The Politics, Practices, and Possibilities of Migrant Children Schools in Contemporary China

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Curriculum and Instruction)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2013

Date of final oral examination: 11/26/13

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lin Xuefeng and Yu Changjun, and my grandparents, Li Jinju and Lin Yaoshun. I could not have come to Madison and fulfilled my dream without their unconditional love and sacrifice. To Christopher Crowley, I am truly lucky to have your love and support. Thank you for always being the first and most critical listener, reader, and editor of my many drafts of the dissertation. And thank you for inspiring me to rethink and rewrite.

Thank you to my advisor and mentor, Professor Michael Apple, for the irreplaceable mentorship and caring support. I have been beyond privileged to be his first PhD student from China to work with him. The opportunity to be part of Friday Seminar and to collaborate with scholars from around the world has been an important inspiration to me, both intellectually and personally.

Many thanks to my supportive dissertation committee: Professors Cathy Compton-Lilly, Diana Hess, Nancy Kendall, and Ming Fang He, for their time, expertise and encouragement throughout my PhD study. I would especially like to recognize Professor Ming Fang He, for her kind and heartfelt support.

I cherish the friendship of Mi Ok Kang and Christopher Crowley, who have been the most inspiring and supporting colleagues from the very beginning as we started our time together as a cohort in Madison and in Friday Seminar.

I would like also to thank the teachers, parents, and community activists who not only participated in my study, but also supported me in so many ways throughout the whole process. Their names stay anonymous, but their commitment and determination will keep me motivated and will continue to inspire me to move forward. Many thanks to

Dong Yanlei, Gao Jie, Wang Xiangrong, Professor Shi Zhongying, Professor Yan Ping, Professor Li Zhengrong at Beijing Normal University, for their help and encouragement throughout the years.

I am thankful to Professors Gloria Ladson-Billings, Daniel Pekarsky, Patricia Burch, Michael Thomas, Simone Schweber, Michael Olneck, Anita Wager, Mary Louise Gomez, Amy Stambach, Maggie Hawkins, Gay Ivey, Travis Wright, Gary Price, Pauline Lipman, William H. Schubert, Bill Ayers, Rowena He, at UW-Madison and other institutions, for their inspiration, guidance, and friendship.

My special thanks to friends and colleagues in Madison for their encouragement and solidarity. To my fellow international students and visiting scholars at UW-Madison: Thank you Jui-Chun Tsai, Katrina Yan Liu, Mi Ok Kang, Genevieve Archer, Wangari Gichiru, Leonel Lim, Shirleen Loy, Assaf Meshulam, Eduardo Cavieres, Hee-Ryong Kang, Shuning Liu, Rohany Nayan, Yvonne Pek, Ayesha Khurshid, ChenJu Liu, Szu-Yueh Chien, Wan-Lin Yang, Ching-Ting Hsin, Wenfei Zhou, Keita Takayama, Taehan Kim, Sejung Ham, Kyung Eun Jahng, Licho Lopez, HyeJu Min, Pallavi Chhabra-Dhokarh, Ang Ling See, Rich Addai, Yuki Kashima, Julio Pereira, Mediha Sari, Latika Gupta, Zhizhong Hong, for supporting and sharing with me the joy, sorrow, struggles, and rewards of studying and working in American academia.

Many thanks to Melissa Sherfinski and Quentin Wheeler-Bell, I am thankful for their insightful feedbacks and critical conversations about my research. To Matthew Knoester, I truly appreciate his continuous mentoring since the very beginning of my graduate study. Thank you Thomas Pedroni, Jen Sandler, Sarah Robert, Jui-Chun Tsai, Matthew Knoester, Joe Ferrare, Assaf Meshulam, Eduardo Cavieres, Hee-Ryong Kang,

Keita Takayama, Mary Thompson-Shriver, Christopher Crowley, Mi Ok Kang, Quentin Wheeler-Bell, Leonel Lim, Justin Lonsbury, Wenfei Zhou, Jorge Rodriguez, Mediha Sari, Latika Gupta, Zhizhong Hong, and all the former, current and future members of Friday Seminar, for welcoming me and providing the space for each other to engage in ongoing critical and honest work. Thank you Elisa Zwier, Irene Resenly, Jennie Diaz, Bryn Jaastad, Mary Ann Feutz, Stefan Brueck, Jess Gallo, Mary Guay, Todd Lilly, Casey Meehan, Mel Freitag, Jim Carlson, Shameka Powell, Manali Sheth, Ojos De Esme, Mary Klehr, Richard Miller, Steve Head, Ann Halbach, Kelly Hayek, Laura Rameker, for their academically and personally friendship.

Without the patience and help from the secretaries in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, I could not have successfully completed my work and study. Thank you, Marilyn Fearn, Elham Milani, Joyce Zander, Cathy O'Sullivan, Chris Kruger, Bee Powers, Pam Odorizzi, Jennifer Austin, Jo Richards, for always being there for me and all the students in the department.

Last but not least, I am also very grateful to the John and Tashia Morgridge Foundation for awarding me the Tashia F. Morgridge Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship. To the Vilas Research Travel Grant at the Graduate School of UW-Madison, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Dissertation Research Grant for providing me financial support for this research. Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past three decades, Chinese society has been undergoing profound social and economic transformations. Under the historical conditions of "late socialist" (Zhang, 2001, p. X) China, new social phenomena—including unprecedented domestic migration and the accelerated restructuring of social institutions—have led to the emergence of various new kinds of social spaces and practices.

One of the most prominent social phenomena is the *hypermobility* of people and their labor. The rapidly booming urban economies, combined with the gradual relaxation of state policies toward migration in this era, enticed large numbers of rural residents to leave their villages and move to cities to look for better work and living opportunities. In China, this demographic group is known as "the floating population" *(liu dong ren kou)*[1]. The presence of this large mobile population[2] in the cities has initiated a very different kind of relationship between the state's control and local communities, which created the conditions for a variety of grassroots movements, especially movements around fair wages for the mobile population's work, the improvement of their living environment and the education of their children.

As a former teacher in schools for migrant children, as well as an observer at many other such schools in my educational research, I saw a distinct need for a critical

[1] Although it is of great importance, to launch a detailed analysis of the causes of migration in current China is beyond the scope of this chapter. For those interested in fuller explanations of the causes of internal migration in China, see Davin (1999); Goldstein & Goldstein (1985); Li (1999); Liang & White (1996); Solinger (1999); Yan (1994); and Yang (1993).

[2] I do not wish to simply categorize this population by using terms loosely. In fact, the struggle over this name has already been raised by several organizations from their communities, one of which use "new citizen" (*xin gong min*) to rename this group. It represents their struggle over discrimination and for recognition. I will use "migrant worker" in my paper, which is not a perfect term yet, but it at least recognizes that the identity of this group is unique from that of urbanites or rural labors.

examination of these issues. Given the increasing globalizing flows of people, capital, language, and ideas, it will become critically important to learn from the experiences of migrant communities like those in China. Not only is this of importance given the challenges and suffering experienced as a result of social and economic inequity in China, but it is also increasingly relevant to other nations throughout the world as they face concerns relating to the education of children from migrant worker families. The lessons learned from these struggles in China help to provide broader understandings of the complex realities in which many migrant communities are situated.

A Brief History of Migration

In the first three decades of socialist China (1949-1979), domestic rural-to-urban migration was virtually eliminated by the state through the household registration system (*hukou*)[3]. Under this system, the Chinese population was officially divided into two parts—urban *hukou* holders and rural *hukou* holders. Rural residents were prohibited from moving into the cities. Their rural residential status denied their access to state-

[3] From 1949 through the early 1950s, there was no restraint on the migration between urban and rural areas. However, during the Socialist Construction in middle and late 1950s, there have been a large number of farmers transplanting into cities, resulting in the scantiness of staple and non-staple food provision, as well as other problems of transportation, housing and so on. The central government then began to strictly limit the migration from rural to urban areas. In June 1955 the national household registration system was established, prescribing that only with government's testimonials could one go to cities other than his/her permanent residence. Its primary goal was to block rural-to- urban migration in order to avoid what government officials perceived as a pathological growth of oversized cities and to ensure the agricultural production of grain to supply those working in industry. Restricting people's spatial mobility was also an important strategy used by bureaucrats to maintain socialist stability at that time. For example, the 1959-1961 Calamity led to the employment of local grain and meat ticket system, under which people could obtain food only in their born area through local tickets, rather than buy it from stores. For detailed information regarding the origin, functions, and socioeconomic consequences of this complex system, see Cheng & Selden, 1994; Dutton, 1992; MacKenzie, 2002; Solinger, 1999; Zhang, 1988; and Zhang, 2003.

subsidized food, housing, employment, and other essential services reserved for urbanites only. This situation, however, has dramatically changed since the beginning of economic reforms in 1978, leading to the rise of a mass labor migration unprecedented in modern China. The floating population consists of people with diverse socioeconomic and regional backgrounds, but their primary goals are the same: to gain a better life by migrating to the cities. Some of these rural transients are able to bring a modest amount of savings with them to start small businesses (see for example, Zhang (2001)'s research on Wenzhou migrants in Beijing). But the majority of migrant workers who come to the cities have nothing but their labor to sell. The lucky ones manage to find temporary hourly work in construction, restaurants, factories, housekeeping services, street cleaning, and other jobs that many urbanites are not willing to take. Still, there are many others who cannot find a job and thus drift hopelessly from place to place[4]. They are not entitled to the same legal rights and social benefits as permanent urban residents and are subject to discrimination and periodic expulsion.

Despite the fact that the cheap but incontestable services provided by rural migrants are in high demand in the cities, the floating population is regarded by city officials and many urbanites as a drain on already scarce urban public resources and is frequently blamed for increased crime and social instability. Appearing to be "out of place" and "out of control," this extraordinarily large and mobile population challenges the existing modes of state control that are largely based on the assumption of a relatively

[4] Space does not allow me to engage the various debates surrounding the demographic analysis. I want to point out, however, that it is worth emphasizing that the floating population is not a homogenous group. Rather, Chinese domestic migrants' urban experiences vary greatly depending on a number of factors such as gender, place of origin, previous *capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) accumulation, and social networks. As a result, their senses of social belonging are also very different.

stable population fixed in space. Migrants are too far away from their places of origin to be reached by rural authorities but at the same time are not integrated into the urban control system. For many years, local urban officials were unwilling to extend their jurisdiction to rural migrants because they were considered "outsiders" in the cities and thus were not seen as subject to urban regulation. However, it was this lack of official control that created opportunities for migrants to develop their own social and economic niche in the cities[5]. The formation of migrant worker organizations and coalitions was a direct response to the lack of state regulation and welfare in certain areas such as migrant communities, most of which are newly established settlements in the suburbs[6]. But when the upper level government at times decides to reclaim control over these new social spaces, it is still able to achieve its goal despite resistance from migrants, social activists, and some local suburban residents[7] who engage in these community actions. These challenges and struggles are particularly true for those who have built special schools for migrant children under the complex and uncertain social and political environments.

[5] The transformation of political and social environments in current China opens the possibility of developing communities and undertaking community-based activities. The open-door policies caused tremendous changes not only in politics, economy, and culture, but also in the social structure. One crucial movement is the forming of civil society. Although the whole of civil society (formal and informal) is not yet fully developed, the space has been opened for participation in academic, social, and even political activities. Despite the fact that the majority of the participants in these activities are residents of urban communities who are advocating for civic rights, the space that was opened by these social and political activities can also be applied to migrant communities. This makes it possible for migrant workers to strive for their social rights, which is the basic aspect of civic rights. For more detailed discussions of the transformation of political and social environments in contemporary China please see, for example, Nathan (1997); Gilley (2004); Link, Madsen, & Pickowicz, eds. (2002); and Sun (2003).

[6] The notion of "suburb" in China is quite different than it is in the American context, for example. Most of the suburban areas in Beijing are far less wealthy and developed than the central city.

[7] Most of the local suburban residents are farmers themselves. They have a quasi-urban residency, but their living conditions are close to rural areas. They actually live inside or next to the newly established migrant communities, and my research suggests there is a great deal of sympathy or solidarity among these groups.

"Mobile Children"

In 2000, the fifth national population census (Population Census Office under the State Council, 2002) showed that the temporary migrant population exceeded 100 million people across the country, 14 million of which were children under 14 years old. In 2004, of all laborers with rural origins, 23 percent were classified as migrant laborers, with an overall number 118 million. More than 25 million of them have brought their families to the cities. This has included 18 million children under age 14 (Zhang, 2005). As of the 2010 sixth national population census, the migrant population exceeded 261 million. Compared with the 2000 population census, migrant population increased by 116 million, or up by 81.03 percent (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). Although the most recent census number of children from migrant families across the country hasn't been published officially, this high growth rate of migrant population over the past ten years could also be applied to predict the large increasing number of children from migrant families[8].

Most second generation migrants were born in the country but grew up in the city, or were born in a city far away from their parents' home towns. The children of migrant workers are often referred to as "mobile children," and they have become a unique subgroup within Chinese society. As this generation of "mobile children" has grown up, it has been accompanied by a series of issues relating to their compulsory educations in urban areas. Neither central nor local governments fully anticipated such changes. Consequently, numerous children of migrant families have either not been able to gain

[8] Some organizations estimated in the sixth national population census, the number of migrant children aged from birth to 14-year-old is around 41 million.

access to school or have been forced to drop out.

According to a survey conducted by National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council, Chinese National Children's Center and United Nations Children's Fund in 2003(National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council, China National Children's Center and United Nations Children's Fund, 2003), in the investigated nine cities[9], some 9.3 percent of the migrant children were out of school, and nearly half (46.9 percent) of the 6-year-old children cannot enroll in school in time. Among those who were in school, half of them were overage: approximately 20 percent of 9-year-old children were still in 1st grade and the percentage of 13-year-old and 14-year-old children who were still in elementary school were, respectively, 31 percent and 10 percent. Near 20 percent of migrant children could not study in local public school. Another study indicates that a lot of children in school dropped out because their families could no longer afford their education. It is estimated that among the current 20 million temporary migrant children, there are approximately 2 million dropouts. The problem of child labor is also severe. Among 12 to 14-year-old children who are out of school, 60 percent have begun working (Zhang, Qu, & Zou, 2003).

The biggest barrier to school is the high tuition and miscellaneous fees, especially the high extra fees, sponsor fee for instance, which is far beyond their families' affordability. While the government has stated its commitment to abolishing or at least reducing those fees, public schools persist in charging them in covert ways. As for the migrant children, the only access to public school is in submitting a sponsor fee,

[9] The nine cities are: Beijing, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Wuhan, Jilin, Zhuzhou, Xianyang, Shaoxing, and Yining.

otherwise, all seats will have been "taken." Even if the extra fee could be forgiven, there are still several supplemental fees, like travel expenses, and uniform costs, in public schools that cannot be waived[10]. The Urban Research Group of Jiangxi Province conducted a survey on current educational charges in 2004. The results indicated that among migrant workers, 45.5 percent agree that current education costs too much, and only 20.7 percent state that they can afford their children's education in the city. Among those who cannot afford their children's education, some ask their children to drop out of school, and others send their children to rural schools to alleviate the burdens. According to the data report presented by Jiangxi Province Department of Education, among 36,688 migrant children enrolled in schools at Nanchang, the capital city of Jiangxi Province, more than half of them have submitted the full sponsor fees, the rest have paid part of the extra fees. And there are still 3,173 children in Nanchang who cannot receive education because their families cannot afford tuition or sponsor fees (Feng & Zeng, 2004).

A survey of the status of migrant children in 2004 (Su, 2004) demonstrates that almost one quarter of these children feel inferior because they believed they were being discriminated against by urban residents, they are offspring of the so-called "illiterate pack" (*mangliu*). Another survey by Beijing Normal University to junior middle school students has conducted further research in this area (Tao, Xu, & Zhang, 2004). These scholars have found that middle school students within migrant children schools have

[10] Besides the 300 to 400 RMB ($50 to 65) paid by the local students each term (This fee is waived by government around 2008), migrant parents must pay an additional 480 RMB ($80) education rental fee (*jie du fei*), a 2,000 RMB ($310) education compensation payment (*jiaoyu buchang fei*) and a 1,000 RMB ($155) school choice fee (*ze xiao fei*). Prestigious public schools can demand over 10,000 RMB ($1,550) and some as high as 23,000 RMB ($3,565) school choice fees from parents. Compare to the 1,000 RMB ($155) average incomes a migrant family makes, this fees are setting a high barrier to their family.

light psychological health problems, especially Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Emotion Imbalance, Maladjustment, and Relationship Tensity and Sensitivity. These patterns are likely connected to two important facts. One is that living between urban and rural communities makes it impossible for migrant children to adapt to urban life immediately, or to go back to the villages; the other is that traveling and transferring frequently with their parents forced some of them to miss perhaps the best period of their lives to receive instruction. Both of these facts result in problems with children's need to develop positive self-identities. While sitting in the same classroom with city children, what they actually feel are that "urban people look down upon us." "They are rich oppidans, while we can only be poor boors," or "city children always tease us." They have become aware of the differences between city children and themselves, and the unbreakable rampart of the differences within the city at a very early age (Xin, 2004).

The sense of inequality and social discrimination are intensified as these children growing up. If there is no place where them can receive effective guidance and help to discover value in themselves, they will (and some already did) have to face many more difficulties socially and emotionally. Although compared with their contemporaries, migrant children are much more independent, some of them have already shouldered the task of looking after their families; they are also a more sensitive and vulnerable group in need of more patience and support from caring adults and safe environment.

The Hidden Context

Before moving on to analyze the migrant children schools movement, we should pay closer attention to the conditions and circumstances that led to the formation and

emergence of such schools in China. I briefly introduced the political and economic backgrounds of migration in the first part of this chapter. However, acknowledging the emotional/cultural elements of the migrant children schools movement is also necessary. After all, the concerns over migrant children's education have also been part of the reason why parents in rural areas decide to migrate to the cities with their youngsters. To understand such concerns, we need to look closely at the inequalities in Chinese education, especially the considerable inequalities in provision between urban and rural areas.

Education in rural China[11] suffers from a variety of problems, many of which are due to the striking difficulties in promoting economic and social development in rural areas. In such a vast country as China, which has a large population and uneven economic development, it is an arduous task to achieve the goal of equality in education[12]. In spite of the official efforts made by the Chinese government to improve education since 1949, considerable problems remain in the Chinese educational system. The law on compulsory schooling, passed for the first time by the 5th National Peoples' Congress in April, 1986, proposed a term of nine-year compulsory education from the age of six, but left it to "each province, autonomous region, or municipality" to decide on the exact implementation "in accordance with the conditions of local economic and cultural

[11] For more deep and detailed discussion on the inequalities in education between urban and rural areas of China, see Fan, Zhang, & Zhang (2002); Hannum (1999, 2006); Rong & Shi (2001); Scrase (1997); and Zhang (2003)

[12] Even the term "educational goal" has absolutely disparate official meanings between rural areas and urban areas. In China 95.2% of elementary schools, 87.6% of middle schools, and 71.5% of high schools are in rural areas; the basic goal of rural education is still struggling to eliminate young and middle-aged illiteracy, especially in China's western region.

development" (Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples' Republic of China, 1986, Article 2). To be specific, at least one-third of educational funds come from the provincial governments and another third comes from local governments. But the provincial and local governments in poorer and more remote areas tend to allocate a much smaller portion of their budgets to education than the required amount for the very basic needs, which makes the conditions of Chinese education in many remote regions and rural areas deplorable and continually deteriorating even further.

One of the striking problems resulting from low economic development, inadequate educational access, and the lack of funding is that there are far too few teachers to fulfill the needs of school-age children in the rural areas. The teacher shortage causes a vicious cycle that directly contributes to more inequalities in rural areas in terms of disadvantaging social development. In response to the huge gap in social status and economic well-being between rural and urban residents, more and more parents make the decision to move to urban areas in the hope of finding better living opportunities. One is to give their children a less disadvantageous education, with the hope of "attending schools without these difficulties".

Nevertheless, China also has a long history of providing education to young generations in much more informal ways. Among them, the most important forms of schooling in ancient China were the unofficial schools opened by literates in their own houses (*si shu*[13]). In these "home-located" schools, there could be only one teacher, several desks, and a shelter available. *Si shu* schools were not ideal places, and the children who went to these schools to learn Confucianism and Han culture were boys,

[13] "*Si shu*" is a traditional private school with a scholarly tutor teaching students in his private schoolhouse.

most of who were from wealthier families. However, even today these schools that linger from ancient China have a strong cultural impact on Chinese people's attitude towards education[14] and their efforts to achieve higher levels of education for their children. It is fair to say that education has been of great importance to parents, no matter how limited the resources they can acquire. From this point of view, the motivation of migrant parents to open the first group of migrant children schools themselves is quite simple: to allow their children a place to learn how to read and write. And this emotional motivation of the migrant parents also provides a solid foundation for understanding how the migrant children schools movement began and continues to grow.

Migrant Children Schools and Their Challenges

In response to the educational problems for children from migrant families, migrant children schools have emerged in some urban areas in China. Such schools were first established by parents within the migrant communities as early as 1992. These schools are considered private primary schools[15], and they primarily serve children from low-income migrant families. Nearly all of the migrant children schools are located in suburban slum areas, and many are housed in rebuilt or rented facilities in abandoned factories or farm houses. These types of schools are also called "underground" schools,

[14] There is a rich Chinese folkloric tradition about how young boys from extremely poor families worked hard day and night, to read and write, and finally became great scholars or important writers/artists in history. These stories are still popular in today's children's literature.

[15] Private funding is the main resource for these schools, which consists of charity sponsorship, donations, as wells as tuition fees.

because almost all are unregistered and thus have no official status[16]. In large part, data about "migrant" or "underground" schools remain elusive. Take Beijing, for example: in 2000, there are approximately 500 migrant children schools in the city with over 95,000 enrolled students (Lv & Zhang, 2001). In general, the main characteristics of migrant children schools are defined as mobility and marginality[17].

Mobility

Mobility here means the frequent moving of schools, students, and teachers. The first aspect is the mobility of schools. Many migrant children schools do not have, or hard to obtain settled locations. If particular events take place, even temporarily, or if there are political efforts for "social reconstruction," these schools are expelled along with the migrant communities. Secondly, the mobility of students means that migrant children change their schools frequently along with the variety of their parents' working places and the family re-location. Generally, it is during the period of moving that migrant workers have to decide which city to relocate or what type of work to look for in other parts of the current city. One of those periods is after the Chinese New Year when most migrant workers end their temporary jobs for the previous year. The third and the most serious threat is the mobility of teachers. Most of these teachers come from other parts of the country—majority of them are also from rural areas and have not obtained official registration as permanent residents of the city. Their wages are incredibly low, just

[16] A large number of these schools founded after 2003 were almost impossible to attain official ratification, I will detailed this in the later chapter.

[17] The marginality here not only refers to the disqualification of the educational conditions of those schools, but also involves the marginality resulting from the lack of official sanctions of the schools and the social discrimination toward children from low-income migrant families.

reaching the minimum subsistence level to maintain a hard life, and their teaching work is extremely challenging (Han, 2001). Moreover, some headmasters treat these teachers with severe disrespect, which pushes teachers to change jobs as soon as they are able to. The fluidity of teachers has large influences on both the students' academic development and psychological characteristics, especially for children who also frequently move from place to place.

Marginality

Very few migrant children schools receive official recognition. Though some of schools have acquired a license from various local bureaus, they haven't been authorized with official approval or ratification as school. Such situations define the school as disqualified. However, for most migrant families, these unpermitted schools, which are not able to confer a graduate certificate due to their status, are the only places available for their school-age children to get very basic education, and such very basic education often comprises the children's entire school experience. Moreover, as underground schools, their educational procedures, such as curricular arrangements, school schedules, examinations, and tuition fees are excluded from local educational regulations. How the school function largely depends on the school owners themselves, and varies widely from school to school.

The lack of adequate official sanctions of migrant children schools makes it more difficult to improve the educational conditions for migrant children. There are wide variety administrative personnel to take responsibility for specific educational issues at different levels of education bureaus in China, but none of them, nor any other specific social service system, takes full responsibility for issues related to the education of

migrant children (Yang & Lu, 2006). So these children's endeavor to obtain education and their parents' efforts to gain education for them can only be considered as spontaneous behavior without support, resulting in stark inconsistencies.

Although the official guidelines of the Chinese Government for private schools suggest that local authorities should be "actively encouraging, rigorously supporting, giving appropriate guidance and strengthening management" (Beijing Municipal Government Circular, 2002), very few migrant children schools had been officially approved and granted legal status. In some districts more radical measures have been taken to outlaw these schools. Students, teachers, and parents of these schools live in constant fear of adverse and unpredictable government action (I will address this issue in detail in the later chapter).

Curriculum of Migrant Children Schools

Migrant children schools mostly follow the main curricula of public schools, including Chinese, mathematics, writing, physical education, English, fine arts, moral education, and social studies. But the textbooks used by Beijing's public schools have been specially designed for and oriented toward urban students (that is, students who are Beijing residents) as a target group, Migrant children have been disadvantaged by using those textbooks, as they are not familiar with the examples or illustrations employed in the textbooks[18], or cannot afford to do the experiments or surveys designed in the textbooks, which require additional materials.

[18] One example of examining how school texts, state ideology, and children's appearances produce new kinds of marginalities is Woronov, T.E. (2004). In the Eye of the Chicken: Hierarchy and Marginality Among Beijing's Migrant School Children. *Ethnography*, 5(3): 289-313.

According to the current education laws and regulations in China, since migrant children schools are not "properly registered" at the local education bureaus, their middle school graduate students cannot participate in the national standardized exam for high school entrance. However, the fact that students in migrant children schools cannot participate in that exam also gives these schools great leeway in curricular design as compared to that of public schools. It is arguable that this difference can be beneficial, as well as harmful to the interests of the students. On the one hand, the greater leeway in curriculum design means greater flexibility for teaching and learning in migrant children schools. Students are free from the coercion of memorizing the orthodox ideological doctrines permeating the "moral education" or "politics" courses, which are mandatory in the standardized exams. Moreover, due to the pressure of competitive high school entrance exams, many public schools have to frequently increase the studying hours of major subjects such as Chinese, English, Mathematics, and so on, which are tested in the entrance exam. This is at the expense of reducing hours or even cutting minor subjects such as fine arts, music, and physical education. Since migrant children schools are free from such pressure, not only can they afford to offer students a plenty of time on those minor courses, but they can also provide instructions in major subjects with curricula that are designed independently from the scope of the exam. On the other hand, however, the disadvantages with the lack of regulation are observable among migrant children schools as well. The most serious issue is the lack of systematicity in curriculum design and instruction. There is too much dependence on the capacities and preferences of individual teachers. Moreover, many teachers are not specialized in all the subjects they are

teaching[19], the fact that their curriculum design and instruction sometimes are not in accordance with systematic criterion, further exacerbates the problem of their inexperience and lack of professional development support.

The leeway in curricular design among migrant children schools in turn implies that each migrant children school has its own curricula in accordance with its particular condition of human and material resources. In one school I observed, the music teacher taught songs written by himself about the lives of students and families he works with, but it also indicates one challenge of designing curriculum being highly self-determined. The instruction of other subjects, similarly, varies in terms of the necessary facilities and the capacities and preferences of the teachers. The content of extracurricular activities is also conditioned by the resources each school has. For example, migrant children schools that have received extensive media attention and have relied on media exposure to gain vital financial support from the society have been organizing regular "public relations tasks," such as accepting television interviews for students and teachers as part of their extra-curricular activities. In contrast, schools that lack such connections or "public relations" resources, extracurricular activities for students are mostly limited within the local communities, or just inside the schools. Another example being the field trips organized by some schools largely come from active relationships with organizations, as well as museums, theme parks, and so on. Other schools without such resources to utilize or make connection rarely have field trip opportunity for their students or no such activity at all.

[19] In most of the Chinese primary schools, different subject is taught by different teachers. While in migrant children schools, teachers have to teach at least two different subjects. The same situation exists in many remote rural schools as well, largely because of the teacher shortage.

The Debate Over Migrant Children Schools

Critics and opponents of migrant children schools have emphasized their poor educational quality, the dilapidated school facilities, and the underpaid/undertrained teachers. Some argue that national requirements specify teachers at public schools have to receive professional teacher training from teacher academies. These requirements, however, are not enforced, or legally recognized at private migrant children schools. It has been reported that a great portion of the teachers at migrant children schools were not educated for the teaching profession so that the actual performance of the teachers was very inconsistent with the qualifications they claimed (Tan, 2005). Additionally, these "informal private schools" are mostly individually or family owned, located in poor, peripheral and recently settled areas around cities with weak infrastructure. The argument implies that school facilities were unpleasant, unhygienic and in areas where refuse remained uncollected and sewage disposal was inadequate. The dilapidated building conditions of migrant children schools have also been criticized as jeopardizing the safety of the students, and have therefore become another reason for the state authority to force those schools to close (Si & Yao, 2006). Because of the reported low educational "quality" and the poor "material conditions", migrant children schools have been referred by their opponents as "improper schools" (*bu zheng gui xue xiao*), in contrast to urban public schools that are "proper schools" (*zheng gui xue xiao*). Moreover, the teachers' salaries in migrant children schools are not regulated and are determined by the principals and owners. Most of the teachers are poorly paid, with half or less than that of the income of public teachers. The opponents claim that it results in their low motivation in general, which contributes to their low quality of teaching.

In contrast, supporters of the migrant children schools see them as having provided education where the government has failed to do so. Lack of political willingness from all levels of government to address the welfare of rural migrants has already left previous generations of migrant children without access to education. The emerging of migrant children schools has filled this gap left by the government. These schools have managed to provide affordable education for poverty-stricken rural and migrant children, and their services have helped to prevent child labor and illiteracy.

Moreover, some advocates point out that the migrant children schools do not merely perform the role of providing education. Perhaps even more importantly, these schools also function as informal social welfare institutions. They offer shelter for street children, provide extended childcare for many migrant families, and look after children who do not have the proper papers or who are "out of plan" because their births are "illegal" according to the One Child population policy. In many aspects, migrant children schools can also be seen as community centers. They facilitate family reunion and provide a channel through which migrants can seek help for themselves and reach out to each other. They also bring together migrants from all regions and ethnic backgrounds across the country, helping each other to make the transition into city life. Perhaps most important of all, they try to make sure both boys and girls from the migrant families have the same access to school. In addition, the schools can be a channel through which migrant communities can communicate their concerns, as a collective voice. The development of such a collective voice makes it possible to begin to address the social discrimination and maltreatment of migrant children, as well as moving towards the possibility of more profound transformation.

Whose Responsibility?

The right to education is among the basic, inalienable rights of Chinese citizens, as mentioned in China's Constitution. The current Compulsory Education Law prescribes that "compulsory education is a welfare offered to children of the right age" (Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China, 2006, Article 1 Chapter I, Article 12 Chapter II). The protection of the right to education is not only fundamental to the promotion of national literacy, but also an index of equality in a civilized society. However, belonging to the most vulnerable group in the society, migrant children, whether came to cities with their parents or born in cities, are suffering the risk of not being educated at all. Their educational rights have predominantly been denied. The protection of equal education should be the greatest priority for all levels of government. The central government should not leave the entire responsibilities to local governments, nor should it promote neoliberal policies, leaving the responsibility for education to a "free" market, depriving children from migrant families their educational opportunities. Meanwhile, local governments are obliged to provide opportunities and support for children in their precincts, regardless of where the children come from, to obtain a normal education.

In the era of planned economy, due to the low rate of population mobility, the educational system closely followed the principle of permanent residence regulation (Wang, Zhang, & Liu, 2005). That is, one must receive compulsory education in his/her registered permanent residence. Local governments' educational funding was also budgeted according to this principle. The rapid transformation of the economic and social conditions, however, has resulted in the fact that migration and transplanting have

become normal aspects of people's living and working, especially for those who hold the rural residence registry. The previous principle of permanent residence regulation no longer fits the ongoing transformation (Zhou, 2005). It is not the excessive demand, but the responsibility of governments, to adjust regulatory systems, including public financial system and social welfare system, to protect regular people's equal rights to migration, residence, education and other social welfare.

The unfair distribution of welfare has also resulted in the tension between urban and rural residents. The dream of earning enough money in cities to buy their children and themselves urban permanent residencies has become one of the most important motivations of the mass movement of rural residents into large cities. This has led to urban residents' fear for the partition of welfare that they have been entitled. As a result, urban residents tend to collectively exclude migrant workers in both psychological and institutional ways[20]. For example, in a large scale survey done by researchers in the early 2000s, a huge number of Beijing citizens do not agree that migrant children should have the same right to education as urban children in the same city. And a majority believes that migrant children should even pay a higher tuition fee for studying in cities as compared to registered urban children (Wang, Zhang, & Liu, 2005). In a survey on issues of medical insurance and pension, urban residents gave similar results.

Due to population mobility, geographic segmentation in China has been slowly transforming, but psychological and social cognizant segmentations remain. Sociologists used to describe Chinese society as a dual social structure (Li, 2006), but it is actually better described as a triple social system (Li, 2004): urban and rural residents, as well as

[20] On social closure as exclusion and its collectivist form, see Parkin, (1974,1979).

the current migrant workers in the city. Migrant families face a dilemma, because they neither regard themselves as urban citizens, nor do they continue to hold onto their rural identities. This can be seen in particular with migrant children, who view themselves as isolated. The former segmentation by region and welfare system has resulted in a hegemonic understanding that people are unequal based on the location and circumstances of their birth[21], and, as a result, some do not even qualify to reside in the city (Tao, Xu, & Zhang, 2004).

These tensions also have a significant impact on the ways of which migrant families approach schooling for their children. Research on the factors of migrant children and their parents in Beijing of *choosing* schools[22] (Shi, 2005) indicates that although the financial reasons have played an important role in migrant families' school choices, it is not the only determinant. Their sense of identity also greatly influenced their choices. Coming from rural areas, migrants and their children find it extremely difficult to integrate themselves into urban society, and some become defensive toward urban residents, and highly sensitive to the perceived contemptuous attitudes toward them. There are two main reasons for why many migrant parents prefer to send their children to migrant children schools rather than public schools. One is the relatively lower tuition fee of migrant children schools, and the other is that at least their children are free from discrimination within these schools, can obtain a stronger sense of self-esteem and

[21] The language of "class" is scattered in China after 1949, as Pun (2005) states that "…the history of class in China is doubly displaced, first by the Chinese state-party and second by the market". But class analysis is not simply "outdated", it can be restructured into understanding various relationships in Chinese society, the discourse of place of origin being one of them.

[22] Here, "choosing" means making a decision that costs the whole family the least, both financially and socially.

develop health relationships with their peers.

Migrant children schools may not offer the most high quality education for their students, but without these schools many migrant children cannot even have the opportunity to gain access to school. It is unreasonable to simply label these schools as ineligible educational institutions, close them down, and expel those who work in them. As many migrant parents, teachers, as well as sympathetic researchers proposed for years, perhaps one solution would be to find a way to promote policies that foster these schools to meet the adjusted qualification, reinforce guidance for their school administrations, and establish special institutions to regulate the use of much-needed funds.

Theoretical Framework

As soon as I finished my undergraduate degree, my intensive involvement in teaching and working with these children drove me to continue graduate study and participate in several academic research programs. However, I found that there were great conflicts between the policies and their implementation, on the one hand, and my observation and reflection when teaching in migrant children schools, on the other hand. One of the academic projects I participated was the research on New Curriculum Standard Reform. The official attitude and orientation embedded in the New Curriculum Standard Reform is the assumption that the qualities of elementary and secondary education can be, and can only be, promoted by the means of an elite- oriented national curriculum, comprises of more burdensome specific teaching objectives and more and stricter exams and qualification standards. Such reforms are not only inefficient in improving the educational prospect of migrant children, but also push them into worse

conditions. Their educational circumstances are challenging, as they receive limited educational resources, and schooling is discontinuous because migrant parents are mostly irregularly employed and their families drift from city to city. With a lack of sufficient resources and favorable circumstances, students attending migrant children schools in the suburban slum districts can hardly meet current national standards, not to mention the higher standards of a new curriculum. With the conflict between aspiration to change fortune and barriers in real life, migrant children will be, and have already been, pushed to the edge of the society[23]. It is the life of children and the struggles of their teachers and parents, as well as the progress that happens in schools, that reminds me to begin documenting. My research, which comes out of this context, is part of the ongoing work involving the development of a greater understanding of the lives and identities of migrant worker parents and educators in contemporary China.

There have been a number of important analyses focusing on the impact of social movements on education and educational reform. Prominent studies have provided sociological research addressing the power of ordinary people coming together to create change in their communities to reverse the downward spiral of educational problems (Anyon, 2005; Ball, 2006; Binder, 2002; Gandin, 2002; Sandler, 2009), historical accounts of describing the challenges and rewards of community organizing (Apple & Buras, eds., 2006; Horton, Kohl, & Kohl, 1998; Walker, 1993; Payne & Strickland, 2008; Reese, 2002), and cultural politics analyses of recognizing the democratic values of

[23] One of the important analyses of the contradictions between official policies that are supposedly meant to help people and what actually happens in the realities of poor people's lives is Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006). Even though it does not specifically focus on educational problems, it portrays in very illuminating ways what happens when seemingly "helpful" policies are made by governments with little realization of the conditions in which poor people and migrants live.

collectively promoting the public interest instead of private benefits (Apple, 1996, 2006,; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Williams, 1989; Willis, 2008)—all of which offer rich understandings of struggles taking place in schools and around issues of education.

These discussions have contributed to the development of particularly useful concepts which explain why and how collective actions are/may be mobilized. In addition to analyzing the resources and strategies movements utilize, this body of research works to identify both the barriers and the opportunities that activists, stakeholder groups, and individuals encounter as they attempt to bring about reform. The conflicts and complexities within social movements are often recognized as resulting from political and cultural struggles stemming from strategic compromises among various stakeholders (Giugni, AcAdam & Tilly, eds., 1999). Hence, it is crucial to document the processes and effects of the various and contradictory elements of social movements—specifically, the ways in which contestations are mediated, compromised, accepted, and used in different ways by different groups (Apple, 2006).

My dissertation research follows in this tradition by examining the dynamics of schooling for migrant children in China. This work pays close attention to the organizational battles against social and political constraints, in addition to focusing on the mobilization of resources in the development of collective action. As I attempt to demonstrate, all of these elements—social, cultural, political, and economic factors—are integrally connected. This study works to create greater understanding of the types of struggles in which parents and teachers in the migrant communities are involved, given their efforts to provide children with access to schooling.

Applying social movement theories to Chinese contexts—specifically those in

which migrant schools are forming—provide spaces for a politics of recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1997) which has been denied to migrant workers and their families for over two decades. By documenting the history of migrant schools, sharing the stories of migrant families, and identifying the very real effects of socioeconomic changes in China, this study works to provide a greater possibility for official recognition of the collective efforts of parents and teachers in migrant communities. It further contributes to existing attempts to ensure that the children of migrant workers receive equitable, high quality education in officially sanctioned schools.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is two-fold. The first aim is to describe the basis of educational problems faced by the children of migrant workers in China. In order to understand the educational, social, and political transformations that are taking place, I intend to examine questions and concerns about educational issues relating to the emergence of the unofficial schools for the children of migrant workers. Secondly, this work tries to develop a greater understanding of the lives and identities of migrant families and of the educators working in "migrant" or "underground" schools. In other words, I want to learn how the lives and identities of migrant workers' families have been shaped by rapidly changing social, political, and economic contexts in China.

Based on these purposes, this study's central research questions are:

1. What are the reasons for these parents and educators to establish the schools independent of public support? How did the schools form?

2. What have the parents, teachers, and administrators been experiencing within

the migrant children schools movement? What are some of the strengths and limitations they believe about their work around migrant children schools?

3. What is the relationship between these schools and the migrant communities? What is the relationship between these schools and larger society outside of the communities?

Organization of the Dissertation

With the interviews, observations, and extensive archival research, I hope to integrate the history and social mobilization into my narrative of the migrant children schools. The organization of the chapters therefore reflects the on-going progression of this social and educational transformation, rather than a single scenario of each individual school.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature as it relates to the social movements theories. I pay particular attention to the research on mobilization and how researchers theoretically and methodologically study the dynamics of mobilization towards actions. Moreover, I examine the frameworks that provide the foundations for how collective identities are formed as people participate in supporting movements. Chapter 3 presents my research methodology, and connects the theoretical frameworks to my methodological design to investigate the research questions.

Beginning with Chapter 4, I move to detail the history and the current situation of the migrant children schools in Beijing. I trace how a distinct historical educational culture nourished migrant children schools' current social and educational practices. I show how the Chinese government attempt to transform rural migrants and their children into a new kind of subject by revising policies to monitor and discipline them through

different practices. In the meantime, schools in migrant communities adopt strategies to negotiate alternative ways for migrant children's education. In Chapter 5, I examine the changing social, gender and other social relations, explore multiple-level social conflicts and resistances within the schools, highlight the instability from the state and the male-dominant society, and analyze the forces behind the challenges. Chapter 6 documents the subsequent return of migrant children schools in some urban communities after the expulsion in the summer of 2011. It focuses on how these returning migrant children schools teachers and parents rebuilt their school and communal life.

In the conclusion Chapter 7 I discuss the future of the migrant children and migrant children schools in a period of deeper structural transformations in urban China. It hopes to suggest the larger implications of this study for rethinking social structure, educational foundations and political possibility in contemporary China.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

According to most social movement researchers, a social movement is "a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power-holders, or cultural beliefs, and practices" (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003, p. 3). The central question around which this chapter is formed is how the struggles and movement toward providing schools for migrant children have been shaped and shaping the changing social, political, and economic contexts in China. Some observers may argue that the development of migrant children schools is not significant enough and is too obscure to be considered a social movement. However, the struggles of migrant children schools which are generated from below and serve to confront institutional inequity have been inspiring a variety of protest activities and long-lasting organizational actions. The schools originally started as "supplementary" to public school systems rather than directly challenging state policies. Over time, they have made strong influences on the public discourse about the education for migrant children and have been able to gradually affect the readjustment of state policies toward migrant communities. The emergence and earlier existence of migrant children schools might not be considered as a movement, but the development of the various struggles and resistance around them influenced the social dynamics and facilitated the formation of a collective identity and social solidarity among people who are involved. From a broader point of view, the development of the collective actions on schooling for migrant children over time are very much like those activities that have been considered as social movements. This point is made clearly by Binder (2002) when she argued for the marginal challenges in her study as social movements:

> Given the explicit rhetoric of injustice that each set of challengers used, social movements research beckoned for a role in the examination of these school battles. In their sense of having been excluded from the public school system, in their claims of inequity, in their collective identity as people struggling for the rights of their children, and in their sense of efficacy in being able to correct these multiple wrongs,…sounded very much like "social movements" that struggle against entrenched institutions. (p.10)

Following the rich literature of social movement analyses that has been applied to educational research, it is crucial to keep in mind that this theoretical framework should not be separated from the local contexts. To understand the experiences of migrant children schools as the development of a special form of social movement, it is important to analyze the contexts of which they are emerged. The major reason is that the theories on social movements, such as the theories based upon the civil rights movement, feminist social movement, and the environmental movements, are largely inspired by and used to explain the movements that have come up in western societies (Charles & Campling, 2000; Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly, 1999; Goodwin & Jasper, 2003; Kriesberg, 1989; Meyer, 2007). To develop the understanding of the ways in which movements differ between countries, particular attention should be given to the different political and cultural structures, namely the conditions and circumstances that led to the formation and development of the actions. The lessons learned from the study of movements in other countries—from the Landless Peoples Movement in South Africa to the variety of grassroots movements in Latin American (see, for example, Purushothaman & Jaeckel,

2000; Jelin, Zammit, & Thomson, 1990; Stephen, 1993; 1995; 1997) —have shed the light on the application of social movement theories to disparate contexts.

Civil Society and Public Sphere in China

Diani (1992; 2004; Diani & McAdam, 2003; Diani & Bison, 2004) has argued that social movements are "a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action that are involved in conflict relations with clearly identified opponents, linked by dense informal networks, and share a distinct collective identity" (della Porta & Diani, 2006, p.20). In western discussion, this process is tied up with that of "civil society." Civil society can be conceptualized as the realm of organized activity outside the immediate control of the state but not entirely contained within the private sphere of the family. It includes economic activity, voluntary associations, religious groups, and literary societies, etc (Alexander, 2006). Building upon reflections of the work of Habermas (1989), Calhoun and others (1992, 1994) pointed out, civil society includes a public sphere in which a rational-critical discourse can take place about how the interests of different groups are related to each other and to the actions of the state for the democratic purposes. The discourse of public sphere and civil society address three basic questions (Calhoun, 1994):

1. What counts as or defines a political community?
2. What knits society together or provides for social integration?
3. What opportunities are there for changing society by voluntary collective action or democratic decision-making, and how can that action be organized on the basis of rational-critical discourse? (p. 193-194)

In China, however, the state not only maintained the major control over the public space and limited non-state organizations but also "penetrated the private realm of the family". The central government can "define the political community, provide for social integration, and determine what opportunities people are to have for collective action" (p. 194). Nevertheless, the reform era in China has been characterized by the emergence of a civil society, a realm of social organization and activity not directly under state control. Even though it is still minimized and extremely fragmented when compared to its western counterpart, it is made possible that individuals or non-governmental organizations gradually exercise initiatives and make decisions outside the scope of the state; and the discussion of the public sphere raises the possibility that people can "knit themselves together in ways not directed by the state, whether through social movements, the formation of political parties, the exercise of cultural persuasion through the media, or other means." (Calhoun, 1994, p. 194)

It is worth recognizing that the concept of civil society has been absent historically in Chinese society, even the terms such as civil, society, or public, carry different meanings in the Chinese context. A number of Chinese researchers have used the concept of civil society and public sphere to discuss the social and political changes in modern China[1], especially after the 1989 Tiannanmen Square student protest movement[2]. However, they differ on their definition of the extent to which civil society

[1] See, for example, Calhoun, 1994; Goldman & Perry, 2002; Ho & Edmonds, 2008; Kwong, 2004; Madsen, 1993; Perry & Selden, 2003.

[2] There is an influential symposium on "civil society" and "public sphere" in a 1993 special issue of the journal *Modern China*, Vol 19, No. 2. Scholars debated about whether these concepts are too western-specific to discuss issues in China. See for example, Wakeman, F. (1993). The civil society and public sphere debate: Western reflections on Chinese political culture. Modern China, 19(2), 108-138. Rowe, W.

has taken root in China. This is partly because they focus on different aspects of meanings to the term and consequently apply different criteria to measure developments in this context. The concept of the public sphere has similarly been debatable. In fact, scholars have criticized that Habermas's initial definition of the public sphere[3] was a "bourgeois sphere" that in reality exclude certain categories of people, such as working class and women[4], and was fraught with problems of social, economic, cultural, even linguistic inequality (Calhoun, 1992). In response, Habermas later recognized the internal dynamics of the public sphere, the possibility of multiple public spheres, as well as the conflicts and interactions among them (Habermas, 1992). In China studies, the reconstructed concept of the public sphere has been more welcomed and recognized. Some scholars argued that it not only could be found in China's historical context, but also has been transformative in China's experiences of modernity (Yang, 2004). While other proposed to focus on the public or public/social space, rather than the public sphere (Yang, 2002).

The purpose of this study is not to engage in a debate on the development and transformation of the terms, nor to argue how to articulate different interpretations of the concepts of civil society and public sphere in contemporary China. However, the social movement theories framework of this study is deeply shaped by and built upon these

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T. (1993). The problem of" civil society" in late imperial China. Modern China, 19(2), 139-157. Rankin, M. B. (1993). Some observations on a Chinese public sphere. Modern China, 19(2), 158-182.

[3] In Habermas's initial definition, public sphere is "A domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed." Access to this domain is "open in principle to all citizens," who may "assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely." (Habermas, 1989)

[4] See for example, Fraser, N. (1992). *Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy.* pp. 109-142; and other critics and discussions in Calhoun, C. J. (eds.). *Habermas and the public sphere.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

discussions on civil society and public sphere in China. As many of them recognize that in the Chinese context it is necessary to view the state as an active factor. Meanwhile, societies in China, no matter how one distinguishes them essentially from the counterparts in the West, still have effects and are unwilling to be overwhelmed by state power. In other words, there is relative autonomy from the state enjoyed by social institutions whether they are formal or informal organizations, social groups or individuals[5]. The autonomy is relative because "every formation in the civil society is in constant interaction with the state as well as other social institutions in the civil sphere, each trying to shape and influence the other" (Kwong 2004). Researchers have examined employment, migration, education, family planning, religion, unions and other spontaneous and even state-led activities, organizations and individuals with no apparent direct state connection in contemporary China[6]. They captured the negotiations and documented the reconfiguration of the different interests and activities, as well as limited social space and uncertain conditions for which many social actors have struggled in contemporary Chinese society. My aim here is to follow these works in my study and map out the dynamic relationship between the state and society as I examine the movement of migrant children schools.

[5] See for example, White, G. (1993). Prospects for civil society in China: a case study of Xiaoshan city. The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, (29), 63-87.

[6] See for example Brook & Frolic, 1997; Flower & Leonard, 1996; Lin, 1999; Kwong, 1997.

Adapting Social Movements in Context

Adapting the social movement theories to approach the understanding of migrant children schools in relation to the broader context, there are four key concepts provide insights into studying the social dynamics and mobilization strategies towards the education of migrant children in China. The first concept that I focus on is Mobilization potential. The second idea is Social Capital/Networks. The third concept is Resources. And the fourth of these concepts is Collective Identity. These four concepts implicate the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of the migrant children school movement, but they are not separately characterizing the activities: together, these four concepts guide my thinking and help me theorize the answers to the questions of my research: Why do people participate in supporting migrant children schools? What are their motivations and emotions? How do people become persuaded to participate? What are the existing networks that link people and organizations? How do other people understand migrant workers' grievances and come to feel tied to the movement? And, very importantly, how are these aspects all linked together?

Mobilization Potential

Mobilization potential refers to the people in a society who could be mobilized by a social movement. It includes those who take a positive attitude toward a particular social movement, that is, the willingness to become engaged in "unconventional forms of political behavior" (Barnes & Kaase, 1979). The attitudes toward a movement involve the means or the goals of the movement (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). With respect to attitudes toward the goals, people who are part of the mobilization potential will consider participating in movement activities, even if these do not appear to be in their material

interests. This theory analyzes the motivation from the individual level, which serves as the necessary conditions for becoming a participant in a social movement. Applying this concept to the migrant children schools movement, mobilization potential helps us frame the answers to the questions of Why do people participate in supporting migrant children schools? And, what are their motivations and emotions when doing so?

However, scholars also argue that the mobilization potential of a social movement is not identical to the social categories that will benefit by achievement of the goals of the movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Jenkins & Perrow, 1977). That is to say, even though they are strongly connected, people who are part of the mobilization potential are not yet the group of people who share a common identity and/or a set of common goals.

Among all the establishers of migrant children schools in Beijing, for instance, over one-third of them are college graduates and/or social activists, most of whom are not from the migrant communities themselves. But they are taking on the task of providing educational opportunity for migrant children, just like all the other migrant parents who start out new journeys as teachers/principals to support their children. Another mobilized and committed group is the large number of volunteers who dedicate a substantial amount of time, expertise, and energy to help maintain and organize migrant children schools. Their actions will not necessarily benefit themselves, and sometimes the committed actions are costly in terms of personal sacrifices. Giugni explains the cultural underpinnings behind their commitment: "Mobilization…may result in a strengthening of internal solidarity and identities, the creation of countercultures, shifts in public attitudes toward a given issue, and so forth" (Giugni, 1999, p. xxiii). This point is further emphasized by Apple (2006) in his analysis on the importance of identity politics:

> For social movements to prosper, they must provide identities that constantly revivify the reasons for participating in them. They must, hence, have an emotional economy in which the costs of being "different" are balanced by the intense meanings and satisfactions of acting in opposition to dominant social norms and values. This doesn't happen all at once. People are changed by participating in oppositional movements… (p. 208)

As I mentioned above, participants in the migrant children schools movement come from diverse social groups. Therefore, the collective identity in this movement does not come naturally to people, and it is as much a result as a cause of further activities. In response to the formation of collective identity, there are two sets of concepts which also need to be taken into consideration: (a) the importance of networks for reaching potential participants, and (b) the influences of public resources for generating motivation.

Social capital, networks, and *guanxi*

Social Capital/Networks is defined by Bourdieu as the complex of "relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" in which social actors—both individuals and organizations—are embedded. It refers to institutionalized network relations that gather actual or potential resources (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, the degree of social capital an individual has is related to the amount of social capital that he or she has already possessed and can be accumulated through conversion with other forms of capital. He pointed out that social capital is connected with group membership and social networks, "the volume of social capital possessed by a given agent…depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 249),

"it is a quality produced by the totality of the relationships between actors, rather than merely a common 'quality' of the group" (as cited in Siisiainen, 2003, p. 192)

Other researchers replenish this concept by viewing networks as their most important component (Coleman, 1990), as well as by emphasizing the sentiments of solidarity and mutual trust associated with them, "… networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved" (Putnam, 1995). Among them, is Robert Putnam's concept of social capital that came out of his work on Italy's governmental reforms (Putnum, 1993). Siisiainen (2003) pointed out the central components of Putnam's concept of social capital:

> …expresses the sociological essence of communal vitality. A solution to the problem of common action and opportunism presupposes the development of voluntary collective action, and it is connected to the inherited social capital in the community. Forms of social capital are general moral resources of the community, and they can be divided into three main components: first, trust, and more generally 'positive' values with respect to development; second, social norms and obligations, and third, social networks of citizens' activity (p. 184)

Putnam's work "preserves many of the ideas of integration". His concepts of social capital and trust are "directed to questions about mechanisms that strengthen the integration of the values of society, and solidarity and togetherness; and that create consensus and sustain the stable development of society" (Siisiainen 2003, P. 200), but he does not discuss conflicts between interests, nor does he mention the conflicts between civil society and the state. Bourdieu's concept of social capital, on the contrary, emphasizes the power function. From his point of view, social capital is a resource in the

social struggles and they are carried out in different fields, because the ability to convert capital and hence accumulate capital is field-specific (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), field is "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (p.97). Occupying a specific position in such a network, an individual interacts with other individuals whose relative position also corresponds to his or her possessed capital and the ability to convert that capital in order to gain an advantage in the struggle to dominate a field. Bourdieu's concept shed lights on how to examine social conflicts or struggles in forms of power and domination and to deal with opposing interests. But he also speaks of the "capital of recognition", and the "sacrifice of selfish interests that is recognized as legitimate and of universal values" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Thus, I focus on the connected parts (recognition and trust) of these two approaches and view such social relations within the process of collective actions. That is to say, the development of social networks depends both on individual emotions and feelings, as well as on the institutional integration supported by organizations. As many social movement theorists argued, the mobilization process relies on the networks of solidarity (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987), and individual involvement in collective action depends upon identification with other members of the social groups (Diani, 1997). People are much more inclined to join the movement when they are approached by those whom they trusted on other grounds (Gerlach & Hine, 1970). Moreover, the formation of networks also involves forming coalitions with organizations (Fernandez & McAdam, 1989), because the formation of an association can create a sense of solidarity and establish a concrete base for the growth of solidarity among a mass of persons, as well as

institutionalizing different forms of capital that are being accumulated (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, the formation of an association can be seen as "collective and individual strategies of investment aimed at the creation of permanent networks of relations that will make possible the accumulation of social capital" (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 193).

The concept of guanxi. Before we move onto the third concept, there is one important point worth clarifying when borrowing the concept of social capital/network to examine how they work in the Chinese context: the significance of *guanxi* in local contexts. The *guanxi*, or personal connections, is "a historically evolved regime of kinship and ethic power" (Ong, 1999, p. 116). More specifically, it not only can be applied to "husband-wife, kinship, and friendship relations", but also has the implication of "social connections, dyadic relationships that are based implicitly (rather than explicitly) on mutual interest and benefit" (Yang 1994, P.1). As Yang (1994) has documented, the practice of *guanxi* in the Chinese society has a profound and long history. The center of *guanxi* distance was relationships among family members. Beyond members of a family or close kin, the 'bases' for *guanxi* – the shared conditions among two or more individuals or groups serving as principles for their forming a relationship of trust— have varied historically and regionally.

The range of *guanxi* bases in Chinese society could be understood as being subsumed under the following categories (Yang, 1994): "family and kinship, neighbors and native-place ties, non-kin relations of equivalent status, and non-kin superior-subordinate relations" (p. 111)[7]. A particularly important *guanxi* base was sharing the

[7] For detailed explanations of each category, see Yang, M.M. (1994). Gift, Favors and Banquets. p 112-119.

same native place[8], *tongxiang*, for this allowed persons who had migrated from their native rural places to cities elsewhere in China or overseas to conduct business or serve in communities, to form conditions of trust between them that ultimately could be assured by family, kin and lineage[9] members in the native place (Skinner & Baker, 1977, p 541-545). Other bases for *guanxi* (sometimes might overlap with native place) are *tongshi*, coworker or colleague, the shard workplace; *tongxiao*, alumni, a shared college or academy; and *tongxue*, classmate, a shared educational experience; and even *tongxing*, a shared-surname that indicates common descent from the same ancestor. The word *tong*, meaning same or shared, is used to "designate a whole set of close personal relationships that serve as *guanxi* bases". The emphasis on "*tong*" or familiarity implicates the importance of a shared identity or shared personal experiences (Yang, 1994, p 111), especially when some of the relationships configured from these *guanxi* bases are between equals while others are between people in unequal status.

Moreover, it is generally recognized that there are "affective sentiments" between the social relations in Chinese societies, which could be recognized as *yiqi*, *ganqing*, and *renqing* (Yang, 1994, p 119-123). *Yiqi* (loyalty, trust, aid) is an important concept attached to friendship. It describes the affective sentiment found in non-kin peer

[8] The boundaries of the native place ties are quite complicated to set a specific definition. There are many different ways of defining a common place of origin: by village, township, county, region, or province, depending on who are the people in the alliance and what are the purposes to set the alliance.

[9] There are several influential anthropologies of lineage studies in Chinese society, documenting the roles and functions of lineage in Chinese families, villages, and different regions. See for example, Freeman, M. (1965). *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*. University of London: Athone Press, and Lin, Y. H. (1947). *The golden wing: a sociological study of Chinese familism*. Kegan Paul. They were parts of the China study conducted at a very different time in history. However, as a native from the southeastern region these studies have focused on, I found them quite fascinating.

relations[10]. *Ganqing* (emotional feeling) means the emotional commitment in long-standing and intimate social bonds. "*Ganqing* applies to a broader range of social relationships than *yiqi* and tends to emphasize affective and emotional identification rather than duty, loyalty, or obligation" (p. 121). *Renqing* (observance of proper social form) involves less degree of affection. An important aspect of its rationale is the notion of the necessity of reciprocity, obligation, and indebtedness (p. 122). *Guanxi* can only be active by employing the bonds of kinship and friendship as well as adopting the language and ritual of *yiqi*, *ganqing* and *renqing*. They are implying the three elements in the art of *guanxi*, which are ethics, tactics, and etiquette. All three elements intertwine with and merge into one another in the course of practice (Yang, 1994, p 119-145). The *guanxi* system, as invoked and practiced, is a mix of instrumentalism (fostering flexibility and the mobility of capital and personnel), and humanism ("helping out" relatives and hometown folk) (Ong, 1999, p 116-117).

The reason why I brought the concept of *guanxi* into the discussions here is that many key elements of the concept of social capital/networks in the western societies can find their counterparts in the Chinese context. Moreover, *guanxi* provides an alternative way to look at civil society in China, as being encompassed by the state, rather than entirely external to the state. As Yang (1994) put in:

[10] Yang (1994) talked about how *yiqi* is closely connected to the bonding among relations of peers within the same gender. However, given the time of her fieldwork, the early 1980s, I would argue that the gender separation has been improved in work places, schools, and many other places where the peer relationships are developed; such loyalties could be found among friends of both genders. While at the same time, I do not want to deny the spirit of such ethic is still mainly preserved in gender-specific circles. I will come back to this point as I analyze the networks among female teachers in migrant children schools.

> …in China, perhaps we should not expect an autonomous social realm to arise only outside the state in the form of independent and oppositional group associations. It can also be found in the fluid flows of relationships and networks operating both within and without the state according to different ethics and principles. (p. 309)

This points back to what we discussed earlier the relationship of civil society and the state. Yang (1989) argued that the practice of accumulating networks capital in contemporary China as a way to bypass state regulations. The traditional social networks of *guanxi* provide the very social basis on which rural migrants organize their social and economic lives (See Goodman 1995. Skinner 1976, Zhang 2001). *Guanxi* allows the mobilization of people in networks to achieve different sets of goals, on scales local and beyond, that crisscrosses and penetrates the institutional distinctions between state and civil society.

However, *guanxi*, as the social connection based on cultural ethics, is also mixed with patriarchal sentiment. When looking at the positive role of family and native-place networks, there is unavoidable "micro-politics of gender, ethnicity and other inequalities" (Greenhalgh, 1994) within such relations. *Guanxi* practices, even though contain an alternative ways of operation as people negotiate his or her way through social or political obstacles by weaving webs of personal relationships to form their own linkages, are not aimed at replacing the state structures or the relational ethics. One significant aspect of the development of migrant children school movement is the ongoing negotiations and subversions that are challenging the embedded cultural hierarchy. Male activists or principals no longer monopolized the leading roles of advocating and

representing the needs of the communities; female teachers and activists have merged to form different forms of social coalition and obtain extended social capitals in their work of supporting families and schools. It is when the networks among people move beyond the existing *guanxi*, and purposefully address the embedded inequalities within such relationships, that we argue the formation of respectful and sustainable social capitals is in place among actors who are involved in the movement for the education of migrant children.

In the development of the migrant children schools movement, the initial ways of reaching out to supporters is to mobilize three kinds of *guanxi* networks, which are kinship, native place networks, and friendship. At most of the migrant children schools, the first groups of staff are either family members or friends who were from the same/close regions, and they also intended to recruit a high proportion of people who were already friends or relatives. As the different stage of the movement emerged, volunteers and nongovernmental organizations eventually play a more significant role in the later development of migrant children schools. Some migrant children schools established long-term cooperation with nongovernmental organizations, volunteer groups, and student associations in the universities by mobilizing persons they were familiar with, and who also hold positions in these groups. Others organized their own forms of semi-registered or unregistered voluntary organizations within the communities to support the operations of the schools and the work of teachers, especially the well-being of female teachers, as well as other specific needs of families of students and teachers. The original networks developed into a more structured and organized base embodied collective forms of capitals and make possible the recognition of their struggles in society.

Resources

Besides existing networks which link people and organizations, how to use more resources to help other people understand migrant workers' grievances and be persuaded to participate is also one of the central questions on strategizing the migrant children school movement. Resources are understood as money and labor. To sustain themselves over time, social movements need resources: money and physical or professional capacities (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). To obtain what they need, social movements also devote considerable time to multiple strategic tasks besides protest actions. These include mobilizing supporters, neutralizing or transforming mass publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets. Resource aggregation requires some minimal form of organization, implicitly or explicitly, some researchers focus more on "entrepreneurial mobilization" (McCathy & Zald, 1973) than do those work within the traditional perspective. As Jenkins (1983) pointed out, traditionally the central problem in the study of social movements "had been explaining individual participation in social movements. The major formulations—mass society theory, relative deprivation, collective behavior theory—pointed to sudden increases in individual grievances generated by the 'structural strains' of rapid social change" (p. 528). The resource mobilization perspective[11] emphasizes the interaction between resource availability, the preexisting organization of preference structures, and entrepreneurial attempts to meet preference demand (Oberschall, 1973).

[11] The resource mobilization theory of social movements, see Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978; McCarthy & Zald 1973, 1977; Gamson 1975; Jenkins 1983.

However, after exploring the resource mobilization arguments, I decided to still include the traditional perspectives, especially the ways of looking at resources in context rather than considering they are generated and gained entirely by social movement organizations. One of the major reasons is that resource mobilization theory obscures the emphasis on feelings and grievances, avoids the activities of individuals in the analyses, but focuses on large-scale mobilizations (Cohen, 1985). In the movement of migrant children schools, there are indeed formally structured organizations which are quite persuasive at mobilizing resources. But those informally movement structures are more long-lasting in terms of mounting sustained challenges. Moreover, "these new perspectives emphasized the continuities between movement and institutionalized actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic problems confronted by movements, and the role of movements as agencies for social change." (Jenkins 1983, p. 528) which are extremely limited elements given China's political context.

As some China studies documented (Ho & Edmonds, 2008), organizations who are working within the migrant communities in China, or any other limited social spaces, cover a wide spectrum, from more or less independent non-governmental organizations (NGO) to government organized non-governmental organizations (GONGO), and student associations within educational institutions, as well as unregistered voluntary grassroots organizations[12]. They are engaged in a broad range of activities, which include public education and community outreach to research and advocate for the well-beings of the migrant communities. Organizations reach out to various forms of media, from traditional media, such as television, newspapers, magazines, radio, to new platforms with the

[12] See Appendix A for the diagram of the relationships between NGOs and GONGOs in China.

development of technology, such as online social networks, public forum websites, blogs; many of them publish newsletters and monthly or quarterly reports, some publish edited volumes and books[13]. Their efforts have gained great attention from the mass media, and this eventually affected the public discourse about the education of migrant children and even further impacted the adoption of state-policies; however, the personal struggles and the emotional experiences of collective action through time are more crucial to the understanding of the movement specifically, especially when we look at the dilemmas of the movement.

Dilemmas occur in the choice of tactics, since what may achieve one aim may conflict with achieving another (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). One debate between the supporters and the opponents of the migrant children schools is the strategy the movement uses to attract media coverage. When the reporters come, there are always certain migrant children schools or principals who get the attention. It might be true that "by focusing on some well-known individuals, it will attract more attention and support" (Ryan, 1991). This preference by the media brings great resources to the movement, but also causes new forms of disproportionality within the movement. Thus the analyses on mobilizing resources from both organizational and individual levels are more likely to reveal the politics and power relations behind the collective action. This brings us to consider these crucial questions: How do other people understand migrant workers' grievances and how do they then come to feel tied to the movement? Furthermore, whose perspectives are recognized and heard within the movement and why is this so?

[13] I will discuss how they mobilize different forms of media in details as I analyze the history and development of migrant children schools.

Collective identity

The following concept continues the discussion on revealing the social relations within movements, it corresponds to the emergence of new networks of trust among movement actors, interacting within complex social environments, and is often linked to "a *crisis* in one sector of the system or another, the crisis denoting breakdown of the functional and integrative mechanisms of a given set of social relations" (Melucci, 1996, p. 22). That is the concept of collective identity. Collective identity is strongly associated with recognition and the "creation of connectedness" (Pizzorno 1978). It brings with it a sense of "common purpose" and "shared commitment" to a cause, which "enables single activists and/or organizations to regard themselves as inextricably linked to other actors, not necessarily identical but surely compatible, in a broader collective mobilization" (Touraine 1981).

It is worth noticing that, there is an ongoing discussion among sociologists of social movements that regarding collective identity as a response to gaps in resource mobilization and political process theories. As Polletta and Jasper (2001) stated, "mobilization and process theorists focused rather on the structural shifts that gave collective actors the resources to act collectively on longstanding grievances. But their emphasis on the how of mobilization over the why of it, their focus on the state as target of action, and their dependence on rationalistic images of individual action left important issues unexamined" (p. 283). They further explained how collective identity response to the limitations by answering four sets of questions:

> One was why collective actors come into being when they do… The second one, Collective identity seemed to capture better the pleasures and obligations that

> actually persuade people to mobilize. Identity was appealing, then, as an alternative to material incentives… The third question responded to the inadequacies of instrumental rationality as an explanation for strategic choice. Finally, collective identity has been a way to get at the cultural effects of social movements…. Changes in collective identity captured movement impacts beyond institutional reform. (p. 284)

These questions have theorized the importance of collective identity perspective, and they have generated strong claims about the role of collective identity in movements' emergence, trajectories, and outcomes.

Social movements are not merely the sum of protest events on certain issues; instead, its process is in place only when collective identities develop, which go beyond specific events and initiatives (della Porta & Diani 2006, p 21-24). The initiatives that target at public problems or express support for several values or principles do not automatically correspond to social movement action. Social movements not only address collective problems, but also require sustainable collective efforts in the struggles for social or political recognition. The dynamic for social movement is changed when the seemingly separated initiatives of collective action are no longer considered as such; instead, they are regarded as components of a longer-lasting action and those who are engaged in these longer-lasting actions feel linked by ties of solidarity. The development of such identity documents a sense of collective belonging that will maintain even after a specific initiative or a particular event has come to an end. As della Porta and Diani (2006) argued, the persistence of these feelings will have at least two important consequences:

> First, it will make the revival of mobilization in relation to the same goals easier, whenever favorable conditions recur. Movements often oscillate between brief phases of intense public activity and long "latent" periods (Melucci 1984; Taylor 1989), in which self-reflection and cultural production prevail....Second, representations of the world and collective identities which developed in a certain period can also facilitate, through a gradual transformation, the development of new movements and new solidarities. (p. 24)

A social movement identity dynamic is gaining necessary ground when individuals feel part of a collectivity, mobilized to support or oppose social change. They identify shared elements in their past, present, and future experiences, and most importantly, certain social or political actors are to be held responsible for the collection of affairs being challenged.

The development of collective identity within social movements does not mean that all the members/actors involved share the exact same identity, or there is a homogeneous group of actors react to the cause of the movement to begin with (Melucci, 1996. p 68-86). Furthermore, there will not necessary be a specific type of collective identity gain popularity, or more intensely, dominance. It is disputable that collective identity can be inclusive or exclusive, and the degree to which holders of such an identity will share one or several traits, are very specific to different contexts. It is from this point of view that I argue the collective identity formed in the process of migrant children school movement is fluid and always reconstructing. It keeps changing and transforming, the purpose of which can be understood as to better serve the goals for the movement at its different developing levels.

During the work towards education for migrant children, there are two stages of collective identity forming and transforming among the actors who are involved. The first stage is the formation of collective identity that set the ground for the movement. There are shared feelings among migrant teachers, parents and their children as they struggle in the migrant communities in urban cities[14]. Connected with one another who share the same experiences and feelings, they linked through the initial sets of networks to open schools and solve survival problems; but these initiatives were not yet organized for the purpose of challenging the political structures and fighting for recognition. As they worked together to advocate for the redistribution of educational resources from the state and adopted different strategies to sustain their work, the formed collective identity was able to set the ground for the movement to develop, especially when people outside of the migrant communities participated and adopted such form of identity. As the movement grows, the second stage started to emerge, that is the transformation of collective identity as well as the development of multiple collective identities. The trust and solidarity that link the actors in the migrant children school movement together have expanded and re-negotiated within different waves of collective actions. These collective actions include the ongoing protests and resistances to school closing in many districts. The collective identities which formed previously have facilitated, through a gradual transformation, the development of new solidarities and new forms of the movement. One of these new forms is the transformation of the identity of many migrant teachers as they gradually

[14] Feelings generated around being disrespected and rejected by the state and by many urban residents.

developed the identities of both educators and activists and took on the leading roles to sustain their collective work for schools and families[15].

Revisiting Gender and Class

As we move further into our discussions of the work of migrant children schools and the people who are actively involve, in addition to considering how the different social relations and structural factors influence the dynamics of the movement itself and the society at large, we need to pay close attention to the factors that have been "invisible" both socially and culturally. The enduring social cleavages—such as ethnicity, class, and gender among the participants of the migrant children schools movement—have led to the study of the cultural implications (Morris & Mueller, 1992; Johnston & Klandermans, 1995) of this movement, which can be more difficult to understand than the political effects. There is a complex set of groups, organizations, and actions operating simultaneously. To understand the actual effects gained by the movement, from both political and cultural aspects, researchers also need to ask questions from the perspectives of the individuals in the movement. Questions such as: what are an individual person's experiences within the movement? How is he/she positioned within the movement? How are people engaging in different forms of activism? and so forth. Most research that tends to focus on the cultural outcomes of movements is empirical (McAdam, 1989, 1994; della Porta, 1999). This work offers ways in which to understand what is happening and how the transformation of political demands influences cultural discourses. As Apple (2006) points out, "Social movements that aim at structural

[15] Chapter 5 will document such transformation.

transformation in state policies may produce profound changes in the realms of culture, everyday life, and identity" (p. 208). Therefore, the study of the migrant children schools movement also needs to take into account both the goals of the movement in a large scale and the personal experiences within the movement, as well as the interrelationship between the two.

One of the key concepts related to the cultural impact of social movements is the discussion on how gender and class play out in the process of movement that represents the complexity of social and political changes. In this study, I document various sets of personal narratives and life histories of educators, most of whom are women teaching and working in the migrant communities, as well as the ways in which they both accommodate and resist dominant ideologies of gender hierarchy and class discrimination.

To analysis the experience of migrant teachers, one needs to take into consideration the long history of the feminization of the teaching profession. The historical and comparative research that studies the process of feminization in teaching explains the cultural construction of teaching from a gender perspective. These works (e.g. Apple, 1988; Biklen, 1995; Collins, 1998; Cortina & Roman, 2006) seek to explain how gender shapes the social and school realities of teachers, as well as how these realities are conditioned by teachers' own social characteristics, such as gender, race, social class, etc (Apple, 1988; Cortina & Roman, 2006). What is particularly interesting to me about these approaches is the effort of recording the voices of teachers and the ethnographies of examining the dynamics that influences the identity of teachers as they enter the classroom. For instance, Morgade (2006) shows in Argentina how women's incorporation into teaching represented both an area of autonomy that allowed them to

leave the home and undertake remunerated work, as well as a space where they were subjected to subordination and kept at the base of the "pyramid" of the school system—the lowest paid, least prestigious jobs, and the reinforcement of self-exclusion from other possibilities.

The definition of "feminization" can be interpreted at several levels by different authors and actors, often depending on their concerns and reasons for approaching the issue. Griffiths (2006) notes that when feminization of the teaching profession is discussed, it can either refer to the numbers of women—absolute or proportional—within the profession, or a "culture" associated with women. Such "culture" ranges from a focus on school ethos, teaching strategies and educational policy, to perceptions, hopes and fears about the effects of all of these. In the Chinese context, although teaching has been historically regarded as a respectful profession, it also has deeply rooted in and associated with traditional ethos and intellectual orientations. In other words, the educative mission that deeply grounded in traditional values was highly regarded for intellectual scholars, who are historically men only[16]. Following the years of the modernization and marketization, however, the intellectual and moral authority role of being a teacher has gradually been replaced by the discourses of personal responsibility and selfless commitment, and then professionalism for the needs of the marketplace (e.g. Kwong & Ma, 2009). Fu (2000) asserts that the feminization of teaching in recent years is one of the underlying causes of the descending teacher status. He argues that the patriarchal

[16] One of the most influential teacher/scholar is Confucian. As Han Yu is his famous essay about teacher "Shi Shuo"(Talk about Teachers) emphasizes, "A teacher is one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts." 师者，传道受业解惑也。The underlying implication of a being a teacher is being a man who is the perfect embodiment of knowledge and moral duty of Confucianism.

culture prevalent in Chinese society leads to an equation of high social status with male-dominated occupations. Social opinion therefore—deeply influenced by prevailing concepts of male superiority and female inferiority—leads competitive males to shun the "caring" teaching profession, especially in primary school level. As we discussed in previous chapters, migrant children school becomes known for being "extended childcare" within migrant communities that are still inherently tied to traditional gender and familial roles thus permit a further subordination to regular primary schools. Teachers who teach in migrant children schools are consequently considered as less professional and less respected by society.

In addition, as many scholars have argued, "ethnicity, class and race clearly differentiate gender constructions" (Stephen, 1993, p 33), to explain how the gendered ideology was assigned to migrant teachers and how their image is created through public discourse, one also have to pay particular attention to the contesting rural-urban division within Chinese society (e.g. Whyte, 2010). Despite the rural roots of Chinese revolution, China's central government eventually followed the Soviet Union model of socialism in terms of massive industrial development in cities. The implication of such vision that established in the 1950s set a strong bias against the rural labor, which interpreted rural labor as not needed to power urban industrialization, and the countryside primarily served as a source of low-cost agricultural products to feed the urban population. As we discussed in the introduction chapter, even though the rural migrant and their labor have played a vital role in the economic revitalization of the Chinese economy since 1978 and of the economies of Chinese cities in particular, they are still subject to inferior treatment and discrimination by both urban residents and urban authorities (Chan, 2001; Zhang,

2001). Not only are they viewed as uncultured and backward but also their labor is considered less desirable, with lower pay and benefit, even when completing the same jobs as urbanites (see Gaetano, 2010; Guang & Kong, 2010; Wu, 2010). As Moore (1988) argues that, it is not work per se but what is conceived as work and the social value assigned to it in a given cultural context that shapes one's societal status. By taking into account of the interplay among work, gender, and social context, my inquiry of the meanings of working in migrant children schools is to explore how the value of these teachers' work is socially and culturally transformed and underestimated, as well as how they negotiate and challenge such under-recognition and under-treatment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of civil society and public sphere, the concepts that foreground the discussions of social movement theories. In particular, I frame my research subjects as examples of how the limited political space would not prevent the development of different forms of movement in China that affect people's lives, especially people from marginalized background. I suggest the necessity of rethinking the theories of social movement in different ways: first, negotiate an alternative/non-western perspective that does not view civil society as parallel to and separate from the state; second, adopt four aspects of social movement concepts with the emphasis of the local contexts (such as the *guanxi* networks corresponding to social relations); and third, focuses on the embedded gender and class relation. Further, I want to emphasize that the idea of "democratization" (such as citizens taking the massive protest actions to the streets) does not capture the complexity of the social and political

changes in China and the richness of the agendas that people have been developing. Thus, rather than labeling their work as “democratization” or a strictly-defined social movement with presupposed civil society and public sphere request, I develop my argument on analyzing people’s work towards the education for migrant children by documenting the ongoing impact on society as a whole and on individuals in their everyday lives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Eleven years ago, as a sophomore at Beijing Normal University, I joined the college student volunteer association and visited a migrant children school located in the same district as many colleges and universities of Beijing for the first time. That was when I started to work alongside with many active members of the migrant communities and later became a teacher in several migrant children schools. As a young teacher, I received tremendous support and mentorship from colleagues in the school and other organizations, in addition to building strong relationships with many student parents in the community. Even though there were always moments of conflicts and crisis—conflicts that are external and internal to the schools and communities—there were always memories of progress and improvements. I kept journaling throughout the five years working and teaching in these schools. Most of them were recollections of conversations I had with students, parents, and colleagues at the time. We talked about what books we read recently[1], what songs were better than the others, and many other things that seem insignificant but fun to share. I also wrote down moments of everyday teaching and living in the schools. Many of them were moments that I would not want to forget. At the time, they did not help me answer any question I encountered that points to the issues at the structural level, but they brought me to understand the role of emotions play in the practices of education[2].

[1] One of the books I read was recommended by a fellow teacher in the school. It is the Chinese translation of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 《被压迫者教育学》. Many teachers and some parents in the school shared this book that was donated to the school library by a university student association.

[2] See Appendix B, selected pages from my teaching journal during the school closing wave in the summer of 2006, it was about one of my six grade students at the time. All names in this study are pseudonym.

The questions I encountered were also from my work at the university. As soon as I began my graduate study, I was required to participate in several educational research projects, most of which used large-scale quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data on student performance. One of these projects was the New Curriculum Standard Reform research, directed by the Minister of Education. The official attitude and orientation embodied in the New Curriculum Standard Reform is the assumption that the qualities of elementary and secondary education can be, and can only be, promoted by elite-oriented national curriculum, with more specific standards and stricter exams and qualifications.

In the process of working for these projects, I recognized the conflictions between the policies and how they were implemented, on the one hand, and my observation and reflection when teaching in migrant children schools, on the other. I doubted whether the ongoing curriculum standard reform grasp the fundamental problem of contemporary Chinese education, namely, the increasingly unequal distribution of educational resources. Top ranking key schools, under current policies, preserve the priority to obtain better educational resources, while lower ranking schools do not. That leads to the polarization between urban and rural schools, and between top and "inferior" schools in the same city. I also came to believe and later realize that the reform would not improve the educational conditions for migrant children; instead, it is exacerbating inequality. Lack of sufficient resources, regular curriculum and favorable circumstance, students attending migrant children schools can hardly meet current national standard, not to mention the higher standard of new curriculum. In the school where I was teaching, many children did not continue their education after graduating from elementary school. The major reason is the

policy restriction; while other concerns also include the heartbreaking reality that many of them could not follow the curriculum at regular middle schools, although most of them are clever and studious. It is their lack of resources and opportunities that give them a major disadvantage, which was neglected by the competitive educational system and the dominant educational discourse.

It was around the same time that I began to systematically read more scholarly research and inquire into ongoing public discussions on issues of education for migrant children in China. Many of them used surveys and questionnaire data to present these issues as social phenomena[3]. They pointed out that some of the fundamental problems were related to the policy limitation, especially the restriction of the household registration system (Lv & Zhang 2001; Su 2004; Tao, Xu, & Zhang 2004); and they also proposed the need for considering the adjustment of the support system at social and governmental levels (Han 2001; Wang, Zhang & Liu 2005). However, one particular aspect from the majority of these articles and reports did not persuade me into their conclusions: the overwhelming criticism of migrant children schools and the teachers who work there. Many articles emphasize the low educational quality and the poor material conditions of migrant children schools without acknowledging other aspects of contribution. They have labeled these schools as improper schools, and legitimized the state authority to close them down. Such criticism constitutes the predominant discourse on migrant children schools and produces a strong effect on the public image of migrant

[3] See Chapter 1 introduction for detailed review of these articles and discussions. For example, Han 2001; Lv & Zhang 2001; Shi 2005; Su 2004; Tao, Xu, & Zhang 2004; Wang, Zhang & Liu 2005; Zhang, Qu & Zou 2003; Zhou 2005.

teachers. There were supporters who advocate for the schools, but their voices were less influential than the dominant discourse at the time.

From my own experiences working in the schools, I could see many things which are much different from the dominant discourse. One important thing I learned from working closely with these communities of teachers and parents is that they by no means passively "accept" anything forced upon them[4]. Many teachers that I met are hard-working and dedicated. They do not just sit in the schools and wait for support and help. They have organized variety of extracurricular activities and utilized available resources to improve the environment for their students and schools. A lot of parents are also active members of the schools and community associations. Even though many of them have to do all they could to survive in the cities, they did not give up the hope and dream for their children.

However, I was struggling to find a way to talk back to the dominant discourse. Many educational and social theories seem to be appealing, but I still felt confused and somewhat lost. In late October of 2005, my home university hosted a series of lectures that lasted over two weeks. The lectures were given by many world renowned scholars in educational studies; and the purpose of these lectures was to prepare Chinese researchers to participate in the conversation on education and society among scholars world-wide. One of these scholars was Professor Michael Apple. His two lectures on "Power, Knowledge, and Education Reform" and "Official Knowledge" were among the most influential for me. I was led to the books of his work on ideology, education and power

[4] Many teachers and parents I talked to used the term "*ni lai shun shou*" (逆来顺受) to describe the act that they would not accept. It means to resign oneself to adversity; to grin and bear it, to submit meekly to insults, maltreatment, and humiliation.

(Apple, 1995; 2004). In his books I saw the kind of research that I could potentially be part of, and most importantly, the possible ways of talking back to the dominant discourse (Apple, et al., 2003). After discussing my thoughts with many supportive colleagues and professors, I sent an email to Professor Apple, sharing the questions I had encountered. The reply I received from him did not directly answer those questions, but he gave me more courage and let me know that the teachers and parents in the migrant communities were not alone:

> …one of the best recent analyses of the contradictions between official policies that are supposedly meant to help people and what actually happens in the realities of poor people's lives is Mike Davis, Planet of Slums (New York: Verso, 2006). While it does not specifically focus on education, it portrays in very illuminating ways what happens when seemingly "helpful" policies are made by governments with little realization of the conditions in which poor people and migrants live…
>
> I understand how difficult it must be to try to critically understand this situation and to fulfill the responsibilities of your position at the same time. I can assure you that you are not alone. Large numbers of people in many nations are trying to deal with exactly this situation. It will not be easy. But if thoughtful people do not continue to try to bring their understanding to those who are now making what are often extremely problematic policies, little will change… (Michael Apple, email communication, August 26, 2006)

I set my mind to pursuit the doctorate study with Professor Apple, with the hope of getting the "perfect" way to do research[5]. Upon coming to Madison, I have been introduced to new perspectives of educational research and immersed in variety of theories. Moreover, I also realized that there will not be a "perfect" way in any kind of

[5] I struggled financially and emotionally in the process of becoming a doctorate student in the university in the US. But I was supported by my own family's tremendous sacrifice and many colleagues and mentors' unconditional trust. For many international students in the foreign academy, the process of doing research often involves the process of reconstructing life and identity across borders. Even though my research is not about this specific issue, some of this work also inspired me. See for example, He, M. F. (2002c). A narrative inquiry of cross-cultural lives: lives in the North American academy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 34(5), 513-533.

research. Research is not to simplify the complexity of things or to make everyone listen to a "perfect" report. Rather, it is to make sense of the complexity, and sometimes it could start at a very basic level.

As I further my study and reading the literature of working within marginalized communities and challenging the official ideology in more depth and breadth, a systematic approach to the complexities of this issue started to emerge. And the focus of my dissertation study began to become clearer. Migrant children schools are often referred to as "unofficial schools" and nothing more beyond that label. Many people pay sympathy to children who attend these schools, but rarely does anyone argue for those who work to make such type of "schooling" happen. My experience provides me knowledge about the schools and people who are involved, which has been a precious resource that allowed me to see the potential in a study of migrant parents and teachers' work and their practices of providing schooling for migrant children inside the migrant communities.

But it is not enough to understand the complexity of the politics around education for migrant children. I need to also interrogate how to make sense of the development of migrant children schools in relation to the state over time, as well as how people's identity changed and formed collectively in this very process. Therefore, in my analysis I need to not only emphasize the values and meaning of being a teacher of migrant children schools by documenting their everyday lives, but also to make the argument of how they have challenged the social and political structures. To do so, I adopted the social movement theories, specifically the theories around the relationships between civil society and the state, the mobilization of resources, networks, and emotions, and the

formation of collective identity, with the re-examination of the local contexts of these schools.

Keeping my own personal history as a teacher and a researcher in mind, and setting the basic framework of what and how I would focus, I designed a year-long study of the practices of people who involved in the migrant children schools in the city of Beijing. There were moments in the process of conducting fieldwork that were quite familiar and brought me back to the days of working in the communities. There were also moments that caught me off-guard and almost threw my research to unpredictability. In the following two sections of this chapter, I document both my initial design of the study and what I have encountered in the field. And the last part is to explain why and how I use narrative inquiry to connect my fieldwork with the contexts and develop my writing.

Initial Research Design and Method

The aim of this study is to critically understand the practices of migrant children schools and to situate them in the larger socio political and economic contexts of "late socialist" China. Conducting a qualitative research supports my idea of research that takes into account the reflexivity and self-awareness (Creswell, 1998) of individuals located within the mobile population movements. This qualitative research uses a systematic approach for data collection in the migrant community and schools. It involves conducting research to gather data from multiple sources[6], including methods of in-depth interviews and participant observation. This work is supplemented by extensive

[6] Creswell's (1998) definition of "Multiple sources of information" includes observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, and documents and reports (p. 61).

archival research. The in-depth interviews are carried out with migrant parents and teachers, as well as several social activists who are actively participating in these schools. Besides collecting rigorous data as I observe, I also aim to get a better idea of the context in which my research is situated. The archival research is designed to gather relevant policies and official documents about migrant population especially the education of migrant children that spanning the past three decades.

The Selection of Participants

Given the fact that the population of migrant families and the number of migrant children schools are quite large, I cannot reach all of them without basic connections. I have chosen three migrant children schools in Beijing because I worked in one of the school for a long time and know several teachers in the other schools as well. For these reasons, I was able to engage in in-depth conversations with my participants more easily.

As for migrant parents, I have two steps for establishing rapport. First, I have been introduced to them through my friends and former colleagues who work closely with them. Second, I have participated in their community activities and interacted with them in more relaxed settings. I included migrant parents who come from different regions, have different family sizes and parenting styles, and have children of different genders. The purpose of this research is to learn the unique stories of different families. Thus, the diversity of the participants is more important than how many of them participate.

Approach

My plan was to recruit four to five parents, four to five teachers, three to four administrators, and a number of activists in my research. The field research was

conducted in China in three separate visits. The initial pilot study took place from December 2010 to January 2011, and the follow-ups were conducted in the fall and winter of 2011. I had started to contact some teachers and activists via emails and phone calls since June 2010. I kept establishing my connections to other participants before I left for China. Also, I started meeting with potential parent participants in person and located my participants in the first week of field research.

I planned to start my interviews with first group of participants and finish all the interviews in June 2011. I have planned to conduct multiple interviews with each of my participants[7] in different visits, asking open-ended questions and encourage them to tell me stories of their lives. For example, rather than asking parents why they did not send children to public schools, I asked questions about when and how did they moved to this city, what types of difficulties they have encountered, and how did they find out the migrant children school in the area[8].

Furthermore, since the schools in China usually end in mid-January and mid-July, I could observe my teacher participants in classroom settings, and join the parent-teacher conferences at the end of the semester. I also observed my parent participants in their homes; the length of each observation was usually one day. The purpose of having the participant observation is to get a clear picture of what is happening in the migrant children schools and communities on a daily base, and to learn about the context in which

[7] As a backup plan, I also asked the possibility for telephone interviews or other possible ways of connecting with my participants. This would allow for much more data to be collected over time and the anonymity technology provides may actually get me more candid responses than face to face interviews.

[8] See Appendix C.

they are situated. Thus, I could combine my field notes with detailed descriptions, photography and audio recording.

In addition to taking field notes for the interviews and observations, I have also kept my own research journals throughout the process. I have encountered some unexpected conflicts and dilemmas that could result in the reconstruction of my research. I have kept my reflection throughout the data collection and analysis, and continually reexamined the research.

In the Field

I was extremely worried on my flight back to China, worrying that I might not find any other participants and the teachers and activists who I had talked to previously would change their mind. One of the reasons was that I was conducting research for my study in a foreign institution. The sensitive feelings about "criticizing the government" to a foreign audience has been brought up in conversations I had with family and friends back home in multiple occasions. I was not sure whether the political and "patriotic" pressure would prevent people accepting my recruitment.

The fact was that I was over-worried. The week after I arrived, my list of participants was already completed. Many teachers and parents who I was introduced to by former colleagues were really welcoming and supportive. I had the opportunity to ask them why they decided to be part of the study in the end; most of them told me that they trust me and the teacher who introduced us. A father who works at a temporary stand in a flea market to support his family and two children, however, asked me a question as his answer: "Why do you think people, no matter Chinese or foreigners, would care about the

stories of me, my family, and other migrants?" I was prepared to answer a question like this from my committee members or the audience in academic conferences, but I was not sure the answer could be the same here. He laughed and told me not to worry about it; he was just honored to be able to tell these stories. The conversation I had with him that day lasted for three and half hours, I left their home with the audio recoded interview and seven full pages of notes. But even now I am still carrying his question, and trying to find the answer that could be meaningful to him and his family. Thus, besides documenting stories and voices of migrant teachers and parents that can talk back to the dominant discourse, I also want to find out how such process could be more meaningful to the owners of these stories, especially when many of them do not get the opportunity to tell.

Working with Participants

Throughout the fourteen-month of my research, I have observed three schools and interviewed fifteen migrant teachers and parents, as well as nine other activists or researchers whose work related to migrant children schools to different extents in six districts of Beijing: the districts of Haidian, Chaoyang, and Fengtai in the inner suburb and the districts of Changping, Daxing, and Fangshan in the outer suburb[9].

Table 1: Participants Profile

Connection with Migrant Children Schools	**Gender**	**Age**	**Years working with/in Migrant Children Schools**	**Years living in Beijing**	**Districts in Beijing**
Teacher	Female	Early 50s	14 years	14 years	Changping
Teacher/Parent	Female	Early 40s	8 years	12 years	Changping
Teacher/Parent	Female	Late 40s	12 years	12 years	Changping
Parent	Female	Early 40s	N/A	13 years	Changping

[9] See Appendix D for the Administrative Districts of Beijing.

Parent	Male	Mid 40s	N/A	17 years	Changping
Principal	Male	Early 50s	13 years	15 years	Changping
Teacher/Activist	Male	Mid 30s	8 years	9 years	Changping
Former Teacher/NGO Activist	Female	Early 30s	10 years	10 years	Changping
Former Teacher/NGO Activist	Female	Early 40s	12 years	12 years	Changping
Former Teacher/NGO Activist	Male	Mid 40s	5 years	8 years	Changping
Teacher/Activist/ Principal	Female	Early 30s	10 years	10 years	Fangshan
Teacher	Female	Early 20s	2 years	2 years	Fangshan
Staff	Female	Late 30s	Less than 1 years	Local resident	Fangshan
Parent	Female	Early 30s	N/A	In and out for 15 years	Fangshan
Principal	Male	Mid 50s	14 years	14 years	Daxing
Teacher	Female	Early 40s	9 years	10 years	Daxing
Teacher	Female	Mid 30s	7 years	7 years	Chaoyang
Parent/Staff	Male	Late 40s	8 years	21 years	Chaoyang
Former Teacher/ Activist/ University Professor	Male	Mid 30s	9 years	9 years	Chaoyang
Officer in Governmental Research Center	Male	Late 40s	13 years	N/A	Chaoyang
University Professor/ Researcher in Governmental Research Center	Female	Mid 50s	14 years	22 years	Haidian
University Professor	Male	Late 40s	7 years	22 years	Haidian
University Professor	Male	Mid 50s	N/A	35 years	Haidian
Professional/ Activist	Male	Early 40s	3 years	Local resident	Fengtai

During my fieldwork, I benefited from the networks of *guanxi*[10], especially when I tried to reach out to potential participants. Sometimes *guanxi* played out through strong affective emotions of trust; sometimes it helped me make the connection through giving or returning a favor. Once connected, most of my participants were extremely welcoming and generous. They welcomed me to their daily routines and let me conduct interviews and observations at their home, classrooms, offices, even on their way to family duties. They introduced me to their neighbors, friends, colleagues, even the corner store owner whom they always bought grocery from. In many occasions, I would not be able to leave without drinking some tea or sharing some home-style snack with them, sometimes there were home-cooked meals.

The visits were mixed with excitement, appreciations, and also challenges, especially when visiting some other activists and governmental officials. I was introduced to some officials by former professors, which otherwise would be quite difficult. I was excited about the opportunities but also understood that I might hold a very different perspective on several issues than some of them. It required me to work carefully to balance my role between a researcher and a communicator. I structured my interviews as dialogistic conversations, actively engaged and responsive in the interviews without involving in defensive argument. One conversation I had with a governmental researcher about my theoretical framework could be seen as an example of such dialogue:

> Governmental Researcher (GR): …So, you said you want to research these schools (migrant children schools), how would you think of them, I mean, in your research?
>
> MY: I was working on adopting the social movement theories…

[10] See Chapter 2 for the detailed discussion of *guanxi.*

GR: These schools by no means were 'social movements'! They were more or less spontaneously self-saving. They were not organized, nor did they aim at anything 'superstructure'. Look at all these people who run these schools now, all they care about are making money. You know that, right?

MY: …Do you think all the schools are like that?

GR: Uh…people who run the schools are mixed up (*yu long hun za*)[11]…Well, there are many schools I have worked with are re-structuring to sustain themselves, and some are getting towards systematic approach.

MY: Do you think this might change some existing social dynamics?

GR: …Some of them are doing something…yes…but…you can't sustain yourself without government support, in China's context, not even with sufficient financial and social basis. What we need is some good policies…send all the migrant children to public schools…That could be the change.

MY: I completely agree with you on providing public education to migrant children. It just…the implementation of the "good policies"…we have seen…

GR: Detours are unavailable. But migrant children schools were just temporary, they will be replaced…Government is making the adjustment, the policies will in place…

Conversations like this actually encouraged me to reflect further. I was led to examine what opinions they held, and how such perspectives connected to the larger contexts. Nevertheless, in some interviews, people were eager to "find out" what perspectives I might have. To reduce the possibility that they would provide "whatever I want to hear", I started with my own experiences and different points of views on issues around schooling for migrant children, and then emphasized that the purpose of my study is not to make a judgment, but to examine the work around schooling for migrant children in a larger context.

Another concern I had working with participants was where should be the boundary between working with them and interrupting their lives. The questions I

[11] *yu long hun za (鱼龙混杂)*, literally translated as "fish and dragon jumbled together", means good and bad are mixed up.

constantly asked myself during my interviews and observations were: Am I making trouble to the participants? Do they feel disturbed by me? Do they mind that I write down everything they say or do, etc.? In order to make my participants feel less "being observed", at the beginning of my fieldwork, I tried to be more interactive with them by joining the conversations and activities that they were engaging. This did help them get more comfortable with the fact that I was "following them everywhere". At the same time, however, this made it quite hard for me to take detailed notes synchronously for quite a while. To keep these observations in detail, I used the two to three hours on the subway and buses between schools and households to catch up with notes, and completed daily journals after finishing the fieldwork of the day.

I used audio recorder to record interviews and sessions of observations during my fieldwork, and took pictures of the physical environments of schools, communities and materials that people shared with me. I also took notes of what I encountered— from conversations I heard to facial expressions I noticed, and to big or small events I saw— sometimes drew pictures to back up my writing. The note-taking was extremely important even when I had all the recorders turned on; the notes not only functioned as my back-up recording, but also helped me capture nuance details later in my transcription and analysis.

One afternoon I was on my way to meet one of my former colleagues who was teaching in a migrant children school and also actively working with some national and international NGOs. I did not notice my audio recorder was bumped and turned on in the two-hour-long crowded subway ride. After I got to his rental flat at the edge of an outer suburb district, I simply placed the recorder on the table and started our conversation. We

talked for almost four hours and had a very fruitful discussion about migrant teachers' work and their struggles. When we wrapped up the conversation, I noticed the recorder was off. The batteries went out half way through the interview, the notes I took during the second half of the interview became the sole recording of the rich conversation that day. Even when the technology was not an issue, note taking would still provide crucial information for the interviews and observation, especially during group interviews. The notes helped me memorize the circumstances of what people said/did and how they said/did so, and record the emotions of certain voices and during the events—the emotions expressed by my participants as well as myself.

Issues in the Field

Fieldwork is not just data collection; it is both learning and re-learning process. I have a long lasting relationship with the migrant communities, schools and families. There are many unspoken routines and normal patterns, as well as shared experiences and understandings that I am quite familiar with. It gave me advantages when I first entered the field: I reconnected with former colleagues right away, and was accepted by new teachers and parents to whom I was introduced as an "old friend". But even so, when I returned to the field as a researcher, I had quite a while to re-adjust myself and stop thinking myself as a teacher. There were moments when I realized things that I took for granted from the perspectives of a teacher need to be pointed out and re-examined as a researcher. One example is the diverse accents represented in the classrooms of migrant children schools. I did not pay special attention to this comment when I was having conversation with one teacher about her daily work at school. The following several days the similar points about dialects and diverse students' place-of-origins kept being brought

up by three other teachers I interviewed at two different schools, one of who even asked me about my own experience when I taught in some of the migrant children schools. It was until then I realized that I was really close to making a mistake: being so confident that I have KNOWN everything. The fact that many students and teachers are speaking different dialects and accented mandarin in migrant children schools was not a strange phenomenon to me because I have experienced it in all of my classrooms when I taught. What I did not realize was that it needs to be connected to the data gathered at different levels and perspectives, which is the most important part of the work of contextualization. The knowledge I had from a teacher's perspective does not give me the necessary "easy-pass" to conduct my work as a researcher. In order to make the observations and reflections as a researcher, I need to purposefully disconnect myself from the familiarity at times. This requires me to be cautious about what I have known and ask question on many already familiar reactions, understandings, and conventions.

The learning process during the fieldwork also involves recognizing my own social and political commitments and defending the ethics of my study. When I returned to Beijing for my follow up fieldwork in the fall of 2011, I encountered more difficulties than I expected[12]. I lost contact with several participants, and was anxiously waiting for the confirmation from new participants. After waiting for over ten days, I received a cell phone message from an activist I interviewed previously. He was asked by a local district official to connect with me. Through some "confidential resources", the official found out that I was conducting research on migrant children schools. He wanted to share with me a copy of not-for-public-distribution report, which is a list of names and locations of

[12] I will describe this situation later in this section.

migrant children schools in that district. The list was not event up-to-date; it was distributed internally for the unpublished government record in the year of 2008. The official asked for 2,000 RMB (about $310 USD) in return[13]. I wanted to answer the message with ferocious rejection, but instead I simply told him that I could not afford and would not be allowed to pay him; however, I would appreciate the possible opportunity to meet him. This time was his turn to say no. The day after this "incident", I called my parents who live over 900 miles away from Beijing. They were seriously concerned and asked me to switch to another hostel immediately. I did not think this could be anything dangerous or threaten my safety, but I could not dismiss it easily because "incident" like this revealed a tip of the iceberg of the larger problem of the government system, such as the mid level corruption among government officials[14], which inevitably prevent migrant parents sending their children to public schools even with the slightly favorable policy adjustment. And what is really interesting is that this "incident" ended in a more ironic way: two weeks later in a meeting with several NGO activists and teachers, I was given a copy of an up-to-date list of migrant children schools in Beijing. It was updated and distributed to almost all the migrant children schools in the summer of 2011. It not only lists addresses of the schools and names of the principals, but also includes the current status of schools (with license, temporary permit, etc.), the contact information of the principals or school offices, and even the bus/subway transportation information[15].

[13] In a weird coincidence, this is the exact amount of money I had with me for the food and lodging during the period of the second fieldwork.

[14] I will return to this point in Chapter 6.

[15] I was debating to include the complete list of the 2011 Beijing Migrant Children Schools Directory in my appendix because of two reasons: first of all, there were significant amount of schools were shut down

If the case above was just a minor incident, then the difficulties I mentioned earlier that brought by constant "crackdowns" on the migrant communities have caused seriously challenges to my study. In the summer of 2011, twenty-four unlicensed migrant children schools were shut down forcefully —some of them were torn down overnight— in three districts of Daxing, Haidian, and Chaoyang in Beijing, affecting over 14,000 students[16]. Chapter 6 is the detailed discussion of the demolition and reconstruction of migrant children schools. What I wanted to emphasis here is how the sudden yet not surprising turn of the events in the field brought painful harm to the migrant families but also inspired collective actions from both inside and outside of the communities, which provide both challenges yet new inspirations for my study.

Because of the sudden wave of school closing happened in the middle of my fieldwork, several participants I previously contacted had moved before I was able to re-connect with them, and some other new potential participants were hesitated to set up the initial meeting. Even for participants who agreed to meet with me, there was increasing stress of concerning "things might go wrong". In late October, I finally got the

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and/or relocated following the summer of 2011 and 2012, the directory was not "up-to-date" before it was completed. All the information on the list was collected by volunteers and some NGO workers during the school closing in the summer of 2011. There were about 20 schools that were listed as "pending status", including the one school I interviewed later in the fall. Second, this list was widely distributed among migrant children schools and served as a piece of very important document, but I still need to keep the names of the schools and principals confidential. In the end, even though it might not be accurate, it recorded the general information of schools during the massive closing act. So I modified the list by removing all the confidential information and listed it as Appendix E.

[16] The official number of students in these schools reported as 14,000. According to several NGOs, many of these 24 schools had over 1,000 students from pre-K to six-grade. The number of students lost their schools over the summer of 2011 might be more than 20,000.

confirmation from Principal Zhao of Sunny School[17] to visit the school. Sunny was forced to shut down in June, but able to re-open in September with the support from organizations, journalists, lawyers, and parents who insisted to stay. However, as soon as the fall semester started, the district office kept sending people to the school for "spot check-ups" on a daily basis, sometimes even turn them into serious harassment[18]. My visit was scheduled soon after those incidents dying down, but Principal Zhao was still very cautious about having visitors/reporters coming to the school. The closest subway station was about four and half miles away from the school. When I told him that I could transfer to the bus to the school like I always did to visit other schools, he insisted to meet me first at the subway station. I thank him over and over again after he picked me up; he replied: "This way would be much easier and safer…The bus usually comes by every half an hour, but sometimes it will take you over an hour to wait for it. And…also …" He did not continue. After a short silence, I asked him where he originally came from. Principal Zhao named a province which was quite far away from Beijing and asked me the same question. Our conversation started to take off from there. What turned out to be quite interesting was that we had a much more relax conversation in the car than in his office later that day. In the short ride to the school, he talked a little bit about his personal history, most of which were his struggles and dreams over three decades, from his hometown to Beijing. While arrived at the school, Principal Zhao quickly switched to the

[17] Sunny is a pseudonym of one of the 24 schools that had been shut down, and Zhao is a pseudonym for the principal of that school.

[18] See Chapter 6.

history of the school, introduced other teachers, and focused on the series of events starting at June.

The fieldwork in the past several months helped me to become more aware of how social and political changes affected the practices and identities of people both individually and collectively. Before returning to the university overseas, I traveled back to my own hometown and spent two days with my family. Upon the short reunion, I learned there were more people than I could remember in my hometown area left home for big cities to be migrant workers; among them, were several of my younger cousins dropping out of middle schools and uncles traveling between towns and villages for the temporary jobs other than farming. I realized that it was not eleven years ago that I entered the migrant communities and have known them since then, in fact, the stories and voices of migrant families were also part of my own family stories. And this also made my research a more personal and emotional process.

Data Analysis and Writing

During my fieldwork, many teachers I talked to called me *bi gan zi*[19] after reading my field notes. In Chinese, *bi gan zi* literally means pen, it is a metaphor of someone who is a creative writer and good at writing. I told them that it was not me but their own stories that stood out of the notebook, and explained that my work is not to create, but to record their stories, and to act as their "secretary". I explained to them about the importance of capturing things that go unnoticed in the big wave of social progression and bearing the awareness of these unnoticed as a researcher. This is what Apple

[19] The Chinese character for *bi gan zi* is 笔杆子.

discusses as part the tasks of the critical scholar/activist in education (Apple, 2010, p 15-18). The tasks of being a critical scholar not only guided me through my fieldwork, but also reminded me to be more cautious in the process of analyzing and writing. The critical work of "keeping theoretical, empirical, historical, and political traditions alive," also requires critical scholars to "extend" and "(supportively) criticize them" (p. 17).

Analyzing Data

Data analysis is part of a recursive process that involves tacking back and forth between one's questions, the field, and data examination (Grbich, 2007). The full data analysis was an ongoing/repeating process of data re-examination and theory re-development, "using cycles of open coding, initial memoing, generating themes and focused coding, and integrative memoing" (Emerson et al., 2011). In my own process, this means looking for patterns of narratives and organizing the sequences of topics. I went through not only the transcriptions of interviews, notes of observations, but also field journals, photos and relevant documents. Since my dissertation study is informed by the social movement theoretical framework, I coded for themes around mobilization potential, social networks, resources and collective identity that would be important to the analysis of the history and development of the migrant children schools, as well as the teachers' practices, and drew out anecdotes of individuals and families' histories, economic and/or social resources, and cultural/political settings.

In the process of transcribing, translating, analyzing and reflecting on the data, the question I had encountered at the beginning of the field work kept re-emerging, which is the question of how to investigate the meanings of telling the stories of "the other". The question that one migrant father asked me when I first met him became a guideline for

me to think through my research. I see this as an ethical responsibility of my research. It is important to let the parents and teachers in the migrant communities to tell their own stories, but this study should not be a simply report of what it is like to live and work in migrant slums located in the political and economic center of a rapid developing country. The more important goal of studying their live and work is to recognize how the migrant communities have contributed to and sacrificed for the rapid developing society. To do this, I need to connect the data to the critical body of theories. While I do hope this work contributes theoretically to the study of social movements, my approach of writing is more a documentation process than an attempt to perfectly theorize the qualitative data. Keeping my own background and positionality in mind, I was inspired by the critical works of narrative inquiry tradition when I began further interpreting and explaining the data, and decided to use narrative inquiry to inform the analysis and construct the very process of my writing.

Writing

Narrative inquiry approach opens up the space for people whose voices and opinions are considered unimportant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrators from many historically marginalized groups have revealed aspects of history that has been misrecognized and misrepresented. These narratives are often particularly effective sources of counter-hegemonic insights because they "expose the viewpoints embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p.7). Many teachers in the migrant communities have been telling their own stories, but very few of them could be channeled through mainstream media to participate in the public

discourse. What I hope to do in this study is to open the channel for these narratives to be heard and provide the alternative understanding of the situations they have been facing.

When telling a story, the storytellers are telling their story both in a particular way and for a particular purpose, "guided by their understanding or conceptualization of the particular situation they are involved in, or image they want to present" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.41). Therefore, it is important to provide the context in narrative understanding. He (2002c) has pointed out that narrative inquiry is to research and understand the way people create meaning in their lives as narratives:

> People complained that some narrative inquirers are too local and self-centered because they only talk about themselves. Narrative itself is pervasive in people's daily lives and exists at all times, in all places and societies. 'Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, mime, painting . . ., stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation' (Barthes 1977: 79). Because of its pervasiveness and changes, the meaning-making of narrative is far more complex. But how to handle this complexity? Positioning research in a broader context is one way that might help the researcher contextualize and historize the stories collected and connect the research with social change and social action. (p.520)

By connecting to the context of how the teachers and families' stories have been shaped, it becomes an inquiry of searching for the implication of changing time, space and social relations, and challenging the hegemonic discourse and action.

Using narrative approach is not just transcribing participants' personal telling into words and then rearranging the words into texts. To conduct a meaningful narrative

inquiry, one should also carefully reflect on the issues of who can speak, how they speak, and who speak under which condition. In the process of working with my participants, I came across these issues early on. One of concerns of my research participants has to do with being comfortable of taking the position in the center of a conversation as a sole speaker/narrator. I want to share their stories, but I also want to respect their decision not to "stand alone in the center" and thereby find the appropriate way in which to tell their stories as they would want them to be told. The way in which I attempt to navigate this issue is to combine the telling of personal life stories with the narrative of the group portraits. This point was echoed in multiple conversations I had with the teachers and parents. One teacher drew the comparison between the Monument to the People's Heroes and the Chairman Mao Zedong Memorial Hall, both of which are located at Tiananmen Square[20], to emphasis the importance of presenting the image of groups:

> People's heroes are the groups of ordinary people made extraordinary moments in history. People's leader is one person; you can worship him, respect him, and criticize him. But he would not be the leader without the sacrifice of all these ordinary people…It doesn't matter what size of a monument you will get or whether you can get the whole memorial hall by yourself, the history are made by the combination of…… That's why you record our stories as a group, all the people you talk to have a part in it, just like all the faces on bas-relieves of the Monument to the People's Heroes. No one single person but all these faces can represent the historical moment.

Thus, in the writing of these narratives, there are stories presented alongside with thematically organized narratives. And the storied experiences are shared through individual life histories as well as the summaries of the collective many.

Some feminist scholars have also pointed out that "the perspective of the researcher—in terms of gender, class, culture, disciplinary orientation—should be taken

[20] See Appendix F for the map of Tiananmen Square.

into account and acknowledged" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p 201) when she works with narrators. To do so, the researcher "…recognizes and assesses the impact on her work of the author's own perspective and of the quality of her relationship with the narrator… and recognizes that the interpreter is an active participant involved in distinctive ways with the shaping of a personal narrative" (p 201-202). I have been given tremendous support as I worked with my participants, but there were moments that I could not help wondering what if I was not a researcher affiliated with a foreign institution, or I had no previous knowledge at all, or I had a different gender. Even though only a few participants had tried to find out "which side I would be standing" during our conversations, I had to be cautious about ways of which I would engage in the conversations, as well as presenting these conversations with my own interpretation.

Moreover, in the process of analyzing and writing these narratives I have collected, I realized that there is a hidden but powerful relationship between myself and my participants that should be carefully reflected on. Such relationship could be understood as an image a researcher has held about him/her self—the image of him/her being the one who give voices to the participants or speak "for" them, especially when working with the silenced or marginalized groups. Speaking for the participants, or considering oneself as the representative of others' voice will potentially bring more harm to the communities. To avoid the misrepresentation of the voices, I not only need to fully acknowledge the existence of the power relationship, but also be sensitive to the intentions both me and my participants have held throughout our interaction. As Pereira (2008) has argued, rather than speak "for" participants, researchers should speak "with" them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I describe the process of designing and conducting my dissertation research. In the first part, I bring my own personal stories of how I involved in this work—from working in migrant children schools to coming to the US for doctorate study—into the narratives of constructing researcher identity. In the second part of this chapter, the initial research design was followed by my documentation of what I have experienced in the field. The majority of this part was adopted from different sections of my field notes and journals throughout the period of fourteen months in and out of the field. The third part is the discussions on why I adopted the methods of narrative inquiry and how I reflected the issues of positionality and representation in the process of my writing.

Chapter 4: The Development

At the early stage of the Chinese domestic migration, from roughly the 1980s to the early 2000s, the absolute majority of children who re-united with their migrant parents in the cities, or who were born in the cities' migrant settlements without household registration residency, were therefore not entitled to access the local educational resources. Gaining such access for their children is one of the most challenging problems that many migrant families with school-age children in Chinese cities are facing. Along with the rapid migrant population grow and the formation of migrant communities in the cities, there are increasingly urgent demands for education for the children of migrants. Starting in the early 1990s, some educated migrant parents decided to work on their own to provide basic schooling for the neighborhood children. The first school quickly enrolled a large number of children and more schools started to emerge to meet the needs of the migrant communities. For over two decades, after going through different stages of development and re-construction, these schools have been the primary resource for the education of migrant children in the cities[1].

The history of migrant children schools represents the determination and struggles of migrant communities to provide an alternative solution for their children's schooling that has been overlooked for decades by the state. Even though the development of these schools is still strongly influenced by the government policies and regulations, the

[1] In 2001, less than 12 percent of migrant children were enrolled in schools recognized by the government. In 2012, according to official statistics, the majority of these children were in schools recognized by the government. Reports retrieved from the People's Daily Online (A website built by People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China): http://bj.people.com.cn/n/2013/0112/c82841-18010010.html. It is worth noticing that the schools recognized by the government are not necessary public schools, they include migrant children schools that received the permit by government and the government-subsidized privately-run schools. I will return to this discussion later.

negotiation with and actions towards different regulations in this process open up a space for reconstructing the relationships between the state and the society. The daily life and work around migrant children schools have played a crucial role in consolidating the sense of solidarity and collective identity among people both inside and outside of the migrant community. This chapter examines the development of migrant children schools in migrant community in Beijing to discuss their mobilization of personal, social resources and the formation of an "embedded activism" in this process.

Early Development: Geography and Social Networks

Almost all the migrant children schools are located inside the migrant settlements in the metropolitan areas of Chinese cities. In this study, I focus on the city of Beijing. The majority of migrants in Beijing live in the inner and outer suburban districts of the city[2]: they have developed certain migrant "enclaves" that co-exist with suburban residents, but such temporary settlements have been pushing further and further out from the inner suburb districts such as Chaoyang, Haidian, Shijingshan and Fengtai to the outer suburb districts such as Changping, Daxing, Fangshan, Shunyi, and Tongzhou because of the continuous urban development. Most of these migrant settlements are formed based on the places of origin and the different types of temporary jobs migrant workers have. These settlements are commonly referred to as a "village" (*cun*) and are

[2] As we discussed before, the areas in the further suburbs of Chinese cities are less developed and considered as less desirable before the urban development and gentrification.

named after different provinces of China: Henan *cun*, Hebei *cun*, Zhejiang *cun*, Anhui *cun*, and so forth[3].

The vast majority of people who founded the migrant children schools are migrants came from the Provinces of Henan, Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Anhui, Shandong, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, and Jilin. Among these founders, most of them were from Henan and Hebei Province, especially the Gushi County in Henan Province and Zhangbei County in Hebei Province. Gushi and Zhangbei regions have been poverty-stricken areas throughout history[4]. Lacking income stability, many people from these two regions had to migrate to other areas where the opportunity of earning a living was greater.

Beijing is the main destination for people who migrated from Henan and Hebei Provinces. People from these two regions were also representing the majority of the early migrant population in Beijing at the beginning of the 1990s. After arrival, they settled close to those who came previously from the same regions in order to gain and provide support to each other. In these concentrated areas, the growing number of families with school-age children made the needs of having neighborhood schools became urgent. The first groups of these schools were mostly built by families from Henan Province to serve

[3] See for example, the research on Zhejiang *cun*. Biao, 2005; Zhang, 2001.

[4] Harsh and unpredictable weather has been one of the main reasons for the frequently insufficient harvest in these regions historically. However, the other reasons are more man-made. In recent years, local government officials have been illegally selling land use rights to real-estate developers to fund infrastructure to attraction potential investors and they also gained profit from the process. The direct result of it is farmers lost their farmlands (Farmers in China do not own their farm lands; they only entitled the land use-rights). Gushi County and Zhangbei County are among the numerous counties and towns in China's rural areas that are losing the farmlands to commercial lands. For more information, see for example, Ding, C. (2003). Land policy reform in China: assessment and prospects. Land use policy, 20(2), 109-120. And also, Cartier, C. (2001). 'Zone Fever', the Arable Land Debate, and Real Estate Speculation: China's evolving land use regime and its geographical contradictions. Journal of Contemporary China, 10(28), 445-469.

children in their communities. Migrants from Henan Province in these early years of migration mainly worked in landfill and garbage recycling and settled in Haidian District. Beside founders from Henan Province, people from Hebei Province have also set up schools in their communities. The majority of people from Zhangbei County worked in the farms in the outer districts of Beijing and delivered produce to the markets in the city center, they mainly lived in the outskirt of Haidian and Shijingshan Districts. There is another county in Hebei Province called Guyuan, people from there who migrated to Beijing have mainly worked in the lightweight trucks operation for shipping, their communities located at Chaoyang District. The founding of migrant children schools initially aimed at solving the problem of educating children who live in the same communities and share the common places of origin. There is a common saying I heard multiple times from older teachers and parents that describes such focus on family and native place networks of migrant children schools in the early years: “Henan kids go to Henan schools; Hebei kids attend Hebei schools”.

Parents value education for their children, especially for migrant parents. Many migrant parents do not have traditional working hours and they often work overtime, schools can be the place that not only look after their children but also bring the sense of secure to the family. In addition, they wanted their children to get education, because to certain degree they see education as a way out: education can help their children escape poverty and gain respect, and most importantly, recognizable status in their new place of residence. The emergence of migrant children schools results from government unwillingness to take on the responsibility, have provided the basic opportunity for this need.

Principal Hu

Hu is the principal of a migrant children school and he was a teacher in Gushi County before he came to Beijing in 1990s. He told me that the middle school classroom he had in the town's only secondary school would lose over half of the students at the end of the seventh grade, "those who can go all left; those who couldn't go at first left later too, including me… There are about two thirds of people in the county working outside; many of us came to Beijing."

The stories Principal Hu shared about his early years of setting up the migrant children school illustrate the experience many other founders of the schools underwent. I set out to meet Principal Hu after calling him on the phone. With the address of the school written down, I was still lost in the interlocked crossroad in the outskirt of Changping District. When I was looking for someone on the street to ask for direction of the school, I saw three boys in school uniforms walking past me. I could not see the name of the school that printed in front of the uniforms, but overheard their conversation/argument about which assignment in the winter break was the hardest one, with quite different slang than Mandarin or the local Beijing dialect. I decided to ask for their help. As I expected, they were student of Principal Hu's school, on their way to school to pick up the assignments for the winter break and full fill the duty of cleaning the classroom[5]. Following them into some alley ways that seem like dead-ended, we entered another wide street. The school located at the end of this street. Walking towards the school gate, stores and shops were replaced by resident flats. There were bikes parked

[5] This is a tradition of cleaning the classroom before locked the campus for winter/summer break in Chinese schools. All the students and teachers participate in the cleaning.

outside of houses, along with the hanging chilies and garlic that send their spicy smell in the cold dry air of January in Beijing. This time all of the three boys talked at the same time to tell me which one of the houses belong to their homeroom teacher at third grade, whose family always cook noodles as all three meals; which one has two families lived in, all three of their children went to their school; and which one shared by four young teachers as dorm. A man in his late 40 or early 50s stepped out of the reception room next to the school gate. "I could hear you three from ten miles away. Hurry up; three of you are quite late. Your class is waiting for you. Today is the last day of school, but you should still be on time…" The boys winked at each other and tried hard to hold back laugh. Principal Hu laughed and let the boys went to their classroom to catch up with their duty.

After showing me around the school, we sat down in the reception room, which also functions as his office. The very first thing I noticed was a framed permit hanging on the wall, it was the "Non-State Run School Operation Permit" (*minban xuexiao banxue xukezheng),* issued in 2005[6]. The rest of the wall was filled with the rules and regulations of the school, guest registry, school bus schedule forms, and so forth. One guest registry was quite different from other regular school guest books. It was called "Patrol Officer Registry (*xunluo jingguan dengji biao*)". Principal Hu noticed the puzzled look on my face; he explained that it was a new rule from the local district office. It requires most migrant children schools to show that they were keeping the safety issue on track and cooperating with the local police station. This registry would serve as a document whenever the officer from the district government decided to come for the check-up.

[6] I will discuss the issue of such permit in the later section of this chapter.

Beside waving goodbye to the students and telling them to stay safe when travelling with families to the countryside for the Spring Festival, Principal Hu was able to put aside that entire morning to talk about his early years of running this school and what he had encountered in his fifteen years in Beijing.

Hu taught middle school in Henan Province for over ten years, with arrears of his salary from local government and reducing number of students in his classroom almost at the beginning of his career. In the late 1990s, the majority of people in his county left for Beijing. He also joined the migration and hoped to make a living in the city. His stayed with relatives who collected and recycled garbage in Beijing. In the area they stayed, there were several families had children with them. When the parents worked in the landfill to collect recyclable garbage, many of their children would just play next to the landfill. After his arrival, several parents came to ask if he could teach their children read and write. Hu recalled the request from his own uncle: "My son, your own cousin, didn't finish elementary school when we left home. Now he could just collect garbage. You were the first educated people (*dushu ren*) in our family; you know how important it is. People from other places can open schools, so can you." He decided to "give it a try". After borrowing money from almost all the relatives, he rent three flats nearby and remodeled them into a very simple school house. Many people in the Henan *cun* came to help and brought their kids. The first semester he had over fifty students. He asked his younger brother, who was a substitute teacher back at home, and also his sister-in-law, to join him. Three of them grouped these students as preK to K, 1 to 2 grade, and 3 to 4 grade, bought textbooks from central textbook store in the city, asked a carpenter in their

community to make study desk and chairs, and started to teach them very basic reading and math.

The school grew fast. In just two semesters, Hu had to look for new teachers and a bigger space in order to accommodate the growing number of students. Around the same time, many families of the students were forced to move to a different area of the city. Hu decided to move with them and looked for larger spaces for the school, and he had to move several times from one district to another since then[7]. He continually supported by relatives and people in the communities and overcame many difficulties and challenges in terms of looking for ideal locations for school, recruiting teachers, and most importantly, sustaining the schools in both financial and moral ways. At the time, moving from rural areas to the city was still highly controlled[8], those who did not have urban residency were required to apply for temporary living permit (*zan zhu zheng*), and re-apply when they move from one district to another in the same city. Hu and many teachers in the school were harassed by the public security joint defense team (*gongan lianfang dui*)[9]. During my conversations with him about state crackdowns on migrant worker communities, Hu recounted an incident that took place one evening when he was

[7] As we mentioned earlier, migrant communities have been pushing further and further out because of the urban development. Migrant children schools thus moved with the majority of the population.

[8] This stage is symbolized by the "custody and repatriation" (*shou rong qian song*) regulation that established in early 1980s and ended after the massive public discussion and political dissonance of the tragic death of Sun Zhigang in a detention center in 2003. Over this twenty year period, police in the urban cities could randomly approach and take migrants into custody if they did not have a temporary living permit (*zan zhu zheng*) with them, and repatriate them to the place where they hold their household registry.

[9] The public security joint defense team is not a formal police force; it is organized by urban work unit and/or urban neighborhood committee. For more information, see Sapio, F. (Ed.). (2010). *Sovereign power and the law in China* (Vol. 18). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

visiting his sister at the other end of the city. Just as Hu and his relatives were about to begin dinner, the joint defense team entered their home to conduct a random residency permit check. Everyone living in the rental flats were migrants and were thus required to carry with them at all times a temporary living permit. Not having his residency permit with him, Hu was unable to immediately provide the joint defense team with necessary document upon their request. He was abruptly removed from his sister's home and sent to a detention center where he would have to remain until someone could retrieve his residency permit and pay a fine.

Hu was not the first teacher to open the migrant children school, nor was he the only migrant teacher sent to the floating population detention center (liudong renkou shourong suo), his stories about the early years of migrant children school revealed a complicated yet illuminating commentary regarding the schools in the migrant communities: At the beginning, there was neither support nor regulation from the government, these schools which came out of the communities were managed to survive on their own with the limited resources provided by the basic networks within the communities. However, the state was not entirely absent; its presence was felt within migrant communities as a result of regular crackdowns on various types of violations of state regulations.

The Development Trajectory

From 1993 to 1997, migrant children schools in Beijing went through the first stage of development, not only the number of schools grew, but also emerged in different migrant communities in different districts other than the major Henan *cun* and Hebei *cun*. These early schools relied on the networks of kinships, native place, and friendships to

choose locations, acquire initial financial resources, and recruit staffs and teachers. They were usually family-run, started by one or two individuals of a family, and hired relatives to work in the schools who sometime shifted roles between the teachers, the staffs, and the school administers. They also rely on the networks to recruit migrants with teaching experiences to be teachers, sometimes there were even local retired teachers taught in these schools.

From 1998 to 2001, migrant children schools experienced a rapid expansion. More and more people began to open new schools. Many of them were teachers, both public schools teachers and substitute teachers, but there were also some people without any teaching background. And from 2001 to 2006, it appeared to be the period of time when migrant children schools started to merge, disappear, reappear, and evolve. Some organizations also involved in founding migrant children schools[10], at the same time, many individual fund schools tried to restructure in order to sustain. Some researchers described this period, namely from 1998 to 2006, as the period of the "marketization of migrant children schools". The emergence of schools met the "demand", and the development of these schools reflected the natural selection and mergers of the market (Han, 2004). I would argue that the market was not the "magic power" that brought the transformation. And the state power did not retreat and leave the space. This period of time was the stage that migrant children schools as a social component gradually realized its position in the civil society, and learned different ways to negotiate with the state

[10] Established in 2005, BN Vocational School (BNVS) is China's first tuition-free, non-profit vocational school at the senior secondary level for children from migrant families. It is also the targeted school subsidized by the Project Hope of the China Youth Development Foundation and the Project Hope's Vocational Education Fund. Information from their official website: http://en.bnvs.cn/

policy and regulations. And most importantly, during this period of time, the space provided by migrant children schools strengthened the connections among migrant teachers, parents and students, and also allowed many people outside of the migrant communities to involve in the work of educating migrant children, which set the foundation of further collective action in the later stage of the organization.

Negotiation with Policies and Regulations

It took the policymakers over a decade to acknowledge the social and educational needs of migrant children in the cities. There was not until 1996 that the Chinese central government drafted specific regulation concerning schooling issues for migrant children. There have been two developmental stages of the evolvement of educational policies and regulations regarding migrant children's schooling, namely the stage of vague governmental responsibilities, and the stage of re-emphasizing governmental control.

The Stage of Vague Governmental Responsibilities

This stage was marked by three central government's regulations issued in 1996, 1998, and 2001.

In April of 1996, the then State Education Commission[11] in China issued the "Approaches on Schooling for School-Age Children and Adolescents of Floating Population in Urban Areas (Trial)". This is the very first specific documentation the central government drafted on the issue of schooling for migrant children. The Approach stated that "local governments of the host cities should provide the opportunity of

[11] After the restructure of the State Council in 1998, the State Education Commission became the Ministry of Education.

receiving compulsory education for the school-age children and adolescents of the floating population, and determine those who with responsibilities" (Article 4), "migrant children who fulfill the conditions could mainly attend full-time primary schools on a temporary basis (*jiedu*[12]) (Article 8), "Those who are running schools specifically for migrant children, are responsible for their own funds raising" (Article 11); and "public schools in the host cities admitting migrant children are allowed to charge parents or other guardians 'education rental fee' (*jiedu fei*)[13]" (Article 15). The document emphasized that the education providers and families remain responsible for migrant children's schooling, and there was no specific requirement on local governments' responsibilities or funding solution for compulsory education of migrant children.

In March of 1998, the State Education Commission and the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China jointly issued the "Provisional Regulations on Schooling for Migrant Children". The contents of this document, was basically the same as the Approach published in 1996, but provided somewhat clear wording, such as proposing migrant children attend full-time primary schools in the host cities on a temporary basis (Article 7). But the precondition for attending any school in the host cities was and could only be one: there was no guardian in the place where they have the household residency (Article 3). Furthermore, "governments of the regions where migrant children have household residency should strictly control the outflow of the compulsory education school-age children and adolescents. Those who have any kind of

[12] *Jiedu*, 借读, literally translated as borrowing the space to attend school, means attending schools on a temporary basis without household registry

[13] Fees for allowing children to attend schools on a temporary basis

guardian condition should attend schools within residency" (Article 3). This regulation formally established the emphasis on migrant children in the host cities could mainly attend the local public schools, and the host cities should take the main responsibilities to manage the schooling issue, which later referred as the "two Mains". However, it did not provide any recommendation of how to take such responsibilities, especially the distribution of educational resources was closely tied to the household registration system.

Not surprisingly, local governments were not only reluctant to take responsibility, but also attempted to shift these responsibilities onto the families and the community schools that already existed at the time. It is further stated in the regulation that "migrant children could attend schools specifically for migrant children to receive compulsory education" (Article 3), and "organization, social groups, or individual citizens could open schools specifically for migrant children according to the law. They are responsible for their own funds-raising, local governments and educational authorities should actively support. The requirements of setting up these simply equipped schools could be less strict, and they are allowed to lease firmly-structured and appropriate buildings as the school house" (Article 9).

This provided temporary legitimacy for migrant children school, which served as a "tipping point" for the development of migrant children schools. Many referred this as "migrant children schools have rules to follow and laws to go by". In Beijing, many schools even kept this regulation as their legal protection. They showed the lines in this regulation to officials when districts came to sweep the communities to close off any migrant organization, saying "the central government would allow us to exist". It was around the same time that schooling for migrant children entered the public discourse and

the existence of migrant children school was recognized and brought to public attention. This was also the very first step of migrant children schools took in confrontation of the local government: using the regulation issued by the central government.

In May of 2001, the State Council of China issued the "Decisions on the Reform and Development of Basic Education", proposing that all governments should "focus on addressing the problem of migrant children to receive compulsory education. Regional governments in the host areas take the lead, and full-time public schools are the main providers. Using different forms to protect the rights of migrant children to receive compulsory education according to the law" (Article 12). This regulation was a big step forward comparing to the previous 1996 and 1998 regulations, it defined the compulsory education for migrant children as required by law to be protected by government. However, this Decision was not a specialized document of the education for migrant children, it did not specify the steps of protect their educational rights, especially the important question of who/which government should take the responsibilities of providing financial support.

These three documents constitute the central government's basic policy framework of the compulsory education for children of migrant workers during the period of 1996 to 2003. These regulations mentioned the opportunity for migrant children to attend public school on a temporary basis, and the self-financial responsibilities of migrant children schools, but did not state clearly how much responsibility of the local governments should take. The "two Mains" framework was proposed to solve the problem of "who should be responsible", as the host cities governments and the regions of origin governments have been passing the buck between each other. But even after this

framework was put forward, it did not get recognized by the local government. Instead, the mention of the existence and disposition of migrant children schools became recognizable. It not only gives migrant children schools the possibility to gain an official position, but also allows local governments to continually evade their responsibilities.

Based on the 2001 Decision of the State Council, in April of 2002, the Beijing Education Commission issued a "Provisional Measures on the Implementation of Compulsory Education for School-Age Children and Adolescents of Floating Population in Beijing". This regulation allowed "social forces organized school" to legally "accept migrant children and adolescents who are compliance with the provisions" (Article 9). It specified that "in the areas of floating population concentration, social organizations and individual citizens can refer to the standard conditions for running schools, report to the district educational administrative departments for examination and approval, and then organize schools specially for mobile children" (Article 10). By this time, the migrant children schools in Beijing has experienced a period of fast development, the numbers of the schools across the city have reached to several hundred. Later in that year, the Education Committee of Chaoyang District organized a meeting for the leaders of the migrant children schools within the district. It was many principals' first time sitting down at the District Education Committee office. Almost all of the over 110 migrant children school principals in Chaoyang District came to the meeting. Later, the Education Committee of Haidian and Daxing also held the principals meetings within their districts. As for Beijing, the underground educational force that migrant children schools have provided can no longer be ignored.

The Stage of Re-Emphasizing Governmental Control

In the analysis of this stage, I focus on four later regulations issued by the central government in 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010, as well as three subsequent regional regulations in Beijing published in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

In September of 2003, the State Council and the six Ministries, including the Ministry of Education, issued the "Suggestions on Further Improving the Work of Compulsory Education for Children of Migrant Rural Laborers to Urban Areas." This document listed comprehensive regulations regarding the compulsory education for migrant children. It proposed that "the local governments' development and reform departments should include the compulsory education for migrant children into the urban social development plans, and also include the school buildings of migrant children schools in the urban infrastructure planning; the compilation departments should count the numbers of migrant children into the calculations of the school budget setting; the price administrative departments should set the standards for miscellaneous fees, make sure migrant children are equally charged as local students (Article 3)". It further stated that local governments need to establish mechanism to "ensure funding of compulsory education for migrant children"… "Local government should financially support schools who receive more migrant children, and reserve some part of the city educational budget to use in the work of compulsory education for migrant children" (Article 5), and "provide scholarships, fee waivers, free textbooks and other ways to support migrant children from families with financial difficulties" (Article 6). It also reemphasizes the need to "support and manage" migrant children schools, and set standards to approve, issue permits, and regulate these schools (Article 8). It was the first time in the

regulations to clarify that it should be the responsibility of the governments in the host areas to look into the funding issue of educating migrant children. Accordingly, in August of 2004, the Beijing Education Commission issued the "Instructions on the Implementation of the State Council Regulations on Further Improving the Work of Compulsory Education for Children of Migrant Rural Laborers to Urban Areas" to reiterate now its policies were in line with the central government.

Yet much like the previous regulations failed to do so, this regulation did not succeed in forcing the local government to fully open the admission to migrant children, nor set aside the budget for migrant children[14]. The actual implementation of central and regional policies often reflected the contradictory reality. The central regulations allow migrant children who fulfill the conditions to attend public schools, and the local regulations set the specific requirements to define such conditions. The numerous migrant parents' experience of trying to enroll their children into public schools in Beijing could be viewed as an example of the actual implementation of such regulation. In Beijing, according to the 2004 Beijing Regulation, parents or legal guardians of migrant children should collect all five certificates before they could apply for the "Proof of Migrant Children Attending Public Schools in Beijing on A Temporary Basis" through the city's neighborhood government official units. The five certificates include, the Temporary Living Permit in Beijing; the Certified Proof of Address (official rental contract, or proof of home ownership); the Certified Labor Contract (official paid roll verification, or

[14] Local governments of the host cities have continued to exercise the "practical reasons" for refusing migrant children open admission to the public schools, claiming that providing education to these migrant children would be a heavy drain on local resources especially for governments already having difficulty in providing adequate educational facilities for their own residents. This might not be found in official regulations, but was predominant in public discourses among urban officials and residents.

official business operator's permit); the Certificate of No Potential Familial Guardian Reside in the Place of Origin, which must be issued by the local township level governments of the same place of origin; and lastly, the Registry of the Entire Family' Household Permanent Residency.

In addition to the visible and hidden fees, the five certificates have largely come to represent another legal barrier for the majority of migrant parents to move forward in the process of being able to legally educate their children in state supported schools. Migrant families often would only be able to get two or three certificates. For instance, many migrant workers did not have stable employments, so they were not able to provide the Certified Labor Contract. As for the Certificate of No Potential Familial Guardian Reside in the Place of Origin, parents have to bear all the cost of time and money, sometimes the danger of losing their temporary jobs by taking a leave, to return to their places of origin to apply in person. What is more, the trip would not always guarantee that a certificate would be obtained from local government. Even for the parents who went through all the difficulties to collect the five certificates, and received the Proof of Migrant Children Attending Public Schools in Beijing on A Temporary Basis, there would be additional steps for parents then to complete: 1) As stated in the 2004 Beijing Regulation, if the child is not attending first grade, the parents or legal guardians have to provide the Certificate of Previous School Attendance, which issued by all the previous schools the child enrolled; 2) in addition, all parents and legal guardians are responsible for contacting the public schools or other schools recognized by the government. And only public schools with "the capacity to fulfill the requirement" are able to accept the request for the enrollment on a temporary basis. Many parents have experienced

humiliation of being pushed from one school to another, having all the required documents in hand but being rejected for the reason that "all seats are taken."

The regulation on the part of "support and manage" migrant children schools also indicated the political motivations behind the systematic exclusionary means of the actual policy implementation. It was around this time when the Education Committees of different districts in Beijing began issuing permits to migrant children schools. It is worth noticing that it did not mean that all the schools who met the criteria would be granted the permit. The regulation requires all migrant children schools have to get permit from the local district government, but not all schools can obtain such a permit even if they are willing to apply for it. The period of getting permit was short (The period lasted from the end of 2003 toward the beginning of 2006. After that, almost no permit has been issued). And many schools that applied for the permit also received different statements of the interpretation of the regulation from the local district office[15]. It is up to these local district governments to set the criteria for determining which school is "reaching the standards" and which is not[16].

Today, there are around sixty migrant children schools with the official permit of school operation in Beijing, all of which had their permits granted in this short period. Many schools without a permit but have the "approval" from local district offices. Different from officially issued permit, an approval was given by the District Committee

[15] Most of them were informed by the Education Committee of the local districts.

[16] "The standards for Running Elementary and Middle Schools in Beijing (Trail)" was issued by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission on December, 19, 2006, almost six months after the massive school closing in that summer. As we will discuss it later, the official claim for closing these 239 schools was "not meeting the standards".

of Education as an approval of allowing running a school (*fuchi pizhun banxue*). But such approval did not prevent any school from being shut down in the later waves of school closings. Moreover, the regulation would soon be tightened up. In September of 2005, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission issued the "Notification on Strengthening the Regulatory Work on Floating Population Self-Run Schools". This Notification requested the regulation and control of migrant children schools in the city, put forward the first time the guidelines of "Triage some; Regulate some; Outlaw some", and emphasized "migrant children schools with potential safety hazard, must be resolutely banned".

In March of 2006, "The Suggestions of the State Council on Solving the Problems of Migrant Workers" was issued. This document touched upon many issues affecting migrants living in the cities. Article Twenty-One focused on the compulsory education for migrant children. It once again clarified that the governments of the host areas should take the fiscal responsibility:

> The governments of the host areas should include the compulsory education for migrant children into local education development plan, include it into the education budget plan. Local public elementary and middle schools should be the main education providers for migrant children and allocate the public school funding according to the actual enrollment of migrant children within the schools.

The document also proposed that "local governments should give support and guidance in school funding, teacher training and other aspects to improve the quality of education in migrant children schools that are entrusted with compulsory education for migrant children" (Article 21).

In reality, many local governments were hesitant about budget issues. Instead, they further emphasized the control of migrant children school. Cracking down on migrant children schools have been considered as a showcase of the local governments' determination to carry out the central regulations. In this sense, closing the migrant children school would show that the public schools naturally becoming the main education provider. Soon after this regulation, district education offices in Beijing stopped issuing permits for migrant children schools, regardless of whether there were previous or a new application, and began to strengthen the control of the schools without official permit. In July 12 of 2006, the Beijing Municipal Government announced the "Notification from the Office of the Beijing Municipal People's Government on Further Strengthening the Safety Work on the Unauthorized Floating Population Self-Run Schools", and the school closing was announced soon afterwards. During that summer, 239 migrant children schools were targeted for closure in Haidian, Shijingshan, and other districts, affecting nearly 100,000 migrant students. The vast majority of these students did not enter public schools as was originally promised. Instead these students were forced to drop out or transfer to the countryside of their parents' places of origin[17]. The migrant communities and the organizations that work closely with them strongly reacted to this wave of school closing, but this issue did not promptly enter the realm of public discussion at the time. However, many teachers, parents and social activists, had learnt from the experience, which would in certain respects foreshadow a large-scale and more systematic confrontation later in 2011.

[17] Among them were forty students in my sixth grade classroom that year.

In August of 2008, the State Council issued the "Notifications on the Efforts to Waive Tuition and Fees for Compulsory Education in the Urban Areas". According to this regulation, starting the fall of 2008, all students receiving compulsory education in the urban areas would not be required to pay tuition and fees. Moreover, migrant children should receive the same free-of-charge education as urban students. For non-state run schools that undertake the task of providing compulsory education for migrant children, local governments should subsidize them in accordance to the standards for public schools.

In July of 2010, the "Plan for National Mid-to-Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)" was issued by the State Council. Even though it was not a specific policy on migrant children's education, it reemphasized the responsibilities of governments of host areas and local public schools, along with mentioning the possibility of a plan to include migrant children in the entrance examinations in the host cities (Article 8).

These later four regulations issued by the State Council on the compulsory education for migrant children that focus on the financial provisions were the most detailed requirements so far. According to these four documents, the central government clarified that there would are three major financial responsibilities that governments of the host areas should take on for migrant children's compulsory education: funding for expanding public schools, recruiting personnel and other expenses; funding for subsidizing migrant children schools that are entrusted with the task of compulsory education; funding for providing free tuition and other needs of migrant children.

These regulations reiterated that local governments of the host cities and the public schools in these areas should be the main education provider for migrant children. However, despite the central government's emphasis on the governments' role, it did not share any responsibility of its own, nor did it stipulate how the local governments at all levels should take the responsibilities, especially the financial ones. So far, the policies of central government on the relevant budget of the compulsory education for migrant children were considered as ambiguous and pushing down liability, which leaves a lot of space for local government to re-interpret and transfer responsibilities again to migrant families.

In fact, many local governments have been taking quite resistant attitude towards the "two Mains" framework. In Beijing, for example, such attitude is even openly expressed by government officials in public. In a newspaper interview in 2010, the director at the time of the Beijing Education Commission used the "lowland effect" as a metaphor to describe the "necessary of controlling the open education access to migrant children":

> …the problems of migrant children in Beijing are no longer merely educational problems, they are first urban administration issues. What is the capacity of Beijing? How many migrant workers and children can we accept? If there is no limit, there would form a "lowland effect", just like the water tends to flow to lower land: if we make our better education more free, then more and more people will come…" (Xinjing Bao Newspaper, 2010-1-25, A 09)

Nevertheless, the so-called "lowland effect" is a false claim. Good schools in the better school districts have never been open access and free to children of urban residents in other parts of the cities, not to mention the migrant children. Students are strictly limited to attend the schools within the residential areas of which they have official certified

proof. In order to enroll in schools outside of their household area, even if the family has urban registry, parents have to pay the now called "voluntary sponsorship" but in fact the same school choice fee[18], which could reach up to a quarter of a million RMB ($40,000 USD) in some top elementary schools in Beijing (China News, 2012-1-19). For these schools, the Property Ownership Certificate is the first cut-off; in some competitive schools, even the proofs of the families' initial ownership of the house are required (These served as the second or third cut-off, if the families purchased the apartments owned by other previously, the schools could potentially reject the enrollment applications). As for migrant families and their children, these schools and educational resources have never been open and redistributed to them.

Moreover, as the capitol of China, Beijing has undergoing continuous urban expansion, on one hand, and tried to promote a positive image of the city for international events, on the other. Despite their contribution, the migrants and their living concentrations would not be helpful in improving the appearance of the city. The crackdowns on migrant communities and schools within these communities have successfully displaced many migrant families and their children. There has been one after another wave of demolishing migrant children schools and other structures in the migrant communities. Not just in 2006, but every subsequent year, more migrant children schools in the Districts of Chaoyang, Shijingshan, Changping, Daxing, Fengtai, and so on, were in the range of demolition, including the ones holding official permits. There were always different voices and resistant actions during each demolition, but they have not been of

[18] For basic information on school choice, see for example Tsang, M. C. (2003). School choice in the People's Republic of China. In Plank, D. N., & Sykes, G. (Eds.). *Choosing choice: School choice in international perspective*. Teachers College Press. pp. 164-195.

concern for the government. However, in the summer 2011, when the 24 schools were forcibly shut down, there were unprecedented systematic resistance and widespread social dissonance. Part of the reason, is the gradual formation of a sense of solidarity and collective identity in the communities around the work towards providing schools for migrant children over the past 20 years.

Support from Within and Outside of the Migrant Communities

As state policies and regulations shifted from "Restricting, Recognizing, Valuing, and Strengthen-Controlling" the issues of schooling for migrant children and what role should migrant families and communities play, migrant children schools inside of the communities did not stop to wait for their fate to be determined by the state. Since these schools were unofficial community schools at the outset, they were not entitled to receive any public resources and services that controlled by the state. In the process of adopting and negotiating different state policies, the evolution of migrant children schools has also influenced the broader social and political dynamics both inside and outside of the specific communities they serve. Teachers and parents inside of the migrant communities supported each other to mobilize limited resources, resulting in further bonding through group action. Meanwhile, the personal trust built upon kinship, native place, and friendship has expended beyond the migrant communities and developed into the collaboration with emerging organizations in the space provided by migrant children schools.

Forming Solidarity within the Communities

Located inside migrant communities, the migrant children schools have contributed to the formation of a sense of collectivity among the students, their teachers, their families, and with the other members of the migrant communities. Many of these schools, regardless of sizes, numbers of teachers, with permits or without official recognition, have organized various activities and opportunities to bring families into the schools, or join the families in the community events. There are talent shows and celebrations held in these school playgrounds on the first day of the new year, families of teachers and students came together to celebrate and wish for a better year. In some migrant communities, the only community centers were organized by teachers of the migrant children schools. Teachers and parents have worked together to host festival activities, perform for migrant workers in places like construction sites, and reached out to other community gatherings across different parts of the city.

The sense of solidarity is also reflected by the indistinct boundary between schools and familial spaces. When new teachers or families arrived at the schools and the communities, they would first become next door neighbors of other students' and teachers' families. The shared living and working spaces allowed families interact with one another, and "help each other out when needed". There are simple things that might be considered as abnormal in formal settings at other places, but do not seem like "out-of-place" in this setting. When one teacher took me to visit some of her colleagues and students' families, it was not considered out of the ordinary to simply arrive at their rental flats without letting them know beforehand. At the beginning I felt quite uneasy and kept apologizing for showing up without notice. But finally, the mother of one of my research

participants persuaded me not to be concerned: "Don't say 'make an appointment'. We are not the city people… Don't worry about it. She (the teacher who introduced us) is here all the time. They work together, same as the four other teachers next door…Just come on in".

The dynamics at the parent-teacher conferences were quite different than the types of parent-teaching conferences I was more familiar with. The specific procedures of parent-teacher conferences are varied at different schools, but they are often held after the mid-term and the final examinations. Generally speaking, the atmosphere of parent-teacher conferences at public schools can be defined as serious. Headteachers will prepare a speech to start the series of presentations of teachers from different subject areas, which are aim to show the parents how to raise the students' test score and other performance in schools. Sometimes there may also be parent representatives to speak. Parents will learn how their children study in school, and prepare to be compared and commented openly[19]. The format of the parent-teacher conferences in migrant children schools might be the same, but the dynamics are quite different. The ones I have observed and in which participated at migrant children schools feel somewhat casual. Teachers focus on the children's study but also the schools' efforts of improving, and ask parents to be part of their efforts (*yiqi nuli*)[20]. Parents would be informed of the work and behaviors of their children in schools, but not in a surprise way, since they interact with teachers on a daily base outside of the school settings. The comments I heard in several

[19] See for example, Leung, P., & Yuen, M. T. (2001). Parent-teacher conferences in a secondary school. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *19*(1), 28-30.

[20] *yiqi nuli,* try hard together.

meetings were gentle and approachable, such as “He (a student’s name) helped his younger brothers and their classmates during lunch, he has always be very kind”; “Remember I told you yesterday that she was doing very good this semester, see, this is her composition notebook”, and so on. Parents would also not be judged for their different accents or simple clothes, nor would they be blamed for their absence because of having to work overtime. Both teachers and parents treat the conference sincerely, but they do not feel stressful or nervous. One such sign of the informality is the occasional use of slang and local dialect in the conversations.

Moreover, many teachers have their own children in the schools, and many parents are teachers or staffs of the schools. Brother Peng was among the very first group to migrate to Beijing in his village in Henan. He came to Beijing in the beginning of 1990s, and he has worked as construction worker, plumber, and security guard. After his daughter was born, he brought the family to the city. “Life was hard and crude sometimes,” he told me. He also described how he became a single father. His daughter was little but his temporary jobs did not give him regular hours. Two of his neighbors were teachers at a nearby migrant children school. They always took turns to look after his daughter when he had to work. After she turned three, Brother Peng sent her to the school where these two neighbors taught. The community was soon demolished because of the urban development expanded to the area, as was the school. Brother Peng moved with one of the neighbor to an Anhui *cun* in Haidian District, largely because the mother of the neighbor came from Anhui Province. He enrolled his daughter in the migrant children school there.

For the following seven years, this family has moved several times. Each time Brother Peng would always enroll his daughter in school. He had tried the possibility of sending her to a public school, but was rejected by the very first step of certificates: the only one he had was a temporary living permit. Right before his daughter turned twelve, Brother Peng heard from several co-workers that a fellow migrant teacher who was also originally from Henan Province needed to find someone as janitor/security guard for his newly open school in Chaoyang District. Brother Peng worked with the team who built the school houses, so he learned that the principal leased the land for fifty years and the school would offer middle school class. He applied for the job and was offered the position. Brother Peng became quite emotional as he described working as the janitor in the school his daughter was attending:

> …at the beginning she said that I tried to 'monitor' her at school, but I knew she was happy, so was I. We rented a flat right next to the school. She would come home for lunch, sometimes with her classmates. I also turned the other room we had into my 'office'. I brought back broken chairs or other things to repair...I didn't get much chance to stay in school myself; this was the closest thing I can do to help. Some older teachers also had their own kids in the school…they would ask me to repair things at home too. We all lived close by.
>
> My daughter was a good singer, sometime I could hear they singing during music class, I could tell her voice right away…

The collective understanding of living and working in the migrant communities are formed among teachers and parents, especially when they shared both roles in the communities.

The growing group solidarity among schools and communities is also reflected by the ways of which schools provide extra support for children from struggling families in the communities. Before any official policies or regulations stated or were implemented

regarding who should be responsible for supporting migrant families and the education of their children, schools in migrant communities had already begun to carry out different ways to meet these needs. It is worth clarifying that migrant children schools are run on the private funds collected from the savings of the founders' entire family (not simply the savings of a single family, they often borrowed money from relatives and friends), tuitions fees, and donations from different organizations in the later developmental stage[21]. Almost all of the schools have reserved portions of the funds to account for the tuitions for students from families facing more difficulties. Some larger migrant children schools would even reduce tuitions for half of the students enrolled. The process of asking for tuition support is far less complicated than those at regular schools. Parents do not have to provide any certificate or proof; most of the teachers and principals were neighbors of these families, they would consider the families' situation when their children enroll in the schools.

Teaching, working, and studying[22] in migrant children schools also provide the opportunity to connect people from different regions and with different backgrounds. After years of developing, as well as being pushed further out from previous scattered areas that were once closer to the city center, many migrant communities are no longer

[21] The issue of tuition in migrant children schools is a quite complicated subject, especially since it has been another major focus of the criticism on the migrant children schools: Although migrant children schools charged lower tuition and fees than most of other schools, even after the tuition and fees were required by law to waive in 2008, there exists individual school owners using these schools to make profit. I AGREE with some of these concerns raised, and these issues deserved further exploration. However, given the scope and focus of this dissertation, topics of research alone this line will likely be the subjects of future research.

[22] For the study of migrant children's learning and schooling experiences, see for example, Woronov, T.E. (2004). In the Eye of the Chicken: Hierarchy and Marginality Among Beijing's Migrant School Children. *Ethnography*, 5(3): 289-313. And Dong, J. (2011). *Discourse, Identity, and China's Internal Migration: The Long March to the City.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

only have people from one place of origin; people from different regions and work different occupations have jointly lived in the same migrant communities. Consequently, migrant children schools have more diverse teacher and student populations in terms of both places of origin and family backgrounds. Some larger and more developed migrant children schools have also come to receive the children of the local residents[23]. This is not to say that the segregation of schools according to household registry should continue for migrant and urban children, or that the migrant children schools are completely harmonious places. Rather, what the urban educational system ought to learn is to embrace the diversity and the sense of collectivity that migrant children schools both foster and support.

Organized Mobilization beyond the Migrant Communities

Although being excluded from the public realm for decades, migrant communities have never suppressed their voices. In the spaces provided by migrant children schools, students and teachers have been using different ways to tell their own stories. The ordinary community festival gathering at the school playgrounds have songs or sketch comedies to tell what they have encountered and to share what they have felt. For students in migrant children schools, there are places such as campus radio stations and student newspapers at school to support them in sharing their experience and telling their own stories. For schools that do not have such facilities, assigned homework sometimes could also encourage them to write and express their feelings.

[23] Some schools in the rural districts of Beijing have been through the "*merging*"—as we will mention in next chapter—these rural schools were merged or closed down because of the "low capacity". Some outer suburban districts of Beijing also merged and closed schools to "save educational resources from wasting". Several large migrant children schools in these areas have children from the rural Beijing enrolled in.

However, the main-stream discourse has created a stereotype about migrant children: they are underachievers and perform poorly in standardized tests, they did not learn anything in the poor-equipped schools, and they cannot read and write appropriately. Yet, in school activities along with other opportunities, many children have been able to show gifted talents, producing powerful works in writing, singing, painting, calligraphy arts, and other forms of creating expression[24]. One of the most influential activities organized by teachers and activists to provide such opportunity is the first essay competition for students in migrant children schools in Beijing.

The first migrant children essay competition in Beijing

This essay competition was titled "Hometown, Dream, Beijing", and the theme of the essay was "my wish". It was the first time in Beijing when a university student association[25] worked with numbers of migrant children schools to collaborate and extend the extracurricular activities citywide for students in migrant children schools.

From the beginning of October that year they started the full swing planning; teachers and activists worked together to set up the procedures of the preliminaries, semi-finals, finals, and the awards ceremony. Over ten migrant children schools that have been working with this student association organized their students to participate, some other

[24] "I want to tell you" is the first original song album wrote and sang by migrant children and their teachers in Beijing. Most of the lyrics were adapted from essays written by migrant children. Their teacher has created simple and catchy rhythms for these lyrics and they shared emotions and comments in the process. All the songs were sung by their own choir and they sang at school and in the communities. There are eight songs in this album, but the making of this album spanned from 2004 to 2009. The children use their own words to describe the experiences of living and learning in migrant communities and share their emotions through these lyrics. They also organized activities to reach out members within and outside of the communities. See Appendix G for the list of songs in the Album.

[25] The student association is "Peasants' Children: China Rural Development and Promotion Association in Beijing Normal University."

nearby migrant children schools also joined. Many university undergraduate and graduate students in the Departments of Chinese Language and Literature, History, and so on volunteered to help organize and assist teachers to coach the students in the schools. Moreover, the essay competition also received widespread support and attention in public. A group of well-known scholars and public intellectuals volunteer to be judges. They not only do not charge any fees, many of them also donate books or money for the events. This competition also brought many "first time" for the students in these migrant children schools: it was the first time they participated in an essay competition in Beijing; it was the first time they were invited to a university campus, it was also the first time they learned that their stories did matter.

This competition, however, was not the first time of such collaboration happened between migrant children schools and organizations outside of the communities. There have already been different types of collaboration between student associations at universities or other organizations and migrant children schools at the time, such as supporting professional development, providing resources for extracurricular activities, mobilizing volunteers, and so on. The relationships and friendships have been built among teachers, university volunteers, and other activists. It not only set the foundation for expanding the social network beyond the migrant communities, but also provided opportunities to encourage many migrant teachers to further involve in the work for their schools and communities. They have worked beyond the boundaries of the migrant communities, sometime formed their own grass-root organizations, to mobilize resources from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as government organized

non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) to support the work for students and teachers in migrant children schools and the communities.

Candlelight Communication and the Home for Migrant Teachers in Beijing

In 2007, after continuously working with non-governmental organizations, several teachers in migrant children schools gained the support from two grass-roots organizations that focus on the rural education[26], and started the first newspaper specifically for migrant teacher called the "Candlelight Communication". They began a more systematic and organized effort to support the life and work of migrant teachers. In addition to its wide and free distribution to all migrant children schools in Beijing, this newspaper is run by migrant teachers themselves. It is usually published once a month and the sections are dedicated to articles, news and discussions that collect and document the voices of teachers, including teachers that talk about their experiences and work in the form of poetry, prose, short narratives, and so on. They also receive submissions from many principals of migrant children schools.

As more and more schools and teachers getting involved, Candlelight Communication also started to organize activities for migrant teachers beyond the news

[26] These two organizations are "Beijing Rural Children's Cultural Development Center" and "China Zigen Rural Education & Development Association". They are both influential NGOs in Beijing's migrant communities. The first one was founded in 2006, by the former members of the "Peasants' Children" in Beijing Normal University after they graduated. They moved from working as volunteers in the university student association to establishing grassroots non-governmental organization, in order to further engaging and participating in the activism space that gradually opened up. I have been a member of "Peasant' Children" throughout my times in Beijing Normal University. These student associations' work has played an important role in the development of civil society in China. In the process of working with migrant communities, rural populations, as well as many vulnerable groups, their own identities have been shaped and reconstructed. I would like to come back to this topic in the future step of my research, as in my dissertation I want to emphasize the significant but neglected roles migrant teachers have played in this process.

report. In 2008, from March to May, they organized the Joint Literary Inaugural Tournament for Beijing Migrant Children Schools Teachers and Students, over 8,000 students and teachers from 57 migrant children schools participated in this event. It was also in that year that they received more support from both NGOs and GONGOs, and were able to offer regularly professional workshops and week-long exchange programs during winter and summer break for migrant teachers.

After further collaboration with other university student associations, the teachers running the migrant community teacher projects decided to start a parallel migrant teacher magazine called the "Urban Candlelight", in addition to the newspaper. They also hold a monthly experience exchange and information sharing seminar for migrant teachers across the city.

As the needs of systematical organization of the work around the newspaper, magazine, workshops, and seminars grew, this group of migrant children school teachers, together with many university student associations, created their own organization – "Home for Migrant Teachers in Beijing" in 2009 to support the work of migrant teachers, mobilize resources for their teaching and professional development, and most importantly, try to provide the basic protection for migrant teachers who have been considered as vulnerable but neglected by the larger society. Since the organization was founded, there have been many teachers who have taken the initiative to work as organizational liaison in their schools and communities. Their practices have showed that they are not just the objects of the well established organizations' charity; they are also quite capable of leading the work of mobilization for collective activism. When migrant teachers move beyond their initial networks within the community and establish their own organizations,

they are able to form a sustainable ground for the development of their struggles over the recognition and redistribution.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with the analysis of the early development of migrant children schools in the 1990s. I described the demographics of the early founders of these schools in the migrant communities in Beijing and traced the trajectories of these schools' development by focusing on the stories of one migrant children school principal. The stories help to illustrate how early migrants was supported by the networks of kinship, places of origin, and friendships to start the school, and what they had encountered from the state authorities over migrant communities.

In the second part of this chapter, I lay out the development of the policies and regulations, both from the state level and regional level, regarding the compulsory education for migrant children and the position of migrant children schools. The progress of these policies went through the stages of vague responsibilities while simultaneously re-emphasizing control. They indicate a trend of decentralization in the implementation of state policies, which has taken place over the past two decades.

The third part of this chapter is a detailed account of how the spaces provided by the migrant children schools have in fact encouraged the formation of the group solidarity among migrant students, teachers and their families, as well as the active members outside of the communities. The vitalizing activities in the communities not only challenged the stereotypes of migrant children and their schools, but also provided the opportunities for mobilizing people outside of the communities and beyond the basic communal networks to further collaborate with and support the work of the migrant

teachers. Such work has been helpful to set the foundation for the development of the further collective actions and the reconstruction of the social dynamics around migrants in cities of China.

Chapter 5: Undervalued Work of Migrant Teachers and Their Resistance

A large number of studies on migration and labor politics in China tend to focus on physical labors in the urban developmental setting[1], or destabilized factory workers in the large industrial setting, often times they are young female migrants[2]; this study tries to acknowledge the explicit and implicit struggles experienced by people work in relatively smaller, community-based schools. Given the mobility of the migrant populations and the informal nature of their employment (outside of the official state order and/or market system), the existing division of labor becomes exacerbated in forms of depreciating the value of migrant labors' work, in the case of this study the work of migrant teachers, most of which is carried out by women. However, the language of how to analyze work or labor in China in the current neoliberal economic/social discourse is giving its way to the emphasis of professionalism, individualism, efficiency, and of course, open market competition. It is not surprising to find that the description of social positions and relations is considered outdated in the main stream public discourses in contemporary Chinese society.

My goal here is not to engage in the debate on how the Chinese state or the global market has restructured the class institution or gender relationships for China. Instead, I will borrow the critical lenses of social structure analysis to re-articulate the language of struggle, whether academically or politically, this time focus on a new social group, migrant teachers in urban Chinese cities. Nevertheless, the formation of this new social body with all of their struggles can no longer be described or politicized as mere class or

[1] see for example, Guang, 2007; Solinger, 1999; West & Zhao, 2000; Zhang, 2001.

[2] see Gaetano & Jacka, 2004; Lee, 1998; Pun, 2005; etc.

gender struggles as they "experience, make sense, react to their life trajectories in contemporary China" (Pun, 2005, P.11). The description of them should be grounded in daily experience from below—in the everyday life struggles of these Chinese migrant teachers in confrontation with the rapidly shifting state power and social transformation. A better understanding of the politics of migrant teachers' work requires a fuller account of the mutually constitutive social, cultural, and economic factors. My goal here is to illustrate how these factors inform one another to shape the work and identity in the movement of migrant children schools.

The Devalued Work

Public concern has started paying attention to migrant children in recent years, but still very few people noted the group of people who teach in migrant children schools. At the beginning stage of the migrant children schools development, most of the schools only had lower grade classes, and hired teachers recommended by relatives and friends from the same places of origin. But as soon as the schools stabilized and reached formal scale, teachers are generally hired through public recruitment, with certain requirements of qualification and teaching experience. Some schools might still prefer to hire experienced teachers from rural areas; others would try to reach out to retired local teachers in Beijing, as well as graduates from the universities in Beijing[3]. According to a

[3] There have been growing numbers of graduates from top ranking universities became full time teachers in migrant children schools. Most of them replied to the recruitment and were hired individually. There are also some non-governmental organizations involved in the recruitment of teachers for selected migrant children schools and rural schools, one of which is the organization of "Teach Future China". These are very important issues related to the relationships between market, state, and civil society in contemporary China. The detailed discussions of these issues will not be able to include in this dissertation, given its focus and scope. However, this trend of the non-governmental organization

series of survey conducted by researchers from the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, female teachers are the overwhelming majority of who work in migrant children schools (Han, 2001).

Migrant teachers come from across the country, some of whom are teachers with decades of teaching experience. Many migrant teachers from the rural areas worked as substitute teachers and forced to migrate to the cities because of their extremely low wages and unthinkable working condition; there are also large numbers of teachers with regular positions in rural schools join the migrant teaching force for the very similar reasons. In recent years, there are more young teachers who graduated from regional teachers colleges or universities move to the cities and teach in migrant children schools. These teachers work in migrant children schools, as such regards of "migrant workers" themselves; at the structural policy level, they are not considered as "teachers" in the society. Migrant teachers, as one of them describes, are "just another group of migrant workers, happen to be doing the 'special' work of teaching". Teacher (*laoshi*) is a term reserved for formal career associated with public schools. In this context, even if many of the teachers at migrant children schools have license from their places of origin and were *laoshi* of public schools there, they are considered as no more than regular migrant workers when they came to the city without teaching in an urban public schools.

The differences between public school teachers and migrant children school teachers also exist in their career support and benefits, such as the opportunities for

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activities has show the potential of influencing the work around education for migrant children. I have started to look into these issues, and more needed to be addressed in future research. See for example, Crowley, B. C. & Yu, M. (2012, April). Teach for America/Teach Future China: Exporting Neoliberal Educational Reform. Paper presented at the 56th Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), San Juan, Puerto Rico.,

professional development, tenure, promotion, and social security insurance. Most of the migrant children schools do not have the resources to organize in-service professional development for their teachers. As for the limited number of non-governmental organizations that work with migrant communities, there is hardly a systematic approach to support the professional needs of migrant teachers.

Moreover, their salary and all the possible benefit as migrant teachers fully depend on the schools' financial situation and the owners' personal decision. Most migrant teachers have extremely low salary with no stipend in summer or winter break, not to mention health insurance, pension, or any other social security insurance. At the end of 2010, two non-governmental organizations[4] conducted a survey regarding the migrant children school teachers' remuneration. The result shows that only one out of the eighty-one teachers participating in the survey has the basic three social security insurance (unemployment, pension, medical) [5], one has two insurance (health, pension), all the rest seventy-nine teachers are not entitled to any insurance.

It also manifested itself within many schools that they are treated as workers rather than teachers. Like the majority of migrant workers, they "work one day to take the day's paycheck". Many teachers even have never signed the official labor contract with

[4] They are the "Home for Migrant Teachers in Beijing" and the "Beijing Rural Children's Cultural Development Center". The Chinese names of these organizations are: *Beijing dagong zidi jiaoshi zhi jia* (北京打工子弟教师之家) and *Beijing nongmin zhi zi wenhua fazhan zhongxin* (北京农民之子文化发展中心), respectively.

[5] As Chinese governmental regulation suggest, as long as the labor contract is signed, the employer should insure for the employees. The three basic social insurance including: pension insurance, medical insurance, and unemployment insurance. They are jointly paid by the individuals and their employers. According to the wages, the proportion of work units and personal commitment generally are: 20% of the pension insurance are paid by employers, personal commitment take 8%; for medical insurance, employers share 6%, 2% is by individuals; unemployment insurance employers pay 2%, personal commitment cover 1%.

the schools, but are in fact the "official" teachers. Under such undeclared employment, some principals can keep or fire a teacher as simple as just saying one word. Several teachers I interviewed after the last day of their fall semester told me how they were really concerned about their situation:

> We have been working in this school for a long time. Wang (one of the younger teacher in the group) here has the shortest time among us, but even she has been here for five years. We have seen so many teachers come and go, but most of the time it is not because they didn't want to stay, like other people or those reports said… There are so many different things the others don't see…
>
> …Just say you express your disagreement with the head (*shangtou*, the people in charge), you might need to look for new school very soon. And you don't get the feeling that you are worthwhile sometimes. It is just too hard to make a living. How can you support your family when you don't even have the most basic security?

When the conversation turned to "worthwhile" (*zhi*), one teacher gave me an example she saw in the "talent market"[6] when she was looking for winter supplemental jobs two weeks ago:

> I make about 1,000 yuan a month (RMB, 1,000 yuan is roughly 150 dollar in 2011), do you know how much housekeepers now can make? Starting at 3,000 yuan, and they can always ask for a raise if they are doing a good enough job…I have college degree and a teacher certification! ... I understand we (the school) are facing difficulties, I don't ask for something that is not realistic, I just hope at least we can get the three insurance (*san xian*). Otherwise we can't keep teachers…

Although they are frustrated towards how they have been treated, they have in fact developed a sense of belonging to the migrant children schools where they have worked. They refer to the schools as *zanmen* (in northern dialect of Chinese it means "we"), as a group of people instead of the employers and employees. The frustration is rather a sense

[6] A talent market is a job/hiring information center; people can find information about what kind of jobs are needed and how much the average pay would be.

of concern towards their condition within the migrant communities than distrust relations with owners/administrators of migrant children schools. Such feeling is very different than many main stream reports or some articles have discussed. In those reports, the owners of migrant children schools are simply described as "opportunist" or capitalists, and their relationship with teachers are regard as exploitive. It is far more complicated than such a simple claim. I will discuss how the relationship could be understood as collective identity in the next chapter which I document the demolition and the strategic reconstruction of migrant children schools.

With extreme low salary and no insurance, migrant teachers, most of whom are women, rely on the imagination of having a fairly fit body. None of them can afford to get sick. In the winter of 2009, several non-governmental organizations who work within migrant communities arranged over 100 migrant teachers at selected schools to have free routine physical examination in one of Beijing's top hospitals. The absolute majority of teachers who participated were women, and they have never had any kind of formal physical examination. The celebration of the opportunity of getting health check-up soon turned to bad news for many female teachers. Not only every teacher participated found multiple health issues, but more than half of them needed further hospital care or surgery. The following year, more migrant children schools sent their teachers to participate in the physical examination provided by these organizations and several hospitals. The majority of them were also women, and the result was once again overwhelming. This time the sponsored hospital added detailed surgery consulting information for migrant teachers. Only one out of the 100 female teachers had a surgery, but not the teacher who found to have cancer. Many teachers who didn't participate in the health check-up were not

against it, what they refused to accept is the reality following the result of the check-up. The fact that being hospitalized without health insurance or stable income is too much to bear. The conditions that migrant teachers are facing have moved beyond the institutional limit and become a structural attack. In other words, the devaluation of migrant teachers' work materialized through the discrimination and marginalization towards their social status and their basic rights, and it also materialized through the effect on these teachers' body and their emotional well-being.

Their Work Matters

When the migrant teachers endure under-paid and less benefit of their work, they also confront excessively harsh working condition: the work load in migrant children schools is often overwhelmingly heavy. Yan is a teacher at one of the migrant children schools in Chaoyang District in Beijing. Her week is normally packed with 26 course-hours, on top of her homeroom teacher duty at her second grade classroom. She not only teaches second grade Chinese Literacy and Math, but also works with the third to sixth graders at their English classes. And all her classrooms have no less than 30 students, often times they would reach to 45. Yan's day at school usually end around 9 o'clock at night, after grading hundreds of students' work. The same survey conducted by the two non-governmental organizations in 2010 regarding migrant teachers' condition shows that teachers in migrant children schools have a weekly average of 24 course-hours (some reach up to 32 hours), average class size of 47 students, and their average daily time in school is 9.79 hours.

The larger classroom size also means the higher pressure for teaching. Different than regular Chinese primary school teachers who normally teach one subject, many migrant teachers are "teaching the whole package". They need to teach every subject for the class they are signed as homeroom teachers, which is actually similar to the US elementary schools but rare in most of the Chinese public schools. Jun is a fifth grade teacher at a larger migrant children school in Changping District. She teaches Chinese Literacy, Math, History, Music and Art, to over 60 students in her fifth grade classroom. "For these many kids, you are looking at differences at almost every single aspect of learning." Jun continued to tell me how she often feels powerless:

> I want to make sure they are learning, and I am trying my best to teach them. But when the highest achiever in the class almost reaches full score, and the ones who always stuck at the bottom don't even write a thing in the paper, you don't know where to start…
>
> As many as 50 students I have taught just these two years are new to this area; I know some of them have lived in three cities since they were born. And we have almost every single province's 'representatives' in this class, I sometimes have to listen very carefully to them, because they speak dialects… I have my own dialect-accented Mandarin (*putonghua*) too, so I would have to talk slow and clear. I think you probably heard this before…there were several times when I finished talking for about ten minutes without break; the kids would stare at me without knowing what I just said.

She laughed while remembering those 'incidents' in class. And she is right about me hearing this before. Not only have I known it from other migrant teachers' stories, but did I also experience the same "incident" when I was teaching there too. Mandarin Chinese, or as in Chinese "putonghua" (literally can be translated as common language) is a language based on the Beijing dialect. People from other regions, especially southern provinces and certain northern regions speak very different dialects. When they entered the city of Beijing as migrants, everything associated to their status and positionality of

the society is considered by the public as abnormal and inferior, especially their accents. In the space outside of the migrant school and the community, many of them have experienced different levels of stigmatization based on how "different" their accents to the Mandarin. And what has projected in the daily practice inside of the classroom, even in the classrooms of migrant children schools, is the association of the accent to the ability of learning[7]. Teachers themselves are judged by how well they can speak Mandarin without accent. In fact one of the must-pass tests to achieve a teacher's license in China is the Mandarin Proficiency Test. In universities of Beijing for example, pre-service teachers have to pass the test with the score of Grade 2 Level A. Some other regions teacher candidates might just need to reach Mandarin Grade 2 Level B, which became another "evidence" that teachers' holding license from other regions are not as qualified as teachers from the city of Beijing.

Jun also mentioned that many teachers have to change schools to better support themselves, "Worse combination is that the mobility of both the students and the teachers, but the worst thing is we are blamed for it. If we could make it, who really wants to leave? " What Jun revealed are the most challenging part of teaching in migrant children schools: teachers would not know if he or she would be able to stay in the same school,

[7] The issue of accent also applied to people who are not necessary identified as migrant. Accent s in China strongly associated with the economic development and the cultural representation of the regions. As a college student in Beijing but originally from the southeastern region, my own accent has been teased by some classmates who speak "better" mandarin. Even though my hometown is considered as economically developed coastal region, it is geographically and culturally far from the "center". For more issues about the connection of accent and identity in China, see for example, Gladney, D. C. (1994). Representing nationality in China: Refiguring majority/minority identities. *Journal of Asian Studies*, *53*(1), 92-123. Dong, J. (2009). 'Isn't it enough to be a Chinese speaker': Language ideology and migrant identity construction in a public primary school in Beijing.*Language & Communication*, *29*(2), 115-126. As well as Gong, Y., Chow, I. H. S., & Ahlstrom, D. (2011). Cultural diversity in China: Dialect, job embeddedness, and turnover. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*,*28*(2), 221-238.

or whether the same group of students would come back for next semester. Jun has moved to different schools every two to three years since she started her first teaching job in Beijing in 1999. Most of the schools were closed or relocated; only two were the ones she chose to leave. She tried to go to the schools where she learnt some of her students would go. “I would do nothing except teaching; I am a teacher, since 1988!”

It is often emphasized and widely believed that the low quality of teachers is one of the major reasons why children attend migrant children schools are underperforming. While there are so many different ways to show the counter-points to such statement, many teachers simply smiled when I brought it up. Even the most powerful literature explores and discusses teacher identity and the value of their work can hardly explain the meaning of such smile. In the argument claims the low quality of migrant teachers, it equals the quality simply to official teacher’s license. It might be the case for some of the first generation migrant teachers that they didn’t have the opportunity to attend college and get the state-recognized teaching license. But the younger teachers who are now the majority of teaching force in migrant children schools are college graduates and/or hold official teaching certification. However, the argument here is not about whether or not migrant teachers have professional license, it is about how to understand what it means to be professional in this context. When many migrant teachers make personal sacrifices to teach the children who also need almost all the other support, professionalism in these teachers’ daily lives means everything but standardized textbooks and relentless testing.

For most migrant teachers, teaching class is not the only work. Many teachers’ daily hours in school often go beyond 12 hours, and part of these are the time beyond classroom. Juan is a 48 years old teacher, came to Beijing in 2000 and has been teaching

in several migrant children schools. “In addition to classes, I’m also responsible for picking up the children on a daily basis.” said Juan. Usually, she has to get up at almost 5:00 am every morning to pick up her students house by house, and then send them back home after school at around 5:00 pm. “In the past, there was no school bus, so sometimes I had to walk more than 10 kilometers (around 6 miles) in total after school just to send every one home.” Compared to public schools, teachers at migrant children schools have provided more care and family support for their students. Though this is an extra requirement for migrant teachers, it is one of the major reason I heard over and over again during my interviews with migrant parents that they prefer to have their children in these schools within their communities. As one mother who sells vegetable in the morning market in Fangshan District explains:

> Our working hours are mostly non-fixed; most of us [as she points around her spot in the market, showing me other families who have their selling spots next to his and whose children go to the same migrant children school in the neighborhood as her two children] need to get up to wait for the delivery trucks in the middle of the night, and you are talking about 300 out of 365 days in a year.
>
> When my husband and I left every morning, I know the teachers will take care of them (her children) in school and send them home after school; they set my mind at rest (*fangxin*). None of us live an easy life (*bu rongyi*), we help each other out.

The word “*fangxin*” (be at ease) describe vividly how the migrant parents trust their children’s teachers. As we discussed at the previous chapter, parents and teachers connected through the shared feelings towards the burden of life and the determination to hard work. Being “*bu rongyi*” (not easy) means having to struggle, but more importantly, it means sharing the emotion of being migrants in the cities.

Compared to the ubiquity of state-licensed teachers in urban public schools, teachers who work in migrant children schools are indeed less “qualified” by comparison.

However, "quality" means different things in different contexts; it goes beyond national standards or scores. The meaning of "teacher quality" should not be tied to the number of licenses teachers may have. Students and parents from migrant children schools demonstrate different measures of "teacher quality", and show their appreciation in the everyday life[8]. Migrant teachers are teaching in difficult conditions, working overtime and underpaid, but they are struggling for providing education to children who might otherwise don't have any access to school.

Fang *Laoshi*: "Once a teacher, forever a teacher"

Despite migrant teachers' key role both in the migrant communities and the society, their work are deemed less important thus invisible in dominated social discourse. To understand the relationship between the value of these teachers' work and social domination, I here provide an ethnographic portrait of Teacher Fang (I will use the Chinese term of teacher, Fang *Laoshi*), an ordinary migrant children school teacher, focusing on how she has strived to recognize her own identity as a teacher. I was introduced to Fang *Laoshi* toward the end of the school day. She was organizing her students to line up for the school bus. After the students left, Fang shared with me her twenty years of teaching trajectory: from a substitute teacher, to an official teacher in a

[8] Even in one of the large scale surveys about the quality of migrant teachers conducted by an official research team, the results of the questionnaires and interviews show how these teachers' work and effort are recognized by the communities. Migrant children school teachers are majorly respected and appreciated by parents and students. 61.2% of the students "like" school teacher, 31.5% of the students said "like some teachers, not sure about some." In term of the standard of teaching or teacher quality, the survey compared the migrant children school teachers with teachers from the original places of students or parents, only 7.4% of them think "not as good as home" (Han, 2001).

southern rural school, and now a teacher in one after another migrant children schools in the city.

Fang was born in a rural village in a southern province of China. She always wanted to be a teacher like her father since the very first day she started school. Soon after finishing high school, she began substituting in the village elementary school she graduated from because one of the only four teachers had left. She worked closely with her mentor who was the principal of that elementary school, asked other teacher to give her feedback about her teaching, and sat in every class of theirs. Gradually, she learned and proved herself to be a "teacher with her name" (*chenzhi*[9]). Four years after she started, Fang passed all the required self-taught higher education examinations and got her college diploma and teaching license.

She was not only a dedicated mentor who contributed greatly to the lives of the students, but also a well-respected teacher in the rural communities where the students and their families were from. However, after teaching for over thirteen years, her school in the rural village has been shut down because of the shortage of education budget and the under-enrollment of student[10]. At the time, her husband already worked as a migrant worker in the city, Fang was facing the dilemma of transferring to other rural school that

[9] *chenzhi*, 称职, means to prove oneself competent at one's job.

[10] Chinese government has been "*merging"* remote rural primary schools to centralized town, or county schools since the late 1990s, the official policy launched in 2001. Every day between 2000 and 2010, there are an average of sixty-three rural primary schools and three rural junior high schools disappeared. Nationwide, the number of primary schools in rural China has fallen by 24%, from 416,000 in 2001 to 317,000 in 2005 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The number of students registered in rural primary schools decreased by more than 31.5 million, while that for the junior high schools plummeted by 16.4 million. Just this year (2012), the Ministry of Education has recently announced a suspension of closing or merging rural schools and is reconsidering their layout "in a more scientific manner". For discussion on the impact of China's rural primary school mergers, see for example Liu, et al, 2010; Yang, 2004.

is further and not yet facing closure, or giving up her career as a teacher completely. The pressure from the families eventually made the decision for her[11]; Fang left her new born child to her parents in the village and joined her husband to work as a migrant worker in Beijing.

Upon arriving in Beijing, her relatives who settled earlier in the city found a nearby restaurant waitress job for her. She put away all the medals and trophies from teaching awards, but kept all the letters her students wrote to her. She cleaned the tables, helped in the kitchen, but missed her students tremendously.

> I felt like hit by something whenever I thought of my students in the tiny little school we had. I thought of things like we read aloud together every morning before classes, practice months before the county district's annual culture and art festivals…The kids study and work really hard, and yet they were always so restless as if they were still little kids… I just let myself keep thinking still teaching them and I could freeze for a very long time. I was not myself at all.

When she found the teacher hiring poster stick to a telegraph pole on her way to pick up the grocery for the restaurant, she went to the migrant children school for the interview even before the school was open. She was shocked when she entered the school, because the school house was even smaller than the three-story building her rural school had, and the equipments were barely minimum. But the principal and three other fellow teachers were really excited and welcoming, they hired her on site. She started in the fifth grade class with sixty students, almost all of them had been moving with their parents from one city to another, and transfer from one school to another. At the beginning, it was rather

[11] Fang was hesitating to say more about this part of her life for a while. She mentioned about her parents-in-law was not happy about her spending so much time at school to begin with. They always wanted her to take some "easy" jobs, so she can stay home more to take care of the family and help in the farm.

difficult for Fang to believe that she was actually teaching in a school in Beijing. She remembered her disbelieves and unease:

> When I talked about "Beijing" to my students back home, we talked about her prestige and glory and how fortunate the people who live there are. I would have never thought that there is this group of kids who have to move around with their parents to make a living; they live in the Capital, but live in the condition that no better than the absolute most remote areas…
>
> …I was shocked and heartbroken, but my responsibility as a teacher motivated me to take on the challenges. I persuaded my husband to let me take this lower paid job and be a teacher again (Fang used the phrase *chong shi jiao bian* here, which is literally translated as "pick up the teaching stick again". It is a common metaphor of the resume the position as a teacher in China). The principal…He was also a teacher in rural school who taught over twenty years before his school was closed…kept telling me that the school needs experienced teachers like me, but I know that I need them too. I am a teacher, and working in school–no matter how difficult it would be–complete me.

Fang started her job with teaching at the school in the day and visiting her students' home at night. Most of her students live in the same migrant neighborhood where she lived, and their parents were doing all kinds of jobs available all over the city, jobs such as working in the construction sites, serving in restaurants, housekeeping in homes and workplaces for urban residents, selling farm produce, cleaning the streets, collecting garbage, and so on. She was so welcomed that she had to join most of the family for dinner; otherwise they would not let her leave empty-handed. She introduced herself, asked the parents about the personality of their child, his or her favorite thing to do, or place to go. But often times, the conversation just take off when she shared with them her story about coming to the city and leaving her baby boy at home, or when they told her the family's stories of moving and leaving.

When working with sixty students, she tried to bring more positive attitude into her classroom by showing the students what they can do and ask them to do the best. She

told me that how small things can make big differences, and how proud she felt watching all sixty of her first group of students in migrant children school showed her every single small step along the way:

> Whenever I hear their neat and musical recitation, and see the innocent and sincere expressions on their faces, there is something softly touched my heart. Who can say these children are inferior to the urban kids?

Despite the effort she and other teachers put in the school, in her third year working there the school got the closing notification from the local government authority. At that time, the school had developed into a place with new school building and facility for over one thousand five hundred students. Following the notice, there were groups after groups of officers in uniform "showed" a visit to the school in the middle of the school day: the officers of City Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau (CUALEB, or in Chinese as *Chengguan*) would be followed by the police from the Public Security Bureau (PSB, or in Chinese as *Gongan*), and sometimes they just show up altogether at the school gate. The next chapter will describe the school closing in detail and use the activity in the summer of 2011 as a case to discuss the fundamental implication of the migrant children school movement. What Fang emphasized here in her story of the earlier encounter of school closing is the cohesion among the teachers, parents, and students:

> After we got the notice of closing…many parents who normally would not dare to ask for leave like those who have normal and stable jobs all put their work aside, wrote a joint letter with joint petition to the District's Education Committee, asking to save the school from closing.
>
> All of us teachers—we considered ourselves as mother hens guarding the chicken—tried our best to console our students…I remembered telling my students, "Do not be afraid, do not be afraid, you are also 'the flowers of the

> motherland'[12]! Our government will not neglect us." However, the government eventually tore us apart…
>
> I can never forget that we—my students, my fellow teachers and myself— never got a formal chance to say goodbye to each other or to the school! I felt the same pain of sending my child far away, this time I have to send so many of my kids away…
>
> Up until now, I've been working in different migrant children schools for nine, almost ten years. It has been a bumpy few years, which gives me a deeper understanding of the name "teacher". It is no exaggeration to say that, as a teacher of migrant children schools, you must have a sense of sacrifice to put into the work, "to put aside your small self, for the purpose of supporting everyone" (*she xiaojia, wei dajia*). I'm proud, and I also know that I have to work harder in order to be worthy of DOUBLY glorious title of the migrant children school teachers. You know what, that's why I think myself as always a teacher.

According to the standard measurement of being a teacher, Fang is not a "qualified" one. Her trajectories of becoming a teacher in both rural and urban migrant communities have not been considered as official: She was a substitute teacher, she got her teacher license through passing self-taught examinations, and now she is a teacher in migrant children schools. In addition, Fang's teaching in both the rural areas and the urban migrant communities has often been interrupted by different state policies, especially the merging of rural schools for the reason of "rational allocation of educational resources for rural areas", and the closing of migrant children schools for the reason of "ensuring the quality education for migrant children".

But the debates among researchers and policy makers regarding these issues have rarely included the voices of students and teachers in these schools. Their work here is considered as temporary and transitional, and nothing more beyond that. Because these schools fell out of the discourses of meeting the needs of the labor market for China's

[12] "The flowers of the motherland" is an official rhetoric in China, it means that children are precious; they are the hope the country.

economic transformation, and the teaching practices of these teachers are further considered as restricting China's economic development. However, many migrant teachers like Fang have kept her identity as a teacher throughout. Her story of striving to be a teacher regardless of how difficult it would be, as well as many other teachers' stories, indicate the different forms migrant teachers have took to act as resistance despite the socially, culturally, and economically constructed control force plays upon them.

Solidarity and Resistance among Teachers

Zhang (2001) describes in her work about the development of group solidarity among migrants living in migrant housing compounds (*dayuan*) in Beijing, she uses the examples of the collective efforts of residents in such migrant housing compounds—examples such as fighting crime—to argue that:

> the location and construction style of *dayuan* can be read as the concrete materialization and externalization of … migrants' marginalized, luminal, and unstable social status as 'strangers' in the city… living in the self-organized housing compounds made migrant collective action possible." (Zhang 2001, p. 86-90)

As we described in the previous chapter, the physical bond of working and living space provided migrant teachers, parents and students a "family-like environment", and allowed them to offer each other communal support. We have discussed the dynamic and collective consciousness seen among families of migrant teachers and students who live close to each other. The same kind of support and connection could be found among teachers themselves, and their actions of caring for each other reflected more aspects of

their marginalized position: as being migrants teachers, and for most of them, as being migrant women.

Care, Well-Being, and Emotional Support

Teachers who work in the migrant children school either live in the teachers' dorms provided by the schools, or rent the nearby flats close to the school with their families. Most of the teachers' dorms can be considered as simple and crude, like the rest of the houses in the migrant communities, sometimes they could be even shabbier and more crowded with six to eight teachers live in less than 20 square meters room. There have been criticisms from both supporters and opponents of the migrant children schools regarding migrant teachers' working and living conditions. And the issues about improving migrant teachers' treatment started to raise among teachers themselves. While there are contradictory exist in terms of how migrant children schools should be more involved in providing teacher more favorable condition, within the given conditions of their own unstable status; migrant teachers have developed informal support groups among themselves to offer each other mutual help. They have been using their own networks in a collective way to share resources for the possible solution of the problems at work and in family affairs.

For migrant teachers, especially when most of them are women from poor migrant families, such support groups not only provide physically care, but also connect them with one another emotionally. One evening, I was invited to dinner by three female migrant teachers at one of their tiny but cozy, rented "shanty" house after staying with them for their long day of work at school. It was the last day of the fall semester; teachers have been busy with assigning homework to students for the winter break, cleaning and

sweeping the classrooms with them, and saying goodbyes to the students who would move with their families to other places after the Spring Festival. We arrived at Teacher Juan's home after seven o'clock that night.

Teachers in this school have been organizing informal gatherings at one another's home on a monthly base throughout their years together. They said such activity has been important part of their lives, which convinced them to stay together at the school when times were tough. That night, Juan's husband had to work overnight at the construction site in one of the commercial areas near the city center, so they decide to come to her house. She was from Henan originally, so for dinner she aimed at cooking four different noodle dishes. As we helped Juan prepare dinner, Teachers Jun and Wang started to fill me in with their routines outside of school.

> Jun: …We would have this (gathering) at least once a month. If our husbands are busy at the construction site, we would all eat together.
>
> MY: Do other teachers come?
>
> Jun: Yes, of course. Not just us, almost everyone in the school. We don't have that many teachers in the school to begin with; it is just like sisters and brothers (*xiongdi jiemei*) get together…We have several young teachers live in the dorm, whenever they want to eat Juan's noodle, they will all follow her home, and we will too. The market just right outside of our school, we can bring all the things we need to cook together…
>
> …We don't always eat at the gatherings; sometimes we just talked about things, like those problems we couldn't solve.
>
> MY: What kind of things do you usually talk about?
>
> Wang: We will share some teaching materials we each find to prepare for our lessons. Ying (another teacher in the school, and she is also an activist) knows many people; she always told us about the lectures in the universities, some of them are held for us. Juan got my son in her class; she would tell me how he was doing…

> Jun: Not just that, I mean when we have all this and that problems, talking to each other really helps… Like you got a big stone on your chest, they can't really remove it for you, but you can breathe after they lift it a little bit for you.…<sigh>…Do you remember Mei…Uh, she is the one found out to have cancer… Before that, she would tell us she feel pain, we all told her to go to the hospital immediately…We need to go visit her, her family moved back to her hometown in Hebei. We need to bring her something, what do you think…

The conversation soon turned into a discussion about how to help Teacher Mei who moved back to the rural area because she could not afford to treat cancer in the city without medical care. Juan later told me that every teacher knows that none of them could do anything "big", or prevent bad things from happening. But it is the gathering like this that made them feel safe and not alone.

As Pun (2005) pointed out in her studies about the women factory workers in the workplace actively "renders familial and sisterhood networks to protect themselves by providing new connotations and significance to family and community" (p. 61), these women teachers in the everyday life in the migrant communities have demonstrated their creativity and strength to resist more harm and to collect more support:

> Although powerless, they have been tactical agents in negotiating their own lives and in manipulating those exploitative forces for their own ends in the daily struggles. Put in specific moments and situations, like dagongmei[13] in the workplace, Chinese women's lives were acted and re-acted in multiple and shifting ways, weaving a grip of social relationships embedded in various regional cultural forms, in differences in family economic status, in individual life cycle, and in the changing identity of women overall. To manipulate an alienated living

[13] dagongmei, means migrant women workers.

> space, women could be active in organizing their own community—which Margery Wolf (1972, 9) called the women's community… (p. 61)

The marginalization of migrant teachers' status combined with the deterioration of their situation make it difficult for them to obtain support from outside as individuals, but they have developed their own social connection to act collectively. As we described in the previous chapter, when some of the teachers took the leading role to collaborate with organizations outside of the migrant communities, their connections within the communities made it more thorough to reach out to other teachers and to focus on the advocacy issues that address more profound need of the group they are representing

Developing Resistance

In the previous chapter, I talked about the formation of migrant teachers' own organization and their initial activism beyond migrant communities. In this chapter, I would like to use the story of Teacher Ying to illustrate how the shifting social and cultural forces interact with migrant teachers' developing resistance. As for Ying, she has accomplished tremendously as she transformed from a migrant children school teacher to a community activist who challenged the traditional leadership and deeply involved in promoting the well-being of teachers and children of the migrant communities. Yet, she also has to work hard to challenge many prejudices that placed upon her.

I was sitting in my activist friend Lian's office to wait for Ying's arrival. Before she entered the room, I heard a loud and crispy laughter travelling down the hallway. I have worked with her since the migrant children essay competition, and we have organized workshops for migrant teacher professional developments, attended different

meetings in different community centers together, but interesting enough I have never got the chance to talk to her in person. Lian was excited to introduce me to her, as she told me that Ying is the person "dare to think, dare to talk, and dare to take action" (*gan xiang, gan shuo, gan zuo*).

Ying was indeed energetic and vigorous. We visited different teachers and families together, and we would talk non-stop as we walked hours from one home to another all day long. Ying graduated from one of the top regional normal universities in Hebei Province. When she first came to a newly open migrant children school in Beijing to interview for a teaching position, the principal had his doubt. Ying still remembered his comments: "Can such teacher really work in our school? She dresses so neat and clean!" Ying had proved that she not only could work, but also work harder in that school from the very beginning:

> I had many students who were afraid of studying at the beginning, I would change up my strategies to make them generate interest and re-engage. Not just strategies you learned in college classes, but also things you learned from the students too…
>
> In the school, teachers take turns to monitor students when they have recess. I would always think of different games to let them play…Hundreds of students, in the playground…We had the largest "The Eagle Catches Chicken"[14] you could imagine…after the day, my shoes would be stepped on so many times by the students, all of us would have dirty shoes. I guess this was why the principal thought I was too clean to work with them…
>
> …Once there was a boy ran away from home. His parents came to school, to our dorms to ask for help. The principal took the two male teachers with him to look for the student, all the female teachers stayed together to wait. I wasn't going to listen to him. The boy was in my class, I need to go look for him. So I got on my bike, and biked miles and miles in the mid night. Back then, this area was completely desolate, behind the school there were nothing but wild woods and graveyards. I didn't think that much, I just wanted to find him, and I did… When I got back the next morning, other teachers told me that our principal was terrified

[14] A popular game for children in China.

> after he learned I went out too…Of course he didn't yell at me or anything, but they all call me fearless after that…

In 2004, Ying's school was among the first group to be part of migrant children essay competition. She actively participated along with many other migrant teachers and volunteers to coach students in the schools, review essays for the preliminaries and finals, and help put together the over 300 essays pass the preliminaries by typing them up into the computer word by word. Ying was excited about the open and dynamic space provided by the emerging activism within the migrant communities. She told me about the times when she had both teaching and other responsibilities:

> After became an editor for the Candlelight Communication, I taught classes and fulfilled all sorts of assigned jobs at school during the day, and at night I have to look though essays and other manuscript teachers submit, sometimes wrote articles, edited sections, proofread, formatted, and so forth. Every one work together for the newspaper and later the organization was like that. The beginning was full of difficulties; I didn't know how I could make it. But it was all worth it.

One of the compliments I heard from other migrant teachers about Ying was that she is the one connect to the "real thing." I asked if Ying herself knew such comment, she nodded her head. Later in our conversation, she told me a little more about the struggles she had experienced:

> You mentioned the work we have been doing, and I just told you it was hard at the beginning. Whatever the kids or other teachers need, I am going to find the way to make it happen. But the difficult part was not about "getting things done", it was that…uhhh…that some people want to do bigger and further things, but not the things that smaller and closer to life…
>
> One thing I now know after all these years of working with organizations and foundations, or any individual, is that just because someone calls himself (or herself, the term is non-gendered in Chinese) "doing good for the public" (*zuo gongyi*) does not mean that person or that group's values or behavior or view of things is going to be something that me or other teachers identify with (*rentong*)…So I'm learning to less influenced by someone announcing that he/she is an activist and showing up once or twice to pass out charity. I'm much more

> cautious now. I will watch and observe that person for a while, just see how he/she goes with things…then I will decide whether I can really trust or work with him/her.

What Ying emphasized here was also echoed by other migrant teacher activist I have interviewed. Many well-established national and international organizations and foundations have established their own sections regarding the work of migrant children education, and their perspectives of migrant children schools and migrant teachers are not necessary different than that of the main-stream opinions toward these schools and teachers. Ying pointed out her understanding of the boundary of collective identity, and advocated for the representation of their struggles in the movement toward schooling for migrant children:

> I say it all the time: If you don't care about the teachers, you really don't care about the children they are teaching. That's the thing! But then people will say these things are too trivial… So how could you blame the teachers, when you offer nothing to help them and their students…?

Ying was in the process of starting her own kindergarten in one of the outer suburban districts when we first met, and by the time I visited her again, her kindergarten was already up and running. She named it Sailing Kindergarten[15], and it was open in the fall of 2011 in a newly formed migrant community at the border between an outer suburban and the rural districts of Beijing. Many migrants in that community moved from the inner suburban because of the city designate the areas of their former communities for commercial areas expansion. Some of them work in the free market and a large landfill in the new region, but many of them still take three hour long bus ride back to the city for their hourly jobs.

[15] Sailing is a pseudonym.

The Kindergarten was newly constructed to strict seismic structural standards, and it has a three floor building and a large playground. In the brand new building that painted with the color of bright pink, there are two nursery and two kindergarten classrooms, as well as the school office on the first floor; a family room and an in-door activity room on the second floor; and teachers' dorms and future dance studio on the third floor. When I arrived around noon, the students were having their nap time. Ying asked the cook in the cafeteria to make some dumplings for us as lunch before preparing dinner for the students and teachers. Over the lunch in her new school's kitchen, we continued our conversations since my last visit of her in the other side of the city.

In the process of meeting with different organizations, foundations, and some new emerged philanthropists to share her philosophy of early childhood education for migrant families, Ying was firm about letting teachers in the community to run the school. She did not want to take the money from organizations that have their own agenda of what the school should do and should not do. I asked her if she ever consider herself as an entrepreneur, or at least developed such imagine of herself, she denied this identity:

> I don't think I'm one of these people… For us, me and other teachers, we have to help each other, especially when we have to let others know whatever things they are doing, we can do them too… The worst part is the loneliness, it seems like all of the sudden people are all doing the good things, but when you are really involved, you realized you are actually alone…I'm not those people selling themselves for the fame. I just want to prove that we belong to wherever we contribute, no matter where we were born.

The loneliness also came from her position as a woman. When she told everyone that she wanted to open her own kindergarten for young migrant families, most of her fellow teachers were really supportive. But some of her close family members were showing different attitude about her activism. When I visited her after the school opened, she told

me that she was in the process of getting a divorce because she was "too much" to handle. The saddest part for her was that she had to wait for the result of the divorce to process, and then she would be able to see her son, who was under the care of her parents-in-law at the time. She did not mention this issue ever again, but during my rest visits to her school and throughout our conversations, she kept talking about the children in the two nursery classrooms were the same age as her son.

Just like Ying, when more and more migrant teachers participated in the organized work toward the mobilization of resources, and took active roles in the collaboration and negotiation with other actors in the space of their own, they not only reflected on the position of themselves within the shifting forms of resistance, but also learned to consolidate their collective identity in this process. In many ways, these teachers' resistance is far more invisible than one expected, but also brought further transformation to the communities in which they live in.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described how the work of migrant teachers has been devalued and diminished, and what are the forms of depreciation have been exercised to act upon them. I further argued that the discussion of the "teacher quality" should also take into the consideration of their everyday practice and contribution in the migrant community by providing a portrait of an ordinary migrant teacher.

I then moved to the narratives of how migrant teachers form their own community to support themselves, especially when most of them are women and considered as powerless and lack of resource. The last part of this chapter is a detailed recording of

series of conversations with one migrant woman teacher and activist. By describing her struggles over recognition and representation in the society, I argued that the transformation of the identity among migrant teachers would set the foundation for the "real" grass-root mobilization within the migrant communities.

Chapter 6: The Demolition, Mobilization, and Action

In mid August of 2011, twenty-four migrant children schools were forced to close in three districts of Daxing, Haidian, Chaoyang in Beijing, affecting over 14,000[1] students. Some of these schools were bulldozed overnight. The local district governments announced that these schools had substandard school conditions and posed significant security risks. As such, they were subject to closing and demolition. Even though this was not the first time migrant children schools faced a direct crackdown from the government, it was the first time the event received widespread media attention from both national and international outlets, including newspapers, television stations, public forums, social networks, and so on. In the front pages of many newspapers during the last two weeks of August, there were series of news reports covering the forced shutdown of these twenty-four migrant children schools, most of which were published along with striking photos.

The focus of the news reports covered a wide range of topics, from the sudden demolition of several migrant children school buildings, to the heated protest from parents and teachers, and to the open discussion of what might happen to the over 14,000 students in these schools. However, what majority of these reports did not emphasize was that it was not the first time government exercised political force to dismantle migrant children schools and displace migrant communities. Neither did the reports capture the various forms of resistance from parents and teachers. In addition, many questions were left unanswered, questions such as: what would follow the closure of these schools? Were

[1] As we mentioned previously, this is the officially reported number. In some NGOs reports, their estimated number of students in these 24 schools who were affected by the event could be more than 20,000.

all the 14,000 migrant children in these schools able to enroll in public schools as promised? Why was this event different than the previous ones?

This chapter documents the demolition of twenty-four migrant children schools, focusing on one school as a representative example of what took place. In addition, I highlight subsequent issues surrounding student relocation (*fenliu*) and analyze the political implication behind the school closing. By documenting the responsive mobilization and the collective actions from parents and teachers, I compare the actions that took place during this event to other types of resistance that happened previously. I conclude by discussing the significance of the development of these different forms of organized actions.

The Demolition and Relocation

The demolition has stimulated a strong emotional reaction in migrant communities after the eviction notice was released to these migrant children schools in the Districts of Daxing, Haidian and Chaoyang since June[2]. But not all the schools responded the same ways: some principals and teachers informed the parents as soon as they received the notice and started the conversations on how to react; some schools hesitated to take further action but found it too late when the forced demolition work team suddenly showed up to tear down the school buildings; some principals tried to negotiate with local government officers through personal connections or *guanxi*; some

[2] Some schools received the eviction notice a month later than the other, leaving them less time to take action.

leaders of the schools confronted the authorities by mobilizing resources and social networks to gain support from the larger society.

As we discussed previously, in 2006 Beijing had already launched a so-called "Banning Strom" closing act that targeted two hundred and thirty-nine migrant children schools. However, at that time, according to the "Triage some; Regulate some; Outlaw some"[3] principle, many districts had left a number of migrant children schools as "specified reserved schools" (*guifan baoliu xuexiao* 规范保留学校) and given them temporary approval. Many schools that received the notice this time were actually among those "specified reserved" ones, and they have been working with organizations as well as related government offices since then. For them, it seemed like the "recognition" from government would finally be a reachable goal. But the closing notification, the forceful dismantle and the broken promise of "every single one of these 14,000 student would have school to go to" had made many schools felt betrayed and left migrant teachers and parents indignant.

Sunny School

The official claim was that these twenty-four migrant children schools violated the permission of operating schools and threated the safety of children, because they were the ones without the official permit issued by the local districts' Education Committees. However, there were intense contradictory and disputes throughout the process. In this chapter, I focus on the encounters of one of these schools. The stories in Sunny School around the development of the collective work of Principal Zhao[4], the teachers in the

[3] See Chapter 4 and later part of this chapter for the further discussion of the Regulation.

[4] Both the school name and the principal name here are pseudonym.

school and parents in the community have illustrated the struggles and social conflicts during the school closing.

In late October, I was finally able to connect with one school that was among one of the few that survived the school closing this time, and the principal was the only one that accepted my request for interviews and visits. So I named it Sunny. It survived the closing act in the summer with the help and support from migrant parents, teachers and activists outside of the community. In the afternoon of arriving at the principal's office of Sunny School, I was handed over copies of the initial notices, sections of newspaper reports, minutes from different meetings, and petition letters written by parents and teachers as well as lawyers and organizational activists. When I was going through the documentations Principal Zhao handed to me, a series of photos caught my attention: one photo shows that there were piles of rubble and only half of a brick wall left at the location where a school appeared to exist previously. The second photo captures the moment when many students and parents gathered and stood around the old school location after learning that the school was demolished overnight; some students were trying to get things out of their old classroom—from the corner of the paper one student was holding and pulling, it might be a painting or maybe his exemplary homework that got display at the wall of the classroom. Another photo demonstrates that some parents were grabbing the iron bars of the gate of the local district government, requesting to see the authorities to turn in their petition letters. There was one specific photo that was re-published by many newspaper reports: one parent was lying in the crossroad in front of the district Education Committee office building, protest the demolition and the lost of the school for his child.

As I looking through the documents, Principal Zhao told me about the history of Sunny School and the series of events happened since the summer. Sunny School is a migrant children school located in the district of Daxing. According to the official statement, it is a "floating population self-run school" (*liudong renkou ziban xuexiao* 流动人口自办学校). In 2001, Principal Zhao signed a lease for a piece of deserted land from a local farming family in the suburban district and built the school. The school is located in the urban-rural fringe area in southern Beijing, and it is right next to a large vegetable wholesale market. The vast majority of the students' parents are migrant farmers working under short-term contracts to grow vegetables in the suburban farmland. When the school built in 2001, it just had a little over 100 students. "We (He constantly used the word "we" when talking about the school) were very small back then, the local authorities did not give us any attention or guideline. There was nothing from them, but we stayed on and grew big." Principal Zhao continued to recall what he had learned as Sunny School developed:

> ...Schools like us went through many difficult times and many challenges, but there are still large numbers in Beijing. The directory[5] we all got this summer has the records of most of the schools, but I knew there should be more. Districts like Chaoyang, Haidian, Changping, as well as here in Daxing, have the most schools: around 30 to 40 schools in each of these districts. Other suburban districts such as Fengtai now have more schools because Chaoyang are pushing out many of our migrant settlements…I know several principals who move their schools to different districts, but some of their schools weren't listed here…There are much less schools after the 2006 closing, but the number of schools right now should still be over one hundred and fifty. Some schools might be smaller, but we are talking about more than 30,000 students in schools like us.
>
> …Since we had the first group of students, more and more parents in the neighborhood area sent their children to us—the number of students increased

[5] See Appendix E.

> from 100 at the very beginning to more than 500 right now... In recent years, whenever the district's education committee hosts school meeting, they would call us to sit in these meetings.

In September of 2005, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission issued the "Notification on Strengthening the Regulatory Work on Floating Population Self-run Schools" (Beijing Education Foundation [2005] No. 27)[6], clearly stated that all levels of education committees and related offices should follow the guideline of regulating migrant children schools. Such guideline was summarized in the document as "Triage some, regulate some, and outlaw some" (*fenliu yipi, guifan yipi, qudi yipi*), and the emphasis was on the "combination of dredging and blocking" (*shudu jiehe*). Right after the official document was issued, the Daxing District Education Committee and the local township government paid a quick visit to Sunny School for the first time. They toured around the school, and requested Principal Zhao to remodel it before they could allow the school to continue. Zhao borrowed money from relatives and friends to reinforce and expand the school building, with a total area of over 600 square meters (about 6,500 square feet).

In early 2009, after the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan province and the school buildings collapse tragedy, the State Council issued the "Notifications on the Embodiment of the Safety Management of National Primary and Secondary School Buildings" (General Office of the State Council [2009] No. 34), focusing on the regulation of the seismic capacities of buildings in all levels of schools. To be in line with this notification, local provincial and municipal governments have introduced their corresponding documents. Daxing District in Beijing also published a document titled

[6] See Chapter 4, P103.

"Notifications on Further Promoting the School Building Safety Project Among Private Kindergartens, Primary Schools, Vocational schools, and Floating Population Self-run Schools in Daxing District" and put forward the requirement for the private-run schools in the region to "complete the school buildings seismic reinforcement task by the end of 2011", and all the cost to investigate and/or reinforce the buildings if needed would be self-funded by the schools.

In order to meet the new reinforcement criteria, Zhao and some other teachers in Sunny School once again borrowed money from their families and friends, and even took out loans from the extended kinship and place-of-origin related network. Together, they were able to raise a large sum of money, total of 800,000 RMB (about 117,000 USD in 2009-2010) in a short period of time without raising the tuition fee of the school to transfer the burden to the students and their families. The rebuilt school building met the national standards for seismic bearing capacities up to Richter magnitude 8, and the school kitchen also received level B recognition in the food hygiene rating[7] from the City Food and Health Department. Despite those efforts, Sunny School could only receive a temporary certificate from the Daxing Education Committee to be considered as "normative reserved school specialized in receiving migrant children." For teachers, students, and parents in this school, even such a temporary "identity card" meant a huge accomplishment.

However, the constantly changing policies turned the events at the end of the spring semester of 2011 from the celebration of the new school building completion to the uncertainty of the future of the school. In late May, Principal Zhao was called to a

[7] Many popular restaurants will have the same level B, which means food hygiene in favorable condition.

meeting held by the district Education Committee along with principals from other migrant children schools in the district. The purpose of the meeting was to announce the report on the poor condition of migrant children schools in the district, and the central message of this report was that the school building, food hygiene and other aspects of these schools had caused potential security risk to students. To Principal Zhao's surprise, even though Sunny School submitted all the required investigation and rating reports about the new school building, kitchen, and playground several months in advance, its name was still listed on the report.

Furthermore, Principal Zhao received a notification titled "Decision on the Deadline of Compliance for the Arbitrarily-Run School." The official hosted the meeting informed the principals that all the schools would be outlawed and then left without answering any question. Several days later, on June 7th, a poster size notification issued by the School Safety Office of the township in Daxing district was put over the front door of Sunny School. The notification stated:

> According to the instructions of the school safety leaders group and the Daxing District School Safe Development Document [2011] file No. 3, and based on the inspection of township rectification leaders group, Sunny School has been determined to be illegally run school housing in illegal construction, there are significant security risks; this school will be banned, starting June 20, 2011.

This official notification also requested parents to stop paying the tuition of this school for next semester and mandated them to bring their required certificates[8] to enroll their

[8] The certificates of the Temporary Living Permit in Beijing, The Certified Labor Contract, the Registry of the Entire Family Household Permanent Residency, and so on. See Chapter 4 and later part of this chapter for the detailed discussions of the requirement for these certificates.

children in two other "government-entrusted schools"[9] within the period of the last three days of August. Next section of this chapter will reveal how the relocation of students actually took place, as many parents and students experienced the empty promises in reality.

What needs to be pointed out here is the partially false statement in this notification. Not only did they denied the fact that Sunny and several other migrant children schools had completed the investigation and remodeling as required, but the so-called "inspection by township leaders group" in fact had never been conducted. The claim in this notification, as well as the similar ones in other notifications to these schools across the city was an assumption or even a purposeful misleading of the public discourse about migrant children schools as a whole, rather than a lawful decision based on the truthful investigation.

Soon after the notification was posted, Principal Zhao and all the other ten migrant children school principals in Daxing district were called to a meeting on June 25. The district official in the meeting ordered them to close their schools, repay any fees charged in advance, dismiss or relocate the teachers, and to promise that they would not open any school in the township. If the school did not shut down as scheduled, the campus safety leader group would send out work team to dismantle "the illegal construction", which referred to the school buildings.

[9] *zhengfu weituo xuexiao* 政府委托学校, or the government-subsidized private-run schools (*minban gongzhu xuexiao* 民办公助学校*)*. Most of them are in fact considered as being not different from regular migrant children schools. In the later section of this chapter, I will discuss this type of schools and their role during the school closing.

Although struggling with the situation, Principal Zhao did not give in and accept the decision made by the district government without testimony or clear information. He organized teachers in his schools and ask other school principals and teachers to join him to request a meeting generated by migrant children school representatives, with the hope of meeting and discussing the issues with the district Education Committee members and other officials in the related governmental departments, such as the Health and Safety Department, Municipal Administration Department, and so on. He emphasized that:

> We just could not understand…There are so many ways to solve the problem, or even just to start the discussion. We had never asked for anything, never received any support or guideline before, so we might make mistake. We were aware of it, and we wanted to improve. Now, all of a sudden, we were told to do this and that, there were challenges and obvious barriers, but we did our best. There could be so many ways to let us improve; the demolishment is the most irresponsible one…

To their disappointment once again, the request of meeting with the district government officials was rejected. And the notice of the rejection was in fact delivered to the principals by text message to their cell phones. It stated that, "…the city of Beijing has been working to demolish illegal construction and eliminate illegal operation. The decision from our district office was in line with relevant regulations from the city."

By August, in the entire Daxing district, eleven schools had received the shutdown notice from the district government. At the time, the number of students enrolled in each school ranged from four or five hundred to far over one thousand. And the announcement of closing migrant children schools in Daxing was not an isolated case. In Chaoyang district there were nine schools being shut down for the reason of "potential security risks". In Haidian district, there were four schools that received the notifications. At this stage of the event, the closing notification for many schools came with an unexpected water and electricity cutoff. The officials exercised various excuses for the

utilities cutoff, including the one claiming that the rental contracts of these school buildings or land had expired, so the utilities cutoff was to make sure they vacate the "illegal occupancy".

The Promise and the Reality of Migrant Students Relocation

In the midst of the uncertainty, parents of Sunny School kept visiting the school on a daily basis to ask the possibility of enrolling for next semester and the registration time. Many parents were still hoping to send their children back to Sunny, because it was close to where they live and had strong connection with them. The district Education Committee relocation plan for migrant children did not meet the needs of the majority parents and students, not to mention the resettlement of the large number of migrant teachers. For students who enrolled in Sunny at the time, only two government-entrusted schools were assigned for their relocation. However, both schools were far away and could only take less than half of students in Sunny.

The biggest concern Principal Zhao and other teachers in Sunny had was the question that where could the students go if the school eventually closed. He said:

> After receiving this notice, I truly felt anxious. It felt like something would come and take part of my life away. If the school close, what would happen to over 500 students in our school? How would they go to school then? Some of these students may be able to relocate, but absolutely not the majority. And it will be impossible for all of them to get into public schools. No, little possibility.

And students and teachers in Sunny were not alone when asking this question. All the students in these twenty-four schools were facing the same problem, as the closing act would soon be in place.

Besides Sunny, there were ten other migrant children schools in Daxing district forced to shutdown, affecting about 6,500 students. According to the Daxing District

Education Committee, most of these schools were the ones without the licenses; but there was one school that actually had the official permit. It "volunteered" to close due to undisclosed reason. The district promised that all the students in these schools could apply to either public schools or private schools with permits, and provided a list of six schools in total for their relocation. Five of them were government subsidized private-run schools (*minban gongzhu xuexiao* 民办公助学校), and the sixth one was a township public elementary school. In Haidian district, the four schools subjected to demolition had a total number of over 3,000 students to be relocated. The Haidian District Education Committee said these four schools were running without permission, and their land rental contracts had expired, which made them "illegal schools housing in illegal constructions". For students enrolled in these schools, the Education Committee proposed to renovate two nearby vacant public school houses for their relocation. In Chaoyang District, there were around 5, 000 migrant students in nine schools that determined to be outlawed. The Chaoyang District Education Committee estimated that only about 400 students could qualified for "borrowing the seats" (*jiedu*) in the township public schools. For the rest of the students, the district adopted the similar approach as other districts, which was putting migrant students in the government subsidized private-run schools that were using vacant public school buildings.

The township public schools

To further explain the conflicts and challenges that migrant students and parents had to face during the relocation, two different approaches of the process need to be examined. One is the possibility of going to public schools; the other one is the alternative of relocating to the government-subsidized private-run schools. First of all,

there was a very small possibility for these migrant students to be relocated into the township public schools. Initially, one of the major reasons why these students enrolled in the migrant children schools was that they did not have all required five certificates to apply for attending public schools on a temporary basis. The implication of such requirement is that migrant children without the Beijing residency should return to the place where they have the household residency to receive compulsory education. Only if they had proved that they did not have any potential familial guardian in their place of official residency, and their parents had lived in Beijing for more than six months and obtained the temporary living permits, could they then apply to "borrow school seats"—to enroll in Beijing primary and secondary schools on a temporary basis. The relocation during this time still required migrant parents to provide the same five certificates, which include the Temporary Living Permit in Beijing, the Certified Proof of Address, the Certified Labor Contract, the Certificate of No Potential Familial Guardian Reside in the Place of Origin, and the Registry of the Entire Family' Household Permanent Residency. Many migrant students and parents were initially denied the access to public schools for the very reason of lacking "sufficient documents"; yet once again during the school closing and student relocation, they were rejected and turned down by the same requirement.

In addition, collecting all the paper works required multiple trips back and forth between the city and the countryside. For families that might be able to collect all the paper works and apply for the five certificates, the challenges then became the limit of time. Most migrant workers did not have fixed work hours or stable jobs. For them, asking for two days off often means leaving the temporary jobs permanently. Fail to

provide the required certificates in limited time thus was transferred into the reason why migrant parents were to be blamed for not enrolling their children into public schools, even when the door to public schools was "wide open".

Moreover, many public schools established their own rules and requirements for migrant children who were applying to enroll. One of the rules was that migrant students with the complete five certificates were required to take the entrance examinations, only those who scored high enough to pass the exam could enroll. The exams might be varied depend on the schools, but the results of the exams were overwhelmingly similar: Three out of four migrant students who took the entrance exam did not pass, thus were not allowed to enroll. The official reports in main stream media and government documents re-emphasized the low quality of education in migrant children schools, but avoided to address the issues in the process of having these exams in details. In the open petition letter submitted by a group of migrant parents in Haidian district, they reported the problems of these exams as the "dark box operation"[10]. Problems of these exams initiated by several township public schools ranged from containing subjects and items beyond regular grade level in the test, to changing or re-scheduling the examination time without notifying students and parents. One incident reported in the letter mentioned an entrance exam was scheduled at 2:30 in the afternoon at a township elementary school in Haidian. When most of the students and parents arrived right before the original time, they were informed that the exam already started at 2 o'clock. Many children entered the testing room in tears of anxiety and worry. To make things worse, the school staffs announced to

[10] The phrase of *an xiang cao zuo*, 暗箱操作, literally translated as dark box operation, means operating procedures without transparency, and the process is manipulated by different interest groups/individuals.

end the exam at 2:45, and forced to take the exam papers from students. Very few students finished the examination papers; the majority of them thus "fail" to pass the test.

Besides requiring the entrance exams, many public schools also exercised the excuse of "seat shortage" to ask migrant parents for "voluntary contributions" before attending. Even though the sponsor fee was dis-encouraged and ordered to cancel by official regulations as early as 2004, the request of hidden fees, such as sponsor fee and school choice fee never go away. It became the unspoken rule. For the township elementary schools in these districts, the starting "price" was set as 6,000 RMB (about $940 USD in Aug 2011)[11]. Some parents were asked to pay a one-time sponsor fee for 10,000 RMB (about $1,565 USD in Aug 2011). Few migrant families could afford such amount of money.

For migrant students who collected all the certificates, passed the entrance examinations and paid the hidden fees, the access to public schools seemed finally clear up, but they might still do not get into the school where they were promised to. They had received unequal treatment for their admission to public schools even when the public concern rose after the massive debates and media reports eventually pressure some district governments to declare that "all the students" in the demolished or to be demolished migrant children schools could be relocated into nearby public schools. During my interviews with parents and activists who closely worked with schools and communities, many of them shared the stories of how some public schools agreed to accept migrant children, but the campus for migrant students was just a temporarily-

[11] There is never any official report about how much each school charges. I collected the information about six elementary schools in two districts by asking migrant parents who attempted to enroll their children in these schools.

converted place that was different from the original location. In many cases, these so-called “branch campuses” were literally set up the night before the school started. Some schools did not have enough desks, chairs, some had playgrounds still looked like construction sites with piles of pipes and bricks scattered all over. Despite the official claims that these “branch” schools were the same as the original public schools, some of them could not even be comparable to the migrant children schools that were demolished for the reason of “security risks” and low quality. In addition, there were also problems that were regarded as minor issues in the eyes of the officials—problems such as some new schools were over five kilometers (about three miles) away from students’ home or the lunch cost would be a few dollars more—were in fact affected migrant families on a daily basis and became their burden.

The government subsidized private-run schools

The second type of schools, which were the main ones designated for migrant students relocation this time, were the ones called the government subsidized private-run schools (*minban gongzhu xuexiao*, 民办公助学校). These schools, along with other migrant children schools that have previously received official permits, are entrusted by the government to educate migrant students. Although one of the most significant differences of these government subsidized private-run schools compared to other migrant children schools is that they are entitled to receive government subsidized educational funds, they are still private schools with some forms of public funds or using public school facilities. As a matter of fact, they are not significantly different from many of the demolished migrant children schools in term of curriculum design, classroom structure, and even the majority of teachers.

According to the Chaoyang district Education Committee and their announced migrant student relocation guideline, students from the shutdown schools could enroll in the township public schools if their family were able to provide the five certificates to apply and obtain the "Proof Migrant Children Attending Public Schools in Beijing on A Temporary Basis"[12]. For students who did not have all five certificates, they would be diverted into the Education Committee entrusted schools. The published official document guaranteed migrant students and their parents that they would be able to enroll in government entrusted schools without any difficulties, and these schools were the official equivalent to the public schools.

Nevertheless, the meaning of "being the equivalent to public schools" was never defined by any official statement, and the conditions of these entrusted schools that designated for relocation varied from school to school and from township to township. Some designated schools have already existed and were solicited for relocation this time. They have been schools for both local and migrant children for a significant period of time, and the teachers and administrators are well-experienced. However, a large number of the government subsidized private-run schools were actually set up during the summer of 2011 for the purpose of relocating migrant students. Similar to the set-up-overnight "branch" public schools that were mentioned earlier, these newly established entrusted schools were not well prepared to receive relocated migrant students. Issues such as oversized classes, insufficient classroom and school supplies, shortage of teachers, and so on, which had been the heavily criticized "disadvantages" of the demolished schools, were still the major problems in the new schools. Besides the three different townships in

[12] For the description of such Proof, see Chapter 4, p.100-101.

Chaoyang district, the same kind of variation of the conditions in the government subsidized private-run schools were also observed in Haidian and Daxing districts.

Furthermore, the official statements published by different districts and municipal level governments used several different terms to describe these schools and caused confusion and misleading consequently. The official documents referred to the schools accepting relocated students as “legal schools”; but many later published documents in fact claimed all schools as “public schools”. Although they are housed in the old public school buildings that were no longer in use, and some of them might share the similar names of the old public schools that did not exist anymore, they are still private schools. In the second section of this chapter, I will discuss how such misleading description was actually a strategic move to dissociate parents and teachers as they mobilized to act against the school closing and advocate for the education rights of their children. What I want to emphasize here is that the misleading description of these schools has left the already deeply worried students and parents with more anxiety and further disappointment.

I spent many days in the vegetable wholesale market near Sunny School talking with parents and local residents about their encounters of the school shutdown and the student relocation. They shared the stories about who got to relocate to what school and how these schools were like in reality. A father got his daughter out of a government subsidized private-run school in Haidian and moved his family out of that district in the hope of enrolling his first-grade daughter back to a school that would be closer to where the family might live. He described how worried he was after finding out that his

daughter's new "public elementary school" only shared the name and an empty school building with the township public school that did not even exist anymore:

> … The government arranged which schools all the kids in my daughter's old school could go…My wife and I went look for the one our daughter was assigned to transfer. Since the elementary school used the name of the village and it sounded quite familiar, we figured it might not be as bad as we thought. But we still wanted to go check it out first. When we finally got to the school, you know what, it was MUCH WORSE than we thought! The "school", if it was still a school, located in the center of piles of rubbish and ruins! They demolished the whole village a year and half ago for some kind of development, everyone had left or moved, but they left the school building just standing alone on the ruins of the entire village. You should go see it! We walked for about five miles, all rubbish, half standing walls, and broken window glasses or door frames. The whole time, we did not even see one single street light. When we walked back to the bus stop, we had to use our cell phones' flash lights to be able to see where the bricks and all the demolition wastes were. So tell me, how could I let my 7-year-old daughter walk those five miles in the dark and all by herself? None of the children go to that school would be safe! We don't know much about the policies, but we had so many questions. This school supposed to be legal, but how can a school built in the demolition rubbish of the village last very long?
>
> … And soon after we signed the enrollment paper, we also found nine teachers from my daughter's old school would be teaching there too. The whole school would have sixteen teachers. So half of the teachers would be the same, then why the old school "wasn't good enough" for our kids?

Just like these first grade students in the demolished migrant children schools in Haidian, a large number of relocating students and their parents across the three districts had the similar discovery. They found out the "public schools" that were promised to them were in fact not that much different than their old schools, especially when many of them had the same teachers they had in the old school. The vast majority of the newly established government subsidized private-run schools rehired migrant teachers from the demolished schools. On one hand, they solved the problems to a certain degree by relocating small portion of migrant teachers. On the other hand, however, more questions re-emerged and eventually became evidence that could be held against the dominant

discourse about migrant teachers and the schools. For instance, one of the biggest ironies of the discourse is how much it had focused on the "low quality and lack of licensure" of teachers in migrant children schools, but it never got mentioned again when the almost completely same group of teachers move to these government subsidized private-run school. They became "well-experienced and qualified" as teachers at these types of schools.

The frustration and concern that migrant parents and students had undergone during the school closing and relocation process did not end after they enrolled and stayed in these schools. Soon after the fall semester started, the requirements for entrance registration at these schools were quickly increased to match the ones set by public schools. They also required students to provide the five certificates to school, and significantly raised the tuition fees for the following semester despite the educational subsidies these schools received from local governments. Two government subsidized private-run schools were brought up by parents who I interviewed. One raised the tuition fees from 300 RMB to almost 600 RMB. The other one claimed to keep the tuition fee stable for a year, but in their recently issued new semester enrollment notification it stated that the tuition fee would be over 800 RMB if the parents could not provide two more certificates in addition to the five required ones. The two additional certificates are the complete Vaccination Certificate for students of all age and the Certificate of Previous School Attendance/Official School Transfer Record. These two additional certificates closely associated with the students' household residency status, especially the vaccination certificate, which set another barrier against the migrant students who did not have the official status.

Before moving onto the discussion of the political implication of the school closing, there are more questions about these newly established government subsidized private-run schools that need to be raised. At the first glance, the approach of reusing the public school buildings to set up the government subsidized private run schools might be the perfect solution for migrant students' relocation. It seemed to solve the problems by not only giving migrant students the schools that they needed, but also recycling the public school facilities that were vacant. However, the fundamental issue of opening equal educational access to migrant children has not yet been challenged. Even though these schools have received more guides and assist from the local governments and Education Committees, they are still not public schools, and students attending these schools still did not receive the educational resources they deserve.

First of all, according to the 2008 revised regulations regarding the implementation of the Compulsory Education for school age children[13], all public primary and middle schools are required by law stop charging basic tuition fees. If these schools are regarded as public, no tuition fee should be asked in the enrollment papers. However, students still pay high tuition fees each semester, which indicates that they are not public schools that are officially carrying out the compulsory education. Then the questions would become why can these schools receive government funding and utilize part of the public educational resources? And how did these schools set up especially being considered as the government's compromise and temporary strategy?

[13] Children age 6-14 are required to receive Compulsory Education in China. The grade levels for Compulsory Education is from primary school to middle school, or from grade one to grade nine. Each province has specific regulations to determine how to implement compulsory education, but starting September 1st, 2008, all public schools by law should not charge tuition fees. For more details, see the brief introduction in Chapter 1.

Secondly, one of the biggest controversies towards migrant children schools is the debate over their nature and intention, especially in their recent stage of reconfiguration. In the case of the government subsidized private run schools, these school were presented as a better solution of providing schools for migrant children. However, these schools still share the same controversial issues with migrant children schools regarding their nature and intention, in addition to their inextricable connection with the government. Their purpose was to replace migrant children schools, but they do not set far apart from one another. The administrators or owners of the schools mainly use private funds to run the schools, employ/recruit migrant teachers, and the students are all from previous migrant children schools. The biggest difference of these schools is that they are carrying a "public" title, which should be further questioned: Not only should these schools justify their ways of using public title and funds, but also should the governments at various levels clarify the inexplicable nature of these schools.

However, the District Education Committees and the related offices such as the City Planning Committees did not give any clear explanation of who are the people that have the ability in such a short period of time to sign the contract with the public schools, and obtain the district governments and the Education Committees approval. Answering these questions requires further investigation beyond the ambiguous description of these schools from the official reports. Nevertheless, I have no access or connections to allow me enter these schools, and several of my interview requests had been rejected by the administrators of these schools. With the current data, further inquiry of these questions was limited for this study. But the conversations and discussions about these questions have already started among migrant parents, teachers, and activists in the communities.

They are asking the similar questions, and many of them are directly calling the political implication of these events into questions.

The Political Implication of the Demolition

Almost all the twenty-four schools forced to shut down this time were the "specified reserved schools"[14] that survived the 2006 closing act and held the temporary recognition status from the district governments since then. The reason why they stayed in the "limbo" position was because on one hand they were unable to obtain official permit[15], on the other hand they were preserved to keep providing basic education and share the responsibilities that most of the local governments were unable and unwilling to address. Different township governments in different districts adopted various strategies to manage these schools that held such vague legal status, but one of the common practices across districts was that these schools had been gradually included into the routine safety and health regulations since they were recognized as "specified reserved". Nevertheless, there were constantly remarks or public interviews made by district officers stated that these schools would eventually disappear given the unstoppable urban development.

[14] One school that was not in this category actual had official license.

[15] As we discussed in previous chapters, the municipal government of Beijing stopped issuing official permits to migrant children schools after 2006. These schools started with limited funds thus were unable to obtain official status when the permission system was open. Even though many of them later managed to develop sophisticated facilities and environment, their application for permit were still denied.

According to the written report of the regulations of migrant children schools by the Daxing District government[16], "specified reserved schools" were the schools that met the needs of migrant children at a certain period of time. They need to be retained as well as being regulated. The most emphasized part for the regulation was to reduce the school building safety risks, and to make sure there were standard construction procedures. These schools were required to show the procedures documents in a limited time period in order to be conditionally retained and allowed to continue the enrollment, otherwise they would be "cleaned up". Such regulations were especially strict after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and the tragic collapse of the school buildings in the disaster areas. In this context, many migrant children schools, such as Sunny School that we mentioned earlier in the chapter, had conducted renovation and reinforcement or even rebuilt the school buildings to meet the requirement. The majority of them also adopted the Education Committees proposed standards to put in the firefighting equipment and security surveillance cameras, redo the pipeline around the schools, and install air conditioning in each classroom. However, soon after the renovation, these schools including Sunny received the shut down notification. The previous regulations about reinforcing in order to retain were replaced by the Daxing District School Safe Development Document [2011] file No. 3, stating that "All the unregistered schools operated in the illegal buildings should be shut down immediately for clean up."

What the principals did not understand was that the construction and reinforcement documents that they submitted to the township governments were nowhere

[16] "Report Meeting of the Work of Regulating Mobile Population Self-run Schools in Daxing District (大兴区清理整顿流动人员自办学校工作总结会)" Retrieved from: http://www.bjdx.gov.cn/jrdx/dxxw/dxxx/2006n/33499.htm

to be found. Additionally, the puzzling situation took an interesting turn when they learned from the district officers through the explicit statement during formal meetings and informal conversations that as long as the schools did not continue, the school buildings would not be torn down. Sunny School Principal Zhao even received the personal promise from the township government saying that they would help him sublease the new school building as long as the school discontinued. Principal Zhao describes what he felt when he heard the "trade-off condition" for the school:

> I was in shock when the township Planning Committee director said that he would promise to sublease our new school building for us, as long as I also promise him not to continue the school. It was at the moment I truly realized that the so-called "tearing down illegal buildings" was not the focus; the focus was to outlaw us.

Compared to Daxing, Haidian District government exercised more stringent controls over migrant children schools. Earlier in 2008, the Haidian District authorities have released a working document to all the neighborhoods, townships, and villages governments, requiring them not to approve any rental request by migrant children schools. This would not only strictly prevent new migrant children schools from emerging, but also putting the existed schools into difficult situation—as soon as their land/building leases ended, they could no longer renew the contract which means they had to either relocate or close. At the end of June 2011, the landlords and the township officials formally notified four migrant children schools in the district that their land contracts would not be renewed, and they should vacate as soon as the current contracts expired in July. Meanwhile, when the principals and teachers set out to look for new locations in the surrounding neighborhood, they were told no individual was allowed to rent houses or land to migrant children schools. As a result, these schools were torn down

overnight by the government work team in July, and one of the reasons was their illegally occupation of private and public property.

Not just schools that only had temporary status, even some migrant children schools that had the official licenses were facing the similar constraints. One of the biggest challenges for migrant children schools to sustain was the rapid urban expansion. On average, a migrant children school with ten-year history would have to move at least two to three times during these ten years when the old locations were in the areas of urban development. With the restriction on land/building lease, no matter if the school has official license or not, they would have to close.

The same trend of constraining the space for migrant children schools can be found in Chaoyang District. Their Education Committee stated that the district would use three years to fundamentally solve the problem of migrant children going to school. By "fundamental solution", they mean that moving migrant children out of migrant children schools—majority of them have been moving into the government entrusted schools—as well as strategically eliminating schools established without official approval.

At the first glance, the official reasons for these districts governments to enforce the school closing seem to be different. Daxing District mainly focused on the rectification of illegal constructions. Haidian District emphasized that they pulled down and vacated the schools because their lease contracts expired. Chaoyang District reiterated that most of the schools were in the areas designated for urban development. In fact, all of these various reasons were the continuation and extension of the policies to control the floating population. Starting 2010, Beijing continuously introduced a series of policies limiting the possibilities for the non-household registry population to purchase

cars or houses in the city. As for the issues of education, the policies follow even more conservative direction. In Chapter 4, we quoted the commentary from the director at the time of the Beijing Education Commission about the "fear" of open education access to migrant children[17]. He used the "lowland effect" as a metaphor to reiterate that the city could not "excessively" care for the education of migrant children because it might cause more people to come to the city, which explicitly reveals the political intention of controlling the growth of non-resident populations.

Constraining the self-run migrant children schools has been a main focus of the government administrative agenda in recent years. The implementation of various regulations and policies often took the priority in outlawing schools over relocating students, even when the very documents reaffirm the opposite. For instance, as the Beijing Municipal Education Commission issued "Notification on Strengthening the Regulatory Work on Floating Population Self-Run Schools" (Beijing Education Foundation [2005] No. 27th)[18] clearly stated, before shutting down migrants population self-run schools, "all levels of governments should properly arrange students to attend other schools, and ensure that their education will not be affected." Also in the document, it asked local public schools to "continually explore the potential to increase the number of migrant children enrollment, so that more migrant children could enroll into the public schools." According to the statement from the Beijing Municipal Education Commission during the school closing, all districts and county governments should follow the "three first and three later" principle. That is tearing down the residential houses first, then

[17] See p. 106.

[18] See p. 103.

demolishing school buildings later; demonstrating the possibilities of the student relocation first, then organizing the specific implementation of the plans later; relocating the students first, then demolishing the schools buildings later. However, in reality the relocation became what most parents described as "you are on your own" type of task and test, and their concern for their children was not unnecessary. Principal Zhao described the interaction between the teachers and parents of Sunny School and the district officials during the series of events:

> After two brief meetings announcing school shutdown, we could not find anyone in the government to meet with us to discuss the matter or even answer some of our questions. Some of us managed to contact the officers who hosted the meetings. They said that they were only responsible for noticing and carrying out the shutdown, others in the district Education Committee was responsible for student relocation. Up until now, several months went by; we had never seen or met with anyone in person that was in charge of the relocation. They just send text messages to our teachers and parents to notify what schools we were allowed to consider… How can they expect students to transfer to a school, any school, without systematic support in such a timely manner?

The forceful shutdown and demolition of these twenty-four migrant children schools in the summer of 2011 was another large-scale political action to suppress the migrant children schools following the similar event happened in the summer of 2006. The demolition this time was basically the policy continuity of the 2006 shutdown. Compared to last time when several public hearings were held by districts and the testimonies were generally accessible, this time the action from all levels of governments, from the municipal to the district to the township levels, were even more indiscernible yet firm. But the rhetoric and the promise made by the Municipal Education Commission and District Committees were the same both times: "The public schools would receive migrant students unconditionally"; "Not one more student would lose their schooling", and so on. In reality, however, take Haidian District in 2006 as an example, there were

more than 15,000 migrant students in the schools forced to shut down at the time, but at the end there were just over 4,000 students who were able to be relocated[19]. This time, the result that the majority of the students lost their schools did not receive relocation has been the same.

The lack of the proper arrangement and the systematic support for student relocation did not stop the demolition of their schools. Migrant parents and teachers were questioning not only the specific policy implementation, but also the responsibilities of governments to ensure the education opportunity for their children. They took actions, just like they had confronted the school closing in 2006, and this time their actions were more organized and determined. And also at this time, their actions were more about protesting against the violation of their children' education rights, rather than opposing the shutdown of one or two schools.

The Mobilization and Action

There have been continuous struggles and resistance from migrant communities in urban China as they constantly face displacement and crackdown from the authorities. Members of the migrant communities, especially migrant teachers and parents this study has focused on, are by no means passively accept anything forced upon them. The various forms of protests, compromise, and negotiations throughout the past three decades took place since the first group of migrant workers began to negotiate with the

[19] The data was collected by the college student volunteer organizations from various universities in Haidian District at the time. My home university and the student organization which I was a former member were deeply involved in the process of collecting the non-officially published data and conducting the follow-up home visits in the migrant communities.

state to fight for their space in the city. My main task in this section is to analyze how the characteristics of their protests and negotiations are closely related to the changes of state regulations of migrant children education and the development of the collective identity among them. The strategies of the different actions showed the determination of migrant parents and teachers, and also represented their emotions of seeking for recognition.

The Widespread Mobilization and Action

As Li Zhang (2001) has pointed out, in a politically sensitive environment like the migrant communities in Beijing, where open, direct street actions by migrants were dangerous, the indirect and everyday forms of resistance played more vital role than the visible uprisings. Even though by the end of the summer only a few schools survived, it was still considered as the temporary victory of the extensive resistance. The school closing act encountered a wide variety of resistance, which ranged from the resistance at the personal level to the mobilization at the organizational level, and moved beyond the migrant communities.

When the closing notifications were posted in front of the school gates, the teachers and principals informed the parents immediately. More parents came to schools on a daily base to talk to the teachers and ask for the possible strategies to react. After discovering that the poster size notifications were removed from the school gates, the township government officials hired hourly workers to distribute flyers reiterating the same statement outside of the schools. Some parents and students chose to ignore the flyers; some got as many flyers as they could but then discarded the stacks of flyers to hinder the circulation; but more of them argued with the hourly workers hired by the township governments, confronted their motivations and challenged their legitimacy of

policy enforcement. As for the main target of the closing, not just Sunny School as previously mentioned, but several schools in all the three affected districts began to organize their teachers and parents in July to visit local governments to request meetings with authorities, send in petition letters, and call for the further investigation of the implementation of certain regulations, and so on. Ying, the teacher and the active member of the migrant communities I met during my multiple fieldwork trips described the ways they mobilized:

> At the beginning, we felt bad for the colleagues who were affected but we did know how to help. Our district did not participate in the closing act this time, and our school had the permit. But we have met and actually worked with one another multiple times. I knew many teachers and families in these three districts. We need to help each other! … By July, many of us who were teaching in other districts had got the phone calls, emails, even visits from friends all over these three districts. They told us what they would do next, and where they would want us to go with them. I made some calls myself, you know, sometimes you could not make it to these places, but a commitment is a commitment. They informed me, I told someone else, someone else let someone else know, then many people, at least the majority of us, would know the situation and would try to help and do something.

These responses were not as fully recorded by numerous news reports as the severe street protests that some parents and teachers had engaged, but they were in fact representing the formation of a collective identity, the mobilization capability of the migrant community and the persistency of their actions. Living in the same community, parents and teachers share grievances related to their job, education, health and other social rights in the city. Such bond has connected individuals who are not necessarily related through original networks or *guanxi*, but joined by their shared experiences of living and working in the marginalized environment.

Furthermore, these responses were not limited within one or two migrant schools or the scattered migrant settlements. Migrant teachers and parents began to reach out to

activists, organizations, and the mass media, as well as engaging in various types of social networking sites and online public forums. A large number of non-governmental organizations that have been closely working with migrant communities, especially the student associations and the research centers of major universities, held public salons and workshops to discuss the matters. Migrant teachers and parents representatives from both the closing schools and the schools that were not yet affected this time were actively participating in these meetings. They also did not just wait for invitation to speak. Several schools collaborated with different organizations to have support groups and individuals to visit schools and re-write the school condition reports. Major newspapers, most of which were mainstream media, received the open petition letters from multiple schools, jointly signed by migrant parents, and were mobilized to interview these schools and teachers. Some migrant teachers and principals had kept open journaling throughout the process; they post their school situations and raised further questions on their public blogs and *weibo*[20].

What Made This Time Different

In this context, I argue that their actions, especially the protests and negotiations took place this time, reflected a greater sense of organized mobilization when the majority of the demands were focused on the collective intention. As briefly mentioned in previous chapters, there are debates on whether the mobilization and actions among migrant parents and teachers could be defined as social movements. Such discussions never stop, and this time they were echoed among active members within the

[20] *weibo*, 微博, is the Chinese word for "microblog". It refers to mini-blogging services in China, including social chat sites and platform sharing. People outside of China refer it as China's Twitter-like social network, since most of the major social network sites are blocked in China.

communities. More and more migrant teachers and parents started to reflect and learn from their actions to redefine who they are and what they are capable or incapable of to be parts of the civil society. Thus, drawing on both the comparison to the previous experiences and the discussions of the new discourses, I distinguish three aspects of the actions during the summer of 2011 that set them apart from what the government considered as "unrest" or "agitation": First, the more organized and strategized collective actions; Second, the wider participation involving not only migrant parent and teachers but also general public; Third, the stronger focus on citizenship and rights of the members in the migrant communities.

More structured and organized resistances have been observed this time. As described previously in this chapter, members of the migrant communities, especially principals and teachers in the closing schools, acted collectively on their ties of solidarity to mobilize support at both personal and organizational levels, to reach out to mass media, and also to negotiate with local governments. At the same time, the organized actions not only aimed at getting resources to solve problems during the events, but also targeted at addressing the continuous issues beyond the single act of the closing. One of the major concerns of the migrant parents and teachers was the student relocation. Several non-governmental organizations conducted follow-up surveys and made home visits to gather authentic data of student relocation, they were able to do so with the help of numerous teachers from affected and unaffected migrant children schools, longtime activists, as well as general volunteers. The similar project first started during the 2006 school closing, but this time there were more community members involved and more migrant students and their families were reached out by the follow-ups.

The relationships that members of the migrant communities and migrant children schools built with the general public over the years have fundamentally changed how they were perceived. They have gradually entered the public sphere in China, even though the term public sphere is still a debatable concept in the Chinese context[21]. The reconfiguration of migrant communities and their social space were strongly influenced by the state policies, but they still thrived to maintain emotional and social ties with one another, as well as developing a stronger sense of sympathy for coexistence in the urban spaces with the general public. Such emotional development represented at this time as the wide range of media attention and the degree to which the public debate had engaged with members of the migrant communities.

It is worth noticing that media was also the "battle ground" for the public discussion about this event. While many mass media organizations published supportive reports at the beginning of August, several newspapers started to release articles telling "the other side of the stories" about the schools later in August when the forced shutdown and bulldozing of school buildings happened in some districts. Some articles still reiterated the official statements about the poor conditions in some migrant children schools. Some adopted different discourse rather than simply repeating the official rhetoric. They used the criticism from several activists who had experiences working in the communities to argue against the schools and "tell the other side of the stories". Even though the focuses or purposes of these "other-side" articles were different, they concluded in quite similar tone, as one of them stated, "These self-run schools have many problems themselves, which to a certain extent gave the Beijing Municipal Education

[21] For the brief discussion of public sphere in China, see Chapter 2, p. 30-33.

Commission legitimacy to rectify and standardize them." (Southern Weekly, 2011-8-26)[22]

Indeed, the issue of migrant children schools is highly controversial. Caring for the education of migrant children does not necessarily mean supporting all the migrant children schools. Nevertheless, there are two aspects of the heated debates need to be pointed out. On the one hand, the degree to which the controversial issues were discussed indicates that the society recognized the significance of the issues of the education for migrant children and the legitimacy of migrant children schools. But on the other hand, the different perspectives of the controversy not only reflected the different concerns of the general public, but also revealed the complexity of engaging controversial issues in the public sphere in China. In the case of debating for or against the school closing this time, one of the newspapers that published the "other-side" story has been considered the most outspoken newspaper in China and recognized as contributing to the formation of civil society in public communication. But soon after the article was released in this newspaper, it was widely republished by other media, most of which hold the mainstream attitudes towards migrant children schools and the closing act. The article was cited as "the true voice" to legitimize the official claim of outlawing migrant children schools, and it did so from a more persuasive way. Cases like this to certain degree made the movement of schooling for migrant children more challenging and let people who involved feel vacillated. But the profound public debates motivated both supporters and opponents to engage and to utilize different forms of platform/media to reach out to

[22] Chen, M., Shen, N., & Yang, W. (2011, August 26). Poor Children Experiencing Problematic Schools. *Southern Weekly*. Retrieved from http://news.nfmedia.com/nfzm/content/2011-08/26/content_28993585_2.htm

broader audience; thus they in fact improved the influence of the schooling movement for migrant children.

In addition to the wide range of people who engaged in the debate, the focus of the debate has also extended from the surface problems of local officials neglecting their responsibilities to the structure issues of government dereliction of duty and violating the rights of migrant communities and their children. The demands that raised this time had moved beyond simply asking the government to take responsibilities to meet the "needs" of the migrant communities. The essential criticism was to emphasize that the government had violated the basic "rights" of migrant children.

During my interviews with Principal Zhao and parents who went though the school closing in the summer, there was one statement they repeatedly referred to. The statement was from an open letter written by a professor and public intellectual to the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. This passionate letter had encouraged these teachers and parents and gave them support and recognition for their work:

> …Without the thorough protection and the proper solution of schooling for migrant children, the different sectors of the Beijing government still shut down the schools for these children. Such action was a flagrant violation of the equality educational rights of citizens in the name of government administration.[23]

This statement connected the term "citizens" back to the members in the migrant communities, and it was not the only one. More terms with the specific meanings were used by people in the debates and at different events this time, including the "fellow workers" (*gongyou*), "city builders" (*chengshi jianshe zhe*), "new citizens" (*xin gongmin*), and so on. They are the descriptions of migrant workers, most of which are self-

[23] I did not get the chance to interview this professor; the letter was forwarded to me by teachers I interviewed. To protect this professor's identity, I did not translate and quote the complete letter.

descriptive—Members of the migrant communities not only share common connection among their fellow workers at various professions, they also contribute to the development of the cities and deserve equal rights as their fellow citizens. These terms represented the migrant communities' demands for recognition and respect, and also indicated the multiple layers of their forming collective identities.

The civil actions did not stop at the adoption of new terms this time. Several court cases were simultaneously organized among more than half of the affected schools and also filed by migrant parents to fight again the townships or even the district level authorities for the first time. Most of these cases were represented by the "rights protecting" lawyers (*weiquan lvshi*)[24] who have helped citizens from marginalized groups protect their constitutional and civil rights through lawsuits and legal activism. The main prosecution point was the local governments' illegal administration that violated the Constitution, the Compulsory Education Law, and the Law on the Promotion of Private-Run Schools[25]. The challenges of filing lawsuit against the government, however, soon came directly from the system. At first, there were only very few cases accepted by the court for trial. Then the lawyers who represented these migrant children schools and families were harassed constantly. Because of their active involvement during the school closing, some lawyers were "invited" by the government to have non-disclosure

[24] These lawyers and legal practitioners are also scholars and activists. They are famous for representing the disadvantaged individuals and groups in many court cases regarding labor rights, land rights, migrant workers' rights, as well as fighting against official corruption and dereliction of duty.

[25] Constitution of the People's Republic of China, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2824.htm;
Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/12/content_1383936.htm;
Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Private-Run Schools, http://english.gov.cn/laws/2005-10/09/content_75357.htm

conversations that lasted for hours; some even had their law license revoked for groundless reason, one of whom I later interviewed. He pointed out,

> The fear them (the government) had was the growth of the civil awareness of regular citizens, especially the migrant workers. They didn't treat migrant workers as citizens, neither do they want this group of people to realize they are citizens and they can protect their rights using the tool of law, the universal law!

Even though the difficulties at the moment seemed insurmountable, the legal approaches had made migrant teachers and parents take their first step towards carrying out the active role as citizens to protect both their legal and legitimate rights.

Throughout the summer of 2011, both local and central governments were surprised by the scale and the degree to which the resistances against the school closing they had received from the migrant children schools, the communities and the society as a whole. These actions did not happen overnight, they took the migrant communities many years to develop their invisible everyday negotiation, compromise, and collaboration into the influence mobilization. Compared to the previously observed individual protests, the more organized actions had reached to a higher level, although the large scale visible political activities, the direct protests and disruption of social order were still not commonly practiced among members of the migrant communities. However, the awareness of their legal rights and the development of the new discourse about citizenship and civil society have encouraged more migrant parents and teachers to hold the government accountable by legal means.

Different Views towards the Target of the Action

Although the various forms of resistance during the summer had inspired members of the migrant communities and other activists, one should not romanticize the politics of developing social movements in the Chinese context or oversimplify the

complex relationship between the state and the civil society. While emphasizing the collective actions, I also want to address one of the major differences among the active members and discuss the barriers for the potential social movements to move forward. That is the question regarding who should be the target of the collective actions.

While community members protested against the injustice they received, many of them still insisted that it was the mid-level government officials that caused the problems. Principal Zhao shared with me the disturbing incidents of how the township government harassed the communities even after Sunny School survived the closing act in the summer. He emphasized the wrongdoing of local governments, but spoke out his hope for the higher-level authorities:

> …For almost two months since we received the new approval from the district Education Committee and re-opened the school on September 1st, the township government kept sending "check-up" teams to the school every day. At the beginning, there were some officers with uniforms showed up during the school day without notifying us in advance. They came to the school at the random times of the day, walked right into the classrooms and interrupted the lessons. We asked them to give us some specific suggestions if there were things we need to work on, but they refused to put anything in writing.
>
> After we contacted officers in the district Education Committee, they stopped coming. But instead, they hired a group of thugs to disturb us! These thugs would come right after the school day ended, they got on our school buses yelling "safety checks", but some of them were topless and covered in tattoo!! How could people look like that be the check-up team? Many young kids got so scared. Our male teachers and some volunteer fathers of our students had to sit in the school buses with the students. There were several times that we worried there would be fights break out in front of the kids… You tell me, how could the people's parental officials (*renmin fumu guan*)[26] do such things?
>
> … One of our old sayings is The Mountains are high and the emperor is far away (*Shan gao huangdi yuan*). Our country's leaders are sitting in a high place, and they have no idea what's really going on. And we don't know what the country's

[26] *renmin fumu guan*, literally translated as people's parental officials. It is a common phrase in China describing that as the people's public servants, government officials should serve people with their heart and soul, like parents guiding their children.

> leaders really say. These corrupted local leaders are the biggest problem—the county officials are the ones who embezzle everything. When we were at the countryside, they were doing bad things and got away with it. Now we are at the foot of imperial palace walls (*huang cheng gen er*)[27], but they still blocked everything, and still got away with all these corruption and abuse of law (*tan zang wang fa*). We need to reveal their wrong-doings. We should speak up and let the central government know and hold them accountable for what they have done.

The phrase he used—*Shan gao huangdi yuan*, The mountains are high, the emperor far away—is a common saying in China. It indicates that many people invariably believe the problems of administration or the issues of legislations are local, and that higher-ranked leaders will be honest and decent. For the vast majority of members in the migrant communities, their trust towards the higher-level officials on the one hand motivated them to use the tool of law within the system to advocate for themselves, but on the other hand prevented them from engaging in the further political activities that disrupt the existing social and political order.

However, some activists began to make strong argument to critique the structural problems of the unfair system. The open letter mentioned in the previous section written by a scholar activist to the Beijing Municipal Government represented such point of view. Instead of blaming one or two corrupted local cadres, it criticized the historical and institutional problems that led to the mistreatment of the migrant communities and their children. Such critique was also echoed by a small amount of migrant community members, most of who had worked with individuals and organizations inside and outside of the communities. Guo, one of the teacher activists who started the Candlelight Communication newspaper[28] with some fellow migrant teachers, reflected on the

[27] At the foot of imperial palace walls (*huang cheng gen er*), here it means in the Capital city, Beijing.

[28] See Chapter 4, p. 117-119.

relationships between the migrant communities and the government when he told me what one could learn from the actions in the summer of 2011:

> Migrant workers are not just the participants of the social change; we are part of the social change. We experience the up and down of the political climate. Living in the injustice, the problem was not about one or two unreasonable regulations, or one or two corrupted officials. It is bigger than that…
>
> (He paused for about half a minute.)
>
> You know, there are just so many problems we had encountered, and no one could solve all for us. But we can find ways to solve the problems. If they (the government) won't let us do it, then we need to fix that problem first…Of course, we will work with them, and work with others as well. I don't think many of us want to always fight against something; we want to work for something. But if we have to fight first in order to find the solution, we should. Just like this time.

For migrant parents and teachers who made their initial steps towards standing up against the authorities, their understandings of the unfair treatment came from their direct interaction with local cadres. For activists in the migrant communities who previously engaged in various voluntary collective actions, their experiences supported them to examine the role of the state and engage in a larger discourse that points to the structure issues of the injustice. The differences among the members of the migrant communities indicate the different dynamics of their identity formation. In the case of the events during the summer of 2011, the various forms of actions reflected the politics of identity transformation; meanwhile the crisis of the state and the resistances from the society had also contributed to the development of new identities among the active members. In other words, although the more profound actions would be less likely to happen at this stage of the movement, the constrained political space or the limited social understanding did not prevent the development of the progressive agenda as well as the transformation of their identities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I begin with the discussion of the forced shutdown of twenty-four migrant children schools in Beijing during the summer of 2011. Using the example of one school, I document the series of events led to the forced demolition of these schools in the districts of Daxing, Haidian, and Chaoyang in Beijing. The events were followed by the subsequent issues of student relocation. I distinguish two types of schools that were entrusted by the government for migrant students' relocation: one is the township public schools, and the other is the government subsidized private-run schools. By the end of the summer, only a small percentage of the students were able to relocate. The difficulties and barriers for relocation not only left the already deeply worried students and parents with more anxiety and further disappointment, but once again transferred the responsibilities to parents for enrolling their children into any kind of schools.

In the second part, I analyze the political implication behind the school closing. The various reasons different districts exercised indicated the continuation and extension of the policies to control the floating population. Constraining migrant children schools has been a main focus of the government administrative agenda in recent years.

The third section of this chapter documents the collective actions from parents, teachers, and the active members outside of the communities. I emphasize the different features of the actions took place this time, including the more organized and strategized collective actions; the wider participation involving not only migrant parent and teachers but also general public; and the stronger focus on citizenship and rights of the members in the migrant communities. Meanwhile the various forms of actions also indicate the politics of identity transformation among active members.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Reflection

This qualitative study of the politics, practices, and possibilities of migrant children schools suggests that these schools have provided education to children from the marginalized migrant families when the government had failed to do so. The lack of the political willingness from the government to address the welfare of rural migrants had denied migrant children the access to public education. The emergence of migrant children schools filled this gap by providing initial education for children from poor and marginalized migrant communities. They also provided the space and possibilities of bringing together migrants from all regions and ethnic backgrounds across the country and supporting each other as they share grievances related to their job, education, health and other social rights in the city. Such bond has connected individuals who are not necessarily related through the kinship or place-of-origin related network, but joined by their shared experiences of living and working in the marginalized environment. The development of such collective identity among teachers, students, parents, and other members in the migrant communities makes it possible for them to begin to address the social discrimination and maltreatment of migrant children, as well as moving towards the possibility of more profound transformation.

The Dilemma from the Past to Present

Almost all the migrant children schools are located inside the migrant settlements in the metropolitan areas of the Chinese cities. Their relationship with the state went from the early years of "no guidance, no regulation" to the present stage of constantly being rectified and outlawed. It took the policymakers over a decade to acknowledge the

social and educational needs of migrant children in the cities. There was not until 1996 that the Chinese central government drafted specific regulation concerning schooling issues for migrant children. There have been two developmental stages of the evolvement of educational policies and regulations regarding migrant children's schooling, namely the stage of vague governmental responsibilities, and the stage of re-emphasizing governmental control.

In this study, I focus on the city of Beijing. Starting around 2005, under the influences of the preparation of hosting the 2008 Summer Olympics, CBD (Central Business District) eastward expansion, population control and a series of other events, Beijing launched waves after waves of rectification targeting migrant children schools and other grass-roots organizations in the migrant communities. In this political climate, only a few schools had succeeded in obtaining the official approval within the short policy window period of issuing permit to these schools. However, it was up to the local district governments to set the criteria for determining which school had "met the standards" and which did not. Many schools that applied for the official permit received different statements or interpretation of the regulation from the local district offices. The majority of the migrant children schools were unable to do so. For them, there would be no long-term stability. In the summer of 2006, the Beijing Municipal Government announced the "Notification from the Office of the Beijing Municipal People's Government on Further Strengthening the Safety Work on the Unauthorized Floating Population Self-Run Schools", and the school closing was announced soon afterwards. During that summer, 239 migrant children schools were targeted for closure in Haidian, Shijingshan, and other districts, affecting nearly 100,000 migrant students. Not just in

2006, but every subsequent year, more migrant children schools in the districts of Chaoyang, Shijingshan, Changping, Daxing, Fengtai, were in the range of demolition, even including the ones held the official permits.

During all the school closing acts, the issue of student relocation had never been properly addressed. Township public schools required students from outside of the household registry system to provide the "five certificates" —the Temporary Living Permit in Beijing, the Certified Proof of Address the Certified Labor Contract, the Certificate of No Potential Familial Guardian Reside in the Place of Origin, and the Registry of the Entire Family' Household Permanent Residency—to pass the entrance examinations, and to the hidden fees. The vast majority of students in the demolished migrant children schools did not enter public schools as originally promised. Instead, they were forced to drop out or transfer to the countryside of their parents' places of origin. Although Beijing claimed that more than 70 percent of the school-age migrant students are now enrolled in state supported schools, there are still around 150,000 children that have been blocked at the door to public education. In addition to the visible and hidden fees, the five certificates have largely come to represent another legal barrier for migrant parents to move forward in the process of being able to legally educate their children in state supported schools. Most parents of these children could not collect all the required certificates, and they were put in the category as the "lower end of the crowd". Fail to provide the required certificates in limited time thus were transferred into the reason why migrant parents were to be blamed for not enrolling their children into public schools.

In addition to examining the history and struggles of migrant children schools from the policy level, I also intend to reflect on the life and work of migrant teachers: By

borrowing the critical lenses of analyzing gender and labor, I try to re-articulate the language of struggles of migrant teachers in urban Chinese cities. Public concern has started paying attention to migrant children in recent years, but still very few people noted the group of people who teach in migrant children schools. Migrant teachers come from across the country, some of whom are teachers with decades of teaching experience. Many migrant teachers from the rural areas worked as substitute teachers and forced to migrate to the cities because of their extremely low wages and unthinkable working condition; a large numbers of teachers with regular positions in rural schools joined the migrant teaching force for the very similar reasons. In recent years, there are more young teachers who graduated from regional teachers colleges or universities moved to the cities and began to teach in migrant children schools. These teachers work in migrant children schools, so they are labeled as "migrant workers" as well. At the structural policy level, they are not considered as "teachers" in the society.

Despite migrant teachers' key role both in the migrant communities and the society, their work are deemed less important thus invisible in dominated social discourse. Teaching in both the rural areas and the urban migrant communities has often been interrupted by different state policies. Their work is considered as temporary and transitional, and nothing more beyond that. Because these schools fell out of the discourses of meeting the needs of the labor market for China's economic transformation, and the teaching practices of these teachers are further considered as restricting China's economic development. However, many migrant teachers have kept their identities as teachers throughout their different stages of life, and strive to be a teacher regardless of how difficult it would be.

The conditions that migrant teachers are facing have moved beyond the institutional limit and become a structural attack. In other words, the devaluation of migrant teachers' work materialized through the discrimination and marginalization towards their social status and their basic rights, and it also materialized through the effect on these teachers' body and their emotional well-being. However, the physical bond of working and living space provided migrant teachers, parents and students a "family-like environment", and allowed them to offer each other communal support. I discuss the dynamic and collective consciousness seen among families of migrant teachers and students who live close to each other. The same kind of support and connection could be found among teachers themselves, and their actions of caring for each other reflected more aspects of their marginalized position: as being migrants teachers, and for most of them, as being migrant women.

Although being excluded from the public realm for decades, migrant communities have never suppressed their voices. In the spaces provided by migrant children schools, students and teachers have been using different ways to tell their own stories. Many migrant teachers' stories indicate the different forms they have took to act as resistance despite the socially, culturally, and economically constructed control force that imposed upon them.

The Future: Sustain the Organized Action

The migrant communities and the organizations that work closely with them strongly reacted to different waves of school closing, but the issue did not promptly enter the realm of public discussion. There were always different voices and resistant actions

during each demolition, but they have not been of concern for the government. However, many teachers, parents and social activists, had learnt from the experience, which in certain respects foreshadowed a large-scale and more systematic confrontation later. In the summer of 2011, when the 24 schools were forcibly shut down, there were unprecedented systematic resistance and widespread social dissonance. Part of the reason, is the gradual formation of a sense of solidarity and collective identity in the communities around the work towards providing schools for migrant children over the past 20 years.

The spaces provided by the migrant children schools have in fact encouraged the formation of the group solidarity among migrant students, teachers and their families, as well as the active members outside of the communities. The vitalizing activities in the communities not only challenged the stereotypes of migrant children and their schools, but also provided the opportunities for mobilizing people outside of the communities and beyond the basic communal networks to further collaborate with and support the work of the migrant teachers. Such work has been helpful to set the foundation for the development of the further collective actions and the reconstruction of the social dynamics around migrants in cities of China.

Throughout the summer of 2011, both local and central governments were surprised by the scale and the degree to which the resistances against the school closing they had received from the migrant children schools, the communities and the society as a whole. These actions did not happen overnight, they took the migrant communities many years to develop their invisible everyday negotiation, compromise, and collaboration into the influential mobilization. Compared to the previously observed individual protests, the more organized actions had reached to a higher level, although the

large scale visible political activities, the direct protests and disruption of social order were still not commonly practiced among members of the migrant communities. However, the awareness of their legal rights and the development of the new discourse about citizenship and civil society have encouraged more migrant parents and teachers to hold the government accountable by legal means.

For migrant parents and teachers who made their initial steps towards standing up against the authorities, their understandings of the unfair treatment came from their direct interaction with local cadres. For activists in the migrant communities who previously engaged in various voluntary collective actions, their experiences supported them to examine the role of the state and engage in a larger discourse that points to the structure issues of the injustice. The various forms of actions reflected the politics of identity transformation; meanwhile the crisis of the state and the resistances from the society had also contributed to the development of new identities among the active members.

Reflection on Research

I began this study with a personal reflection on my experiences teaching in migrant children schools and working with members in the communities. Many questions I had about how these schools emerged, why these schools existed, what people involved in these schools have been doing seem to find their way into the dissertation. But the journey of exploring the issues related to the practices, problems and politics of migrant children schools was much more difficult than I expected.

The first challenge came from the social movement theoretical framework I decided to focus on. I found it hard to transfer the argument and analysis of the social

movement theories into the Chinese context. It is not because these theories do not "fit"; the "daunting" task is to explain why these theories indeed matter and how them have taken various forms and adapted different language to develop in a very different context.

I decided to pay more attention to China's different political and cultural structures, by laying out the conditions and circumstances that led to the formation and development of the actions, as well as recording the transformation of the social dynamics. Keeping that in mind, I use the examples within the history and development of migrant children schools to capture the negotiations and document the reconfiguration of the different interests groups and social actors in the Chinese society, and argue that the limited social space and uncertain conditions in which many social actors have struggled in contemporary Chinese society do not prevent the emergence and development of the collective actions against entrenched institutions. Thus, I focus on four key concepts of social movement theories that provide insights into studying the social dynamics and mobilization strategies towards the education of migrant children: mobilization potential, social networks, resources, and collective identity. Meanwhile, I also keep one of the local concepts that deeply rooted in the Chinese culture—*guanxi*—in the discussion as I see it being a more organic way to look at how relationships work in the context-specific process. These concepts implicate the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of the migrant children school movement, and help me theorize the answers to the questions of my research: Why do people participate in supporting migrant children schools? What are their motivations and emotions? How do people become persuaded to participate? What are the existing networks that link people and organizations? How do other people understand migrant workers' grievances and come to

feel tied to the movement? And, very importantly, how are these aspects all linked together?

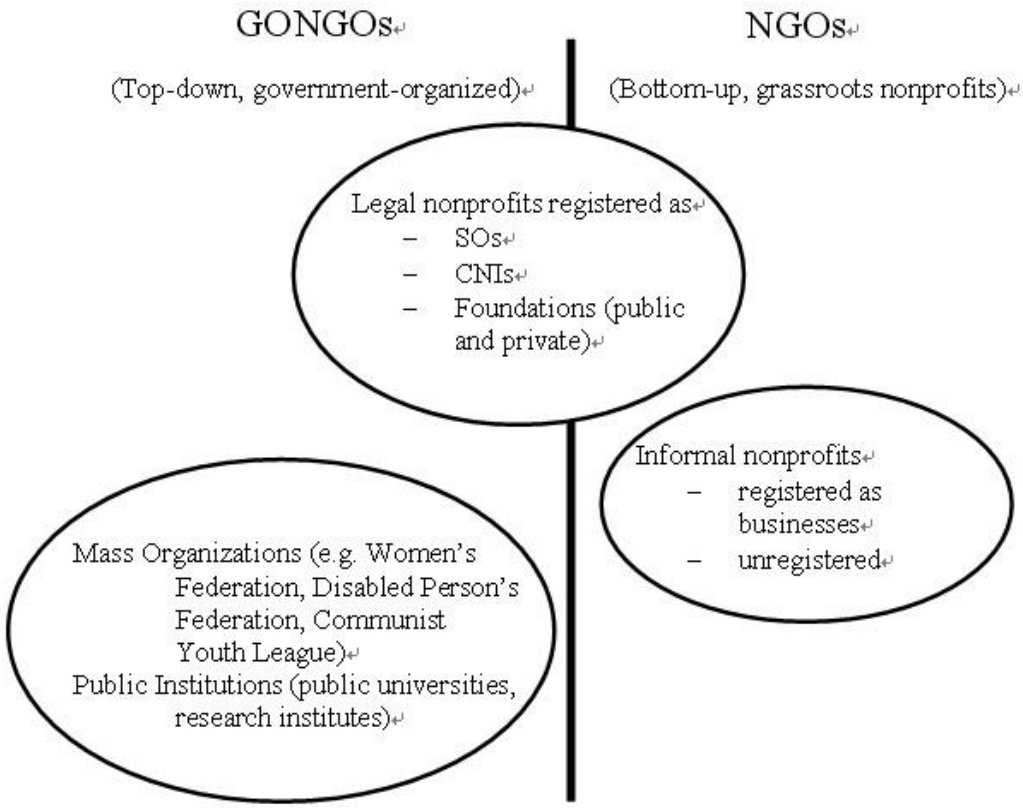
The second challenge is a more emotional one. I recorded in the methodology chapter about the mix feelings of surprise, joy, anger, and anxiety I went through during the fieldwork, what I did not expect was the emotional pressure during the process of writing. I wanted to tell the powerful stories about many courageous individuals that I interviewed or heard about during my fieldwork, and keep their very personal memories and experiences about their despair, loss, hardship, and grievances alive in my writing. But I also did not want to only show the emotional side of these courageous people and the work they have done.

The narrative inquiry approach gave me tools to record the stories of people from the disadvantaged background, and prepared me to organize the space for them to reveal their reality and contradicts in life. However, my understanding of using narrative approach is not just transcribing participants' personal telling into words and then rearranging the words into texts. To restore a meaningful narrative inquiry and respect those who welcome me into their personal memory and look into their life history as a researcher but also a friend, I have to carefully reflect on the issues of who can speak, how they speak, and who speak under which condition. In the process of working with my participants, one of concerns about the storytelling approach my research participants had has to do with being comfortable of taking the position in the center of a conversation as a sole speaker/narrator. I want to share their stories, but I also want to respect their decision not to "stand alone in the center" and thereby find the appropriate way in which to tell their stories as they would want them to be told. The way in which I attempt to

navigate this issue is to combine the telling of personal life stories with the narrative of the group portraits and place the narrative of the individual and collective experiences in several different but specific time periods.

Appendix A – Figure 1: The Nonprofit Organizations in China

(The size of the circles suggests the relative size of each group. This diagram is adapted from Inaugural Special Issue (Summer 2011). New Trends in Philanthropy and Civil Society in China. *China Development Brief*. No. 50. Retrived from: http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/?p=333)[1].



In the overlap areas between GONGOs and NGOs, there are Social Organizations (SOs); Civil Non-Enterprise Institutions (CNIs)—It is important to notice that migrant children schools with permit are categorized as CNIs—and Foundations (Public foundations are GONGOs, while the private foundations are NGOs).

[1] For more information, see also Saich, T. (2000). Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China. The China Quarterly, (161), 124-141.

Appendix B—Chun's Story

Chun sat silently in the very back row of the classroom, her head tilted downward, her shoulders slumped, avoiding eye contact with me as if her life depended on it. At 16, she was the oldest in my sixth grade class. One day, I asked Chun a question about the story the children read, and predictably, she didn't say a word. Instead, she looked down at her feet, grabbed her shirt tightly, and her ears, peeking through her hair, turned red.

"She is always like that," said her mom, a 40-year-old woman temporarily working at the garbage recycling station outside of the metropolitan Beijing. "I don't know what to do," Chun's mom continued, "we moved to Beijing five years ago, but we couldn't get her back to school until this fall. She was a quiet kid before, and now she doesn't even talk to me. I owe her five years of schooling, but I don't know how to make it up for her."

At the beginning of the next semester, all of the sixth graders contributed something for the traditional Lantern Festival. I found a gorgeous painting within the collection of artifacts. It was simply entitled, "Spring". Printed on the back of the painting was a poem from the Tang Dynasty[2]:

> A good rain knows its proper time;
> It waits until the Spring to fall.
> It drifts in on the wind, steals in by night;
> Its fine drops drench, yet make no sound at all.
> The paths between the fields are cloaked with clouds;
> A river-skiff's lone light still burns.
> Come dawn, we'll see splashes of wet red –
> The flowers, weighed down with rain.
>
> (好雨知时节，

[2] The poem is "Delighting in Rain on a Spring Night" (春夜喜雨) by Du Fu (杜甫). Translation adopted from: O'Kane, B. (2005, July 25). DU FU: "DELIGHTING IN RAIN ON A SPRING NIGHT". Retrieved from http://bokane.org/2005/07/25/du-fu-delighting-in-rain-on-a-spring-night/

当春乃发生。
随风潜入夜，
润物细无声。
野径云俱黑，
江船火独明。
晓看红湿处，
花重锦官城。)

Chun's name was signed underneath the poem. I found her in the classroom after recess. For the first time, she talked to me, and she showed me many pieces of her artwork, smiling with a melange of emotions radiating from her eyes.

I taught 40 children that year, in a migrant children school in the slum-suburban area outside Beijing. At the end of the school year, two of my students went back to their parents' hometown to attend middle schools in a rural area. Only one student transferred to a public school at the other side of the city—he passed the "entrance exam" designed for migrant children instituted by the public school, and his parents were able to collect all the required "certifications" and pay the "donation" fees to the school for his transfer. The 37 remaining students, including Chun, ended their education that sixth grade year. Many children who attend migrant children schools in the cities, their education likely terminate after grade six completions. Though I do not know what has become of this special young woman, I keep a painting that Chun created for me. In the picture, she is holding my hand, and she has a sunny smile on her face.

Appendix C—Interview Questions

I. Introductory, background questions

Please share with me a little background information about yourself:

- Where are you from? (Original province)
- When and how did you move to this city?
- What are the difficulties you encounter?
- What grade are you teaching now? How many grades have you taught? (For teachers only)
- How long have you been teaching this grade? (For teachers only)
- How long have you been teaching in this school? How many schools have you taught in? (For teachers only)
- Are you a full-time or a part-time teacher? (For teachers only) If part-time, are you a volunteer teacher/activist?

II. Semi-structured Interview

<u>Original connection to the school</u>

- Tell me something about how you've been involved in migrant children schools.
- How did you find out these schools? And why did you choose this current school?

<u>Personal perspectives of the school</u>

How would you describe this school in terms of:

- Quality
- Environment (Following questions will be more specific)

Personal expectation to the school

How would you like your school to be different (if possible) in order to better meet you expectations?

Teacher views of students

How would you describe your students (your children's teachers) in terms of:

• Personalities

• Academic achievements

Parent views of teachers

How would you describe your child(ren)'s teachers in terms of:

• Personalities

• Teaching style

• Commitment to students

Parental involvement

• How would you describe parental involvement at your school?

• Have you participated in any kind of activity in your child(ren)'s school, either voluntarily or requested by the school? If not requested, why and how did you participate? (For parents only)

School organization (For teachers only)

How has the organizational (administrational? governance?) system at your school been functional, or dysfunctional?)

Professional development (For teachers only)

How professional development is carried out at your school? Do you have a specific plan for yourself?

Support from school (For teachers only)

What kind of support have you had from your principal and other teachers in your school?

Support from society

Have you received any kind of support from people outside of your family/school/community? If so, what kind of support have you had from outside (material or emotional, or in any other form)?

Connection to other organization

Do you know any kind of organization in the community? If so, do you participate in them? Tell me something about how you've been involved in this/these organization(s).

Social Activities in Schools

• How would you describe volunteers work at your school?

• Did you encounter any kind of difficulties/conflicts with volunteers or other activists in the school? If so, can you describe what the major difficulties/conflicts were?

Social Activities in Society

• Do you know some of the activities/projects that work with the schools, or some other places in the migrant community? If so, how would you describe these social activities that advocate for the schools?

• Have you heard or encountered any kind of conflicts, dilemma, or any other kinds of struggles? If so, why do you feel that way?

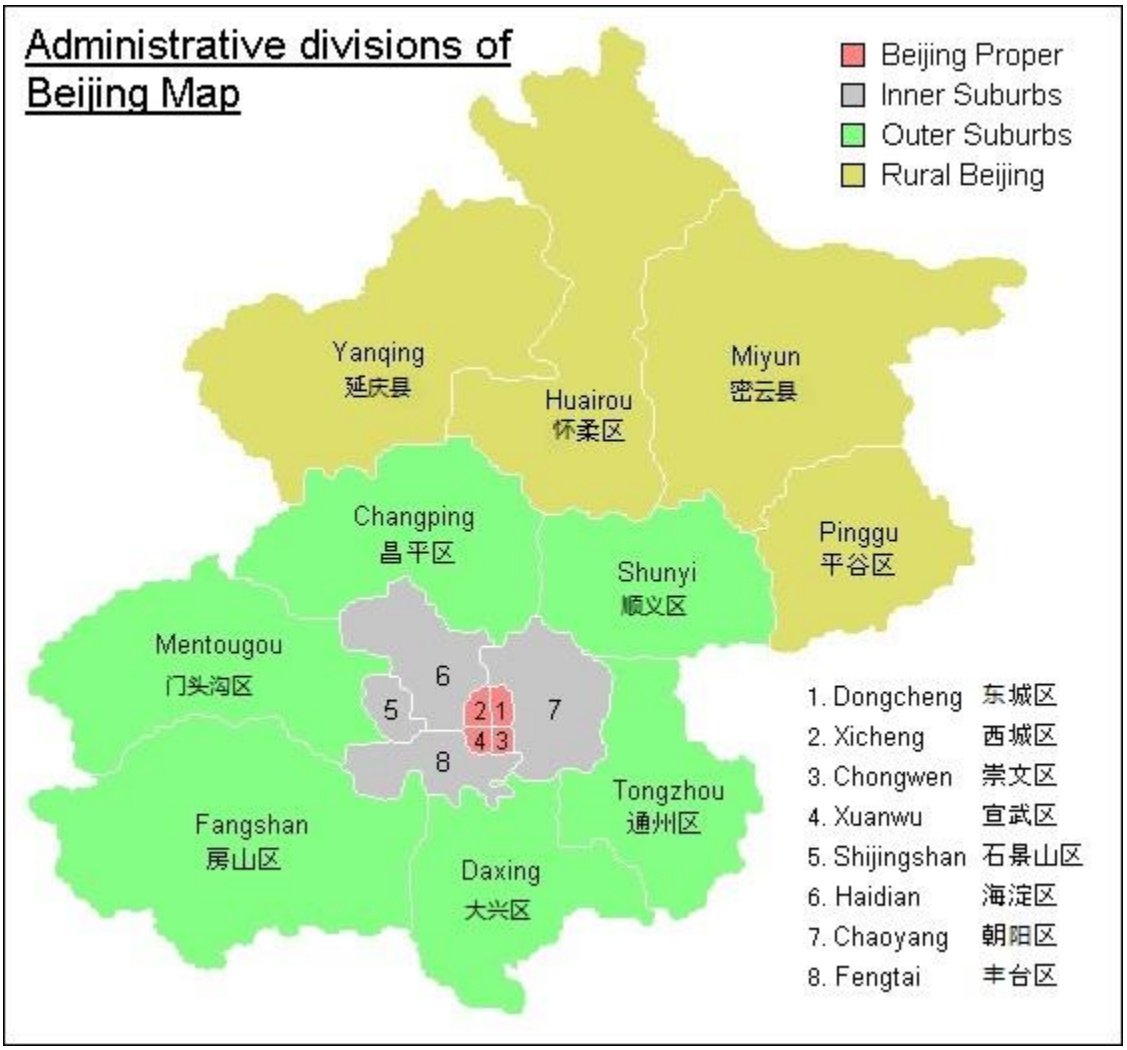
Individual life related to the school

- What has been changed after your teaching/working in this school? Gain? Loss?
- What has been your greatest challenge in your life related to teaching/working in this school?

Final Question

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix D – Map 1: Administrative Districts of Beijing



Appendix E – Table 2: 2011 Beijing Migrant Children Schools Basic Information*

* Modified from the 2011 Beijing Migrant Children Schools Directory, removing the names, addresses, directions, and contact information of the schools and principals, as well as the status of individual school (with permit, temporary approval[3], etc.) in Chaoyang District[4].

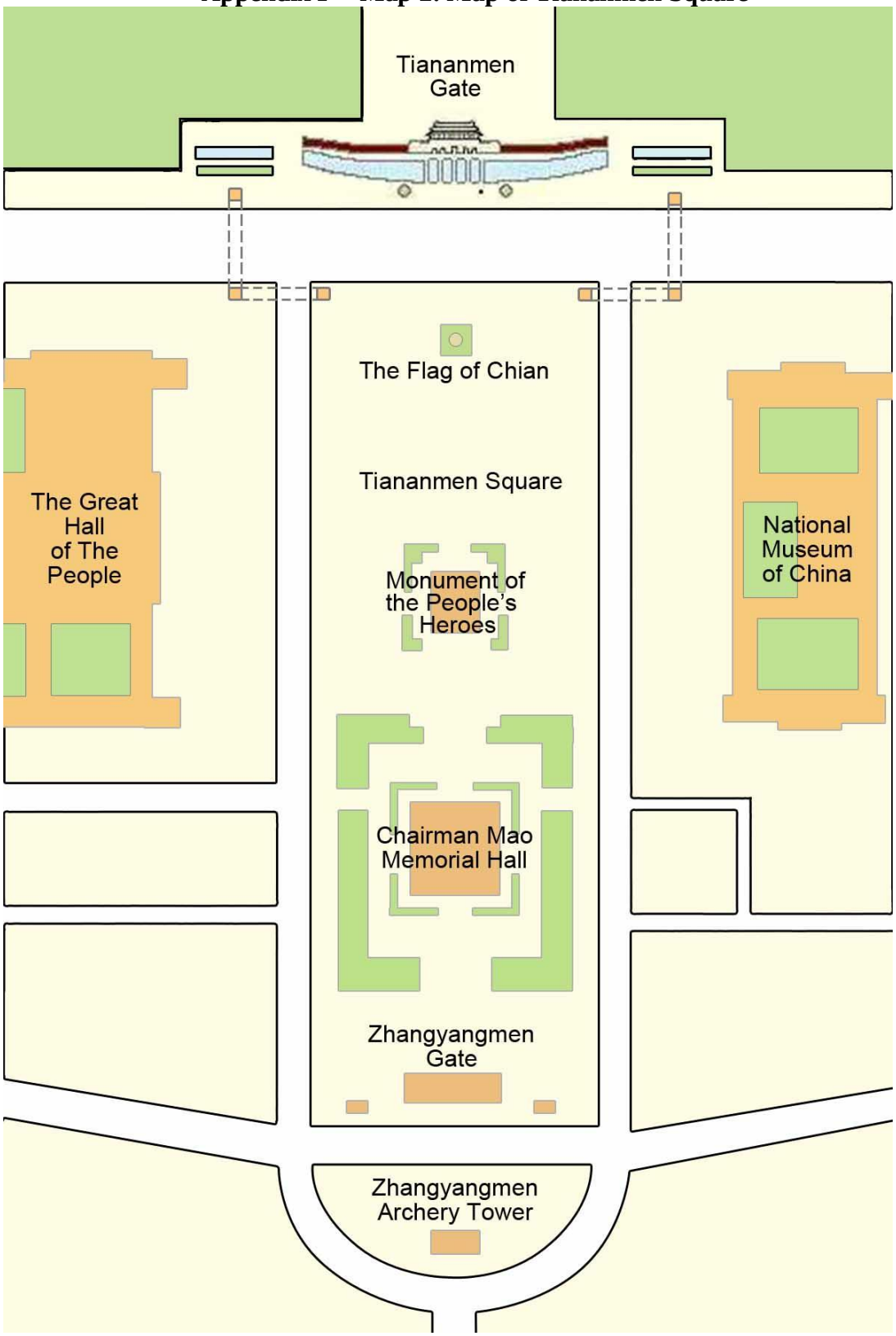
District[5]	Known Numbers of Schools in the District as of July 2011	Known Numbers of Schools with Permit	Known Numbers of Schools with Temporary Approval
Xicheng	1	N/A	
Xuanwu	1		
Fengtai	6		
Shijingshan	8		
Haidian	14		
Chaoyang	32	9	10
Daxing	15	N/A	
Changping	33		
Tongzhou	14		
Fangshan	6		
Shunyi	4		
Huairou	1		
Yanqing	1		
Total in the Directory	**136**	**62** (This is the total known numbers of schools with permit in the city)	**N/A**

[3] Different from a permit that was issued officially, a temporary approval was given by district level education committee as a "waiting-list" approval. Such approval did not save any school that had it in the closing act.

[4] In the directory, only some schools in Chaoyang District had their status listed.

[5] I listed the districts in the order of "center city districts—>inner suburbs—>outer suburbs—>rural districts". There were two center city districts, one outer suburb, and two rural districts not listed in the Directory. See Appendix C for the map of the districts.

Appendix F – Map 2: Map of Tiananmen Square



Appendix G – Table 3: List of Songs in the Album "I Want to Tell You"

I Want to Tell You	**我想对你说** **wo xiang dui ni shuo**
1 My Hometown	1 我的家乡 wo de jiaxiang
2 Walking by the Village	2 走过村庄 zuo guo cunzhuang
3 First Time to Beijing	3 第一次来北京 di yi ci lai Beijing
4 I Want to Tell you, Dad and Mom	4 我想对你说：爸爸妈妈 wo xiang dui ni shuo: Baba Mama
5 Rural Boys	5 乡村少年 xiangcun shaonian
6 I Want to Tell you, Beijing Beijing	6 我想对你说：北京北京 wo xiang dui ni shuo: Beijing Beijing
7 Never Give up: A Song for Migrant Teachers	7 永不放弃——打工子弟教师之歌 yong bu fangqi: dagong zidi jiaoshi zhi ge
8 Surround with A Circle of Love: A Song for Volunteers	8 把爱围成圆——支教志愿者之歌 ba ai wei cheng yuan: zhijiao zhiyuanzhe zhi ge

Glossary

an xiang cao zuo	暗箱操作	literally translated as “dark box operation”, means operating procedures without transparency, and the process is manipulated by different interest groups/individuals
bi gan zi	笔杆子	literally translated as “pen”, means someone who is good at writing
bu rongyi	不容易	not easy
bu zheng gui xue xiao	不正规学校	improper schools
chenzhi	称职	prove oneself competent at one’s job
chengguan	城管	the officers of City Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau (CUALEB))
chengshi jianshe zhe	城市建设者	city builders
chong shi jiao bian	重拾教鞭	literally translated as “pick up the teaching stick again”, means resume the position as a teacher
dagongmei	打工妹	migrant women workers
dagong zhe	打工者	migrant workers

dagong zidi	打工子弟	migrant children
dagong zidi jiaoshi	打工子弟教师	migrant teachers
dagong zidi xuexiao	打工子弟学校	migrant children schools
dayuan	大院	migrant housing compounds
dushu ren	读书人	people who received education
fangxin	放心	be at ease
fenliu	分流	relocation
fenliu yipi, guifan yipi, quid yipi	分流一批，规范一批，取缔一批	Triage some, Regulate some, Outlaw some
fuchi pizhun banxue	扶持批准办学	approval of allowing running a school
ganqing	感情	emotional feelings, or the emotional commitment in longstanding and intimate social bonds
gan xiang, gan shuo, gan zuo	敢想，敢说，敢做	dare to think, dare to talk, and dare to take action
gongan	公安	police from the Public Security Bureau (PSB)
gongan lianfang dui	公安联防队	public security joint defense team

gongyou	工友	fellow workers
guanxi	关系	personal relationships, connections
guifan baoliu xuexiao	规范保留学校	specified reserved schools
hukou	户口	household registration system
huang cheng gen er	皇城根儿	At the foot of imperial palace walls, means in the Capital city, Beijing
jiaoyu buchang fei	教育补偿费	education compensation payment
jiedu	借读	literally translated as “borrowing the space to attend school”, means attend schools on a temporary basis without household registry
jie du fei	借读费	education rental fee; borrowing school-seat fee
laoshi	老师	teacher
liudong ertong	流动儿童	mobile children
liudong renkou	流动人口	floating population; mobile population
liudong renkou shourong suo	流动人口收容所	floating population

		detention center
liudong renkou ziban xuexiao	流动人口自办学校	floating population self-run schools
mangliu	盲流	literally translated as “blind flow”, means illiterate pack, unregulated flow (of migrants)
minban gongzhu xuexiao	民办公助学校	government subsidized private-run schools
minban xuexiao banxue xukezheng	民办学校办学许可证	non-state run school operation permit
ni lai shun shou	逆来顺受	resign oneself to adversity; submit oneself to insults, maltreatment, and humiliation
putonghua	普通话	Mandarin Chinese
renmin fumu guan	人民父母官	literally translated as “people’s parental officials”, a common phrase in China describing that as the people’s public servants, government officials should serve people with their heart and soul, like parents guiding their children
renqing	人情	human sentiments, favors

renting	认同	identify with
sanxian	三险	three insurance, including pension, medical insurance, and unemployment insurance
Shan gao huangdi yuan	山高皇帝远	The mountains are high, the emperor far away.
shangtou	上头	people in charge
she xiaojia, wei dajia	舍小家，为大家	put aside one's small family, for the purpose of serving the bigger good
Shi Shuo	师说	"Talk about Teachers". It is a famous Chinese classical essay about teacher, written by Han Yu in Tang Dynasty
shourong qiansong	收容遣送	custody and repatriation
shudu jiehe	疏堵结合	combination of dredging and blocking
si shu	私塾	"home-located" schools, traditional school with a scholarly tutor teaching students the Chinese classical texts in his own house
tan zang wang fa	贪赃枉法	corruption and abuse of law

tong	同	same or shared
tongshi	同事	coworker or colleagues
tongxiang	同乡	people who shared the same places of origin
tongxiao	同校	alumni
tongxing	同姓	people who shared the same surnames
tongxue	同学	classmates
weibo	微博	“microblog”, it refers to mini-blogging services in China, including social chat sites and platform sharing. People outside of China refer it as China's Twitter-like social network, since most of the major social network sites are blocked in China.
weiquan lvshi	维权律师	the rights protecting lawyers, these lawyers and legal practitioners are also scholars and activists who famous for representing the disadvantaged individuals and groups in many court cases regarding labor rights, land rights, migrant workers' rights, as well as fighting against official

		corruption and dereliction of duty
wuzheng	五证	five certificates for migrant children to enroll in public schools, including the Temporary Living Permit, the Certified Proof of Address, the Certified Labor Contract, the Certificate of No Potential Familial Guardian Reside in the Place of Origin, and the Registry of the Entire Family' Household Permanent Residency
xin gongmin	新公民	new citizen
xiongdi jiemei	兄弟姐妹	brothers and sisters
xunluo jingguan dengji biao	巡逻警官登记表	patrol officer registry
yiqi	义气	loyalty, trust, aid
yiqi nuli	一起努力	try hard together
yu long hun za	鱼龙混杂	literally translated as "fish and dragon jumbled together", means good and bad are mixed up
zanmen	咱们	we, us
zan zhu zheng	暂住证	temporary living permit

ze xiao fei	择校费	school choice fee
zhengfu weituo xuexiao	政府委托学校	government entrusted schools
zheng gui xue xiao	正规学校	proper schools
zhi	值	worthwhile
zuo gongyi	做公益	doing good for the public

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