve family life standard, which is a means to earn a high household status in their communities and networks at home. These migrant workers usually have worked for a long time in cities.

So far, we have found that Chinese migrant workers' motivations to dagong are stratified, composed of direct economic motivations and indirect social motivations. In these stratification structures, there are two geographical orientations: urban-oriented and rural-oriented. For each of the two geographical orientations, their motivations might be individualistic or societal.

Based on these classifications, four types of Chinese migrant workers' general orientation to dagong can be identified: personal honor at home, personal future in cities, household need at home, and family development in cities. Table 9 presents the relationship between the four ultimate orientations. They are categorized along two dimensions: individualistic versus societal motivations, and rural- versus urban-oriented motivations. Personal honor at home is an individualistic motivation rooted in rural

villages, while personal future is an individualistic motivation toward cities. Household need is a societal motivation at home, while family development is a societal motivation toward cities.

Implications for integrating migration theories

There are many calls for integration in migration theories. Massey et al.'s (1993) research has contributed to this integration in three aspects. Firstly, they pointed out that there are many migration theories, careful examination and critics of which could be groundwork for integrating these theories. Secondly, the contemporary migratory processes need an integration of the existing theories to describe and explain. Thirdly, these theories are possible to be integrated, as they focus on different levels of aggregations and their explanations are not necessarily exclusive (also see Samers 2010). Boyle et al. (1998) pointed out that there indeed many attempts to integrate theories. If Boyle et al.'s approach represents a theoretical integration of migration theories, King et al.'s (2008) approach is to achieve an empirical integration of migration theories of internal migration and international migration, when they tried to figure out the relationship between internal and international migration.

This chapter proposed a problem-oriented approach to integrate migration theories by distinguishing three key problems involved in some or all migration theories and to solve those problems by drawing upon relevant theories. Three problems were singled out: structural possibility, operational resources, and decision-making process. This chapter examined the theories related to migrants' motivations to migrate and then proposed an integrated model of migration motivation—the stratification model of migration motivation—by solving the four theoretical debates of these migration theories.

When this model was used to trace the changes of Chinese migrant workers' motivations, a dynamic model of migration motivations was found, in which the layer of the stratification structure and the nature of its elements are changed with the working and living conditions in migration process. If this approach is reasonable, further research is needed to integrated migration theories around other common problems.

Table 9 Four Ultimate Motivations of Chinese Migrant Workers to dagong (N=36)

Social Orientation	Geographic Orientation	
	Rural	Urban
Personal	Personal Honor at Home (12*, 37.5%**)	Personal Future in Cities (5, 15.6%)
Social	Household Needs at Home (10, 31.2%)	Family Development in Cities (5, 15.6%)

*This number is the number of cases within the category in the data;

**This number is the proportion of all cases within the category in the data. All these numbers are to describe the data, rather than represent the population of Chinese migrant workers.

Chapter Seven:

Chinese Migrant Workers' Attitudes to the Dagong Lifestyle

This chapter is to examine Chinese migrant workers' attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle—whether they accept this lifestyle. This question is based on the assumption that motivations and attitudes are two different questions, because Chinese migrant workers have their own motivations to *dagong* doesn't mean that they accept the *dagong* lifestyle, though there are some relationships between motivations and attitudes, for example, the desire to permanently migrate might make them resist against their unbalanced relationship with employers (Lü 2013; Lee 2007). This question is important because attitudes will directly influence their behaviors (Bohner and Wänke 2002). This question is important also because to answer this question is necessary to understand the emergence, existence and future of Chinese migrant workers in general.

After reviewing previous studies about Chinese migrant workers' attitudes, this chapter will examine their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle, which has been defined as “leaving home in rural villages, going into cities, and working for others, in order to make money.” It will also examine the role of comparing *dagong* and its alternatives in their attitude formation, and the influences of their attitudes on their motivations and attitudes.

Chinese Migrant Workers' Attitudes in Previous Studies

Because of its importance, previous studies have explicitly or implicitly taken into account Chinese migrant workers' attitudes. In previous studies on Chinese migrant workers' attitudes, conservative and radical viewpoints could be distinguished in previous studies.

According to conservative viewpoints, Chinese migrant workers tend to hold a positive attitude to their life conditions. At the macro-level, Chinese migrant workers' attitudes were usually examined in the context of urbanization. In Chinese traditional culture, rural residents have a deep connection with farm land, which has led to a traditional way of life characterized by gerontocracy, gender difference, the differential mode of association, the rule of ritual, and no litigation, and so on (Fei 1992). In the modernization process, Chinese peasants' attitudes to farm land and agricultural production have attracted attention of scholars in different areas. It was argued that the rural residents prefer non-farm work to agriculture, because of the income differentiation between agricultural production and non-agricultural jobs (Lü 2013; Zinda 2006). At the micro-level, Li and Li (2007) argued that migrant workers' lower future expectations, conceptions of their human capital, and comparisons with farmers had led to their positive attitudes to social security, social justice, and life conditions in cities.

By contrast, radical scholars argued that Chinese migrant workers held a negative attitude to their life conditions. At the macro-level, Chinese migrant workers have gradually recognized their interests and rights and become dissatisfied with their life conditions, which have posed a challenge and will caused a severe challenge to the present labor regime (Lee 2007; Hannan 2008; Chan 2008). At the micro-level, after Chinese migrant workers experienced the lifestyle in cities, they would compare their own life conditions and those of their urban compatriots, which would in turn strengthen their sense of unfairness (Lü 2013).

Despite their contradictory conclusions, the two perspectives have pointed out some common and important questions about Chinese migrant workers' attitudes. In

order to solve the contradictions, their approaches to these questions have to be critically analyzed.

First, what is the attitude object for Chinese migrant workers? Previous studies have referred to their attitudes to agricultural production (Zinda 2006; Lü 2013), family life and rural community (Myerson, et al. 2010; Fan 2008), working and living conditions in cities (Chan and Qiu 2011; Jiang, et al. 2009), social justices and security (Li and Li 2007; Lü 2013), state policies and government corruptions (Lee 2007). However, some of these objects are just parts of their *dagong* lifestyle (e.g., working and living conditions in cities, family life and rural community), while attitudes to other objects (e.g., state policies and government corruptions) are influenced by the attitude to the *dagong* lifestyle. For example, Chinese migrant workers' social attitudes depend on their attitude to their immediate working and living conditions. So, this study focuses on Chinese migrant workers' attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle. This approach has two advantages: (1) this can overcome the contradictory conclusions derived from examining only parts of the *dagong* lifestyle, and (2) this can help explain Chinese migrant workers' social attitudes in general, because their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle have shaped their social attitudes.

Second, there is an intimate relationship between motivations/expectations and attitudes. Previous studies especially emphasize that role of comparing expectations with outcomes in attitude formations. This logic could be found in both conservative and radical thoughts. In conservative thought, Chinese migrant workers' lower future expectations are thought as a cause of their positive attitudes. According to radical viewpoints, Chinese migrant workers' recognition and expectations of interests and rights

have resulted in their dissatisfactions. There are two problems with this logic. First, besides expectations, perceptions and calculations also influence attitudes. Second, if attitudes are more affected by other factors than motivations, they might also change expectations or motivations.

Third, social comparison is considered as the main factor which influences motivations and attitudes. Holding a conservative stance, Li and Li (2007) argued that Chinese migrant workers' frame of reference was those who still live and work in rural villages and comparing their own life conditions with farmers' had shaped their positive social attitudes. For radical scholars, Chinese migrant workers tend to compare their life conditions with urban citizens, which might make them depressed and angry (Lü 2013; Loyalk 2013). However, social comparisons might also help develop perceptions besides expectations, both of which could influence attitude formations.

To conclude, this chapter is to examine Chinese migrant workers' attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle from their own perspectives, and to investigate the relationship between their attitudes, motivations and perceptions.

Motivations and attitudes

As shown above, Chinese migrant workers' motivations have been thought as a determinant factor in explaining their attitudes. In chapter two and three, Chinese migrant workers' motivations have been investigated, which can serve as a background for examining the relationship between their motivations and their attitudes. It was found that Chinese migrant workers' motivations are stratified, with permanent migration and family needs as two ultimate goals. However, both ultimate goals are more complex than permanent migration paradigm and household strategy paradigm have assumed.

Furthermore, in the stratification structure of motivations, the relative places of the two ultimate goals are different and changing during their migration processes and through their life courses.

Radical Migrant Workers' Attitudes

How are the attitudes of migrant workers who have strong desires to settle in cities? It is found that whether migrant workers have strong desires to settle in cities or not, they may accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Here, I focus on a participant, who had a strong desire to settle in cities but accepted the *dagong* lifestyle. Yang was a maintenance staff in an apartment in Beijing. He had worked there for three years when I interviewed him. He came from Henan province. He graduated from a technology school. He was twenty-five years old and just got married. When talked about his plan in the future, he said:

Fayin: "Why not work in agricultural sector?"

Yang: "In Henan Province, we don't have much farm land. So we cannot make much money. It is impossible to live a better life through agricultural production (...) You can only have a better life by living in cities [not just by going to and working in cities]."

Fayin: "Do you want to live in the city in the future?"

Yang: "Yes, I want to earn a better life for my wife. If I have any children, I also want them to have a better life (...) This is also the reason why I didn't get married before twenty-four years old. But, you know, in the countryside, we usually get engaged before twenty years old and marry soon."

Because of this motivation or expectation, he was not satisfied with his present life conditions as a migrant worker. When we talked about his working and living conditions, he said:

"My living condition here is miserable. This building has fifteen stories. We three maintenance workers live in a room in the attic. We don't have any extra space to accommodate our families (...) We don't earn enough money to rent rooms outside. So our bedroom is also our office (...) I got married in the last year, but I have to separate with my wife because I don't want to lose this job."

An interesting thing is that although he was not satisfied with his present life condition, he had to accept the *dagong* lifestyle as a means to meet his needs. So, when I asked “As your living conditions are not good and you don’t want to live like this, why do you still stay here?” He said,

“I don’t have other choices! I know there is no future to work on farm land. I have to work in cities. I don’t want to live in a backward rural village for my lifetime (...) I don’t want to work on farm land either. Fortunately, one of my fathers’ friends introduced me to the boss I am working for. So, I could experience the lifestyle in the biggest city of China. (...) I want to be like my boss. He is from the same county with me. He was also a migrant worker several years ago. He is smart. He also worked hard. He was promoted as a manager after he became familiar with the businesses. I admire him (...) However, I think it is normal to “eat bitterness” (endure hardship) before you can be better than the majority. So, for the near future, I have to work hard, learn skills, develop social networks, and perfect myself.”

This case typifies all the elements involved in attitude formation for those migrant workers with desires to settle in cities. First, their attitudes to present working and living conditions are different from their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle as a means to an end. That they are not satisfied with the living conditions doesn’t mean that they reject the *dagong* lifestyle. Furthermore, they are not satisfied with their living conditions in both rural villages and cities. Secondly, the *dagong* lifestyle is considered as a means to achieve their goals. As they “have no other choices,” they have to accept this means. Finally, social comparisons with other successfully urbanized citizens strengthen their motivations and attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle.

Conservative Migrant Workers' Attitudes

How about those migrant workers without strong desires to settle in cities and treating family needs as their ultimate motivations? Their attitudes to their living conditions are also different from their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle as a means. While they are not satisfied with the living conditions in cities, they tend to think *dagong* as a reasonable means to meet their needs, as they also “have no other choices.” The difference with radical migrant workers is that they tend to be satisfied with their life conditions in rural villages, because they are more concerned with their households in rural areas.

For example, Tai was forty years old and working in Beijing as a construction worker. He had two parents, one of whom was sick and needed money to see the doctor. He had two children. The elder daughter had worked as a migrant worker in the local city for three years, and the younger son was in the third grade of the best elementary school in his local town. As the last chapter introduced, he worked in Beijing because he wanted to pay off the money he borrowed for his father's medical treatment and to support his son's education. He lived in a small, informally built house, which was located in a remote village from Beijing center. I visited that village with him and did a second interview with him there³². When we talked about his working and living conditions in Beijing he expressed both a sense of satisfaction and a sense of pride.

“Every morning I have to get up very early, because it takes much time for me to travel a long distance to the Beijing center and work there (...) There are a large number of migrant workers (those who come here to *dagong*) living in this village. So, sometimes all the buses are extremely crowded. Sometimes, we have to wait for a long time during cold winter

³² In last chapter, I take him as an example to illustrate how family needs serve as ultimate goals. The data is from our first interview at his working site. After that I went to his living place and had dinner with him in his bedroom, because he only had a small room. During the dinner I did an informal interview with him.

and hot summer (...) Sometimes I feel exhausted. I am tired of repeating this life (...) But I have to do this (...) Now I can make more money here than at my hometown. I can support my family. I have almost paid off my debts. I think it is me who have work hard and earn a better life for my family (...) I still survive. I think I am doing right things. I have no guilt. I am proud of myself. My wife and children are also proud of me.”

Again, when I asked him, “As your living conditions are not good and you don’t want to live like this, why do you still stay here?” He also mentioned “no other choices,” and thought *dagong* was a reasonable way to meet his needs:

“I have to come here, because I need money. I have no other means. I cannot earn enough money through agricultural production.”

Apparently, this is a simple question for him, which doesn’t need much explanation. Though he didn’t have a strong desire to settle in cities, he also accepted *dagong* as a means to meet his family needs as those migrant workers with that desire.

To conclude, Chinese migrant workers’ motivations only influence their attitudes to present life conditions, because their motivations involve expectations about their future life conditions, which serve as standards to assess the present life conditions. Furthermore, whether they live as migrant workers for permanent migration or family needs, they tend to hold negative attitudes to the present life conditions. However, if motivations and life conditions are of same category, motivations and the *dagong* lifestyle are of different categories. While motivations point to goals such as family needs and permanent migration, the *dagong* lifestyle is the means. So, motivations can justify the lifestyle as a means, rather than reject it. This is also the reason why nearly all migrant workers to some extent have accepted the *dagong* lifestyle as a reasonable means to achieve their needs. So, motivations can only explain a part of their attitudes—the

attitude to life conditions. It needs more attention to their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle as a means.

Attitudes and calculations

All of the above analyses on Chinese migrant workers' motivations indicated that the *dagong* lifestyle is just a means to achieve their own ends, whether the ends is to make money, to meet family needs, or to settle in cities. So, from their own perspectives, their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle are also developed out their treatment of the lifestyle as a means. When I asked research participants "why do you *dagong*" to get information about their motivations or intentions, some of them just told me "I have no other choice." Here, we can find that they are thinking about *dagong* and its alternatives to meet their needs. More, generally, comparing *dagong* and its alternatives shapes their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle. This section argues that Chinese migrant workers' instrumental rationality has caused the different degrees of accepting the *dagong* lifestyle and the changes in their attitudes, by comparing this lifestyle with its alternatives against their expectations/ motivations.

High degrees of accepting the *dagong* lifestyle

New, young and single migrant workers often compare *dagong* with education. Whatever industry they are working for, all these migrant workers use their failure in education to justify their *dagong* lifestyle. They feel it is normal to *dagong* as a kind of social education if they have quit schooling. Gang is 18 years old and single. He graduated from primary middle-school at the age of 16. Since then, he worked in the construction sector. When I interviewed him, he was working for a bus-making factory. I

asked him “why do you come and work here?” in order to know his purpose or intention toward *dagong*. He said:

“I don’t go to school. I have to do something (...) Studying is boring. I don’t like studying (...)”

Even though his parents wanted him to go back to school and were able to support his education, he didn’t continue his education. He felt that he let his parents down, so he had to work to pacify his parents.

“They [his parents] also encouraged me to go to school. They also think education is very important. After all, I should have such basic skills as reading and calculating (...) My parents transport bricks for construction sites. They also do some construction jobs. They could earn enough money to support my education. [Later, he mentioned that his family had built a new house in the village, which cost more than 100, 000 Yuan.]”

“They (his parents) were very disappointed and angry at first. Finally, they didn’t force me to go back to school. Probably they knew that I will not do well at things in which I am not interested (...) My parents want me to continue my schooling. But I don’t like studying. I let them down. I made them very angry (...) I have to work, because it is me who didn’t want to go to school. I have to do something to spend my time, which should be spent at school... If I don’t work, I would be forced to go back to school.”

He told he didn’t like the job he was doing and he was not satisfied with his life conditions. Again when I asked him why he worked there even if he didn’t like it, he said, “I have no other choice (...)”

This study doesn’t focus on the education system in China. However, education matters for migrant workers’ calculations, especially for new and young migrant workers’. Regardless of the educational conditions, the failure in schooling is a reason for new migrant workers to leave home and have something to do.

Older migrant workers usually compare agricultural production with *dagong* in cities. Rural migrant workers have the possibility to work in agricultural sectors, though some of them never did agricultural activities. Some scholars thought that rural villages are declining (Lü, 2013; Pai, 2012), but my interviews show that agricultural production has been developing in the past three decades. Especially the technological and organizational changes have resulted in more and more surplus laborers in agricultural sectors, who would have nothing to do if they didn't *dagong*. On the other hand, the income from agricultural production has been decreasing because of the high prices of machines, services and fertilizers. So, some migrant workers have given up agricultural production and worked in cities. Ning was a male migrant worker from the Shandong province and was working as a carpenter in Beijing. When I interviewed him, he just came back to Beijing from his home village a month ago. He went back to Shandong to help his family harvest wheat. I asked him, "don't you have other farming work to do?"

He told me:

"Farmers don't have much work to do except sowing and harvesting. Now, sowing and harvesting are much easier than before, because of mechanization. Fifteen years ago, harvesting wheat exclusively depended on hand and animal. It lasted for about a month from harvesting wheat to sowing corn. About ten years ago, we started using tractors to harvest and grind wheat. Tractors could do the work within one or two weeks. Now, huge machines could do all the work at once within several hours. Sowing corn only takes another day (...) In the past, we had to pull weeds every week after sowing wheat or corn. Now, we have herbicides for all plants (wheat, corn, bean, and so on). After using herbicides, we don't need to pull weeds by hand for a whole season (...) In the past, we also applied fertilizers nearly every month. But now we have new fertilizers. It is enough to apply these fertilizers once a season for the plants to grow (...) Now my wife is at home. She actually doesn't have much farm work to do, either. Her main task is to look after the children (...) I also try to raise pigs in my home village. But I found that raising livestock is very risky. Even when I used scientific methods, I found that there so many factors out of control. I tried twice. For the first time, the price of pigs became

very low when I tried to sell mine. The market is not stable. For the second time, several pigs were sick and died. Then, I went bankrupt...”

Agricultural production is an alternative for Ning. However, he didn't give up his rights to work on farmland, because agricultural production is becoming easier and easier. However, new technologies are expensive, so he could earn enough money to support his family.

Low degrees of accepting *dagong* lifestyle

Some migrant workers gradually become disappointed, when they find that they cannot carry their wives and children to the working place, or when they cannot earn as much money as they expected or needed. They try to find other ways to improve their living standards. Some are thinking about agricultural production, for example livestock raising, greenhouse vegetable cultivation, and so on. Some are thinking about starting their own businesses in rural or urban areas. A typical example is Ye, who was 33 years old. He was working for a hotel as a chef. He used to work in Jinan as security staff more than ten years ago. Then he worked for a small dumpling restaurant and then ran that restaurant for three years because the boss transferred it to him. In order to become more professional, he went to Tianjin and Beijing and worked as an apprentice in several large hotels. Then, he went back to the local city and worked as a chef in the best hotel in that city. However, he said he could not earn enough money to support his family and tried to start his own restaurant again:

“Now I have two daughters. My older daughter goes to school in this city. My younger daughter is just two years old. [It seems that he will have a baby boy. But he didn't tell me clearly.] So, my wife has to look after the children and cannot go to work (...) I subcontracted the land to others, because I am able to earn more money by working in cities than agricultural production (...) Because we don't have agricultural activities in my village, I lease an apartment in this city and all my family members

are living here (...) So, though I could earn more money by working in the city, the living cost is also very high. I always feel that I cannot earn enough money (...) I have worked in several places and for several bosses. My experiences tell me that working [he said “dagong”] for others is not the way to make money, and only working for yourself can give you a better life, because working for others can only earn money for others(...)I have been thinking about starting my own business. I probably want to run my own restaurant. But I don’t have enough money. I can start a small one, but my family members cannot help me because my wife has to take care of my children (...) I also thought about building a greenhouse in rural village, but contracting land in good place is too expensive. I think a few years later I will start with a small restaurant and then expand my business.”

Ye is a skilled migrant worker and has some experience of running his own business. So, he has some alternatives to the *dagong* lifestyle. These alternatives have made him hold a negative attitude to the *dagong* lifestyle.

To conclude, the key to understanding migrant workers’ attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle is to define “alternatives” to the *dagong* lifestyle. In this paper, *dagong* means rural residents, whose families have houses in rural villages and could work in agricultural sectors otherwise, leave their rural homes and work for others in non-agricultural sectors. So alternatives could be (1) to go back to rural villages and work in agricultural sectors, or (2) to run their own businesses in agricultural or non-agricultural sectors. This definition can distinguish migrant workers’ attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle from their attitudes to their jobs. A large number of studies have pointed out migrant workers in China changed their jobs, industries and places very frequently. Some even though that the frequent turnovers indicated they didn’t work to *dagong*, which would lead them to resist the social arrangements (Wang, 2005; Lü, 2013; Hannan, 2008). However, if migrant workers’ attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle are distinguished from their attitudes about their jobs, migrant workers’ high turnover rate only indicates that

migrant workers have more and more job opportunities for migrant workers. In migrant workers' eyes, these opportunities might have made *dagong* a better choice than alternatives.

Changes of Chinese migrant workers' attitudes

Migrant workers' attitudes are not only different, but also changing during their migration processes. The case of Lin (in chapter two) indicates that experienced workers have tried alternatives to *dagong* and different jobs as migrant workers. When I interviewed with him, he still wanted to try alternatives to *dagong*, because he felt depressed by his *dagong* experiences. The process in which the being unsatisfied with *dagong* experiences led them to try alternatives can be called depression.

Migrant workers may also become optimistic to the *dagong* lifestyle. This process can be called justification. This happens mainly for two reasons: (1) they failed in alternatives to *dagong*, including education, self-employment, and agricultural production; and (2) they have more choices as migrant workers, including the options of industries, factories and cities. The process of becoming optimistic because of failure in alternatives could be called forced justification, while the process based on increasing choice could be called seductive justification. Both kinds of justification have contributed to the increasing degree of buying into the *dagong* lifestyle. However, it is hard to distinguish the two kinds of processes in reality. In most cases, the two reasons lead to a justification together. Most of my interviewees were not satisfied with their working and living conditions, which made them have tried or trying some alternatives, except for new migrant workers.

Laosi had been working as a migrant worker for 26 years. He was 43 years old. At the age of 17, he left his home in the Sichuan province and went to the far western province of Xinjiang to build roads. Though he only stayed there for a month and got no money, that trip started his migrant-worker experiences. After his adventure to Xinjiang, he tried other provinces, including Jilin, Shanxi, Tianjin, and Inner Mongolia. However, he said at that time migrant workers had no guarantee of their jobs, working conditions, or income. After working hard for a year in Xinjiang and Shanxi, he couldn't even get his wage and thus went back home for a family reunion with empty pockets. Finally, he was too angry to work outside as a migrant worker:

“I couldn't bear such miserable events. I just wanted to make money by my hand. But I was hoaxed again and again... I was almost sold as a slave in a coal mining company (...) I decided to give up working outside. I wanted to find something to do in my hometown.”

At first, he tried to learn cooking skills and started his own small restaurant. But he failed because the community was reorganized and his restaurant was forced to shut down. After this trial and error, he worked in several nearby cities as a construction worker. He said at that time he could get money at the end of a year. When he felt he had enough money, he went back to the rural village and raised chickens. But he became bankrupt again. According to his own opinion, the failure in raising chickens is caused by the middle man between himself and the company, because he sold poor-quality feed at the price of regular feed to make money. He told me:

“During those years, nearly all I thought about was starting my own business... However, everything seemed to be difficult and even impossible. (...) When I ran my own restaurant, I had to work till 2 or 3 o'clock in the mornings...But the result was not very good...At the same time, I found that those who followed me and worked outside before have made a lot of money. Some of them have become bosses or businessmen...”

Probably because he was encouraged by others' success, he decided to work outside again as a construction worker in the year of 2004. He went to Beijing and found that construction companies didn't postpone their wages anymore. At the end of 2004, he went back home with his wages and he was very happy. He also worked in factories. But he felt working in factories was boring: piecework wages made him feel very pressured and tired, and his personal life was limited to the dormitory in the factories. He also said that wages in factories were lower than in construction sectors. So he worked in factories twice, but only for a short time. When I interviewed him, he was working in Beijing as a construction worker. He had come to Beijing from Guangzhou six months earlier. At that time, his son went to an occupational school after graduated from primary middle school. The occupational school was a private school. So he said he had to work outside to support his son's education. When I asked him about his opinion on the jobs he used to do, he said:

“Though I am so far away from my home, I can make more money that I couldn't earn if I worked in the local city. (...) Though the construction job is not stable so that I have to move from place to place for jobs, I can make more money than I worked in factories. (...) Though I have to work harder physically as a construction worker, I don't need to use my mind so much as when I ran my small restaurant...”

These analyses indicate that migrant workers have their own calculations. Their calculations not only influence their different degrees of accepting the *dagong* lifestyle, but also the changes in their attitudes. It seems that they are rational calculators, because they develop their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle by treating it as a means to their ends and by comparing this means with its alternatives. Apparently, the rationality is an

instrumental rationality of means-end calculation (Weber 1978: 24-26). Homans' last proposition in his social exchange theory says:

“In choosing between alternative actions, a person will choose that one for which, as perceived by him at the time, the value, V , of the result, multiplied by the probability, p , of getting the result, is the greater.” (Homans, 1974:43)

This proposition gives us the following equation of rational logic:

$$C = f(V, p)$$

Where C is the choice, V is the value of the result and p is the probability of getting the result.

Chinese migrant workers' attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle are also consistent with this instrumental rationality. For example, for those migrant workers who want to make money to support family needs, though agricultural activities have a high probability to make money, the amount of money earned becomes small because of the shortage of land and the commercial use of new technologies. However, to start their own business has higher values but also has higher risks. Comparing with these two alternatives, to *dagong* becomes a reasonable choice, because of more job opportunities and the government policies guaranteeing wages.

Conclusion

So far, Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes have been examined. They are two factors emphasized by micro-level theories about the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, which could be found in permanent migration paradigm, household strategy paradigm, conservative and radical viewpoints about their future. Putting them together, this section is to conclude the micro-level analysis in terms of a life-experience theory about Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes.

Four types of migrant workers

In order to comprehend the emergence, existence and future of Chinese migrant workers, it is important to examine their own understandings of their life conditions. This chapter and the previous two chapters try to figure out their own interpretations.

With respect to their motivations to *dagong*, this research goes beyond the opposition between permanent migration paradigm and household strategy paradigm by combining various theories of migration motivation. It argues that Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong* are stratified, though different migrant workers might have different layers of motivations in the stratification structure. At the top of stratification structures, two ultimate motivations are permanent migration and family needs. However, permanent migration might also be treated as a means to meet family needs. Family needs might also be treated as a means to permanent migration (Loyalka 2012)³³. So, permanent migration and household strategy are not exclusive to each other and both could be arranged in a stratification structure of motivations.

As far as Chinese migrant workers' attitudes are concerned, their attitudes to their life conditions are separated from their attitudes to the *dagong* lifestyle, because the latter are different from the former because the former is only part of the latter. This research finds that though they are not satisfied with their current life conditions, they accept the *dagong* lifestyle as a means to meet their ends. As all migrant workers treat the *dagong* lifestyle as a means, the degree of accepting the lifestyle is determined by comparing this lifestyle with its alternatives. Those migrant workers who recognize alternatives and have

³³ In chapter three, she talked stories about teenage girls who worked in beauty salons. A legendary story was widespread among beauty girls that a girl had married an urban guy. Stimulated by this story, some girls dreamed that one day they would marry an urban boy so that they could permanently migrate into cities.

higher expectation of alternatives tend to have a lower degree of accepting the *dagong* lifestyle.

According to their own motivations and attitudes, four ideal types of migrant workers could be constructed (Table 10). While optimistic migrant workers believe that through working as migrant-workers they could meet their strong desire to settle down in cities, adventurous migrant workers try other ways to settle down in cities and tend to doubt the future of migrant-worker lifestyle. While instrumental migrant workers work as migrant workers to meet other needs other than settling down in cities, fatalistic migrant workers have lost their hope of settling down in cities or migrant-worker lifestyle and are prone to return to rural areas.

Life and Subjective Experiences

Table 10 only shows four “ideal” types of Chinese migrant workers, not only because there are no clear boundaries between the four types, but also because a certain migrant workers’ motivations and attitudes are changing. These changes in subjective consciousness—motivations and attitudes—are called subjective experiences. As to the changes in motivations, the term “radicalization” refers to the process in which migrant workers’ desire to permanently migrate increase. The term “conservatization” refers to the process in which migrant workers reduce the desire to settle down in cities and focus more and more on their other needs such as family needs. The term “optimisticization” is used to describe the process in which migrant workers gradually accept the *dagong* lifestyle as a reasonable way to meet their needs. By contrast, “adventuring” could be used to describe the process in which they become unsatisfactory with the *dagong* lifestyle and want to try its alternatives.

Subjective experiences are only a part of Chinese migrant workers' experiences, because subjective experiences are conditioned by their immediate life conditions, including working conditions, incomes and family lives. Furthermore, their life conditions are also changing during their migration processes and through their life courses. The changes in their immediate life conditions are called life experiences. Subjective experiences are conditioned by life experiences because their motivations and attitudes are changing with their life conditions. As Bourdieu (1963; 1972) said, "subjective hopes" tend to be consistent with "objective chances," which is a mechanism of social reproduction. Radicalization happens mainly at two points. The first point is when they just start working in cities and experience the disparity of living standards between rural and urban areas. The second point is when they get better working and living conditions in the cities, which might increase their ambitions. After radicalization at the two points mentioned above, marriage and children's education might lead to a conservatization process. Migrant workers become optimistic to the *dagong* lifestyle mainly for two reasons: (1) they failed in alternatives to *dagong*, including education, self-employment, and agricultural production; and (2) they have more choices as migrant workers, including the options of industries, factories and cities.

Unsolved problems

The above life-experience theory only involves the relationship between life experiences and subjective experiences. Specifically, Chinese migrant workers change their motivations and attitudes because of the changes in their immediate life conditions such as working conditions and family lives. However, there are several unsolved

problems with this reasoning. All of these problems are important to understand the logic of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers.

If motivations and attitudes change with life conditions, do they change frequently? Or are their motivations and attitudes relatively stable for a certain period of time? Are there dramatic changes in their life conditions? Or are their life conditions only changing within a certain limit? So, we need to examine the factors which have influenced Chinese migrant workers' life conditions. If migrant workers have some cognitive and manipulative power over their immediate life conditions (this is also the reason why these life conditions are said "immediate"), these life conditions might be shaped by other conditions beyond their control. These remote conditions might be beyond their condition and manipulation, so they are systems in Harbermas' term (1984; 1987). The next two chapters will examine the institutional or systematic factors which have shaped their life conditions and subjective consciousness.

Table 10. Four Ideal Types of Chinese Migrant Workers (N=36)*

Whether migrant workers have high degree of accepting the <i>dagong</i> lifestyle	Whether migrant workers have strong desires to settle down in cities	
	Yes	No
Yes	Optimistic (7; 19%)**	Instrumental (21; 59%)
No	Adventurous (5; 14%)	Retreating (3; 8%)

*The 36 interviewees are selected by theoretical principles according to migrant workers' characteristics. So, these interviewees might not be proportionate to the overall structure of Chinese migrant workers.

**The number and percentage of cases in each category out of selected cases.

Chapter Eight:

Conclusion

With industrialization, the internal migration from the countryside to cities in China has been considered as the largest migration in world history (Meng and Manning 2010). Despite the rapid urbanization process, most of these migrants have not become workers who have settled as urban residents; rather, they became migrant workers and guests in cities. Furthermore, this group of migrant workers has existed for more than three decades and the number of migrant workers has been increasing in the past decades. The problem is that their working and living conditions are unfavorable compared to city dwellers and even quite miserable in absolute terms. They commute between rural and urban areas, especially during traditional festivals and harvest seasons. They concentrate in physically demanding jobs where they work long hours under severe working conditions, but their wages are low compared to most city dwellers. Even though their work is legal and vital to the economy, they work without formal job contracts. Most of them have no health insurance, retirement insurance, injury insurance, unemployment compensation, and other welfare benefits or social services. Their children cannot go to public city schools. Their living quarters are very small and most of them have to live separate from most of their family members. Their jobs are neither secured nor stable. Furthermore, these unfavorable life conditions often cause psychological problems, such as depressive symptoms. Yet they continue to *dagong* since wages are slightly higher than in their villages.

This study is about the logic of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, which can explain their current situation and future. It is argued that in the past

three decades Chinese migrant workers have formed a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle, because:

- (1) This group of people has a large number of individuals, possesses persistent proportions in Chinese social structures, and has existed and will exist for an uncertain but not currently foreseeable period of time.
- (2) Stable institutional arrangements have maintained the existence of Chinese migrant workers by shaping their life conditions, identities, motivations and attitudes, and these institutions include the development of household autonomy system in rural villages, the encouragement and regulation of informal employment relationship in cities, the maintenance of differential citizenship with migrant workers receiving less in the cities, and the strengthening of identity-based market ideology.
- (3) Chinese migrant workers' motivations have justified their *dagong* lifestyle even when their desire to permanently stay in cities is blocked, and these motivations include personal honor at home, career future in cities, household needs at home and family development in cities.
- (4) They tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle, especially when they fail to meet their needs through returning to agricultural activities, starting their own businesses, and pursuing further education. This process is called the structuration of Chinese migrant workers which happened based on the changing macro-institutional arrangements and diverse micro-subjective experiences shaped by and shaping those institutions.

These findings can be summarized as a class-structuration theory of Chinese migrant workers. These findings are important to understanding the rapid and continuous economic growth in China because Chinese migrant workers have provided a labor force for China's economic growth. This has given China a competitive advantage and made it the world's factory. These findings are also significant to explain the social stability in China, because they can reveal Chinese migrant workers' multiple responses to their life conditions and social institutions. These findings also have significant implications for state policies for removing the migrant-worker class because the logic of the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers in this study points out the underlying forces of this class, which have to be abolished or ameliorated in order to eliminate the unfavorable life conditions of the migrant-worker class. This conclusion will summarize the main findings of this study, and explain both its contributions and limitations.

Institutions, Experiences and the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

As the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades, this study has argued that Chinese migrant workers have been structured as a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle. Furthermore, this structuration process has both macro-institutional and micro-subjective bases. This part will reiterate the main arguments and findings of this study.

The Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

Because of the changes in Chinese migrant workers' life conditions, previous definitions have become inadequate to grasp their common characteristics. In this study, Chinese migrant workers are defined as those workers characterized by their *dagong* lifestyle, whereby *dagong* means leaving rural villages, where they have the rights to

contract farm land and build houses, and work in towns and cities, in which they work for others in order to earn higher wages than in the villages but lower than most city dwellers. This definition focuses on Chinese migrant workers' behavioral characteristics, but also integrates their features of economic and social status, so it can grasp the recent changes in their life conditions.

Chinese migrant workers emerged since the late 1970s when China launched its Reform and Opening-up Policies. In 1978, when China initiated its economic reform, 82 per cent of the total population in China was rural and worked in agricultural sectors with extremely low productivity and income (Li 2008). This part of Chinese population had been collectivized into communes in agricultural production before 1978 by the communistic party-state. Furthermore, the Hukou arrangement had been developed to tightly control rural people's movement from the agricultural sector to the non-agricultural sector and from the countryside to cities. Because of the economic growth and institutional reforms since 1978 when Chinese government launched the project of reform and opening-up, the number of migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades. Even in the last five years, the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing by 8% from 225.42 million in 2008 to 268.94 million in 2013.

Not only has the number of Chinese migrant workers been increasing, the proportion of this group of migrants in the economic structure has grown and become relatively stable. With respect to the industrial structure, migrant workers concentrated in labor-intensive industries, including manufacturing, construction and service industries. This industrial distribution did not change much in the past decades, which indicates that Chinese migrant workers have become a structural element in Chinese industrial structure.

On the supply side, the employment opportunities described above have attracted surplus labors from rural agricultural sectors. The proportion of migrant workers out of total urban employment also indicates that Chinese migrant workers have grown to be a structural element of the Chinese labor force.

Furthermore, they have developed to a social stratum with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle, which is different from both the lifestyles of typical rural residents and urban residents. This *dagong* lifestyle is characterized by Chinese migrant workers' various connections with rural community and their marginalized life conditions in cities and towns. All migrant workers are from agricultural sectors and have some connections with their rural villages. These connections with rural villages are also the reasons why migrant workers frequently move between their hometowns and cities. This connection could be of economic or social nature. As to economic connections, they have the right to contract farm land in rural villages, so they are not willing to give up agricultural production because it is a basic security. The split household strategy adopted by rural families usually involves leaving some family members in rural villages. The separation of family members only intensifies their social connections with their rural villages. In cities, they concentrate in physically demanding jobs in manual labor, which are jobs usually shunned by urban residents. So the occupations taken by migrant workers have low prestige, such as domestic worker, security staff, porter, and construction worker, and so on³⁴. Their jobs are very unstable, with some of them being day laborers and some of them changing jobs for many times a year. The working conditions at construction sites and service occupations are usually unsafe and dirty as they frequently work over-

³⁴ Studies of Chinese migrant workers show many of them are in the manufacturing sector. Part of my contribution is to show how migrant workers form as a class and obtain their identities in other industries.

time. Migrant workers' living conditions in cities are also marginalized with respect to their consumption, residence, and children's education.

Finally, some Chinese migrant workers have become a political force, which can be found in both governmental policy-making targeted to Chinese migrant workers and their own bottom-up responses to their life conditions. The government has introduced regulations particularly targeted at improving migrant workers' living conditions. However, all of these policies are to permit and serve the existence of migrant workers, rather than to eliminate migrant workers in the labor system. No attempt has been made to completely remove this system. There are three stages of policy making toward migrant workers. The first stage was the pendulum between permission and limitation of population migration. The second stage was a transition from permission to management. In the third stage, state policies changed from managing migrant workers to beginning to serve them. At present, gradualist reforms also try to provide basic social benefits to migrant workers, rather than give them equal status and welfare with urban residents. On the other hand, the resistance launched by migrant workers is another mechanism through which Chinese migrant workers have been structured. First, the resistance particularly launched by "migrant workers" indicates that migrant workers have some common working and life conditions, which also have led to shared perceptions, attitudes and actions. Second, nearly all studies indicate that migrant workers' resistance is still at the initial stage, which also implies that this resistance is not strong enough to change the basic institutional arrangements within the short-term. The protest process indicates that their resistance is still largely autonomous and not well organized, usually based on the factory level. Third, resistance could serve as a signal to the state, which could develop

corresponding policies to solve the problems causing resistance. But as analyzed above, these state policies might not change institutional arrangements and eliminate the group of migrant workers since acceptance certainly outnumbers resistance.

All of this evidence indicates that Chinese migrant workers have constituted a semi-permanent social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle. This process can be called the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. Here, the structuration means the emergence of a social class, which (1) has large numbers, (2) possesses stable proportions in Chinese social structure, (3) has a distinctive lifestyle, and (4) has existed and will exist for a long period of time. Generally speaking, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers means that there are a number of social positions occupied by a group of people, which have existed and will last for an undetermined but relatively long historical period. Specifically, this structuration has two aspects: macro-structural forces and micro-experiences combining motivations and attitudes.

Macro-Institutions and the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

What institutional arrangements have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers? Many argue that the Hukou system causes the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. In order to examine the effects of the Hukou system, this study has clarified its meaning. After examining the origin, operation, purpose, and function of the Hukou system, I defined the Hukou system as a state project, through which the state has tightly controlled the population's migration in the communistic era, and which also provided a basis for the state to re-organize its citizens and other resources. Focusing on its function of migration control, this definition emphasizes the holistic nature of dual urban-rural structure derived from migration control, especially the

differentiated citizenship between rural and urban residents. However, the previous studies on the Hukou system tend to include everything in the Hukou system so that the term has become vague and too broadly used.

Based on this definition, it is true that the Hukou system has contributed to the large number of Chinese migrant workers because: (1) the loosened migration controls have stimulated more rural residents to leave rural villages and work in cities and towns, and (2) the differential citizenship between rural and urban residents and the partial citizenship of Chinese migrant workers in cities and towns make it hard for migrant workers to permanently migrate to urban area.

Moreover, the definition of the Hukou system employed in this study indicates that the Hukou paradigm alone is inadequate for explaining the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers. For example, the emergence of Chinese migrant workers took place before the Hukou system reforms. That is, even before the government loosened the tight migration control, rural residents had begun leaving home and working in cities. To some extent, the Hukou system reforms can be treated as governmental responses to the emergence of Chinese migrant workers and their own motivations. Though everything can be abstractly related to the Hukou system, this system itself is embedded in broader social arrangements, especially the interaction between the state and market. Furthermore, the value of Hukou statuses depends on other institutional arrangements besides migration control, such as agricultural production organization, social management in cities, and the development of market economy, and so on.

So this study identified three other institutional arrangements besides the partial reform of the Hukou system. After the migration control was loosened, four institutional

arrangements have contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers by influencing their identities, motivations, and attitudes. These institutional arrangements include: (1) the development of household autonomy system in rural villages, (2) the encouragement and regulation of informal employment relationship in cities, (3) the maintenance of differential citizenship with migrant workers receiving only semi-citizenship in the cities, and (4) the strengthening of identity-based market ideology. The development of household autonomy in rural villages has inadvertently strengthened Chinese migrant workers' identity as family members. The encouragement and regulation of informal employment relationships in cities have reinforced their temporary identity as guests in cities and towns. The maintenance of differential citizenship with migrant workers receiving less in the cities has made them identify as rural residents. Finally, the construction of identity-based market ideology has led them to think of themselves as lower-level workers. Furthermore, the development of household autonomy in rural villages and Chinese migrant workers' identity as family members are especially related to their motivations to *dagong* in cities. Especially, some migrant workers work in cities to meet household needs and achieve family development. Chinese migrant workers' informal employment, differentiated and partial citizenship, and their identity as guests and rural residents are related to their unfavorable life conditions in cities and their attitudes toward their *dagong* lifestyle. Once being accepted, the market ideology has shaped Chinese migrant workers' perceptions and attitudes toward their life conditions. The next section will examine how these institutional arrangements have affected Chinese migrant workers' experiences.

Micro-Experiences and the Structuration of Chinese Migrant Workers

As far as Chinese migrant workers' micro-subjective experiences are concerned, their motivations and attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle elaborate the influences of institutional arrangements and explain the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. Moreover, their motivations and attitudes uncover the micro-level mechanisms through which Chinese migrant workers have been structured as a social class.

With respect to Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong*, not all migrant workers have a strong desire to permanently migrate. Actually few migrant workers are motivated by the desire to settle in cities. Why do many of them lack this desire? Within the group of migrant workers without such a desire to settle in cities, some of them simply feel that settling down is impossible to achieve that because they cannot make enough money through *dagong* in cities. These migrant workers are usually just starting working in cities as migrant workers. For them, though they feel the disparity between the countryside and cities with respect to the living standards and job opportunities, they feel it impossible for them to live in cities. This kind of desire I called "no desire." Within this group, some of them used to have a desire to settle in cities, but they have given up because after they work and live in cities for some time, they think it impossible to achieve citizenship in the city. This kind of desire can be called "lost intention." For those migrant workers with the desire to permanently migrate, some of them only have a hope of settling in cities, while others have developed a specific plan to achieve this. That is, some migrant workers only have a "hopeful desire," while others have an "expected desire."

However, the desire to settle in cities is by no means an ultimate motivation to *dagong* and becoming a migrant worker within the *dagong* lifestyle is a process over time. Why do some of migrant workers want to settle in cities? As some of them don't have a desire to permanently migrate, why do they go to *dagong* in cities? This study found that Chinese migrant workers' motivations to *dagong* are stratified, with direct, conscious and economic motivations at lower levels and indirect, unconscious and social motivations at higher levels. This study shows that migrant workers' desires change over time with four types of ultimate motivations. Some migrant workers' motivations are rural-oriented, while others' are urban oriented. Some of them are personal-oriented, while others are social-oriented. According to their motivations' geographical and social orientations, four motivations can be distinguished. First, "personal honor at home" is a rural-oriented personal motivation, in which migrant workers try to earn honor and respect from other family members. Second, "personal future in cities" is an urban-oriented personal motivation, whereby migrant workers want to have a brighter future in cities. Third, "Household needs" at home is a rural-oriented social motivation which means migrant workers want to earn money to meet their consumption needs in the countryside. Fourth, "family development in cities" is an urban-oriented social motivation in which migrant workers want to settle in cities for a better family future, especially their children's education.

Though not all of them have a strong desire to settle in cities and towns, all Chinese migrant workers have motivations to leave the countryside and work in cities and towns. All of these motivations have justified the *dagong* lifestyle. However, this doesn't mean that Chinese migrant workers have accepted the *dagong* lifestyle. Because

of the unfavorable working and living conditions associated the *dagong* lifestyle, some migrant workers try to shed this lifestyle. So, whether Chinese migrant workers accept the *dagong* lifestyle also depends on whether they have viable alternatives to this lifestyle. Whatever their motivations are and whether they accept the *dagong* lifestyle depends on whether there are alternatives to the *dagong* lifestyle.

According to their motivations and attitudes, four types of Chinese migrant workers were distinguished:

- (1) Adventurous migrant workers want to settle in cities but do not accept the *dagong* lifestyle.
- (2) Optimistic migrant workers want to settle in cities and accept the *dagong* lifestyle.
- (3) Instrumental migrant workers do not want to settle in cities and treat *dagong* as a means to meet family needs.
- (4) Retreating migrant workers do not want to settle in cities or accept the *dagong* lifestyle.

Optimistic and instrumental migrant workers have especially contributed to the structuration of Chinese migrant workers. Furthermore, through the process of their life course, Chinese migrant workers tend to sooner or later reduce their desire to settle in cities and to accept the *dagong* lifestyle.

Furthermore, during migration process both Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes are changing with their life course. There are two general trends. First, they tend to reduce their desire to settle in cities, especially when they get married, have children, and have more family responsibilities. Then they would become less

ambitious and focus on their household needs. Second, they tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle. Especially after they try alternatives to *dagong* and fail, they are forced to accept the *dagong* lifestyle as a reasonable way to meet their needs, which are also changing during the migration process.

The Contribution to Sociological Knowledge

As the above summary indicates, this study tries to describe the current situation and future of Chinese migrant workers as a group of people. It is argued that Chinese migrant workers have been structured as a new social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle. This conclusion is based on an examination of institutional arrangements and migrant workers' experiences in contemporary China. What are the implications of this conclusion? This section will point out three important implications that go beyond the description of the current situation of Chinese migrant workers.

A Class-Structuration Theory of Chinese migrant workers

As the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing for more than three decades, studies on this group of people have also been increasing for more than three decades. This study has criticized transitional perspectives—"permanent migration" and "labor protest"—on Chinese migrant workers, as I have argued that they have constituted a social class with a distinctive lifestyle. This study results in a class-structuration theory of Chinese migrant workers, which has important implication for class-structuration process in general. Compared to other perspectives about Chinese migrant workers, including migration perspective, urbanization perspective, class-formation perspective, and labor-regime perspective, this class-structuration perspective

can describe and explain the increasing number and long-term existence of Chinese migrant workers.

Chinese migrant workers have many characteristics, including their migration behavior, their unequal status with local urban residents, their wage-labor employment relationship, and their resistance against their unfavorable life conditions. However, previous studies tend to emphasize only one of these characteristics, which has led to different, but in my view faulty or incomplete, perspectives about Chinese migrant workers. According to their definitions of Chinese migrant workers, I identified four paradigms in the study of Chinese migrant workers (Xu, 2015): the migration paradigm treats them as migrants and concentrates on their migration behavior (for example, Fan, 2008; Zhu, 2007; Lee and Meng 2010; Ye, 2011); the urbanization paradigm considers them as semi-urban-residents and examines their urban working and living conditions (for example, Meng and Manning, 2010; Cai, 2010; Kwan, 2009; Knight, et al., 2011; Wang and Zhang, 2008; Liang and Wang, 2010); the class-formation paradigm thinks of them as a new working-class and focuses on their collective resistance (for example, Shen, 2006; Lee, 2007; Chan, 2001; Pun and Lu, 2010); and the labor-regime paradigm considers them as laborers and investigates their interaction with others in the labor process (for example, Pun, 1999; Pun and Smith, 2007). Based on these definitions, these perspectives also focus on different research questions: (1) the decision-making to migrate and structural disparities involved in the migration paradigm; (2) the party-state urbanization strategy in China and Chinese migrant workers' social adaptation in the urbanization paradigm; (3) the transformation from class-in-itself to class-for-itself in

class-formation theory; and (4) and social reproduction and the labor process from a labor-regime perspective.

However, all four paradigms leave some unanswered problems because each of them only focuses on only certain dimensions of this phenomenon. Focusing on decision-making to migrate, the migration paradigm cannot explain Chinese migrant workers' social adaptation and life conditions in cities. With the implicit assumption of modernization and industrialization, urbanization paradigm fails to examine the long-term existence of the group of Chinese migrant workers. Empirical evidence shows that Chinese migrant workers' resistance is still at an early stage, which makes the class-formation perspective unsuitable to the current situation of Chinese migrant workers—the increasing number of Chinese migrant workers. Finally, the labor-regime perspective tends to concentrate on the control of migrant workers by employers and their life conditions, and thus cannot link to broad social contexts. Moreover, each of these paradigms has examined only some institutions, so the influence of other institutions cannot be completely investigated. Even though they have examined some same institutions, each of them cannot explicate the complete effects of those institutions. For example, the Hukou system has been examined in all four paradigms, but each of them cannot completely explicate the influence of this institution.

But these paradigms are not exclusive to each other and to some degree their research questions could be more complimentary. So it is important to construct an integrative framework to understand the long-term existence and future of Chinese migrant workers. The turn to class analysis is a good starting point because the development of class analysis has integrated economic, political and cultural elements

involved in class processes. However, the class-formation paradigm has narrowed the scope of class analysis. Besides class conflict, there are other class processes, including class structuration, class effectuation, class action, and class reproduction. This study also treats Chinese migrant workers as a social class, but the basic question is the class-structuration process.

Among the four paradigms, labor-regime perspective has attempted to connect migrant workers' motivations, attitudes, and life conditions, on the one hand, to social institutions, on the other. In order to investigate the increasing number and long-term existence of Chinese migrant workers, this study also draws upon this perspective by combining migrant workers' experiences and institutional arrangements. This study has tried to describe the current situation of Chinese migrant workers as the "structuration," which means Chinese migrant workers have formed a social class with a distinctive *dagong* lifestyle, whereby *dagong* means leaving rural villages, where they have the rights to contract farm land and build houses, and work in towns and cities, in which they work for others in order to earn wages. Furthermore, this class-structuration process includes both macro-institutional arrangements and micro-subjective experiences.

Migrant Workers, Economic Growth, and Social Stability in China

Chinese migrant workers have constituted an important economic force and political force. They have contributed to the rapid economic growth and long-term social stability over the past three decades. So, this study not only helps describe and explain the emergence and existence of Chinese migrant workers, but also has implications for the economic growth and social stability in China.

The first direct implication of this study is about the future of Chinese migrant workers. Because of Chinese party-state's gradualist approach to institutional reform (Pei, 2005), the current institutional arrangements are serving and supporting the existence of Chinese migrant workers, rather than removing and eliminating this group of people. Furthermore, in the gradualist approach, institutional reforms have taken into account Chinese migrant workers' demands and reactions, so resultant institutional arrangements have shaped both Chinese migrant workers' motivations and attitudes. At least some of them have accepted the *dagong* lifestyle as a reasonable means to achieve their needs or motivations. Despite having considered Chinese migrant workers' needs, in the future the continuous trial-and-error institutional reforms will not remove all barriers at once to the permanent migration of rural residents to cities and towns.

On the other hand, because their motivations have justified their *dagong* lifestyle and they tend to accept this lifestyle, their protests will not become very revolutionary. Especially, their protests are largely to improve their wages and living conditions, rather than to change the whole social system. Even if their bottom-up collective actions are rising, it still takes a long time for them to become strong enough to dramatically change the institutional arrangements in contemporary China. As the term "structuration of Chinese migrant workers" indicates, this group of Chinese migrant workers will exist for a certain period of time in the future.

This first direct implication is closely related to the rapid economic growth in China over the past three decades. Labor is an indispensable element for economic growth. As labor-intensive industries constitute a large proportion of Chinese economy, labor is especially important for its economic growth. In the past decades, China has become a

“world factory,” which depends on the low labor costs in manufacturing industries. As cheap laborers, Chinese migrant workers are the competitive advantage of China in the world economy. So, the debate on “Lewisian turning point” is significant for Chinese economic growth. However, the question is not only about the supply and demand of migrant workers. It also involves the creation and existence of migrant workers, which are related to Chinese unique institutional arrangements and migrant workers’ motivations and perceptions. This study implies that in the future Chinese migrant workers’ market benefits will increase; for example, their wage will be higher and their bargaining power will increase. But this doesn’t mean that this group of people will disappear soon because institutional arrangements will force them to work as migrant workers and this will reinforce them to some extent to continue to accept the *dagong* lifestyle.

The second direct implication is that for the response of Chinese migrant workers to their life conditions. According to their motivations and attitudes, this study distinguished four types of Chinese migrant workers: optimistic, adventurous, instrumental and retreating migrant workers. Those adventurous migrant workers tend to be unsatisfied with the *dagong* lifestyle and desire revolutionary social changes. These migrant workers might launch various forms of protest. But all other three types of Chinese migrant workers tend to accept the *dagong* lifestyle or quit working in cities and towns. Furthermore, through their life courses, Chinese migrant workers’ motivations and attitudes will change with their family life, working and living conditions. For example, optimistic migrant workers might become adventurous, after which they might become instrumental migrant workers. It was found that some adventurous migrant workers have

become instrumental, when they got married and had kids, and some of them have become optimistic, when they got promotions and earned better life conditions.

These implications are closely related to the social stability of China. In the past few decades, the co-existence of economic liberalization and political authoritarianism has become a puzzle in China studies because it was argued that economic liberalization will release social forces, which will force political changes (Gallagher, 2007; Rawski, 2011). That is why labor protests launched by Chinese migrant workers have attracted many scholars' attention. Some argued that Chinese migrant workers have become a social force with independent actions based on one or more of the following reasons: (1) Chinese migrant workers' demands have gone beyond those defined by legal regulations; (2) some of their actions to struggle for their interests have gradually become radical; (3) their collective actions have included more than one particular company and sometimes loosely united across factories and/or cities; and (4) they have developed their own discourses by borrowing from many political ideals (Lee, 2007; Chris Chan, 2009, 2010; Chan & Ngai, 2009; Ngai & Lu, 2010). Other scholars rejected the above arguments because they thought that (1) Chinese migrant workers' collective actions are irrational and spontaneous, rather than planned; (2) these actions are temporary, rather than long-standing; (3) collective actions across factories are rare cases subject to police action; and (4) collective action can be ignored, compared to the vast numbers of Chinese migrant workers (Ahlers & Schubert, 2011; Chan & Siu, 2012; Lee, 2013). This study shows that only adventurous migrant workers are subject to labor protests and these migrant workers eventually tend to become conservative. This process theory of motivations and attitudes

partially explained the social stability associated with economic liberalization and political authoritarianism.

Implications for State Policies

This study also has practical policy implications. My analysis of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers shows the logic of the emergence and existence of this group of people. This logic includes both macro-level institutional arrangements and micro-level subjective experiences. Furthermore, those institutional arrangements have shaped Chinese migrant workers' life conditions, motivations and attitudes. Finally, those institutional arrangements involve the interaction between the state and market. The first implication is that state policy is the key to improving Chinese migrant workers' living conditions and to eliminate the unfavorable life conditions of this group of people. Second, it is inadequate to make policies based on migrant workers' motivations and attitudes alone because their motivations and attitudes are shaped by their life conditions which in turn are affected by institutional arrangements. If only elite migrant workers had more desire to settle in cities, then policies only allowing these migrant workers to settle in cities will contribute to the urbanization process, but it will continue to maintain the existence of Chinese migrant workers.

Though the current policies have considered Chinese migrant workers' needs and are just to serve and support the existence of this group of people, if the government really wants to eliminate this phenomenon, they will have to take quite different measures. The key is still the relationship between the state and markets. The state has to make policies to construct a fair labor market, rather than to serve the bare existence of this group of people. Besides the ideology of market, the state should also construct new

market institutions. The state should pay attention to the following two problems: (1) to solve the differential and partial citizenship of Chinese migrant workers, the state should give equal citizenship rights to migrant workers with urban residents; and (2) to solve the problem of informal employment, the state should strictly enforce the National Labor Law with respect to migrant workers' employment relationship and give them stronger employment contracts and allow higher wages or at least wage supplements or bonuses for being migrant workers.

Implications for Migration Theory

Chinese migrant workers are predominately characterized by their migration behavior. Because all of them don't become permanent urban residents and they have various connections with rural villages, they have to circularly migrate between the countryside and cities. The examination of Chinese migrant workers' migration has important implications for migration theories.

First, Chinese migrant workers' motivations examined in this study can contribute to the understanding of migration motivations. In migration theories about migration motivations, there are debates between economic and social motivations, individual and societal nature of motivations, and rational and irrational decision-making. This study shows that migration motivations can be stratified, with economic motivations at lower levels and social motivations at higher levels. More importantly, even when migrants' migration is based on rational decision-making, the rational process is still embedded in irrational and moral values. For example, all Chinese migrant workers rationally consider *dagong* as a means to achieve their needs because of the structural disparities between the rural and urban area in China. However, this rational calculation has different orientations.

So, some migrant workers want to earn personal honor from their family members and relative networks, while some other migrant workers want to earn money to meet their nuclear family's financial needs. Even within the group of migrant workers with the desire to settle in cities, some want to have a brighter career future, while others want to provide better education for their children.

Second, existing migration studies tend to separate the question of migration decision from that of assimilation after migration. Most studies emphasize the disadvantageous status of migrants in receiving areas, as if they are part of that society. However, the circular migration of Chinese migrant workers involves both their decision-making to migrate and their life conditions in cities in which assimilation is largely not possible. Furthermore, this study also pointed out how the institutional arrangements have shaped Chinese migrant workers' life conditions, identities, motivations and attitudes. The conclusions of this study might be able to apply to understanding circular migrations in other arenas. For example, some international migrants might commute between sending countries and receiving countries if they fail to permanently migrate to the receiving countries³⁵.

Implications for Structuration Theory

Treating Chinese migrant workers as a social class, this study has concentrated on the structuration process of Chinese migrant workers, which means Chinese migrant workers have become a structural stratum in Chinese social structure. The term "structuration" employed here recalls Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.

³⁵ This contribution is somewhat different from the cumulative or rotational theory described by Massey et al. because it describes permanent rotational rather than partial rotation. In other words, Chinese migrant workers are a semi-permanent class for almost all workers, as few ever become full residents.

In this study, the term “structuration” has two meanings, only one of which is same as Giddens’ definition. The first meaning is the definition of structuration as a mechanism through which structure and agency are interrelated with each other. The second meaning is the definition of structuration as a historical process of class formation. Furthermore, this study shows that the structuration mechanism can be used to explain substantial structuration processes. As Giddens’ concept of structuration focuses on the first meaning of structuration as a mechanism, the double meanings of structuration employed in this study have two implications for structuration theory. First of all, the concept of structure in Giddens’ theory is very abstract, while the concept of structure used here is very particular. As Giddens (1991: 201) said, his structuration theory is to “develop an ontological framework for the study of human social activities”. As an ontological concept, all of his concepts in his structuration theory are very abstract and general. Though his analysis of the class structure in advanced societies and his criticisms of linguistic theories involve some particular structure, his structuration theory focuses on the general nature of structure—the duality of structure in the interaction between structure and agency. However, the structuration of Chinese migrant workers focuses on a particular structure—a specific social class structure in China, or specifically a structural stratum of that structure.

Second, the structuration theory proposed by Giddens is reproductive, the structuration here refers to social change or structural transformation³⁶. For Giddens (1984: 17-25), “structure, as recursively organized sets of rules and resources, is out of time and space, saved in its instantiations and co-ordination as memory traces, and is

³⁶ This also relates to the reproductive nature of Bourdieu’s theory. According to Parker (2000), Giddens and Bourdieu are two structurationists, because both of their theories are characterized by the central conflationism of structure and agency and the reproductive nature of their theoretical orientation.

marked by an “absence of the subject.” The social system in which structure is recursively implicated, on the contrary, comprises the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space. Analyzing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction”. That is, the beyond-time-and-space structures are reproduced by human actors’ situated activities, which resulted in a stable social system. By contrast, the structuration of migrant workers means a new structural stratum and a new structure emerged in Chinese society.

Giddens’ structuration theory could be called a reproductive structuration theory, while the structural transformation and the structuration of a group of people could be called a transformative structuration. However, the difference could not cover the complementarity between the two kinds of structuration process. The structural transformation implies that a relatively stable structure emerges, which indicates that human actors are reproduced during and after the structural transformation. So, the reproductive structuration is the mechanism through which the transformative structuration happens. As a result, there is a complementarity between the two processes.

Limitations and Future Research

These findings and implications depend on recognizing the three major limitations to this study. Two of them are substantial: the debate between class-structuration and class-formation, and the relationship between state policies and civil society movements. Another one is methodological, especially related to the selection of interview sites and participants. Finally, this section will propose some future research.

The Nature of Migrant Workers' Resistance and Class Structuration

Admittedly, this study is limited by its starting point. The starting point of this study is the fact that the number of Chinese migrant workers has been increasing in the past more than three decades. The research questions are: what are the current situation and future of this group of people? Why has this group of people existed for such a long time? Every aspect of this study has been guided and constrained by this starting point and these research questions.

Actually, Chinese migrant workers have many characteristics, such as their migration behavior, social adaptation in cities and towns, market position, and collective action. Because of the increasing number and unfavorable life conditions of Chinese migrant workers, their collective actions have also increased. Some studies have started with this fact. This approach can be called class-formation approach, though not all those authors use the term “class” and migrant workers’ resistance doesn’t use class discourse (Lee, 2007; Guo, 2014). A representative study is Ching Kwan Lee’s *Against the Law* (2007). Focusing on Chinese migrant workers’ collective protests, she pointed out the differences between migrant workers and veteran state workers with respect to their grievances, actions taken, subjective identity, pattern of mobilization, discourses employed, and barriers to further development of collective action. She found that the major grievances of migrant workers are about wages and working conditions. Their collective actions usually first take the form of petitions and lawsuit and then launch collective protests against local governments. Their subjective identities and discourses include “working class,” “class,” “citizen,” and “workers.” The pattern of their mobilization is characterized by cellular activism, which only takes place at the workshop

level and local government. The barriers to the formation of a class-for-itself of Chinese migrant workers are rooted in their economic and social relationship with rural villages.

As matter of fact, in class analysis of Chinese migrant workers, we can distinguish two stances: class-formation stance radically focuses on Chinese migrant workers' collective ability to dramatically change the social system and why class-structuration stance emphasizes the class-in-itself nature of Chinese migrant workers. Focusing on their everyday experiences and consciousness, Pun and Lu (2011) argued that migrant workers constituted an unfinished class or semi-proletarian class. Alvin Y. So (2013) argued that Ching Kwan Lee's study presents a very depressing picture of the making of the migrant working class in South China because in Lee's eyes the migrant working class is powerless to defend its own interests and they only focus on narrow economic issues rather than political issues³⁷. By contrast, So argued that (1) migrant workers in South China seem to be drastically transformed in the first decade of the 21st century, (2) they would use class perspective to explain their sufferings and identify themselves as workers, (3) their collective actions would go beyond economic issues and cellular activism, and (4) they would take more radical strategies to protect their class interests.

Because of the starting point of research—the long-term existence of Chinese migrant workers, this study adopts a different approach—a class-structuration stance. As a result, this study didn't examine Chinese migrant workers' collective actions or labor movements, though it is supposed to be helpful for understanding their collective action. Although there are debates on the nature of Chinese migrant workers' collective action,

³⁷ In fairness to Lee and the workers she studied, the state will strongly intervene whenever a political issue is addressed, especially if it espouses collective action. Consequently, workers know their constraints.

the study of their collective action is a necessity for understanding their existence and future. But my study is also a necessity for understanding another very broad sector of the labor force.

The Influence of Migrant Workers' Resistance and State Policies

Another substantial limitation to this study is related to state policy. All the arguments of this research assume that the party-state will continue its gradualist approach to institutional reform and only fine-tune the current policies. This study outlined three stages of state policies related to Chinese migrant workers. But I did not examine the logic of the policy-making in contemporary China because it would require an internal study of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, in order to justify the conclusion of this study, it is also important to understand policy-making logic in contemporary China.

The most important questions are: (1) how long this gradualist approach will last, and (2) whether there are possibilities that the state will make dramatic changes. The authoritarian nature of Chinese politics and policy-making process make it hard to predict future policies. However, there are some possibilities for this to happen. First, though there are no democratic elections in China aside from some village and city elections, each new generation of leaders puts forward somewhat new orientations for policy-making, which might dramatically change the current policies. On the other hand, because of the bureaucratization of Chinese politics, this kind of dramatic change seems impossible to happen. In this unique Chinese context, the political logic of the Chinese party-state is very important. Second, the labor movements by Chinese migrant workers might dramatically change the trajectory of state policy-making logic. If Chinese migrant

workers, as So (2013) says, became more radical in the future, the state will make radical policies to respond to their demonstrations and protests. Again, this points to the significance of examining the current situation and future of Chinese migrant workers' collective actions. Finally, related to the labor movement issue, there are other social forces interacting with the party-state. The development of civil society organizations has become a focal point in China studies (Huang, 1993; Howell, 2012). Some even argued that the civil society organizations and movements might change the nature of the Chinese party-state and the basic dynamics of governmental policy-making.

So examining the effect of migrant workers' resistance is as important as investigating the nature of their resistance. It is absolutely right that migrant workers' resistance will more or less exert influence on state policies and future resistance. Guo (2014) identified four types of migrant workers' resistance: passive/individual, passive/collective, active/individual, and active/collective. Among these types of resistance, even though passive/individual and active/individual resistance have no direct impact on the actor's own rights, they can contribute to the growth of rights consciousness and collective resistance. Moreover, collective acts of resistance have a more direct effect on migrant workers' individual and collective rights, but they also attract attention and sometimes repression by the Chinese party-state.

Thus, the final result of migrant workers' resistance also depends on the response of central and local governments to their demands. Two studies are enlightening with respect to the interaction between migrant workers' resistance and governments' response. Cai (2010) examined why some collective resistance has succeeded in China. He argued that the result of collective resistance depends on the interaction between the resisters,

local governments and the central government. Based on an interactive and relational conception of infrastructural state power, Lee and Zhang (2013) identified three micro-foundations of Chinese authoritarianism: protest bargaining characterized by the logics of market exchange, legal-bureaucratic absorption of rule bound games, and patron-clientelism based on interpersonal bonds. Most of these processes are responses by the government to migrant workers' resistance and all of them have contributed to the gradualist reform agenda and social stability.

To conclude, the nature and influence of Chinese migrant workers' resistance are important to understanding their existence and future. On the other hand, the argument of this study—the structuration of Chinese migrant workers—also has significant implications for understanding the nature of their resistance. In essence, Lees sees a glass that is a quarter full (i.e., the presence of resistance), while I see a glass that is three-quarters full (the permanence of a new class). For example, Lee's depressing picture of the low power of the migrant-worker class can be partially explained or covered by the structuration of Chinese migrant workers and their acceptance of the *dagong* lifestyle.

Limitations Related to Research Methods

Because of the nature of research questions in this study, this research combined interpretative and critical qualitative research methods. Specifically, this study not only focuses on the meanings constructed by Chinese migrant workers about their life conditions, but also tries to identify structural disparities and institutional arrangements that have shaped their meanings. While interpretative methods are good at explicating meanings, critical methods do well to link meanings to institutions. However, the scope

of my specific research techniques have been constrained by the research questions I tried to answer in this study.

First, my study starts from the fact of the long-term existence of Chinese migrant workers and tries to explain the structuration of this social class. As a result, my study focuses on Chinese migrant workers' everyday experiences, including their life conditions and subjective consciousness. Blecher (2009) argued that three kinds of regional political economy have been developed during globalization and institutional transition in China. These labor regimes include globalized despotism in the Southeast, decaying rustbelt in the Northeast, and mixed and adaptive political economy in Northern-Central China. My study was based on informants from central-northern part of China, because my interviews were conducted in three central-northern cities: Beijing, Jinan and Liaocheng. In the mixed-adaptive political economy, it is better to understand Chinese migrant workers' everyday life conditions and consciousness because the migrant workers in this area represent the logic of the long-term existence of Chinese migrant workers as a whole. Even in other areas with a different political economy, most Chinese migrant workers also "eat bitterness" with their hard work (Lee, 2007; Luyn, 2008; Loyalk, 2013).

The limitation is that though migrant workers in different regions have some similarities, different regions might have somewhat different institutional arrangements and thus migrant workers in different regions might have different experiences and consciousness. Though I believe that most of Chinese migrant workers work hard, even though their working and living conditions in cities are unfavorable, it is still necessary to

examine regional differences in institutional arrangements, because the institutional transition since the 1970s involves an increasing autonomy of local governments.

Second, the purposive sampling method is to include all kinds of Chinese migrant workers with respect to their family life, gender, age, industries, and migration distance. This sampling method is to understand the logic of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, rather than to describe the composition of the population of Chinese migrant workers. In other words, though these participants represent different kinds of migrant workers and their experiences, motivations and attitudes, this sample doesn't represent the population of Chinese migrant workers as a whole. So, this study cannot accurately reflect the proportions of these types of Chinese migrant workers in the population. But again the composition of Chinese migrant workers with respect to their motivations and attitudes is important. For example, a large number of adventurous migrant workers make it easier for them to launch collective actions and a large number of conservative migrant workers might lead this group of people to exist for a long time. In the future, a representative sample in a large-scale social survey can hopefully be constructed to know more about the composition of Chinese migrant workers.

Future Research

Because of the limitations to this study, there is still much work to do with regard to the long-term existence and future of Chinese migrant workers. In the future, more research should be conducted to elaborate the findings of this study and to examine those topics beyond this study.

First, because a theoretical and purposive sample can only understand the logic of the structuration of Chinese migrant workers, it cannot describe the composition of this

group of people with respect to their motivations and attitudes. A large scale survey project based on a weighted-random sample would be needed to make larger inferences to the labor force as a whole. According to their motivations and attitudes toward the *dagong* lifestyle, this study identified four types of Chinese migrant workers: optimistic, adventurous, instrumental and retreating migrant workers. This typology has important implications for Chinese migrant workers' reaction to their immediate life conditions (for example, their relationship with employers) and the society as a whole (for example, the state policies). However, their reaction to some extent depends on the number of each kind of Chinese migrant workers in different regions. So, in the future a representative sample is needed to figure out the composition of Chinese migrant workers. Because of the different political economy in different regions, a comparative study can be conducted to figure out the regional compositions of Chinese migrant workers, which are shaped by divergent institutions.

Second, the nature of the resistance initiated by Chinese migrant workers needs to be closely examined. This is important because (1) this question might challenge the conclusion of this study, as labor protests might break the continued structuration of Chinese migrant workers; (2) this question might reflect the current situation of Chinese migrant workers, because labor movements are embedded in social structure and institutions, though labor movements have their own logic as social movement theories indicate (Eder 1993); (3) this question is closely related to state policies, because the gradualist reform in China is characterized by the trial-and-error governmental responses to civil society organizations and movements; and (4) this question is also related to the historical role of Chinese migrant-worker class and its future, but whether, when and how

Chinese migrant workers would become or never become a revolutionary force or not are still unanswered questions.

In the future, four important questions need to be elaborated and tested with connection to my study: (1) what are the institutional arrangements that affect Chinese migrant workers in each region of China; (2) what are the compositions of migrant workers with various motivations in these different regions; (3) what is the nature of collective actions launched by migrant workers in these different regions, and (4) what is the impact of migrant workers resistance, demonstration and strikes in each of these regions and overall on China as a whole. Answering these questions would provide a more unified answer to the future existence and impacts of Chinese migrant workers. But this study clearly contributes to piecing together the various regions of Chinese migrant workers.

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