

THE URBANIZATION OF CHINESE CITIZENSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF SHANGHAI AND SUZHOU

by

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Chapter I: Introduction

In 1986, Chinese journalists Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye published an interview with Zhang Baojian, a native of the countryside near Shanghai who had migrated to Beijing to work as a tailor. The interview detailed the lack of opportunities for Zhang in his hometown and the ordeals of starting a new life as a migrant worker. The experience of Zhang Baojian, who at the time of the interview had become a moderately wealthy businessman in Beijing, foreshadowed the social upheaval soon to be caused by the migration of several hundred million more rural residents to China's rapidly growing cities. Though Zhang's younger compatriots face the similar problems of underemployment and lack of opportunity in their hometowns, both the political and social fabric of China have changed significantly in the twenty years since Zhang established himself as a tailor in Beijing. This thesis will address how these changes have taken place, and will discuss the implications that a new social and political atmosphere has for the role of migrant workers in Chinese society.¹

Research Question

The most significant demographic consequence of China's economic reforms has been the massive movement of people from China's countryside to its urban areas. The scale of this migration is unprecedented; official government statistics assert that the size of the migrant population had reached over 147 million people in 2005; news sources suggest this number

¹ Zhang, Xinxin and Sang Ye, *Chinese Profiles*, Beijing, PRC: Panda Books (1986), 101.

could be as high as 240 million today.² According to the 2000 census, approximately half of these migrants remained within their home counties.³ The remainder had left their home counties, and in the case of 50 million migrants, left their home provinces. Of all the segments of China's migrant population, the relative size of interprovincial migrants has grown most rapidly in recent years.⁴ The wave of human migration that has resulted has been termed the "floating population" because of the inability of its members to change their permanent registered residence (*hukou*).⁵ The floating population includes people who have met three conditions: they have left the administrative region in which they are registered residents for a period longer than six months, they have not acquired a new *hukou* or altered their old one, and, and least theoretically, they continue to "float."⁶

Although China's *hukou* system has precedents dating back to ancient household registration systems and the *baojia* system that existed in late imperial China, the *hukou* system as it exists today is a vestige of the Maoist-era planned economy.⁷ The central government sought to restrict urbanization for both ideological and economic reasons by assigning people a *hukou* identifying them with their place of birth, usually based on their mother's registered

² National Bureau of Statistics, "Communiqué on Major Data of 1 percent National Population Sample Survey in 2005," 16 March 2006, *National Bureau of Statistics of China*, 12 September 2010, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj_en_detail.jsp?searchword=floating+population&channelid=9528&record=2> .

³ Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (2006), 129.

⁴ *Ibid*, 130.

⁵ The Chinese phrase is *liudong renkou* (流动人口). Though *liudong* is often translated simply as "floating," Michael Dutton notes that this translation does not convey the disparaging connotation of the Chinese term. The etymological origins of the expression *liudong* suggest not only a lack of place, but also chaotic movement and the assumption of criminality. See: Michael Dutton, *Streetlife China*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (1998), 61.

⁶ Dorothy J Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (1999), 15.

⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

hukou.⁸ The motivations for these restrictions originated in the central government's broader economic goals for China. Marxist ideology views urbanization as a consequence of capitalism; the logical corollary that appeared during the decades following the Communist Revolution in China under Chairman Mao was that restricting urbanization would restrict the spread of capitalism.⁹ More pragmatically, maintaining a tight control over population movement allowed the central government to coordinate industrialization efforts and regulate the agricultural communes that had been established earlier. Housing and work assignments were restricted to the area listed on one's *hukou*, and one's *hukou* could only be changed through marriage or other exceptional circumstances. The implicit assumption at the outset of the *hukou* system's implementation was that people would spend their whole lives in their birthplace.¹⁰ Between 1958 and 1982 these agricultural communes formed the basis of rural residency in the pre-reform era. Peasants collectively contributed to farm labor within their registered localities, and in return received basic health care and education. Since 1982, when communes were dismantled, rural residents have been required to pay for these benefits themselves.¹¹

Since the inception of Deng Xiaoping's "reform and open up" policies, the demographic shift that began in the 1980s has completely changed the landscape of labor in China and has given rise to a host of new social issues. While rural-to-urban migrants were able to seek employment in construction and as entrepreneurs in the private sector, they continue to be denied access to the cities' relatively generous social welfare programs and other public

⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

⁹ *Ibid* 33.

¹⁰ Li Zhang, "Spatiality and Urban Citizenship in Late Socialist China," *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2002: 314.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 293.

services. As a result, significant portions of China's urban population have been excluded from the urban sphere of society; they can live and work in the city, but they have not necessarily received any form of social security, been able to enroll their children in public schools without paying exorbitant fees, or benefited from various health care programs.¹² Given the significant increase in opportunities for mobility in the reform era, the disparity between the treatment of "official" and "unofficial" city residents is an increasingly visible issue.

This thesis examines to what extent the distinction between urban and rural residents still exists by addressing three aspects of urban citizenship in two Chinese cities, Shanghai and Suzhou. First, it will analyze the legal restrictions and protections afforded to rural migrants in these two cities. Second, it will attempt to determine how well these policies are being enforced vis-à-vis the protection of migrants' rights, using education policy as a case study. Finally, it will analyze current media debates in Shanghai and Suzhou surrounding the citizenship rights of rural workers in these two cities to plot the trajectory of the evolution of Chinese citizenship. This thesis hypothesizes that the status of migrants in both of these cities has improved since the early 1990s, particularly in terms of education policy enforcement. Their heightened status is connected to the rise of grassroots movements and increased public awareness as market forces continue to draw migrants to urban areas. The different backgrounds of migrants to these two cities have also had an effect on the role of market forces. Migrants from the most recent wave to these cities have arrived with higher levels of education and more advanced skills, and are involved in more technologically complex industries.¹³ These

¹² Delia Davin, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China*, New York: St. Martin's Press (1999), 154.

¹³ Mallee, Hein, "Migration, Hukou, and Resistance in Reform China," In *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, by Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, New York: Routledge (2010) 85.

migrants form a critical part of these advanced sectors of the Shanghai and Suzhou economy. The data shows that because of their increased importance in these cities' economic development, they have more leverage in influencing policy than earlier waves of migrants.

The Meaning of Citizenship

Central to the discussion of the status of rural migrants in China is defining what, exactly, constitutes citizenship. The definition of citizenship that applies to most Western societies, i.e., one is a citizen of a country by virtue of birth or legal naturalization, does not adequately account for the obvious inequality between the legal statuses of China's urban and rural residents, nor can it accommodate the persistence of this inequality as rural residents migrate to cities. This inequity suggests that Chinese citizenship should be viewed as a spectrum. Though a basic package of rights is extended to everyone that is called a citizen by the Chinese state, a blanket definition of citizenship in China is essentially meaningless because of these inequalities. China's registered rural residents enjoy so few benefits compared to registered urbanites that they belong to a separate class. Although the different social classes that exist in China may have been justified on economic grounds when domestic migration was strictly controlled, the persistence of this inequality in an era of frequent migration raises questions about the meaning of Chinese citizenship.

This progressive idea of citizenship was advanced by sociologist T.H. Marshall in the 1950s. In its simplest version, Marshall's view defines citizenship as a status that is "bestowed on those who are full members of a community."¹⁴ Though Marshall rejects the notion that

¹⁴ T.H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," *Inequality and Society*, Jeff Manza, & Michael Sauder, New York: W.W. Norton and Co. (2009), 150.

there is some universal package of rights that must be granted before full citizenship is attained, he stresses the importance of equality across society. Marshall sees citizenship as a progression from civil rights to political rights and finally to social rights.¹⁵ It is readily apparent that China's rural and urban residents exist at different points along this progression.

Sociologist Bryan S. Turner extends this view of citizenship by analyzing the role of labor in obtaining citizenship. In his view, the social aspect of citizenship is a product of participation in the labor market. Increased integration into the modern economy comes with entitlements unavailable to rural workers; welfare, insurance, health care, and retirement benefits are all amenities of a post-agriculture economic sector.¹⁶ As a result of these entitlements, those who enjoy social citizenship become more involved in different forms of civil society, such as work-related organizations and unions.¹⁷ This understanding of the social aspect of citizenship is particularly troubling for China's rural residents. As the urban economy grows at a faster pace than the rural economy, China's urban residents are able to move further along the progression towards a Marshallian view of full citizenship while rural residents lag behind. Moreover, the entitlement programs that Turner associates with participation in the labor force are granted according to one's *hukou*. Thus, even migrant workers who integrate themselves into the urban economy are unable to attain the benefits associated with entrance into the urban work force because of their permanent identity as rural residents.

Angus Stewart, a sociologist at the London School of Economics, puts the question of Chinese citizenship in a broader context by discussing two expansive concepts of citizenship.

¹⁵ Ibid, 151.

¹⁶ Bryan S. Turner, "The Erosion of Citizenship," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (June 2001): 192.

¹⁷ Ibid, 193.

The first, state citizenship, is defined by a legal association with a nation-state and can be further divided based on the degree of welfare entitlements discussed by Marshall and Turner. The second conception of citizenship, more familiar to Western societies, stresses political participation and argues that citizenship is based on involvement in the political community.¹⁸ Francis Fukuyama explains the disconnect between these two notions of citizenship by accounting for the role of rule of law in determining democratic citizenship. Democratization, and with it the formation of an equitable concept of citizenship, is the process of extending the rule of law beyond social elites to all members of society.¹⁹ The advantage of this view of citizenship is that it adds some degree of rigidity to Marshall's fluid notion of citizenship. Moreover, this view of citizenship provides a means of analyzing the evolving Chinese conception of citizenship discussed below.

Education, in particular, is key to providing access to equal citizenship. Many contentious issues related to expanding citizenship have centered on education issues. The debates surrounding *Brown v. Board of Education*, the integration of American universities, and the Dream Act have challenged notions of citizenship and inclusion. Sociologist Herman van Gunsteren argues that education is the most effective way of extending citizenship and equality of opportunity to marginalized sectors of society. Education is the means by which notions of citizenship are imparted, and it provides the easiest means of social mobility.²⁰ This thesis will draw broader conclusions about the citizenship status of migrant workers in Shanghai and Suzhou by examining the quality of their children's education opportunities.

¹⁸ Agnus Stewart, "Two Conceptions of Citizenship," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (March 1995): 63.

¹⁹ Francis Fukuyama, "Transitions to the Rule of Law," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (Jan. 2010): 38.

²⁰ Herman van Gunsteren, *A Theory of Citizenship: Organizing Plurality in Contemporary Democracies*, Boulder, CO, Westview Press (1989) 83.

Chinese Conceptions of Citizenship

Chinese society has long attached labels to different segments of its population. Post-revolution China has focused primarily on changing definitions of “people,” but the aforementioned concept of citizenship as a measure of political, legal, and economic rights has largely been the subject of Western debate. The general principles of citizenship found in various United Nations documents and international treaties are also codified in the current Chinese constitution, but in reality the policies of the People’s Republic of China have created separate notions of “nationals” (*guomin*), “citizens” (*gongmin*) and “people” (*renmin*). During the ideologically charged years following the Communist Revolution in 1949, all of China’s legal residents were permitted to think of themselves as nationals, but only members of the working and peasant classes were considered to be members of the people, and found themselves more privileged. The word “citizens” appears in government documents but does not have much applied meaning. The legacies of feudalism and class conflict remain; the “people’s” state is still the ultimate manifestation of political authority in China. The notion of citizenship as a package of intrinsic and inalienable rights bestowed upon those born in China has not yet been fully embraced by political society.²¹ Rather, in China the concept of citizenship is more concerned on the responsibilities, rather than the rights, of individuals. This view of citizenship is consistent with the “state citizenship” concept described by Angus Stewart in the previous sections—citizenship in China defines the subordinate role of individuals to the state, rather than describing the state as a summation of individuals with rights and privileges.

²¹ Yu, Xingzhong, “Citizenship, Ideology, and the PRC Constitution,” in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, by Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2002), 288-307

The Importance of the Study

The distinction between urban and rural citizenship in China has been studied extensively. Dorothy Solinger argues that institutional biases and prejudices against rural migrants have prevented China's rural residents from attaining any meaningful measure of citizenship. Solinger notes that market forces have drawn millions of peasants out of China's countryside despite the discrimination they will eventually face.²² On the whole, Solinger argues that market forces have no inherent benefit for migrant workers; relying on the market will not provide the necessary catalyst to bring about improved rights for the floating population. By providing higher paying jobs in more desirable locales, the market forces that lead to migration quell much of the potential for unrest amongst migrant workers; even if their situation is not ideal, they are better off as unregistered migrants in the city than as underemployed residents of the countryside.²³ Li Zhang takes a more moderate view, suggesting that the late socialist government-dominated market economy of reform-era China has created a distinct definition of "urban citizenship" that entails guaranteed subsidized housing, health care, and free education for the children of urban residents, while rural residents occupy a parallel sphere of citizenship, a situation which has the potential to create a "separate and unequal" state of affairs.²⁴

China's migrant population is well-studied from a macro-perspective; both Chinese and foreign scholars have documented and described the broad patterns of labor migration that began during the reform period. This thesis will attempt to use that framework to analyze the

²² Solinger, Contesting Citizenship in Urban China 36.

²³ Ibid, 280.

²⁴ Li Zhang 313.

legal and social status of migrants at the municipal level, specifically Shanghai and Suzhou because of the role they play in the changing landscape of labor migration in China. As a direct-controlled municipality, Shanghai has a higher degree of autonomy with regards to public policy than most Chinese cities.²⁵ Suzhou, located in southern Jiangsu province, benefits economically from its proximity to Shanghai (about a 30 minute train ride) but lacks its political autonomy. Moreover, both of these cities have been the destination for the second wave of domestic migration that began in the late 1990s. This second wave of migration has been driven more by the expansion of the service economy than by the construction and manufacturing sectors which fueled much of the migration that began in the 1980s. As a result, Shanghai and Suzhou have not had to conform to the demographic or political model set by earlier migration to Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and other cities along China's southern coast.

As China's largest and arguably most globalized city, Shanghai is a magnet for labor migration and its public policies are considered the more progressive of China's major cities.²⁶ Shanghai's status as an economic powerhouse has made it an influential leader in political and economic changes. Moreover, as a direct-controlled municipality like Beijing, Shanghai has more flexibility and autonomy in terms of setting public policy. Suzhou provides an interesting comparison to Shanghai; as a comparatively wealthy prefecture-level city, Suzhou has benefitted both from its proximity to the coast and its close ties to Shanghai.²⁷ Given the differences in both economic structure and political status between these two cities, it is likely

²⁵ China's four direct-controlled municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Chongqing) are independent of China's provinces and are governed solely by the central government. As a result, they have more autonomy than other cities under provincial governance.

²⁶ Jeffrey N Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments*, (New York) Routledge, 2009, 108.

²⁷ Yehua Dennis Wei and C. Cindy Fan, "Regional Inequality in China: A Case Study of Jiangsu Province," *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 52, No. 3, (2000), 458.

that significant policy differences exist in these two cities. Both of these cities have significant populations of migrant residents. At the time of the 2000 census, Shanghai had over 3 million non-native residents, or nearly 20 percent of the city's total population; Suzhou had 1.5 million non-native residents, or approximately 15 percent of the total population.²⁸ Though these figures represent a large proportion of the population of Shanghai and Suzhou, most of China's cities that are popular destinations for migrant workers have encountered a shortage of migrant labor in the past few years.²⁹

Methodology, Data, and Preliminary Hypotheses

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to determine to what extent rural migrants in Shanghai and Suzhou have been able to obtain a meaningful degree of citizenship. Scholars suggest that the situation of rural peasants and migrant workers in particular has improved since the beginning of the reform period, but until they gain a status equal to that of their urban compatriots, the degree to which they can be called citizens must be qualified. Writing in the 1990s, Dorothy Solinger described rural peasants and migrant workers as essentially "non-citizens" because of the restrictive *hukou* system and institutional biases, but noted that their situation was improving. Building on Solinger's work, Li Zhang concedes that the situation of migrant workers has improved, but also suggests that China's rural and urban residents still exist in distinct spheres of citizenship. Based on a general reading of the current literature, particularly Li Zhang's suggestion that the status of rural-to-urban migrants has improved since

²⁸ National Statistics Bureau of China, *County-Level Data Analysis from the Fifth Census (2000)*, 20 September 2010, <<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/renkoupuocha/2000fenxian/fenxian.htm>>.

²⁹ Deng Fengtian, "The Primary Reason of the Migrant Worker Shortage is the Delay in 'Urbanizing' Migrant Workers [Minggonghuang Shenceng Yuanyin Shi Nongmingong Shiminhua Zhihou]," *www.ifeng.com*, March 22, 2011 <<http://finance.ifeng.com/opinion/fzhl/20110322/3722141.shtml>>.

the publication of Dorothy Solinger's work, the logical hypothesis for the overarching question surrounding the nature of rural-to-urban citizenship is that members of the "floating population" in Shanghai and Suzhou have come closer to attaining a more complete citizenship.

This thesis will use the above definition of citizenship as a model for evaluating questions regarding the public policies of Shanghai and Suzhou. First, it will attempt to provide a qualitative analysis of the relevant laws and regulations of Shanghai and Suzhou. Do rural migrants in these cities have, at least in theory, any legal rights to basic social services? Chapter three relies on primary source texts of these laws and regulations as well as secondary source accounts and scholarly research on them. This chapter will also consider the degree to which non-governmental organizations have influenced public policy. These sources suggest that there have been modest attempts to include legal migrants into broader urban society since the middle of the 1990s; however, the scope of these laws is relatively narrow.

Chapter four examines how well policies affecting migrant workers are enforced, especially in terms of access to education. After determining the legal rights of both unregistered and registered migrants in this respect, this chapter will discuss to what extent equal access by migrant children to education is protected. This portion of the thesis will consider the ability of migrant children to enroll in school, the existence of "migrant only" schools, and the general quality of migrant child education.

Chapter five examines current debates surrounding the rights and status of migrant workers in Shanghai and Suzhou. This analysis provides some understanding of how the situation for migrant workers has changed since the publication of Solinger's and Li's work. This

analysis will provide an indication of how the citizenship status of migrant workers has progressed along the course that is suggested in Li's work. It also considers the particular impact of the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai on the public perception of migrants. Data for this analysis will come from the aforementioned sources as well as Chinese newspapers and other media.

If citizenship can be understood as a linear progression from total lack of citizenship to full citizenship rather than in, black and white terms, then the data will show that migrant workers in these two cities have moved towards "total citizenship" along this linear progression. Moreover, the strong economic relationship between these two cities suggests that public policy changes in Shanghai may have a spill-over effect in neighboring cities such as Suzhou. However, the significant differences that exist between Shanghai and Suzhou suggest that their respective treatment of migrant workers may have noticeable differences. Given the relative autonomy of Shanghai and its international exposure, Shanghai has more favorable policies regarding migrant workers. Support for this hypothesis would suggest that an improved situation for rural migrants in these cities may be indicative of a broader policy change in China that will erode the distinction between rural and urban citizens.

Chapter II: The Hukou System and China's Rural-Urban Divide

"This is the first time I've ever heard the term 'urbanized peasant.' There're a lot of urbanized peasants out there who are a lot richer than I am. But there are also quite a number of people worse off than I am. Since they're totally unskilled there's nothing anybody can do to help them."
-Zhang Baojian³⁰

Though both the nature and implementation of China's *hukou* system are well understood, there have been different explanations of the origin of the rural-urban division of citizenship and its consequences. Population registration has been a part of Chinese governance for millennia. Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, among others, point to the influence of the *baojia* system of mutual surveillance that was widespread in imperial China. They also acknowledge the impact of the population control systems developed during China's civil war in the 1940s and the inspiration that came from the Soviet Union's passbook system.³¹ Scholars also agree on the role that *hukou* restrictions played in Mao Zedong's China. Li Zhang notes that the rigid divide between urban and rural citizenship was necessary for China's centrally planned economy, and Dorothy Solinger contends that the system was originally enacted because of a Marxist aversion towards urbanization.³² This chapter will consider these arguments and the effect that population registration has had on the diverging statuses of rural and urban citizenship.

³⁰ Zhang Xinxin 110.

³¹ Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The Origins and Social Consequences of China's Hukou System," *The China Quarterly*, No. 139, (Sep. 1994): 645. Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (1999), 30-33.

³² Li Zhang 312. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China* 34.

The *Hukou* System of Population Registration

Internal migration during the initial years after the 1949 revolution was relatively unrestricted, and the Great Leap Forward industrialization campaign from 1959-60 resulted in the forced migration of nearly 20 million peasants to China's cities. However, by the end of the 1950s the Chinese government reversed the direction of rural-urban migration by deporting more than 50 million people back to the countryside and standardizing enforcement of the *hukou* system. From 1960 until the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the 1978 rural-urban migration was extremely limited.³³ The political restrictions on internal movement, which resulted in one of the lowest periods of net internal migration in modern Chinese history, stemmed from a desire to promote social stability—controlling rural to urban migration was viewed as a “public order issue.”³⁴ By the end of the 1970s, only 16 percent of China's population held a “non-agricultural” *hukou* and all the social benefits that entailed.³⁵ Though the *hukou* system remained in force during Deng Xiaoping's “reform and opening up” period, new free markets for food in the city allowed rural migrants to find jobs and buy food on the open market, even if they retained their rural *hukou*. This new freedom, combined with labor shortages in urban China, led to the beginning of the largest migration in modern history.

In 1979, the central government of China enacted a series of economic reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy by adopting market-based economic policy. The most immediate consequence for China's peasants came with the dismantling of communes. The return to family-based agriculture created an overwhelmingly large surplus of labor in the countryside.

³³ Mackenzie, Peter W., “Strangers in the City: The Hukou and Urban Citizenship in China,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 1, (2002) 307.

³⁴ Mallee 84.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 86.

Based on the amount of arable land in China, improvements in agricultural technology, and rural population growth, Cheng Li calculated in 1996 that this labor surplus was around two hundred million people. The agricultural sector in China has been unable to accommodate this surplus in labor, and, consequently, market forces have pushed many of these rural residents into China's cities.³⁶ For much of the 1980s and 1990s, rural workers were able to migrate to cities, but they retained their official identity as rural citizens. Throughout the early years of the reform period, the pull of market forces led migrant workers to newly-created Special Economic Zones in southeastern China, namely Shenzhen. In recent years migration flows have shifted towards Shanghai and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces.

Even as migrants found better-paying jobs in cities, the economic and political conditions they found there relegated them to a "second-class" citizenship. In the late 1980s and early 1990s most registered urbanites were sending their children to school and had stable housing. At the same time, just forty percent of migrant children were enrolled in school and more than half of all migrants lived in dormitories or shelters. Migrants were also barred from most public health programs, which exacerbated negative perceptions held by urban residents. Many cities also restricted migrants to jobs in low-skill sectors, preventing social mobility. All of these obstacles reinforced migrants' status as second-class citizens during the early years of the reform era.³⁷ The economic changes that took place during the 1980s and 1990s also had a limiting effect on migrant workers' ability to improve their social status. For much of this era, the labor surplus in the countryside was far greater than the immediate need for labor in

³⁶Li Cheng, "Surplus Rural Laborers and Internal Migration in China." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 11, (1996), 1129.

³⁷ Mackenzie 312.

China's cities, leaving prospective migrant workers with little leverage to demand better working conditions or living standards.³⁸

Despite similar interpretations of the *hukou* system's origins, scholars disagree on what were the most important antecedents to the modern *hukou* system and the causes of the current inequality between urban and rural citizenship. This portion of the thesis will discuss some of the major approaches to explaining the origin and impact of the rural-urban divide in China. One approach, advanced by Li, Cheng, and Selden, suggests that the origins of the modern *hukou* system lie in Chinese culture and modern ideologies. Another theory, advanced largely by Solinger as well as Børge Bakken and Cheng Li, places more emphasis on the role of the economy, particularly the role of market forces. A final approach, developed by Guangqing Xiong, suggests that the urban-rural divide is the product of active political exclusion on the part of the Chinese state and urban society. These three approaches can be viewed as rough approximations of the cultural, economic, and political influences that have affected the rural-urban divide in China.

The *hukou* system has changed with other economic reforms; though detailed policy varies from city to city, rural migrants can work and live in cities with fewer restrictions than in the past. Only government offices and other state-owned enterprises restrict employment based on a citizen's *hukou*.³⁹ However, the liberalization of China's internal migration policies has moved at a slower pace than broader economic reforms; there is little market incentive to extend social welfare programs to rural-to-urban labor migrants. The higher wages offered in urban labor markets serves as a powerful "pull" factor that attracts rural migrant workers;

³⁸ Ibid, 316.

³⁹ Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*, 115.

urban employers do not have to offer costly entitlements. This has aggravated inequality as urban residents belong to different social classes that are legally defined based on birthplace. Dorothy Solinger notes that although economic reforms allowed rural workers to move to cities, the institutional bias in favor of urban residents has remained, albeit at a more muted level than during the late 1980s. The goal of these initial reforms, Solinger claims, was not to fully enfranchise rural residents, but to untether them and convert them into a mobile source of labor.⁴⁰ Despite the persistent institutional bias against rural migrants, the migrant population in China continues to grow rapidly, and now represents a significant proportion of China's population. As these migration patterns move towards permanent, rather than seasonal, labor migration, there is likely to be an increased demand for reform to accommodate these new realities.

The Effects of Population Registration on the Rural-Urban Divide

The shifts in public policy and public opinion in favor of migrant workers are likely due to a combination of several factors: market forces, political change, and a broader social acceptance of rural migrants. This section describes the role that each of these three influences has had in the creation of China's rural-urban divide. Though none of these influences is capable of instigating change independently, they have successfully complemented each other and provide a theoretical understanding of these two competing notions of citizenship.

The Spatial-Ideological Argument

⁴⁰ Ibid, 45.

The notion that there is a relationship between spatiality and citizenship has been applied to many cities afflicted with social unrest. Class conflicts that occurred in Los Angeles and São Paulo are rooted in the same underlying sense of a spatially delineated citizenship that Li Zhang finds in China.⁴¹ With regards to the urban-rural citizenship divide in China, the argument from culture and ideology looks to the history of population registration in China and the anti-urban Maoist ideologies that have influenced modern China for an explanation for the current *hukou* system. Li argues that the culture of China's socialist period led to the solidification of the spatial politics that have endured in China. The *hukou* system has divided China into two distinct spheres of citizenship, the city and the countryside.⁴² It went beyond establishing a simple separation based on a sense of spatial identity; access to housing, food rations, medical care, and education, as well as the right to marry and join the army were tied to one's *hukou*. As a result, the *hukou*, and by extension one's birthplace, wholly defined the individual concept of citizenship. The stark difference between the generous services provided to urban residents and the weak social net extended to rural residents cemented this spatial understanding of citizenship.⁴³

The "explicit asymmetry" between rural and urban spheres of citizenship, Li contends, has been challenged by the changes in China's economy. With the end of collective agriculture, the state lost its justification for tethering rural citizens to state-owned land to work in state-owned industries. Following the death of Mao Zedong and the subsequent collapse of Mao-era ideology, the need to distinguish between the countryside and the city became less

⁴¹Li Zhang, 328.

⁴²Ibid , 314.

⁴³Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, 644.

compelling.⁴⁴ The emergence of a large floating population that exists outside of these conceptual barriers has eroded the need for spatial delineation. However, while China has moved away from its planned economy, the experience of the socialist past continues to affect current political discussions, particularly in social issues such as the spatial concept of urban-rural citizenship. China's planned economy created a class of urbanites who were reluctant to embrace a migrant class that threatened the privileges of urban residents.⁴⁵

The lasting legacy of these experiences and the *hukou* system was the creation of two separate "nations" within China, one urban and one rural. Thus, the continuing debate about the role of the *hukou* system focuses on the necessity of this spatial distinction in a nation with an increasingly mobile population. As rural citizens migrate to the city and unemployed urban citizens are cut off from the socialist-era social safety net, these migrants have begun to create a new system of citizenship that suits modern China.⁴⁶ The movement to a new concept of citizenship was met with resistance by the urban elite and municipal governments. The general perception among China's urban residents was that migrant workers are "stealing local residents' rice bowls," and several cities have restricted employment in certain sectors to registered urban residents. Li Zhang argues that these restrictions are the product of lingering cultural attachment to a strict system of population registration.⁴⁷ The spatial argument is particularly acute in China because the state remains the sole owner of land in China. Consequently, the state has control over who may access urban areas. The implication of this

⁴⁴ Ibid, 668.

⁴⁵ Li Zhang, 313.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 316.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 327.

cultural-ideological argument is that the changing nature of citizenship in urban China is closely tied to evolutions in culture that will lead to political reform at the national level.⁴⁸

The argument that either feudal or post-Revolution culture is the primary origin of the rural-urban divide in modern China is not a particularly compelling explanation for the continued second-class status of migrant workers in China's cities. Though China does have strong cultural traditions and a distinct rural identity, many of these cultural legacies have given way to political movements and economic change since the Communist Revolution in 1949. Economic changes in particular provide a clearer picture of how the status of China's rural residents and migrant workers has changed.

The Market Forces Argument

Though Dorothy Solinger and other scholars acknowledge the role of ideology and culture in defining China's *hukou* system, they view them as the products of broader market forces that have driven population movement. Beginning in the 1980s, market forces created a tiered system of citizenship with "true citizens" (urban residents) on the top and "noncitizens" (the poorest of migrant workers) on the bottom.⁴⁹ Market forces have created a system of "push and pull factors" that have transferred millions of surplus laborers from the countryside to the city. In many ways, these push and pull factors are manifestations of the unequal citizenships held by urban and rural residents. Income disparities, poor support for agriculture, and minimal access to social services have left rural residents dissatisfied with the countryside.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid, 329.

⁴⁹ Solinger, 279.

⁵⁰ Børge Bakken, *Migration in China*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press (1998), 12.

The push and pull factors of the market forces are closely tied to the evolution of China's surplus labor. China has a fifth of the world's population but only a fraction of the world's arable land. Moreover, the ever-increasing size of China's labor forces has created disincentives to use land efficiently or sustainably. These conditions have created a labor surplus of nearly 200 million people.⁵¹ The growing income gap in China has created a pull factor that draws these surplus laborers out of the countryside; regardless of discrimination or unfair labor practices migrants may face in the city, they are still benefitting economically from the higher wages offered in urban areas.⁵² Though the state has attempted to alleviate the problem of surplus labor in rural China by encouraging the growth of township-village enterprises (TVEs), Li shows that the jobs created by TVEs,⁵³ which peaked at nearly 60 million between 1978 and 1986, cannot compensate for the growing size of China's rural labor surplus.⁵⁴ The movement of surplus labor in China is controlled by blind market forces largely outside of state control.

The pressing question for Solinger is how a fledgling market economy will affect an emerging concept of equal citizenship. China's market reforms have diminished the state's ability to define citizenship with differing levels of social services and opportunities; a new concept of citizenship will emerge from the "logic of the market." The market, at least in the early stages of reform, has been a poor means of providing the rights of migrant workers; in the equations of market capitalism, migrants are human capital filling labor vacancies in urban

⁵¹ Cheng Li, *Rediscovering China: Dynamics and Dilemmas of Reform*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers (1997), 114.

⁵² *Ibid*, 118.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 124.

⁵⁴ Mackenzie 308.

areas.⁵⁵ The possibility of a fairer citizenship determined by market forces is less reliable than the political and cultural evolution suggested by the spatial-ideological argument. Solinger argues that market capitalization may impede the progression towards full citizenship because it is leading to the dismantling of the welfare state enjoyed by China's urban residents. Urban residents have, in the past, channeled their fear of economic changes into discrimination against migrant workers.⁵⁶

Solinger is not as optimistic about either the direction political changes have taken with regards to migrants' rights or the ability of migrant workers to be agents of change. With the gradual dismantling of state-owned enterprises, urban employers, with the support of the government bureaucracies, have discovered in the countryside a readily available source of labor that is not entitled to the costly welfare provisions enjoyed by urban citizens. This problem has been accentuated by the prominence of foreign investors in China's new economy. As investors and low-level officials collude to attract business to the local economy, there is no system in place to protect the well-being of migrant workers.⁵⁷

The push-and-pull factors of the market forces argument provide a logical explanation for the onset of migration in China. Liberalization of the Chinese economy created simultaneous labor shortages in the city and labor surpluses in the countryside; rural-to-urban migration was essentially inevitable. The key advantage of this explanation is that it provides a means for comparing the leverage of different waves of migrants. As the demands of the Chinese economy become more specialized and the "pull" factors change to meet these expectations,

⁵⁵ Bakken 13.

⁵⁶ Dorothy Solinger, 278.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 280.

urban economies have become more dependent on migrants, who in turn should have more power to make demands of their employers and the local government. However, the government may be slow to act and concerns about political exclusion by urban elites remain an issue.

The Political Exclusion Argument

Guangqing Xiong, a sociologist at People's University (*Renmin Daxue*), suggests a third explanation for the perilous situation of migrant workers' citizenship in modern China. Though Xiong acknowledges the role of market forces and Chinese culture in creating discriminatory attitudes towards the floating population, he suggests that the disparity in the citizenship rights of registered urbanites and migrant workers is the product of active political exclusion on the part of the Chinese state and Chinese urban society. This political exclusion entails restrictions on membership in political organizations and a general lack of representation at the municipal government level. The effects of this exclusion are apparent in all aspects of migrant life. In economic terms, migrant workers invariably hold undesirable and low-paying jobs that often come with poor working conditions. These jobs also lack any sort of long-term stability and worker protection because of migrants' exclusion from state-run trade unions.⁵⁸

The floating population also faces significant challenges in obtaining social services and social acceptance. With respect to public health, Xiong notes that maternal mortality rates in Beijing are nearly three times higher for migrant workers than for registered citizens, and the ten year infection rate for malaria is nearly sixty percent for the floating population of

⁵⁸ Guangqing Xiong, *Zhongguo Liudong Renkou Zhongde Zhengzhi Paichi Wenti Yanjiu* [Research on Questions Concerning Political Exclusion within China's Floating Population], Beijing: Renmin Daxue Chubanshe (2008), 76.

Shenzhen.⁵⁹ Migrant workers also face challenges with social exclusion. Xiong notes that the social circles of migrant workers essentially consist of immediate family and friends from the countryside. Moreover, a majority of registered urbanites in Xiong's study had negative views of migrant workers, attributing increases in both crime and public health problems to their presence. As a result, migrant workers are deprived of many of the informal advantages that come with belonging to society, such as word-of-mouth communication of various social programs and an increased sense of social security.⁶⁰ The children of migrant workers also suffer from their parents' social status; Xiong found that nearly half of children aged 6 and under had yet to enter school, and nearly 10 percent of migrant children had not completed any compulsory schooling.⁶¹

Xiong places the greatest emphasis on the nature and impact of political exclusion among China's migrant populations. To measure political exclusion, Xiong compares the participation in political organizations, social organizations, labor unions, local elections and other organizations of civil society for both registered residents and migrant workers. Overall, Xiong found that registered urbanites were twice as politically involved as members of the floating population. Significantly, Xiong found no difference between the political participation rates of recently-arrived and established migrants; length of time in the city does not lead to increased political inclusion.⁶² These results are significant because they suggest that China's migrant workers are excluded from both civil and political society in China. Thus, their ability to bring about social change is dependent on concurrent developments in public policy.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 83.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 84.

⁶¹ Ibid, 80.

⁶² Ibid, 114.

Xiong notes several causes of this political exclusion. First, he argues that China's social structure has developed at a slower pace than its economy—despite China's economic modernizations, there is still a strong social divide between urban and rural residents. As evidence he cites the difference in social programs that have been provided to China's urban and rural populations. While the urban population had enjoyed institutional support in terms of employment, material provisions, social welfare, and other subsidies, the rural population has largely been left to fend for itself in these areas.⁶³ The relative hesitancy of political organizations and officially-sanctioned social groups to include migrant workers and rural citizens has also contributed to this form of political exclusion.⁶⁴ Xiong also argues that political exclusion has been magnified by increased social stratification in China's cities. He notes that the difference in the relative value of agricultural products compared with industrial products has increased almost by a factor of 150 in favor of industrial products; the urban-rural income gap has also grown accordingly.⁶⁵ The result is that there is a large segment of the urban population that the state has neither attempted to protect from market forces nor to incorporate into broader society. This political exclusion has imperiled the migrant population's ability to attain a meaningful degree of citizenship.

Conclusion

There is significant overlap among these three views on the origin and consequences of the rural-urban divide in China and its impact on citizenship. All of them acknowledge the role of changing market forces in China and the failure of the Chinese state and society to react

⁶³ Ibid, 119.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 126.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 137.

accordingly. However, the different aggravating causes suggested by these theories suggest three different understandings of how the rural-urban divide in citizenship may be resolved. If China must address the weight of culture and changing ideology, then both the state and the economy must adapt to satisfy these cultural obstacles. If the current state of affairs is the product of market forces, then migrant workers must continue integrating themselves into the urban economy and hope that market pressure improves the situation of these migrant workers. If migrants are the victims of active exclusion on the part of the state and society, then either the state must voluntarily enforce social change or migrant workers must forcefully demand it. Analyzing the relationship between public policy, the enforcement of public policy, and the popular debate about the direction of public policy will provide a clearer understanding of the trajectory of the evolution of urban citizenship in China.

Chapter III: The Policies of Shanghai and Suzhou

“What’s the matter with being rich? I made my money with my own hands thanks to the government’s policy. The thing is, though, if you’ve got the skills but there’s no policy to protect you, they’ll attack you sooner or later for being a member of the ‘new bourgeoisie.’”

-Zhang Baojian⁶⁶

This chapter addresses the policies in place in Shanghai and Suzhou that affect migrants in these cities. It begins with a discussion of the *hukou* system established by the Chinese central government in the late 1950s, which has remained largely unchanged by the central government since then. It will then describe the municipal policies of Shanghai and Suzhou. After elaborating on how these policies are regulated and enforced at the city level, this chapter looks specifically at how municipal policy deals with education for non-*hukou* holding children and enrollment in other social services.

These policies have improved the legal status of migrant workers, however, the poor enforcement or unobtainable prerequisites attached to these policies limit the scope of their influence. Conservative estimates suggest that at least one fifth of Shanghai’s population (four million people) and one third of Suzhou’s population (two million people) are people with non-local *hukou* status. The migrant population of Shanghai now represents nearly a fourth of China’s rural-to-urban migrants, and Shanghai is now the second most popular destination for migrants after Guangdong Province. Despite Shanghai and neighboring Suzhou’s status as a hub

⁶⁶Zhang Baojian, as a first generation migrant during the late 1980s, represents the views and challenges faced by migrants in the early years of the reform period. From: Zhang Xinxin, *Chinese Profiles*, 109.

for migrant labor, most migrant workers (nearly 90 percent) are “unregistered” to some degree.⁶⁷

General Stipulations of the *Hukou* System

In 1958, the Chinese Government issued the *Regulations of Population Household Registration for the People’s Republic of China (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Hukou Dengji Tiaoli)*, a document that laid out in broad terms the structure of population registration in China. Though the terms of this document are still in force today, they leave ample room for interpretation at the local level. Originally, China’s *hukou* system created a highly fragmented society. The Public Security Bureau (PSB) in each municipality was responsible for issuing *hukou* passbooks to residents under their jurisdictions, while the local governing committees of towns and villages had similar responsibilities in the countryside. Moreover, the various cooperatives were responsible for issuing passbooks that were both industry and region specific.⁶⁸

Local governments have broad discretion in how to apply the basic stipulations of the 1958 document. The law places significant restrictions on domestic travel; any personal travel longer than three days in the city or ten days in the countryside requires registration with relevant authorities, and stays of over three months require more formal immigration procedures. In general, changing one’s permanent *hukou* requires exceptional circumstances, such as marriage, divorce, or other major family events. Permanently moving to the city

⁶⁷ Roulleau-Berger, Laurence, and Shi Lu, "Migrant Workers in Shanghai: Inequality, Economic Enclaves, and the Various Routes to Employment," *China Perspective*, Vol. 58, (2005) 9.

⁶⁸ Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, "Regulations of Population Household Registration for the People’s Republic of China [Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Hukou Dengji Tiaoli]," (Beijing) 1958, 1.

requires permission from one of three agencies: the municipal department of labor, the municipal *hukou* registration agency, or a university in the city. It is these organizations that have had the most flexibility in extending the benefits of urban citizenship to China's migrant workers.⁶⁹

Municipal Policies of Shanghai

Beginning in the late 1980s, the Public Security Bureau of Shanghai recognized two types of legal resident: those who hold Shanghai *hukous* and those who hold residence permits (*juzhuzheng*). The PSB issues residence permits which serve as the official identification for legal migrants. Access to social services, such as education, health care services, and social security, also depends on obtaining one of these permits.⁷⁰ In general, there are three avenues by which migrant workers can apply for a residence permit: proof of stable employment, invitation by a university or employer, or the invitation of a family member. There are no explicit criteria for granting or denying a residence permit, but in theory, anyone who can provide documentation reflecting one of the above criteria will be granted a permit.

Formally changing one's permanent *hukou* is a more difficult and complex process than simply obtaining a temporary residence permit. Only residence permit holders can apply for a Shanghai *hukou*, and the relevant policies for obtaining one are determined by the city government of Shanghai, not the Public Security Bureau. These procedures echo the aforementioned guidelines established by the central government, under which a formal

⁶⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁷⁰ The People's Government of Shanghai, *Shanghai Municipal Residence Permit Regulations*, Shanghai: Shanghai Public Security Bureau (2005), 1.

change in *hukou* is usually reserved for exceptional circumstances. Despite the difficulty in obtaining a permanent *hukou*, residence permit holders do enjoy some benefits in terms of obtaining education for their children and enrolling in other social services.

Education

One of the stipulations of a residence permit is that the children of permit holders may apply to enroll in local schools to receive their compulsory education (elementary and middle school).⁷¹ In general, the children of permit holders are able to enroll provided their parents can show proof of residence, their national identity card, and proof of enrollment in some form of social insurance. Restrictions in terms of school enrollment are tied to these residence permits; parents can only enroll their children in schools in the district where they are registered, and can only apply for compulsory education during the period during which their residence permits are valid. The children of these legal residents are also, at least in theory, guaranteed the same level of treatment accorded to native-born residents of Shanghai. However, parallel schools for the children of migrant workers are also allowed to operate legally, with no guarantee of the same standard of education.⁷² Municipal policy also limits access to education to compulsory education, that is, elementary and middle school. Children of residence permit holders are guaranteed neither a place in high school, nor the right to apply to universities as Shanghai residents. Applying as a non-Shanghai resident increases the

⁷¹ Ibid, 2.

⁷² Shanghai Standing Committee on Education [Shanghaishi Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui], *Five Changes Brought About by the Procedures Implemented by Shanghai to Help the Children of Migrant Workers Receive Compulsory Education* [Shanghaishi Shishi Jinchengwu Gongrenyuan Suiqian Zinv Yiwujiaoyu Sannian Xingdong Jihua Dailai Wuda Bianhua], Shanghai: Shanghai Committee on Education (2010) 1.

standards required for admission to a Shanghai university, creating a distinct disadvantage for migrant children in the city.⁷³

Health, Social Services, and Additional Services

Holders of residence permits and their children also have access to a package of health services shared by native-born Shanghai residences. Permit holders can take advantage of preventative health care, vaccines, and similar health services that are provided free of charge. They are also entitled to basic family planning services as directed by the central government. However, non-preventative health insurance is not offered on a universal scale; it is provided by some government employers and work units, but there are no provisions guaranteeing such care to non-*hukou* holders. Resident permit holders are entitled to the same (non-medical) comprehensive insurance and social insurance programs that are established for native-born Shanghai residents. Additionally, permit holders have access to other miscellaneous services such as drivers' licenses, various job training programs, the right to file patents, and the right to participate in "model worker" competitions.⁷⁴

Employment

With the exception of the aforementioned job training programs and similar benefits, residence policies in Shanghai say relatively little about the right to employment. Rather,

⁷³ Shanghai Committee on Education [Shanghaishi Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui], *Regulations on the Enrollment of the Children of Residence Permit Holders in Shanghai Schools* [Chiyou <Shanghaishi Linshi Juzhuzheng> Renyuan Zinv Ruxue Guiding], Shanghai: Shanghai Committee on Education (2010), 1.

⁷⁴ The People's Government of Shanghai, *Shanghai Municipal Residence Permit Regulations*, 3.

Shanghai makes obtaining a residence permit dependent on first having stable employment from a Shanghai-based employer.⁷⁵ This harkens back to the *hukou* system for the 1950s when one's work unit (*danwei*) or cooperative was responsible for monitoring and restricting population movement.

Municipal Policies of Suzhou

As a prefecture level city in Jiangsu Province, Suzhou exists in a different political climate than Shanghai. Though it benefits economically from its proximity to Shanghai, it is still under the immediate jurisdiction of the provincial government of Jiangsu, in addition to the central government. Thus, the framework in which Suzhou may determine *hukou* and other population registration policies is beyond the control of the municipal government.

Similar to Shanghai, local governments throughout Jiangsu province grant temporary residence permits (*zanzhuzheng*) to nonresidents of Jiangsu who immigrate to the province. The local Public Security Bureau is responsible for issuing these permits.⁷⁶ These permits serve as the primary official identification of temporary residents in Jiangsu, and are valid for only one year. The regulations outlined by the provincial government give the Public Security Bureaus broad discretion in determining eligibility for residence permits, as well as in establishing measures to verify compliance with provincial and national laws.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁷⁶ Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Jiangsu Province, *Temporary Resident Management Regulations of Jiangsu Province [Jiangsusheng Zanzhu Renkou Guanli Tiaoli]*, Nanjing (2003) 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 2.

The city of Suzhou, building on the regulations issued by both the central and provincial governments, has established regulations on the issue of relevant resident permits to non-Suzhou *hukou* holders. The day-to-day work involved is delegated to local Public Security Bureaus, to whom temporary residents must report within three days of arrival to Suzhou. Temporary residents who will stay in Suzhou longer than one month must be issued a temporary residence permit to reside legally in Suzhou.⁷⁸ Applicants for a temporary residence permit must be sponsored by either a relative with a Suzhou *hukou*, an employer based in Suzhou, or by the landlord of a rented house or apartment.⁷⁹ As in Shanghai, the temporary residence permit serves as a gateway to education and other public services.

Education

The children of non-Suzhou *hukou* holders have rights similar to their compatriots in Shanghai. Those with an official residence permits are guaranteed some form of compulsory education. However, in some cases these children may be assigned to “migrant children” schools that exist in the same “separate but equal system” that is reported to exist in Shanghai. Enrollment in primary and middle schools is tied to possession of a valid temporary residence permit, which must be renewed annually.⁸⁰ The city of Suzhou has made a concentrated effort to guarantee that all children residing in Suzhou, regardless of *hukou* or residence permit status,

⁷⁸ The People's Government of Suzhou, *Foreign Population Management Regulations of the City of Suzhou [Suzhoushi Wailai Renkou Guanli Guiding]*, Suzhou: The People's Government of Suzhou (1995) 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁸⁰ Suzhou Department of Education, *Report Regarding the Equal Treatment of Local Resident and Non-local Worker Children in Schools [Guanyu Wailai Renyuan Zinü he Bendi Jumin Zinü Xiangshou Tongdeng Daiyu Baogao]*, Suzhou: Suzhou Department of Education (2010) 1.

receive the same quality of education.⁸¹ The effectiveness of these efforts will be considered in the next chapter.

Health, Social Services, and Additional Services

In general, residence permit holders are extended access to the same social insurance and preventative health care programs that *hukou* holders are offered. As in Shanghai, these health care provisions are limited to basic, preventative health care. The only health care program specifically named by the provincial government of Suzhou is mandatory enrollment in family planning programs; evidence of participation with the local family planning officials is required for all female temporary residents over the age of sixteen in order to guarantee compliance with the one-child policy.⁸² The government of Suzhou also extends various forms of non-medical social insurance to non-residents, regardless of their legal status. This insurance includes elderly care, unemployment, work-related injury and other types of coverage.⁸³

Employment

As in Shanghai, employment is more a prerequisite to obtaining legal residence in Suzhou than it is a perk of holding one. For those not attending a university in Suzhou or with relatives with Suzhou *hukous*, an invitation from a stable, local employer is the only way to

⁸¹ Ibid, 2.

⁸² Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Jiangsu Province, *Temporary Resident Management Regulations of Jiangsu Province 2*.

⁸³ The People's Government of Jiangsu, *Suzhou Migrant Worker Enrollment in Insurance Exceeds One Million; Demonstrates that Social Insurance Can Spread Without Limits [Suzhou Mingong Canbao Chao 100 Wan Ren, Shixian Shebao Zhuanyi Wuzhangai]*, Suzhou: The People's Government of Jiangsu (2009) 1.

obtain a residence permit.⁸⁴ However, the city of Suzhou does not require that employers make these invitations. As in Shanghai, the city of Suzhou offers expansive employment training to both official and unofficial temporary residents. The training, which offers basic technological and office skills, is provided free of charge to any migrant worker with stable employment.⁸⁵

Analysis

For the most part, migrants lucky enough to obtain residence permits in Shanghai are granted access to the social services that their native-born Shanghai compatriots enjoy. They can enroll their children in local schools, take advantage of preventative health programs, and enroll in various job training programs. However, there are notable omissions and gray areas in the residence permit policy. Residence permit holders are also excluded from most manifestations of political society, as well as labor unions or similar organizations. Residence permits serve as a gateway to these public services, but legal migrant workers remain identified as permanent residents of wherever they have a permanent *hukou*. Additionally, while those with residence permits have, in theory, access to the same services as native-born residents of Shanghai, there is a danger of a “separate but equal” or “separate and unequal” system of services, as demonstrated by the existence of migrant-children schools. The system of migrant education, which serves between a third and half of migrant children in Suzhou and Shanghai, will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁸⁴ The People's Government of Suzhou, *Foreign Population Management Regulations of the City of Suzhou*, 2.

⁸⁵ The Peoples Government of Jiangsu, *Suzhou Provides Free Employment Training to Extra-provincial Workers*, Suzhou: The People's Government of Jiangsu (2010) 1.

The rights contained in these policies are only granted to holders of official residence permits who meet some ill-defined criteria. The burden created by these stipulations undercuts the optimistic view presented by the text of these laws as it is likely that many members of Shanghai's floating population, namely those in labor intensive jobs or other low-skill sectors of society, remain essentially "undocumented." Not only are these individuals denied most of the public services afforded to residence permit holders, they are also more excluded from political society than residence permit holders. During the 1990s, nearly two-thirds of working migrants held temporary residence permits, though many of their dependents remained undocumented. In addition, barely one third of migrant workers were registered with their place of work.

The situation for migrants in Suzhou is largely similar to that of those in Shanghai; they can obtain temporary residence permits with the proper invitation and access a basic set of social services. However, the policies of Suzhou exhibit the same shortcomings of those found in Shanghai. There is significant ambiguity about how permits are granted and how the local PSB determines compliance with these policies. The government of Suzhou makes no effort to ensure that all migrants to the city become legal migrants; despite the existence of outreach programs intended for these "undocumented" workers, there is still a significant difference between the treatment of residence permit holders and other migrants. Moreover, Suzhou runs the risk of having the same "separate and unequal" system of social services.

The policies of both Shanghai and Suzhou regarding temporary residents and other migrants use grandiose language to declare support for the rights of migrant citizens, the

continuation of economic development, and insuring equality. The governing documents for temporary resident registration in both Shanghai and Suzhou speak at length about the need to preserve the rights of all citizens, continue the development of the economy, and building socialism. Moreover, the primary documents outlining the general structure of migration policies in both these cities stress the need for social stability or individual concerns. References to “strengthening the advanced of socialism” and “establishing a harmonious society” are not uncommon; rhetoric concerning individual welfare or social equality are absent. There has been, however, movement in Shanghai and Suzhou away from “temporary residence permits” (*zanzhuzheng*) in favor of more permissive residence permits (*juzhuzheng*).⁸⁶

Ultimately, there is a clear disconnect between policy formation at the level of the central government and policy implementation at the local level. Part of this disconnect is due to larger problems with the rule of law in China. Francis Fukuyama looks beyond the history of population registration in China and suggests that broader aspects of Chinese culture have an impact on the rule of law, and by extension, the enforcement of laws meant to protect and advance the rights of migrant workers and registered rural residents. Fukuyama traces the origins of China’s legal systems to edicts from emperors who “recognize no authority higher than” themselves. This cultural history of positivist legal systems, as opposed to the codified and religious-based legal systems found in the West, has created a legal culture where the

⁸⁶ Cao Tianxiao, "Suzhou Residence Permit System Undergoes Complete Implementation in One Quarter [Suzhou Juzhuzheng Zhidu Yi Jidu Qiquanmian Shishi]," 24 January 2011, [Suzhou News Net](http://www.subaonet.com/html/livelihood/2011124/C1JFI9B5BI09J3B.html), 25 February 2011 <<http://www.subaonet.com/html/livelihood/2011124/C1JFI9B5BI09J3B.html>>.

government of China controls the constitution, rather than the other way around.⁸⁷

Consequently, any laws meant to protect the rights of migrant workers that propose significant legal changes in China face cultural barriers to their enforcement. Given the historic difficulty of integrating migrant workers into urban society, policies that relate to migrant issues are likely to have similar issues regarding implementation. Non-governmental organizations have been able to alleviate some of the problems created by poor enforcement by working within the rigid system that governments them. However, the ability of NGOs to influence public policy is limited. Subsequent chapters will elaborate on the difference between policy and practice in urban China by discussing the quality of migrant children education. The measurements will provide a clearer picture of how well the municipal governments of Shanghai and Suzhou are implementing these policies.

⁸⁷ Fukuyama, 36.

Chapter IV: Migrant Education in Shanghai and Suzhou

"On the other hand, with a good policy and no skills, there's no way you're going to make it through either. What good is a person with no skills? Even if the government forced you to get rich, you'd never make it."

-Zhang Baojian⁸⁸

In December 2010, the city of Shanghai made headlines when its students scored, by a significant margin, the highest scores in the world on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam in each of the test's three sections (science, reading and math). Shanghai's achievement was undercut by the glaring omission of the rest of mainland China—while Hong Kong and Macau participated and performed well, no other city or region publicly participated in the PISA examination. Critics were quick to note that Shanghai's performance is not indicative of China as a whole, or even of all of Shanghai's students.⁸⁹ This implied disparity between education in Shanghai and the rest of China was dramatized by director Zhang Yimou in his popular 1999 film *Not One Less* (*Yige Dou Buneng Shao*). The film portrays the deplorable rural school conditions that push many children to urban areas to find work, as well as the urban elites' combination of curious sympathy towards and emotional distance from the plight of rural students. The disparity between these two classes of education is not confined by physical location—as migrants have moved to urban China with their children, many have found that they are not welcome in city public schools and have been forced to enroll their children in low-quality private schools established specifically for migrant children. This chapter

⁸⁸ Zhang Xinxin 109.

⁸⁹ Dillon, Sam, "Top Test Scores From Shanghai Stun Educators," 7 December 2010, [nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/07/education/07education.html). 14 February 2011 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/07/education/07education.html>> 1.

will address these parallel systems of education and the attempts to promote education integration and equality in Shanghai and Suzhou.

The Legal Status and Basic Conditions of “Unregistered Household” Schools

The right to education is enshrined in the constitution of China, and this right is not restricted to those residing within the area listed on their *hukou*. The *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* states that children ideally should attend schools where they are registered residents, but this document was amended in 2006 to reflect the needs of an ever-growing migrant population. Now local governments are mandated to provide education to school-aged children, even if they have a non-local *hukou*. Moreover, the law compels local governments to guarantee some measure of equality when providing education to migrant children. However, the law leaves the specific regulations to the discretion of local governments, and urban governments throughout the country have experimented with different approaches to incorporating migrant children.⁹⁰

These experiments are essential because the onset of mass migration to urban China has presented a significant legal challenge to China’s education system and strains the provisions of the *Compulsory Education Law*. Public schools in most cities have been unwilling or unable to accommodate most migrant children, but all are guaranteed by the Chinese constitution nine years of compulsory education. Private schools have been established for migrant children in many cities to meet the excess demand for education, but these schools often provide substandard conditions, suffer from poor instruction, and lack necessary permits

⁹⁰ Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China. Beijing, 2006.

from the local government. Sociologist Huang Hui argues that attempting to enforce both the constitutional and legal principles that affect these schools creates a contradiction: the government is constitutionally obligated to provide education to children older than six, but fails to provide sufficient funding to the public school system. At the same time, many city governments have closed many private migrant schools for failing to meet municipal, provincial or national regulations. Huang argues that the only constitutionally acceptable solution is to either ignore regulations regarding private schools or to integrate these private schools into one system.⁹¹

The existence of migrant-only schools is widespread in China, and they invariably suffer from poorer conditions than public schools in the same city. These schools often serve migrants who have come from the same area and settled together in the same district.⁹² These schools generally fail to meet basic health and hygiene standards, and the quality of education suffers from lack of official oversight. Dormitories for teachers and boarding students at several migrant schools were reportedly essentially lean-to sheds constructed from corrugated plastic, and most rely on used vans to transport students. The official response to these schools has largely been condemnation; the earliest schools lacked virtually every permit and license required by law, and many of them were closed by city authorities. While migrant children's schools exist in both Shanghai and Suzhou, the government in both cities has made efforts in the past few years to provide a better solution to the integration of migrant children.

⁹¹Huang, Hui, "Are "Unregistered Household" Migrant Children's Schools Constitutional But Illegal? ["Heihu" Mingong Zidi Xuexiao "Hexian bu Hefa" ma?]", 15 September 2008, Chinese Civil Law Web, 12 February 2011 <<http://www.civillaw.com.cn/article/default.asp?id=40723>> 4.

⁹² Gong, Yu, "New Methods: Shanghai Migrant Children's Schools Have 3 Years to Become Official [Changshi Xinfanshi: Hu Mingongzidi Xuexiao Youwang 3 Nian Zhuangzheng]," 26 January 2007, China Youth Daily, 17 February 2011 <<http://news.qq.com/a/20070126/000916.htm>>.

Migrant Education in Shanghai

The number of school-aged migrant children in Shanghai has grown rapidly in the past decade. In 2001, more than 500 small, privately run schools served a student population of over 100,000 children. These schools generally suffered from the substandard conditions found in much of urban China's migrant school system—hygiene and health standards were below acceptable levels, teachers lacked formal training, and the basic facilities used by students and staff were rife with safety concerns. With the accelerating growth of Shanghai's migrant population, the municipal government has made significant efforts to reduce the inequality between these parallel systems of education and integrate migrant children into the city's public schools.⁹³

In 2006, the city of Shanghai began a program to allow privately-run migrant children schools to receive official approval in order to meet the new requirement of the *Compulsory Education Law*. Schools were given three years to meet the standards set by the government and apply for the requisite permits. The city also allowed migrant children whose parents successfully applied for a temporary residence permit to enroll in local public schools.⁹⁴ By 2007, almost 60 percent of Shanghai's nearly 400,000 migrant children were enrolled in public schools. Government reports suggest that this figure represents the limit of the current public

⁹³ China Youth Daily, "Investigation of the Closure of a Shanghai Migrant School [Shanghai Yi Mingong Zidi Xuexiao Bei Qudi Diaocha]," 15 January 2007, news.qq.com, 17 February 2011 <<http://news.qq.com/a/20070115/000231.htm>>.

⁹⁴ Shanghai Standing Committee on Education, "The Shanghai Standing Committee on Education's Concerns Regarding the Strengthening of Including Migrant Children in Regulated Schools Management Policies [Shanghaishi Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui Guanyu Jiaqiang Yi Zhaoshou Nongmingong Tongzhu Zinü Weizhu de Mingbanxiaoxue Guifan Guanli de Ruogan Yijian]," 27 January 2010, 17 February 2011 <http://code.fabao365.com/law_483890_2.html> 3.

school system to enroll migrant children; accommodating the remaining 40 percent would create an unsustainable financial burden on the city government. Allowing privately-run schools to receive official approval both relieves the financial pressure on Shanghai's government and provides an option to parents who cannot obtain temporary residence permits.⁹⁵

The government's experience with this plan has largely been successful. Students who leave private migrant-only schools and enroll in local public schools are charged a tuition fee, usually less than 300 RMB per year, equivalent to the fee they had been paying at the private school, lessening the financial burden presented by moving schools.⁹⁶ The quality of education that students at schools that have met official benchmarks receive is comparable to that at public schools. By 2007, a total of 23 schools in Shanghai's Pudong district had received official recognition and assistance. The improvements at these schools over their 2004 conditions is dramatic—the city government invested nearly 700,000 RMB per school, provided training to teachers and administrators, and aided in the construction of new facilities. These schools also receive a subsidy of 2000 RMB per enrolled migrant student.⁹⁷

Shanghai's policies attracted significant media attention in early 2007 after Jianying Hope School, a migrant school largely attended by Anhui natives, was forcibly closed at the end of the fall 2006 semester and its students were sent to a nearby public school. The initial public reaction was outrage—students had been preparing for exams, and the school had been operating with impunity for over ten years. However, subsequent investigations portrayed the government's actions in a more favorable light. Jianying Hope School had flouted the

⁹⁵ Gong 2

⁹⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 4.

aforementioned policies and lacked necessary permits. The school of nearly 2000 students had only four primitive bathrooms, and was constructed using the same material used to build temporary dormitories for construction workers. Officials found serious hygiene concerns, and nearly a third of the school's teachers lacked teaching certificates. The new school was a significant improvement for the 1800 students who ultimately enrolled there. The facility of the new school is nearly ten times larger than Jianying Hope School, and is staffed by qualified teachers using a nationally approved curriculum. Most students are eligible for tuition waivers, and those that are not pay no more than they had been charged at Jianying. Officials with the Shanghai education department said that with the closure of Jianying, fewer than 20 percent of migrant children in the city center still attended migrant-only schools.⁹⁸

The migrant population of Shanghai has grown rapidly since the government's efforts to integrate migrant students began, and the scope of the government's programs has as well. There were almost 400,000 migrant children old enough for compulsory education in 2007; this figure grew to nearly 500,000 by the end of 2010. Over 70 percent of these students are enrolled in public schools, and are supported by government investments totaling 100 million RMB. The remaining students are enrolled in private schools that have met, or are in the process of obtaining, official approval.⁹⁹ The city of Shanghai has expressed that its ultimate goal is to integrate all school-aged children and to guarantee that migrant children have the opportunity to receive equal treatment in the education system.

⁹⁸ China Youth Daily, "Investigation of the Closure of a Shanghai Migrant School," 15 January 2007.

⁹⁹ Zhong, Fan, "Shanghai Migrant Children Can Receive Free Compulsory Education-- Total of 470,000 Children Affected [Shanghai Mingong Zinu Keyi Jieshou Mianfei Yiwu Jiaoyu--Gong Sheji 47 Wan Ren]," 10 January 2011, Bancheng Evening Post, 17 February 2011 <<http://gb.takungpao.com/edu/news/2011-01-10/455690.html>>.

In 2010 the Shanghai education department issued a report discussing the progress made since the policy allowing private migrant schools three years to achieve official recognition was implemented. The report notes significant progress; the number of private, migrant child schools had fallen to 151, down from 500 in 2001. This decline was the result of consolidation into larger, better-constructed schools and the integration of many migrant children into the public school system. The policy has resulted in increased financial subsidies to these private schools and a greater degree of regulatory control over them. Despite these advances, the report notes that there still exists a noticeable inequality between the two school systems, and lays out a roadmap for future policy. The report urges the city to increase the inclusion of migrant children into the public school system and to increase regulation of schools that remain private. Additionally, the report calls for the city to increase financial support for school subsidies, teacher training and capital improvements to private schools. Ultimately, the report suggests an optimistic future for migrant children in Shanghai. Despite lingering issues of inequality, the proportion of migrant children enrolled in public schools or officially sanctioned private schools has increased dramatically in the past ten years.¹⁰⁰

Migrant Education in Suzhou

The pattern of migration to Suzhou and the corresponding development of migrant schools are roughly similar to what occurred in Shanghai. The first privately-run school for migrants in Suzhou was founded in 1999; by late 2001, there were over 140 schools. Unlike the larger schools found in Shanghai, many of the migrant schools in Suzhou were essentially two

¹⁰⁰ Shanghai Standing Committee on Education, 6.

or three rented rooms, a used van, and a couple dozen students who had migrated from the same area as the school principal.¹⁰¹ The teachers at these schools came from similar backgrounds; many of them were acquaintances of the school's founder and had not completed high school.¹⁰² The problems presented by educating migrant children were especially urgent for the municipal government of Suzhou. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of school-age migrant children in Suzhou grew from 100,000 to over 220,000, a figure that represented a third of Suzhou's total student population. A study conducted by Suzhou University found that the quality of education at these private schools lagged significantly behind that at public schools, particularly as students moved from primary to middle school. Average passage rates for exit exams were as low as 5 percent for English, and hovered around 50 percent for other subjects.¹⁰³

The city of Suzhou began pursuing policy solutions similar to those used by the government in Shanghai in 2006; by relaxing restrictions on public school enrollment and increasing oversight of private schools, the municipal government hoped to improve equal access to education among Suzhou's migrant community. The program's early results were underwhelming. The city claimed that 60 percent of migrant children were enrolled in public schools, but a study by Suzhou University found that the actual figure was significantly less than what official reports claimed.¹⁰⁴ The reasons for these poor results were largely related to cost;

¹⁰¹ Suzhou Department of Education, "Investigation of Migrant Children Schools [Mingong Zidi Xuexiao Diaocha]," 10 March 2003, [Suzhou Department of Education](http://www.szedu.com/show.asp?id=4927), 8 February 2011 <<http://www.szedu.com/show.asp?id=4927>> 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰³ Wang, Xiange, "How Migrant Children's Education Can Resolve Difficulties: A Case Study of Suzhou [Mingong Zidu Jiaoyu Ruhe Zouchu Kunjing--Yi Suzhoudiqu Weili]," 31 December 2009, [Suzhou University Urbanization Research Center](http://rurc.suda.edu.cn/ar.aspx?AID=607), 8 February 2011 <<http://rurc.suda.edu.cn/ar.aspx?AID=607>> 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

parents of migrant children could not afford the 500 RMB and higher tuition fees and deposits required, and described a spot in a public school as “an unimaginable luxury.” Parents also worried about the rigidity of public school system; the lax private schools their children attended allowed them to miss school for work or trips home. Other parents did not see the point of worrying about education when their children, in their minds, were destined for a life of migrant labor.¹⁰⁵

Statistics from the early years of Suzhou’s integration program suggested there was some truth to this fear. By 2003, fewer than half of migrant students in Suzhou continued to high school in either Suzhou or their home region; most of the rest remained in Suzhou and found part time jobs. However, the quality of the migrant education began to improve from 2004 on as the private school industry matured and the government was able to refocus its efforts. By 2005, the typical privately-run migrant school had at least 400 students and more permanent facilities.¹⁰⁶ Most teachers had at least gone to technical schools, and many had teaching certificates. Students at these schools were markedly more optimistic about their education, and a higher percentage took the Suzhou high school entrance exam. As the quality of private school education increased and the number of migrant children grew, the city redoubled its efforts to incorporate these children into the public school system. In late 2002 the city issued a regulatory document, *Methods for Managing “Floating Students” School Enrollment*, to clarify its approach to enrolling migrant children. The city’s efforts had an immediate effect on migrant enrollment in public schools; a full 10 percent of new students in

¹⁰⁵ Suzhou Department of Education, "Investigation of Migrant Children Schools [Mingong Zidi Xuexiao Diaocha]," 10 March 2003, [Suzhou Department of Education](http://www.szedu.com/show.asp?id=4927), 8 February 2011 <<http://www.szedu.com/show.asp?id=4927>> 4.

¹⁰⁶ Wang, Lingling, "Questions of Migrant Education in Suzhou [Suzhou Wailai Mingongziniu Jiaoyu Wenti]," January 2006, [Education Commentary](http://www.szggg.com/information/Show.Asp?ID=643), 8 February 2011 <<http://www.szggg.com/information/Show.Asp?ID=643>> 1.

2003 were the children of migrant workers, and that percentage increased in subsequent years.¹⁰⁷

By 2006, nearly three fourths of Suzhou migrant schools had met official standards and were included under the regulatory auspices of the city government. The city also dealt with non-approved migrant schools more aggressively. In extreme cases, schools that had serious safety concerns were closed and students were moved to nearby public schools.¹⁰⁸ Though Suzhou is the epicenter of migration to Jiangsu Province, the municipal government of Suzhou has been unable to provide the financial resources found in Shanghai. Nevertheless, Suzhou has made significant improvements to the fledging private system of migrant education since the industry was founded in the 1990s.¹⁰⁹ A majority of private schools that cater to migrants in Suzhou now fall under the jurisdiction of the municipal government, and most migrant children now attend public schools or sanctioned private schools. Though Suzhou has not yet provided the level of equality found in Shanghai, it is clearly on the same trajectory.

Analysis

Migrant education has dramatically improved since the mid-2000s, largely due to an increase in public awareness of the plight of migrant children. Moreover, the development of the migrant labor force has made investing in migrant education a sound decision for municipal governments. Most migrants in these two cities intend to reside there long-term; they and their children are less transient than the migrants of earlier decades. In both Shanghai and Suzhou,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Qiu, Min, "74 Migrant Schools Enter City of Suzhou Education System [74 suo Wailaigong Xuexiao Naru Suzhoushi Jiaoyutixi]," 11 January 2009, [Suzhou News Net](http://www.mingong123.com/news/71/200901/86e211e7c37e8813.html), 8 February 2011 <<http://www.mingong123.com/news/71/200901/86e211e7c37e8813.html>>.

¹⁰⁹ Wang Lingling, 1.

municipal governments have undertaken efforts to bring the private system of migrant education under their control. In general, policies relied on three methods of integrating migrant students. When possible, migrant schools have been incorporated into the public system as publicly-run private schools. Schools that lag too far behind in health and education standards are closed and their students sent to local public schools. Finally, both Suzhou and Shanghai are beginning to replace temporary household registration policies with more permissive and long-term permits that allow more access to public education.

Providing better access to education is essential in creating a more equitable notion of citizenship to migrants, particularly as more and more migrants move to the city with the intention of remaining long-term within the city. Education provides the best means for cross-generational social advancement in any society; in a country that emphasizes education as much as China, access to a quality education is essential to escaping lower class status. Though universal education for migrants and local residents does not include either secondary or tertiary education, a higher quality compulsory education improves migrant children's chances of testing into high school or university. Education is also an essential part of the citizenship formation process; equality in education will translate to more equal social treatment in the workplace. Conversely, the existence of low-quality migrant schools reinforces the idea that migrants are an "outside class" in Shanghai and Suzhou. Though the segregation of migrants in certain schools, even if they are state-regulated, raises concerns about equality, the increased attention paid to this issue by municipal governments is a positive development for the citizenship of migrant workers in these two cities.

Chapter V. Media Perception of Migrants in Shanghai and Suzhou

“What’s so great about Shanghai anyway? The people there hardly have any money. They don’t have color TV or decent places to live in either. But they keep making fun of us, like we’re their stupid country cousins or something.”

-Zhang Baojian¹¹⁰

Migrant workers in urban China have long suffered from discrimination and apprehension on the part of China’s urban elites. The Chinese term, “floating population,” connotes a degree of vagrancy and criminality that goes beyond its literal characterization of migrants’ mobility. Moreover, the early incarnations of the *hukou* system were designed to prevent migration in the name of preserving public order, resulting in a modern view of migrant workers as potential criminals.¹¹¹ Many of these biases and fears were bolstered by the legal separation between urban and rural residents; as the pace of market forces has drawn migrants to the city faster than municipal governments could adapt, these cultural biases have remained.

Cultural factors have reinforced the institutional discrimination against migrant workers. Li argues that the *hukou* system has more than economic meaning for Chinese citizens—it contributes to an individual’s sense of identity and is a powerful cultural label.¹¹² The perception among China’s cultural elite of rural migrants has evolved alongside the legal landscape that defines and regulates them. At the onset of the reform period, migrant workers were, by default, associated with any social ill that plagued urban communities. Stereotypes

¹¹⁰ Zhang Xinxin, *Chinese Profiles*, 102.

¹¹¹ Mallee 85.

¹¹² Li Zhang 315.

about migrant workers were unapologetically derogatory; Dror Kochan cites an extreme characterization of this dominant narrative:

Regardless of whether it is the conversation of ordinary urbanites or the opinions of important government officials that one is listening to, regardless of whether one is watching a popular film or television program or reading the work of an authoritative expert, one will be given more or less the same description of rural people who enter urban areas: that is that they are, in the main, stupid, dirty, lacking in breeding, and without any sense of shame. You will be told that the country people pouring into the cities are, if not active, then latent, robbers and plunderers, prostitutes and pimps, 'out-of-plan guerillas' and carriers and transmitters of contagious disease.¹¹³

This perception of migrant workers was manifest in both contemporary film and news media; news reports during the 1990s suggested that any increase in crime in urban areas was correlated with the ever-growing "floating population."¹¹⁴ However, the narrative surrounding migrants began to change in the 1990s as China's cultural elite dismissed the rigid association between migrant workers and social ills and began to discuss migrants in human terms. Kochan highlights a number of documentaries, films, and television series that portray sympathetically the plight of individual migrants.¹¹⁵ Surveys of headlines from the 1990s reflect a combination of apprehension and pity towards migrant workers—they were still associated with social ills, but urban media had begun to accept that internal migration is an inevitable side effect of adopting a market economy.¹¹⁶ Newspapers of this era did occasionally publish articles that reflected positively on migrant workers and their contribution to society; however, these articles were invariably reports from social scientists and never represented the "editorial voice"

¹¹³ Dror Kochan, "Visual Representation of Internal Migration and Social Change in China," *China Information*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (2009), 287.

¹¹⁴ Li, Zhang 318.

¹¹⁵ Kochan 287-289.

¹¹⁶ Davin, Delia, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. (1999) 160.

of the media.¹¹⁷ The narrative of rural-to-urban migration is making a definitive shift towards a more accepting attitude; the question is whether municipal governments are following suit.

This chapter will discuss the degree to which media representation and perception of migrant workers has changed in Shanghai and Suzhou by analyzing the editorial attitudes of leading newspapers in these two cities. Analysis for Shanghai will consider material from the *Liberation Daily (Jiefang Ribao)*, a daily newspaper published by the Shanghai Committee of the Communist Party of China and the *Shanghai Daily*, an English-language newspaper largely marketed towards foreigners in Shanghai. This section will also consider press releases and news articles distributed by the committee in charge of the 2010 World Expo that was held in Shanghai. Analysis for Suzhou will be based on articles from Suzhou News Net, an online consortium of two of Suzhou's flagship newspapers, the *Suzhou Daily* and the *Suzhou Evening Post*. This section will consider attitudes towards the general situation of migrants in these two cities, the quality of migrant children's access to education and the broader nature of rural-to-urban migration in China. Analysis of media perception in Shanghai will also consider migrant-related issues surrounding the World Expo that was held in Shanghai in 2010.

Media Perception in Shanghai

Views on the General Situation of Migrants in Shanghai

In 2009, the city of Shanghai began a program that would, theoretically, make the process of becoming a registered resident of Shanghai easier. Applicants who had a minimum

¹¹⁷ Davin, Delia, "Migrants and the Media: Concerns about Rural Migration in the Chinese Press," *Rural Labor Flows in China*, by Loraine A. West and Yaohui Zhao, 278-291. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies (2000) 283.

number of points based on their educational background, employment history, skills, and other accomplishments, could convert their residence permits into formal household registration cards. An editorial published in the *Liberation Daily* criticized the plan for being too narrow in scope and warned that these new policies would only benefit relatively wealthy migrants who could game the system. The paper called on Shanghai to expand this point system to be more flexible, allowing low-skilled migrants from less affluent backgrounds to gain some degree of stability. The ultimate goal of Shanghai's household registration policies, in the paper's view, should be to provide peace of mind to the workers who formed the backbone of Shanghai's growth.¹¹⁸

A follow-up editorial from mid-2009 argues that recent changes to Shanghai's household registration policies should be viewed as a transitional program, and that Shanghai should ultimately strive to include all long-term residents of the city as citizens. The editorial emphasizes the "floating population" of Shanghai as a marginalized group that should have its legal rights enforced and protected. The editorial highlights policies of neighboring provinces that, while they do not extend full *hukous* to migrant workers, allow migrant workers to reside in these areas long term and do a better job of attracting talented workers from the countryside. The *Liberation Daily* implies that these less restrictive measures should be the next step for Shanghai's own household registration system.¹¹⁹ A news article from 2010 shows that the municipal government of Shanghai has made progress along these lines by extending

¹¹⁸ Tong, Dahuan, "Changes to the Shanghai Residence Policy Forecasted to Increases Hope for Job-seekers' Stability [Shanghaihuji Gaige Yuan Geirencai Wending de Yuqi]," 14 January 2009, *Liberation Daily*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/56076.htm>>.

¹¹⁹ Wang, Lin, "Household Registration Reform Should Be a Starting Point [Hujigaige Yingcong Buduanban Chufa]," 6 June 2006, *Liberation Daily*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/55466.htm>>.

programs to attract skilled migrant workers from the countryside. The paper referred to these policies as a “badge of honor” for Shanghai and expresses optimism about the future of the city’s household registration policy.¹²⁰

A 2010 editorial in the English-language *Shanghai Daily* suggests that political progress was not enough to rectify the discrimination against migrant workers. The author notes that even as migrants are getting more social benefits and access to better schools, social prejudice is still strong and influences public policy. The urban elite of Shanghai views migrants as convenient sources of labor and pieces of the larger puzzle of Shanghai’s economic development. Most policies that affect migrants, in the authors’ view, are directed at increasing levels of migrants’ consumption in order to pursue the government’s broader goals of increasing revenue. The author argues that policies directed at improving migrant workers’ quality of life and social stability would have the dual effect of assuaging the ills of migrant life and developing the Chinese economy by creating a stronger working-class.¹²¹

Views on Migrant Education

A *Liberation Daily* editorial from 2009 described the problems facing migrant children when enrolling in school. Students are required to provide no fewer than ten documents to prove that they are eligible to enroll in Shanghai public schools, a burden that most members of China’s “floating population” cannot meet. The paper suggests that local governments look at the example of Suzhou, which simplified this process in 2006. The paper argues emphatically

¹²⁰ Ye, Feng, "The Door to Shanghai Household Registration Once Again Widens to "Talented Migrants " [Shanghai Hujizhimen Zaici Xiang "Youxiu Nongmingong" Qiangkai]," 8 January 2010, *Liberation Daily*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/808176.htm>>.

¹²¹ Wan, Lixin. "Migrants Do Our Dirty Work But Don't Consume," 12 August 2010, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=446091>>.

that providing better access to education to migrant children is an obligation of the city government, not just an ideal.¹²² Despite bureaucratic hurdles that existed in Shanghai, by late 2010 the *Liberation Daily* was reporting significant progress on increasing migrant access to education. In addition to the reforms discussed in the previous chapter, the paper published an editorial in late 2010 describing the increased satisfaction of migrant parents with the quality of their children's education.¹²³

The *Shanghai Daily* is similarly optimistic about the prospects of a better-regulated migrant education system, but is less subtle in its criticism of earlier inequalities. In 2007, just as the city of Shanghai began increased inspections of the city's migrant schools, the *Shanghai Daily* published an editorial lambasting the deplorable conditions of migrant schools and the exorbitant fees required of their students.¹²⁴ Six months later, when the city of Shanghai began closing migrant schools or integrating them into the public school system, the *Shanghai Daily* published a notably more optimistic article about the increased oversight of migrant education and the improved prospects for equality between migrant and native children.¹²⁵

Views on the Migrant Population of China

¹²² Wang, Yi, "To Resolve the Problem of Enrolling Migrant Children in School, Look to the Example of Suzhou [Jiejue Wailaigong Zinu Ruxue Kexue Suzhou Jingyan]," 27 June 2009, *Liberation Daily*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/55375.htm>>.

¹²³ Qian, Yu, "Eighty percent of Migrant Workers Satisfied with Their Children's Primary Education [Bacheng Nongmingong Manyi Zinu Youeryuan]," 02 December 2010, *Liberation Daily*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/1726637.htm>>.

¹²⁴ Dong, Lance, "Migrant Schools Face Scrutiny," 26 July 2007, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=251429>>.

¹²⁵ Yan, Zhen, "Time is Called on Shanghai's Migrant Schools," 22 January 2008, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=346206>>.

In the same editorial discussing the role of Shanghai's new household registration policies, the *Liberation Daily* hopes that progress made by the government of Shanghai could serve as a model for all of China's regions, not just the typical destinations for migrants.¹²⁶ In a later editorial, the *Liberation Daily* denounces the "black" existence of most migrant communities and the businesses that cater to them across China. These unregistered households and businesses, the editorial argues, contribute to the instability that plagues lower-income levels of society.¹²⁷ The *Liberation Daily* referred to the example of household registration policies in Beijing to summarize the general problem with this issue. The primary function of household registration and the issuance of temporary residence permits in Beijing was to simplify the job of government statisticians and the Public Security Bureau. The *Liberation Daily* applauds the transition towards a more permissive system of registration and encourages the same in Shanghai.¹²⁸

The *Shanghai Daily* makes similar arguments about the general state of migrant rights in China. Migrants have made significant sacrifices to the nation's growth, but "these sacrifices do not seem to have figured in the minds of policy makers."¹²⁹ The rapidly changing dynamic of China's population means that the government should begin treating them differently, a later editorial argues. Migrants are more mobile than during the 1980s and 1990s, and in the long-term, the government's goal should be the integration of migrants into the city's social

¹²⁶ Tong 1.

¹²⁷ Shi, Ping, "The Appearance of "Black Villages" in the City Is Simply Due to a Lack of "Sunshine" [Dushi Chuxian Heicunzhuang, Zhi Yinshao "Yangguang"]," 05 August 2010, *Liberation Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/1315946.htm>>.

¹²⁸ *Liberation Daily*, "Citizens Rights Flourishing: Temporary Residence Permits Are Losing Their Relevance [Gongmin Quanli Rixing: Zanzhuzheng Zhengshiqu Cunzai de Yiyi]," 13 January 2009, *Liberation Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.jfdaily.com/a/56085.htm>>.

¹²⁹ Ni, Tao, "You Can't Force Filial Piety But You Can Help Migrants Go Home," 13 January 2011, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=461374>>.

structure, not just into its economy.¹³⁰ The paper notes with optimism that such policies are already in development in many of China's major urban centers.¹³¹

Views on Migrants and the 2010 World Expo

In 2008, one of the directors of the coordinating committee for the 2010 World Expo Shanghai published an essay describing the intended effects of hosting the World Expo on the city. Among the goals listed were developing the service economy, attracting international migrants, increasing environmental standards, and generally increasing the cultural role of Shanghai in China and the world. Improving the conditions of Shanghai's several million migrant workers was not explicitly mentioned.¹³² Despite this initial omission, the role of migrant workers in the construction of the Expo's pavilions was met with praise by the coordinating committee. An article from later in 2008 described a visit to migrant workers by the mayor of Shanghai, during which he made dumplings and warmly welcomed them, saying "all migrant workers and rural workers are family members of our city. We Chinese celebrate the New Year with our family members."¹³³ The city further welcomed its newest "family members" by providing them and their children free tickets to the Expo.¹³⁴ As the Expo wound down in late 2010, the coordinating committee reaffirmed its appreciation to the migrant workers who

¹³⁰ Zhu, Shaobin, "Highly Mobile Migrants Pose Mounting Challenge," 14 September 2010, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=449177>>.

¹³¹ Xinhua, "Report Urges Better Deal for City Migrant Farmers," 24 December 2010, *Shanghai Daily*, 2 March 2011 <<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/print.asp?id=458155>>.

¹³² Zhou, Hanmin, "How the Preparation for the World Expo Will Speed the Evolution of Shanghai into an International Metropolis," *Expo 2010 Shanghai China*, June 3, 2008, <http://en.expo2010.cn/a/20080603/000423.htm> (March 21, 2011).

¹³³ Expo 2010 Shanghai China, "Municipal Official Visiting Construction Workers at the Expo Site," *Expo 2010 Shanghai China*, June 3, 2008, <<http://en.expo2010.cn/a/20080603/000595.htm>> (March 21, 2011).

¹³⁴ Shanghai Daily, "Dream Tickets for Dream Expo on Sale," *Expo 2010 Shanghai China*, March 30, 2009, <<http://en.expo2010.cn/pdf/0330.pdf>> (March 21, 2011).

provided the labor that made the Expo possible, without ever explicitly calling for long-term improvements in their living conditions.¹³⁵

Media Perception in Suzhou

Views on the General Situation of Migrants in Suzhou

The general attitude towards migrant workers and their families found in Suzhou newspapers is one of acceptance and awareness of a changing economy. An editorial from the *Suzhou Evening Post* in 2010 noted that the demand for labor in Suzhou was projected to increase by 50 percent by the end of 2010. This increased demand for labor has been accompanied by a changing demographic in the rural labor pool. The paper notes that migrant workers since the 1980s have much higher expectations for their standard of living, and these expectations should be met with more generous compensation packages and better treatment by the city government. These younger migrants make up nearly two-thirds of new residents in the city, and generally have higher levels of education than their parents' generation. The editorial board calls for Suzhou to create a stronger "pro-labor" atmosphere that will allow migrants to feel more welcome in the city.¹³⁶

The city began experimenting with ways of incorporating migrants in early 2011 by altering its temporary residence regulations. Beginning in the first quarter of 2011, temporary residence permits (*zanzhuzheng*) were replaced by laxer residence permits (*juzhuzheng*). The

¹³⁵ Expo 2010 Shanghai China, "China Bids Farewell to Successful Shanghai World Expo," *Expo 2010 Shanghai China*, November 1, 2010, <<http://en.expo2010.cn/a/20101101/000004.htm>> (March 21, 2011).

¹³⁶ *Suzhou Evening Post*, "The Need for Migrant Workers Should Be Met with a "Pro-Labor" Mentality [Liuzhu Nongmingong Dangyou "Qingong" Linian]," 1 March 2010, *Suzhou News Net*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.subaonet.com/html/opinion/201031/8B6C8AC38BEB9KG.html>>.

difference between these two permits is significant—under the new system, migrants will be free to move throughout Jiangsu Province without the hassle of registering. More significantly, migrants can use these new residence permits to register their children for schools, apply for public health insurance, and legally seek employment. The editorial board of the *Suzhou Daily* welcomed these new policies as an acceptance of the new role of migrants in the city population. By 2011, migrants constituted half of Suzhou’s population, and more than two-thirds of these migrants hoped to remain in the city long-term.¹³⁷ Ultimately, these attitudes and these new policies represent the municipal government’s acknowledgment of new market forces that have altered Suzhou’s demography. Economic growth has accentuated the need for a larger labor force, and changing cultural attitudes have elevated the role migrant workers play in the new economy.

Views on Migrant Education

Editorials in Suzhou have taken a similarly pro-migrant stance with regards to the education of migrant children. In a terse opinion piece from 2008 about city inspections of migrant schools, the editorial board of the *Suzhou Daily* makes its position clear: “Our migrant brothers contribute a great deal to the construction and development of our city. When considering the education of their children ought we not to give them more attention and

¹³⁷ Cao 1.

care?"¹³⁸ The inspection, which was originally designed to check the sports facilities of these schools, found instead overcrowded classrooms and deficient hygiene standards.

A feature article from 2010 profiling a newly-constructed migrant school reflected a more positive outlook on the situation of migrant children. By the end of 2009, nearly a third of compulsory age students were migrants and more migrant schools were meeting requirements set by the city. The article notes that the onset of programs has had a significant and positive impact on the overall situation of migrants and points to the better integration of migrants into Suzhou as a result.¹³⁹ The article notes the increase in funding for migrant school construction, subsidies for migrant students, and extracurricular opportunities.¹⁴⁰ The article also advances an argument regarding the treatment of teachers at these schools, an issue that had received relatively little attention in previous years. The low wages offered to teachers at migrant schools leads to a high-turnover rate, which in turn undermines the physical improvements made to these schools.¹⁴¹ These newspapers have closely followed the improvement of migrant education since reform of the migrant education system began in 2007. A full third of "new citizens of Suzhou" are migrants; their integration and acceptance into Suzhou society is portrayed as an essential step in continuing Suzhou's economic development.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ *Suzhou Daily*. "Who Should Bear the Cost of Inspecting Migrant Children's Schools [Mingongzidi Yingjian Daijia Sheilaidan?]." 19 November 2008. *Suzhou News Net*. 25 February 2011 <<http://www.subaonet.com/html/opinion/20081119/A943CFG520B7KB5.html>>.

¹³⁹ *Suzhou Evening Post*. "The Pains of Growing Up in a Migrant Children's School [Wailaigong Zidixuexiaode Chengzhangzhitong]." 22 November 2010. *Suzhou News Net*. 25 February 2011 <http://www.subaonet.com/html/szedu/20101122/D630HI0G8DHE1IH_3.html>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁴² *Suzhou News Net*. "'New Little Suzhou Residents' in Each Age Group Account for 30 percent ['Xiaoxin Suzhouren' Zhan Tongnianlingduan Haizi de Sancheng Yishang]." 28 October 2010. *Suzhou News Net*. 25 February 2011 <http://www.subaonet.com/html/ori_livelihood/20101028/101028154650597485779.html>.

Views on the Migrant Population of China

The *Suzhou Evening Post* has a view of the situation of migrants across China similar to its view on migrants within city limits; as the economy changes and migrant labor becomes essential in multiple sectors of industry, migrant workers should not be treated as an exploitable resource. An editorial from 2009 openly denounces firms that help migrants find jobs in the city, then exploits them and saddles them with “debt” as a result of their migration. The editorial goes further and calls on the central government to increase job opportunities for migrant workers and to decrease barriers to the job opportunities that currently exist. Currently, the influx of migrants to some cities that results from these job placement companies has led to an increase in unemployment and underemployment among many migrant communities. Though Suzhou is a regional hub for migration, its newspapers recognize that the issues facing migrants in Suzhou are relevant to all of China.¹⁴³

Analysis

Though the four newspapers discussed in this chapter have significantly different corporate structures and intended audiences, they all tend to display a decidedly pro-migrant editorial opinion. This opinion goes beyond the progress made by municipal governments by decrying the continued social stigma that plagues migrant workers, even as they are enrolling their children in public schools and finding stable employment. The relative coherence between the editorial views of the *Liberation Daily* and the *Shanghai Daily* is particularly noteworthy. As

¹⁴³ *Suzhou Evening Post*, "Services Helping Migrant Workers Blindly Enter the City Are Unacceptable [Nongmingong Mangmu Jincheng Wugong Yaobude]," 16 February 2009, *Suzhou News Net*, 25 February 2011 <<http://www.subaonet.com/html/opinion/2009216/315GGJ9J5IHBDG7.html>>.

the paper of the local Communist Party and an English-language newspaper, respectively, these two papers' agreement on a pro-migrant integration stance suggests a growing acceptance of migrants on the part of the urban elite. These newspapers' reactions to government policy are also significant. In general, they have responded to changes in household registration policy or migrant education with optimistic and constructive criticism. While noting the progress represented by these advancements, the editorial boards of these newspapers have been consistent in their calls for further liberalization and greater social acceptance of migrants.

Despite the generally positive view towards migrants held by these newspapers, the official stance on migrant workers and the World Expo is less optimistic. Though the official committee in charge of the World Expo repeatedly expressed its appreciation to these workers and called them, at least rhetorically, members of the Shanghai family, there is no indication that the World Expo was a major impetus in shifting public opinion. While the World Expo was not as influential in shaping public policy as the 2008 Beijing Olympics was on environmental policy, the general positive view of migrant labor during the Expo is congruent with newspaper views.

The positive correlation between public opinion and public policy is well-established for modern, Western democracies.¹⁴⁴ However, the Chinese media serves a distinctly different purpose because of the high degree of state control over the media. Press freedom is essentially non-existent, and any criticism of the government is expected to be mild.¹⁴⁵ Criticism of particularly sensitive issues, such as China's entry into the World Trade Organization and the

¹⁴⁴ Paul Burstein, "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No.1, (2003): 6.

¹⁴⁵ Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Media Freedom in China," *Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (2002) 2.

accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, is stringently controlled. Thus, any endorsement or condemnation of a particular policy on the part of Chinese media is at least loosely correlated to government opinion.¹⁴⁶

The pro-migrant status of these newspapers is significant because of this correlation. Though the newspapers discussed here, particularly the *Shanghai Daily*, have some autonomy, their ability to encourage further policy liberalizations suggests that these newspapers are at least somewhat representative of public opinion and the government's long-term agenda. Despite the Chinese government's authoritarian leanings, the congruence between the editorial boards' opinions and the evolution of public policy regarding migrants in these two cities is obvious. The favorable media perception of rural-to-urban migrants in Shanghai and Suzhou has implications for their evolving citizenship. Even as policies towards migrants have become more favorable, there were lingering concerns among the urban elite that migrants were a threat to urban prosperity. Increased concern for China's "migrant brothers" on the part of these newspapers suggest a shift in public policy change away from the disparaging "dominant narrative" cited at the beginning of this chapter.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 6.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

In each of the three aspects—the general legal rights of migrants, the quality of migrant education, and the media perception of migrants—of migrant citizenship discussed, migrants in Shanghai and Suzhou have seen significant improvements in the relative equality of opportunity their citizenship affords them. Though officially registering as permanent residents of these two cities remains a difficult process, movement towards more permissive residence permits (*juzhuzheng*) removes some of the obstacles created by early programs. Migrant education in particular has become a priority of the municipal governments of Suzhou and Shanghai. Migrant-only schools benefit from public oversight, and more migrant children are enrolling in public schools. Though the disparity between urban residents and migrants still exists, shifts in public opinion in the media of these two cities suggests an optimistic trajectory for the future of migrant citizenship.

Differences between Shanghai and Suzhou

Despite the significant differences in the political structures of Shanghai and Suzhou, the study did not find any data to suggest that these political differences have impacted how these two cities have worked towards the integration of migrants into urban society. Though Shanghai benefits from a larger budget, both Shanghai and Suzhou have instituted roughly similar policies designed to increase the stability of migrant life and provide migrants with better access to social benefits. The data do suggest, however, that Shanghai and Suzhou are similar in that they are the destination of a second wave of migrants that has arrived in these cities with more education and that pursue more specialized jobs. As a result, promoting the

stability and increasing the standard of living of these migrants has become an important means of guaranteeing these cities' continued growth.

Migrants have become an important part of the economic growth of all of China's cities; however, their role is particularly significant in Shanghai and Suzhou. As the migrant population on these two cities approaches one half of the total population, the legal distinction between native born and migrant citizens will become increasingly difficult to manage and less acceptable to the broader population. In this regard, Shanghai and Suzhou will play a more progressive role in the changing nature of urban migrant citizenship than Beijing or Western cities which are less dependent on migrant labor. Moreover, the international prominence of Shanghai and its relative autonomy may hasten the development of a more inclusive urban citizenship as public opinion shifts in migrants' favor.

Implications of the Study

The results of this thesis do suggest that urban China has made progress towards the full inclusion of migrant workers in the past ten years; however, there are still issues that would benefit from further study. This thesis used migrant education as a gauge of how well policies regarding migrants are being enforced in Shanghai and Suzhou. While education is an important gateway towards social mobility for migrant workers, further study should address the situation of migrants in terms of access to housing and social benefits. Since issues such as housing inequality lack of the emotional appeal or relatively low costs of improving children's schools, they may be developing at a slower rate than migrant education. Moreover, the editorial voice of major newspapers, though an important gauge of official attitudes in these cities, is not an

ideal proxy for general public opinion. Further study should address either polling data or a more comprehensive survey of media representations of migrant workers. Further study should also address the agency of migrants in bringing about these changes through their own actions, rather than relying on state actions.

The results of this thesis have theoretical implications as well. An improvement in migrants' rights at the municipal level suggests that Chinese political society may be moving towards an equal conception of citizenship as described above. Given the relative size of China's migrant population and its importance in bolstering China's development, such a transition would be tantamount to the civil rights movement in the United States. Discussions about the rights of migrant workers in China raise similar questions about the plight of undocumented workers in the United States. Though both of these groups have been integrated into the economies of their new homes, they have been subject to *de jure* and *de facto* political discrimination in spite of their economic contributions. The fate of China's migrant workers may be a fair case study of the role of migrant workers worldwide.¹⁴⁷

Prospects for the Future

The distinction between urban and rural residents of China has been attributed to the economic, political, and social factors discussed in chapter two. Similarly, the shift towards a more inclusive urban society can be tied to shifts in these conditions. The role of market forces in improving the legal status of migrants has been particularly strong. During the early years of the first wave of migration that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of surplus workers in the countryside far surpassed the employment capacity of China's cities. This

¹⁴⁷ Mallee 84.

imbalance allowed employers to ignore demands for higher wages or better conditions. Since 2000, the structure of the migrant labor pool and needs of urban employers have approached equilibrium, and migrant workers' relative status within the urban economy has improved. This is particularly true for migrants in Shanghai and Suzhou, two cities that have been the destination of a "second wave" of migrant workers. The majority of migrants in these two cities are employed in trade, skilled-manufacturing, and similar sectors.¹⁴⁸

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations and Migrant Self-Agency

The Chinese Department of Social Organizations Management reports that there are over eight thousand NGOs in Shanghai and nearly thirty thousand in Jiangsu Province. Many of these groups focus on migrant issues, particularly highly visible issues such as migrant children's health and migrant women's safety.¹⁴⁹ Government regulation limits the effectiveness of these organizations in influencing public policy, but they still provide a forum for migrant workers to organize and articulate their grievances. These NGOs have become substitutes for official trade unions that exclude migrant workers. These trade unions have been criticized as inefficient and a weak means of representation, suggesting that migrant workers have an advantage in terms of organization. However, these NGOs must work under the limitations set by the government, which restricts their efficacy to very specific issues in these two cities. Ultimately, non-governmental organizations are not an ideal vehicle for changes in public policy.¹⁵⁰ Migrants

¹⁴⁸ Roulleau-Berger 4.

¹⁴⁹ National Office of Humanitarian Organization Management, "2008 Niandu Fendiqu Shehuizuzhi Tongji Shuju [2008 Report on Local-level Humanitarian Organizations Statistics]," *National Office of Humanitarian Organization Management*, March 18, 2010.

<http://www.chinanpo.gov.cn/web/showBulltetin.do?id=42812&dictionid=2201&catid> (accessed March 21, 2011)

¹⁵⁰ Froissart, Chloé, "NGOs Providing Support to Migrant Workers in China," *Power to the People? (Con-)Tested Civil Society in Search of Democracy*, Heidi Moksnes and Mia Melin, Uppsala: Hallvigs (2010) 183.

themselves have been reasonably successful in self-organizing because of the strong role that family and hometown relationships play in migrant life. A majority of migrants claim to rely on kinsman for support when local governments fail to provide adequate social services.

Ultimately, these informal associations of migrant workers may be more influential than NGOs as they provide a stronger voice to represent migrant interests.¹⁵¹

Migrants Today

The underlying issues surrounding migrant worker's status within China's cities are economic in nature; China was faced with a rural labor surplus and an urban labor shortage following the economic reforms of the 1970s, and waves of migration have moved China towards equilibrium. However, the labor shortage that has plagued urban China over the past year suggests that unfavorable political conditions for migrants have slowed the natural labor flow from the countryside to the city. Analysts argue that there is likely a causative relationship between the continued exclusion of migrant workers and the increasingly serious labor shortage. This suggests that political liberalizations will be necessary to continue urban China's migrant-fueled economic growth. As a result, market forces will arm migrant workers with greater leverage over how they are treated and compensate.¹⁵²

This thesis has focused primarily on the political and social improvements to migrants' status. As migrant workers have gained more economic leverage and intend to live in these cities long-term, the municipal governments of Shanghai and Suzhou have liberalized policies that affect migrants. Residence permits that were once unobtainable for all but the most

¹⁵¹ Mallee 98.

¹⁵² Deng Fengtian 1.

educated migrants have been replaced or de-emphasized in both cities, and even migrants who remain entirely undocumented have opportunities to send their children to city-run schools. The public perception of migrants in these two cities has also seen improvement since the 1990s as leading newspapers in these two cities have begun expressing an explicit editorial view that migrants ought to be better protected. Though migrant workers and their families in Shanghai and Suzhou still face barriers to full political and social inclusion, they have moved closer to obtaining the urban ideal of Chinese citizenship.

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