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Becoming modern urban citizens: The experience of schooling, intergenerational relations and social identity formation among rural-urban migrant children in China.

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by

Chuan Ma

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<u>Abstract</u>

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The rural-urban migrant children in China has become a hot spot in different disciplines. This dissertation concentrates on the schooling experiences, intergeneration relations and urban experiences of migrant children in Qingdao to unpack their understandings of education, the urban-rural dichotomy and their social positions in the city. The research is established in two main clues. The first task of my research is to explore migrant children's educational trajectories in the city. The second task investigates how migrant children shape and reshape their social identities in the urban-rural dichotomy.

I selected five migrant children as the key participants of my research. By employing participant observation, I got a valuable chance to participate in children's daily lives over six months. Even when I left the field, I still maintained connections with these children through online chatting. Through intensive fieldwork, my research unravelled how the educational system reproduced the social structure by displaying social inequalities hidden in migrant children's everyday school experiences. As a result, most migrant children were educated to be manual labour repeating their parents' fate. My research also illustrated that the urban-rural dichotomy excluded migrant children from becoming urban citizens. Importantly, I also paid attention to children's agency by analysing their aspirations. All participants expressed

their strong desires to live and work in the city rather than return to the rural villages. The children's careers aspirations reflected that they positioned themselves as 'future citizens' or 'new citizens', which helped me capture the interplay of structural constraints and individual agency.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Chuan Ma

Title of thesis: Becoming modern urban citizens: The experience of schooling, intergenerational relations and social identity formation among rural-urban migrant children in China.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

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5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

7. None of this work has been published before submission.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is about rural migrant children in Qingdao with the emphasis on the school, family and social identity. Unlike their parents who had been exploited and excluded as the victims of economic development, currently the migrant children have better condition (Wei & Gong, 2019). The most remarkable change was that they could access public school, which provided a path for upward mobility (Zhang, 2018). However, the urban and rural dualistic structure is still a feature of modern China, and, as a result, migrant children still face many social inequalities (Chen & Feng, 2019). However, research on rural migrant children in China is usually quantitative and structuralist. My research aims to explore how migrant children engage with the unequal conditions they face, and how they construct their identities within these environments. During several years of research on this topic and interacting with migrant children, I found that my participants are similar in many ways, but also experience important differences. The similarity and differences among their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours show how individual agency plays a role in their lives. In what follows I first explain the motivation and aim of the research combining it with my own experience as an outsider but also an insider. After that I put forward my research questions. Then I provide basic information about contemporary Chinese society and the situation of migrant children. Finally, I introduce the structure of my thesis.

1.1 The motivation and aim of the research

• The personal experience

'As a qualitative researcher it is impossible to separate personal life and research' (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.56). My personal experiences and opinions not only influence the way I do research, but also provide valuable empirical knowledge to explain and analyze the data collected from my fieldwork. I could be considered as a 'migrant child' myself since my parents were from a small rural village. In 1988, they moved to Qingdao, to start a new life in their prime years. With only a bit of money in their pockets, they began to work and live in an entirely unfamiliar environment. Fortunately, my parents had a college degree that helped them find decent jobs and provided opportunities for promotion because the economic

development demanded young people with higher education. Consequently, my parents achieved great upward mobility and social advancement in only one generation. I grew up hearing fascinating stories about how my parents studied hard to pass the national college entrance examination in tough conditions and how they saved their earnings to purchase their first apartment in the city. Most of their childhood friends who dropped out of high school still live in the small village of origin. The different destiny between my parents and their friends lead me to realize that my parents could settle down in this city because of the combined effect of both particular social circumstances and individual subjective factors. Therefore, my research focuses on the interplay between structural limitations and individual agency.

On the macro level, China's Opening-up and Reform policy inaugurated in the 1980s promoted rapid economic development and accelerated the speed of urbanization that brought some opportunities to people from the bottom. On a personal level, my parents appreciate the value and importance of education and hard work which helped them transform from rural migrants to urban residents. They believed a classic Chinese saying that 'Knowledge changes fate and education creates the future.' which they often repeated to me. Throughout Chinese history, the importance of education became embedded deeply in people's minds, as the 'imperial civil examination system[1]' which enabled talents to join the ruling class regardless of their family backgrounds, had existed for more than 1300 years. Chinese people use 'Liyu yue Longmen' (translateable as 'The carp has leaped through the dragon's gate') as a metaphor to describe a person who has passed the 'imperial civil examination'. I understood at a young age that studying is the shortcut to success. After I became friends with the participants I could not help wondering what would have happened to me if I had faced the same situation and challenges. Without educational opportunities, parental and social support, would I ever had the opportunity or ability to pursue a PhD degree at a reputable foreign university? My own family's migrant past and my own growing-up experiences connected

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[1] The imperial civil examination system was established during the middle of Tang dynasty (618-907). The system was designed to select the best potential candidates for the state bureaucracy serving as administrative officials. The higher level degrees a candidate got in the examination would lead to higher ranking placements in the imperial government service. The imperial civil examination systems was considered as objective measures to evaluate the ability of the examines which provided opportunities for the people at bottom to enter the ruling class. The examination system also significantly influenced the Chinese culture and society.

me with the rural migrant children and their families, that inspired me to explore how these children deal with the challenges they faced in the city.

The aims of the research

Much existing research related to migrant children in China paints a bleak situation, primarily adopting a problem-oriented focus and putting forward policy recommendations. Migrant children's access to and positions in health care, education, and employment, as well as their levels of poverty and 'identity crisis' are major topics (Lin et al., 2019, p.2). Some studies criticize the unequal urban-rural dual system in China, especially the discriminations and difficulties caused by the Hukou system(Chen & Feng, 2013; Qian & Walker, 2015; Xiong, 2012; Zhang, 2017). However, I believed that something crucial had been missing in much of this research because of the fascinating stories I heard from my participants. Most of the existing research related to migrant children emphasized the effects of the structure, but ignored the agency of migrant children. Furthermore, in previous studies, the migrant child was considered less of a person but more as a research object, offering specific data to analyze, especially in quantitative research. They concentrated on the acquisition and analysis of quantifiable data ranging from health to academic performance and family background (Lai et al., 2014; Lan, 2014; Wei & Gong, 2019). During my research I was really touched by migrant children's stories which displayed their successes, courage, dreams and strong sense of love for their family, that also accompanied by tears, frustration and confusion. Therefore, I hope that my research can debunk some stereotypes about migrant children and explore their life experiences from their perspectives.

Moreover, much of the existing research set clear standards to assess migrant children's performance and potential based on pre-conceived values. For example, in China one of the definitions of 'educational success' is to obtain a college diploma or above (Sun, et al., 2019). In fact, the majority of migrant students do not have a chance to enter a university, because they go to the technical school or drop out after graduating from the middle school which typically means they lose the opportunity to attend high school (Duan & Liang, 2005; Wang & Holland, 2011 Lu & Zhang,2004; Lu, 2012). Before I started this research I used to take

education as an important measure to evaluate someone's ability and quality, so entrenched were my parents' influences and my personal experiences. Once I had an impressive conversation with my supervisor after my first fieldwork, because I simply divided migrant students into 'good students' and 'bad students' based on their academic performances. I assumed that the migrant students who scored high marks were 'good students' which conformed with the prevailing view in the Chinese educational system.

In addition to academic performance, the school system did not attach importance to other abilities, skills or interests. Based on Bourdieu's theory, school as a particular field favors specific types of cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). The school ranks students merely based on test scores, and, as I will show in Chapter 4, this principle was so entrenched in everyday school life that even the seating arrangement in the classroom was related to test scores. While the 'good students' could sit in front received close attention from the teachers, 'bad students' were relegated to the back. To some extent, the symbolic position of a student in school is determined by his/her academic performance in reflection of the central value the dominant culture places on studying specific subjects over other forms of cultural capital. Reflecting on my own experiences growing up in China, I realized that I unconsciously accepted the meritocratic cultural values, reinforced through having been a beneficiary of the Chinese educational system.

However, lacking in financial and educational resources, the migrant children might be the victims of meritocratic principles. To some extent, the meritocratic promise which suggests that skill and hard work at school can get you success could be seen as a fair deal for migrant children, because it essentially offers an egalitarian path to equality. As mentioned above, the structural opportunity for migrant children to compete with urban peers has now been incorporated into the education system. As a result, if migrant children fail, they have nobody to blame but themselves. The meritocratic idea in the education system takes failures personally, interpreting them as evidence of personal weakness or incompetence. However, as became clear throughout my fieldwork, it also successfully obscured the impact of family background and social inequality on the ways in which migrant children faced at school. Thus, it became clear that rather than using academic performance as a way of understanding

the migrant students, I wanted to find out the social and cultural factors that formed this prevailing view and how this influenced the options and identities of the children I was getting to know.

Besides, my supervisor reminded me that I should be an observer rather than a judge, which inspired me to reconsider the original aims of my research. The thesis has two main aims. First, it will examine the impacts of the social inequalities on migrant children and the agency they form within the system of school and family, because it is an important part of what migrant children are experiencing on their journey. The institutional discrimination and barriers set limits on migrant children, but at the same time inspire their ambition and motivation to struggle against social injustices. How do young migrants respond to a poor family condition and struggle against the inequality in the school system? This aim also raises a question about the relationship between structure and agency.

The second aim of my research is to explore the identity construction process of migrant children in the Chinese city through providing an ethnographically informed understanding of their experiences. The main questions this gives rise to are: How do the migrant children construct and negotiate their social identities? In turn, how do identities reflect migrant children's agency? 'Youth and age are not self-evident facts, but are constructed socially, in the struggle between the young and the old.' (Bourdieu, 1993, p:95). Bourdieu emphasized struggle, and I will approach the identity of migrant children as a product of struggles, such as those that revolve around what is understood in China as a radical economic, cultural and ideological tension between rural and urban. To pursue these questions I will explore migrant children's experiences of and responses to school, family and urban life. The identities of migrant children interplay with the agency and structure which guides them to build bonds with other people, resist or accept the social structure.

Research questions

The main research questions of this thesis are the following:

1) How do structures reinforce and maintain the stereotypes of the rural migrant children? And how do migrant children negotiate and construct their identities in daily experiences and encounters in school and family?

2) To what extent do migrant children transform their habitus to deal with the rural-urban dichotomy caused by social transformation and modernization in China?

3) Why do migrant children form strong desires to become urban citizens even though they experience social inequalities?

1.2 Transitions: Economic and political dimensions

1.2.1 The economic reform

In 1978 the Chinese government implemented the reform and opening-up policy, which is the most significant and far-reaching reform during the last several decades, to promote economic development, modernization and urbanization (Chan, 2015). After Deng Xiaoping[2]'s important speech in Shenzhen, the Chinese government had replaced its planned economy with a market economy in 1992 (Garnaut, et al., 2018). The Chinese society has stepped into a period of social transformation, gradually stepping out of semi-closed state into an open state and integrating into the world economic system (ibid). After that China's economic development has entered a long period of rapid growth with an annual growth rate of 10.5 percent (Chen & Rezaee, 2013). Besides, the reform not only caused significant social and economic transformations, but also led to the world's largest rural to urban migrations (Zhang, 2015). The migrant workers who had left their hometowns for at least six months rapidly increased to 281.71 million by 2016, as compared to nearly 67 million in 1985 (CLB, 2009; NBS, 2017). The rapid economic development and the largest internal migration complemented each other. On the one hand, China's rapid urbanization and economic expansion had created a large number of employment opportunities in the cities that attracted millions of young migrant workers from the small villages who poured into the

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[2] Deng Xiaoping is the paramount leader of Chinese government from 1978 to 1992. He taken over leadership and power after Chairman Mao Zedong's death becoming the core of second generation of central leader group. He initiated the Reform and Opening-up.

factories and construction sites to seek higher incomes and better lives (Wei & Gong, 2019). On the other hand, millions of rural migrants became the cheap labor force which accelerated the economic development and made China gradually become the 'world factory and manufacturing base'. The migrant workers have contributed 16% of GDP growth since the reform and opening-up (Tan, 2010).

At the same time, the economic development also caused many social problems. Despite the fast growth at the aggregate level, the wealth gap, rural-urban inequality and imbalanced development across regions seemed to be worsening at the same time (Sredl, 2016). During the initial stage of reform, the Chinese government sacrificed equality for efficiency and economic growth. Deng Xiaoping promoted a 'let some people get rich first' principle as key development strategy (Chan, 2015, p.18). Under Deng's vision, some people and some regions would get rich first and others be brought along this process, so that common prosperity of the entire population would be gradually achieved (ibid). However, only half of this plan has been finished. The income gap between urban and rural residents has expanded gradually. Specifically, in 2019, the annual per capita income of urban residents was 42,359 yuan which was nearly three times the 16,021 yuan of rural households (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019). As a consequence, millions of rural migrants left their home towns and moved to cities, due to the discrepancy in income and living conditions between urban and rural areas.

The growth of private wealth and free labour market led to economic development as well as growing inequalities and disparities (Duan et al., 2013). The economic reform created employment opportunities for migrant workers, but most of them were working in labor-intensive industries such as manufacturing, textile, construction, and mining (ibid). Migrant workers were required to work long hours, some of them even without weekend breaks, however, they were paid only half as much as urban workers (Tan, 2010). Even worse, the migrant workers were excluded from the social insurance and unemployment protection system, which pushed migrant workers and their children into a more vulnerable and disadvantaged position (Lin, 2013). The rural migrant workers are both the contributors and victims of Chinese economic development.

The urban-rural dichotomy

The serious disparity between urban and rural regions is a striking characteristic in contemporary Chinese society (Lin, 2013). The urban and rural division had been reinforced by the economic reform (Kirkby, 2018). Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the government set up strategies of placing heavy industry in major cities as the priority of development, influenced by the successful experience of the Soviet Union (ibid). The Chinese government issued a series of urban-centred policies to concentrate strength on supporting the construction of urban regions (Wang, 2005). All these factors have contributed to the widening disparity between urban and rural regions. The rural people had been officially positioned in a disadvantaged position in the Maoist era.

After the reform and opening-up, China entered an era of globalization with an economic take-off in urban areas. Recent decades have witnessed a profound social transformation in urban areas ranging from lifestyles to ownership structures, but the rural villages seemed to be forgotten (Li, 2013). In my interviews with migrant children, the streets and houses of their parents' rural hometowns were described as shabby and offered no economic and cultural activities. Farming was still the most common economic activity in rural areas which limited rural people's incomes and reduced their consumption capacity that promoted millions of rural Chinese to leave their rural hometowns. However, the rural migrants were not completely out of touch with rural hometowns because they could not sell their rural land.

The land as the basic means of agricultural production was belonging to the state since the rural land reform in the 1950s (Zhou et al, 2020). In other words, Chinese peasants only had use rights, but they did not have ownership right to the land they farm (ibid). Due to the insufficient arable land resources, the Chinese government worried that the agricultural land could be transformed into other types of land such as residential or commercial land, thus, the rural lands were not allowed access to the land trading market (Qu et al., 2019). Therefore, the rural migrants often rented out their agricultural land to the people left behind to raise their incomes. If a rural migrant transformed his or her rural Hukou to urban Hukou, he or she automatically gave up possession of their rural housing land (Qu et al., 2019). Therefore,

the land was an strong factor that maintained the connection between rural migrants and the rural villages. Moreover, for rural migrants, the land provided a way of insuring themselves against the instability. If they did not find a job in the city, they could return to their hometown and back on familiar ground. The land was an important explanation why most migrant parents still maintained a strong connection with their rural hometowns.

1.2.2 The political dimensions

The Chinese central government's approach to rural migrants had shifted from restraint to acquiescence to support. Before the 1978 reform, the movement between rural and urban areas was strictly prohibited because of the strict Hukou system (Cai, 2002). In 1958, the government officially introduced the Hukou system to control rural-urban movement and manage the population (Ye, et al, 2013). The Hukou system categorically divided the Chinese population into two types as 'rural' and 'urban' residents with either 'agricultural' or 'non-agricultural' Hukou status (Li, 2005). To meet the booming labor demand, the Chinese government relaxed the control of the Hukou system. After 1984, the rural population could freely move to the cities (Mu & Hu, 2016). However, the Hukou status excluded rural migrants from full access to pensions, health care, public education and other social benefits in the recipient city (Cai, 2002; Sun et al., 2019; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; Wu & Sun, 2020). The Hukou system made the non-agricultural population economically and socially superior to the agricultural population who are considered as second-class citizens. Besides, the children's Hukou status depends on their parents' Hukou status. For example, if the parents hold agricultural Hukou their children will obtain the same kind of Hukou when they are born and thus the children are also excluded from the social welfare system in cities. The Hukou system becomes the institutional barrier preventing migrants and their children from integrating into city life (Fu & Ren, 2010; Afridi et al., 2015; Cui & Cohen, 2015; Wu & Sun, 2020;).

As research in China has shown, children generally were more vulnerable than their parents when facing their new urban environments, integrating new values, and encountering prejudice and discrimination (Zhang, 2015). As a consequence of the urban-rural dual structure, economic, social and cultural capitals of migrant families are relatively low (Chen

& Feng, 2017). This often means that migrant children only gain limited support from their families (ibid). Migrant children suffer negative impacts on their physical and mental health (Zhou, 2010; Wu, 2011), academic performance (Yang, et al., 2014; Yuan et al., 2009), social adaption (Liu & Fang, 2011) and personal development (Chen, & Feng, 2013; Liu & Jacob, 2013). Based on the findings of these research, even born in the city, the migrant children are treated as outsiders leading to a higher risk of personal problems.

With entering into the 21st century, the Chinese government loosened regulation of the Hukou system to reduce inequality and social exclusion. For example, the Ministry of Education and Public issued the 'Provisional Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Youths' in 1998, that was an important policy reform which opened a door for migrant children to attend public schools and private schools in cities as temporary students (Tan, 2010). However, the migrant children needed to pay extra fees to the urban school for their educational services, because the central government funding for school was based on the number of students with local Hukou (Mu & Jia, 2016). The government of the host cities or school did not have enough financial resources to accommodate the educational needs of migrant children. As a result, it is still difficult for the migrant children to access urban schools. The central government began to realize the urgency to address the educational needs and wellbeing of migrant children. The educational rights of migrant children were further guaranteed with the implementation of 'Two Major Solution Policy' in 2001 (SCPRC, 2001). Comparing with previous reforms, the 'Two Major Solution Policy' required the public school and the local government to provide educational services to migrant children which was a big step forward (ibid). Due to the positive changes in policy, between 2009 and 2015, the migrant children had grown by an annual average rate of 2.35%, much faster than the increase of migrant workers (Wu, & Li, 2016). According to the report of the All-China Women's Federation in 2013, nearly 40% migrant workers bring their children with them instead of leaving them behind which can be regarded as evidence that the situation of migrant children is improving. The reform provided more opportunities for migrant children, but it not closed the gap between rural migrants and urban citizens (Zhou & Cheung, 2017).

1.3 The migrant children in China

As mentioned above the economic and political reform promoted the largest internal migration in China. Children participated in the migration process passively, becoming a unique social group in cities because the they are generally not involved in the family decision-making process (Wei & Gong, 2019). In 2016, there were approximately 35.81 million migrant children aged between 6 and 14, accounting for 14.3% of the China's national child population (NBS, 2016). The 5th Chinese National Census defined 'migrant children' as 'youth under 18 years of age who have lived in a town/sub-district for more than half a year and whose household register (Hukou) is in another town/sub-district" (Yuan et al, 2013). The definition of migrant children frequently applied in research is similar to the Chinese government's definition which refers to migrant children as persons below 18 who live in urban peripheries with their migrant parents (Wu, et al., 2015; Liu, et al., 2015; Chen & Feng, 2013). However, the definition of 'migrant children' in this research is slightly different. In my research it excludes children who have moved from other cities and mainly focuses on the rural children between the age of 14 and 16 who are born in or have moved to urban Qingdao without a local Hukou. While the children aged between 14 to 16 are often considered as adolescents or teenagers rather than children, I nevertheless call them 'migrant children'. This has two reasons. One is to keep consistent with other research in this field, which generally uses the term 'migrant children' to refer to this age group. Another reason is that the Chinese government implements nine-year compulsory education, and that the students in middle school aged between 14 to 16 and at the end of compulsory education, are still officially regarded as children.

1.4 Qingdao

As a leading city in the northeast of China, Qingdao is located in the south of Shandong Peninsular by the Yellow Sea. Due to its geological location and natural condition, Qingdao is one of the most important port cities in China. Since 1999, the GDP of Qingdao has been the highest in Shandong province (Zhang, & Rasiah, 2013) reaching 1.001 trillion yuan in 2016 (£ 113.84 billion), and ranking at 12th in China (Qingdao News, 2017). According to the survey of National Health and Family Planning Commission of Shandong province, Qingdao is the first choice of the floating population in Shandong province (Qingdao News, 2017).

There are 31.7% of the total floating population moving to Qingdao and 80.8% of them decided to settle down (ibid). At the end of 2016, the city's permanent population (the total population living in Qingdao) hit 9.2 million, and the urban population (the population Qingdao Hukou) was 6.58 million, accounting for 71.53% (ibid).

Qingdao government introduced a 'point-based system' in 2015, which allowed people who meet the specific requirements to receive a Qingdao Hukou (Qingdao News, 2015). Generally migrants need 100 points to gain a Qingdao Hukou. In 2015, only 689 migrants got Qingdao Hukou through the 'point-based system' (Qingdao News, 2015) which is an indication of the difficulty migrants face if they want to achieve this status. However, migrant children enjoy the same access to education as their urban counterparts which makes Qingdao different from other mega cities. The government of Qingdao tries to relax the control of the Hukou system and create a more friendly environment for the migrant children.

The majority of the available literatures on migrant children in China have been conducted in first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (Li, 2013; Xiong, 2015, Zhang, 2015). Due to the population pressure, the Hukou system in these cities remains intact. I conducted my research in a public middle school in Qingdao where policy is more tolerant and equal to rural migrants. For instance, migrant children can attend public middle school and high school as long as they pass the entrance examination. Personally, I was born and raised in Qingdao, hence, I am deeply familiar with both the urban environment as well as the educational and political system in this city.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In this Chapter I outline the socio-historical background of Chinese internal migration and the research context combining with my personal experiences. I also put forward the research motivation and aims, especially the identity and education of migrant children which are the main topics of my research. In Chapter 2 literature review I will summarize the existing research related to migrant children in China and other countries. The study will be contextualized by drawing on contemporary research on research literature on child migration and family migration. Chapter 3 is theoretical framework. The empirical research for my research is underpinned by Bourdieu's key concepts. In Chapter 4 I will explain the research

context and methods. I also reflect on the difficulties that arise from building rapport with migrant children as an adult researcher. Chapter 5-7 will focus on my ethnographic work with five key individuals and present an analysis of their experiences in urban school, rural village and city. Finally, in Chapter 8 I will revisit the research questions and briefly highlight my findings what I believe that could add to existing understandings of rural migrant children in China.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the literature review a focus was placed on primary sources that contained current information and data dealing with the migrant children to throw some light on my research question of how the migrant children negotiated their identities during struggling with the social inequalities. This chapter reviews two thematic discussions that drive my research. It begins with a review of literature on the relationship between school and youth identity. Many Western literatures has paid attention on this topic (Colley, 2006; Weis & Dolby, 2012; Willis, 2017). However, only little research has explored how Chinese rural migrant children construct their identities faced stereotypes embedded in the educational system and how their identities were shaped by the schooling experiences. The aim of this chapter is to review what difficulties and challenges that a rural children from a low socioeconomic background may face with are defined in the existing literature. Combining the educational system and individual struggles, my research tries to combine macro level with micro level to display the interplay between individual agency and structural constraints. This may be the main contribution made by my research.

Then, this chapter moves to the literature related to the interrelation between intergenerational relationship and youth identity. Most of the existing research focus on the international migration to explore how the language and culture in the host society influenced the intergenerational acculturation gap and family structure (Renzaho et al., 2017). However, only limited amount of literature investigated the same issue in the internal migration. In fact, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the economic and social reform caused rural-urban dichotomy that led Chinses rural migrants faced the similar situation as the international migrants. The migrant children experienced constant tension between parents' expectations and their own aspirations which is essentially a tension between the rural culture and urban culture. The rural migrant children used different strategies to cope with intergenerational conflicts, showing how they deal with their new positions in the host society. Thus, my research employed intergenerational conflicts as useful lens to explore the issues of youth identity and their sense of agency.

2.1 School dynamics and youth identity

Over the past several decades, scholars have strived to unravel how children's identities are shaped by the structural elements embedded in day-to-day schooling (Willis, 1977; Nolan & Anyon, 2004 ; Li, 2013). Meanwhile, the scholars also explore how children exercise their agency to struggle with the institutional and ideological barriers they have to confront within schooling by displaying the successful stories of the children (Hemmings, 2000). Before I interrogate the migrant children's identity within school settings, it is critical to clarify the definition of identity.

2.1.1 Youth Identity

Identity has been a popular research topic in youth studies, which is also a key concept in my study. Researcher in various disciplines, ranging from psychology, sociology, anthropology, to linguistics, and education had explored the youth identity. 'Identity is about how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future' (Norton, 2013; p.127). According to social identity theory, social identities are group-based cognitive representations of self, referring to the portion of an individual's self-concept that is derived from perceived membership in social groups and their attached emotional significance (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A person's identity is a complex and multifaceted concept including one's perception of self and sense of belonging which is shaped by one's life experiences, contacts and circumstances (Erikson, 1963; Harris & Sim 2002). These works enrich our understanding of how the identity is shaping and is shaped. By reviewing the interpretations of identity from different perspectives, I suggest that youth identity is a product of structure and individual agency. Thus, youth identity not only indicates how children position themselves, but also reflects how structural forces shape their behavior, perceptions and aspirations.

As Hall (1990) suggested, identity was multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. I mainly focus on the rural/urban identity. Youth identities are constantly negotiated based on daily experiences. Although rural migrant children in China are ethnically non-different from their

urban peers, they experienced an 'identity crisis' caused by the Hukou-based social policy, the urban-rural dual structure and the strict social hierarchies (Xiong, 2009; Jie, 2011; Kwong, 2011). The Hukou system had set many restrictions to migrant children especially in accessing to higher education (Zhou & Cheung, 2017). They were not allowed to take college entrance examination in the city (Li, 2013). Besides, the Hukou system stopped migrant children from integrating into the city by excluding them from attending urban public school (Montgomery, 2012; Afridi, 2015; Guo & Zhao, 2019). The rural migrant children also need to combat a sense of inferiority caused by the Hukou system which categorized them as the second-class citizens (Dong, 2009). The distinction is reinforced by their daily interactions with the socially and economically more advantaged urban peers (Yuan, et al, 2013). Social anthropology considers that identity is socially, historically, politically, and culturally constructed at institutional and individual levels (Abes et al., 2007). Specifically, individuals live in an already structured society, and it is the social identity that bridges the gap between the individual and the society (Berry et al., 2006). The institutional barriers caused by the Hukou system are the main cause of migrant children forming an identity as 'outsider'.

Based on their Hukou status, even the migrant children are born in the city, they are still categorized as rural people. Due to the urban-rural dichotomy, being rural migrants can be coded as being poor, uneducated and lack of personal hygiene that put them at the bottom of urban hierarchy (Lin, 2013). The rural migrant children are facing the similar stereotype as African American youth who are linked with criminal behaviors and lazy (Lee, 2005). The stereotype positioned migrant youth on disadvantaged position at the host society and promoted self-alienation (ibid). The migrant children believe that their rural origin is the leading cause of the unequal treatment and discrimination (Li, 2013). They try to get rid of their rural identities and integrate into urban culture (Xiong, 2009). However, the rural migrant children still faced exclusions and discriminations even though they imitated the accent and behavior of the urban peers. Another quantitative research conducted in Beijing showed that 69.9% migrant children in a public school failed to show a clear identity because the local students rejected the membership of migrant children (Liu & Fang, 2011). Consequently, the migrant children felt that they were neither urban residents nor the rural residents facing with 'identity crisis' (Xiong & Li, 2017).

In addition, the identity is not a thing that one is born with, but it is a process of becoming throughout life based on personal history and experiences (Jenkins, 2014). Stuart Hall also argues that a person's identity is a construction process that will never complete (Hall, 1996). Therefore, migrant children's identity is not a given, but it is 'something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Jenkins, 2014: 52). The existing literatures mainly focused on how the Hukou system affected children's identities based on socio-economic, stereotypes and institutional barriers. However, there are few research connected migrant children's identities with their school life in Chinese context. The next section will focus on how migrant children's identities are shaping and shaped by their schooling experiences.

2.1.2 School and youth identity

Over the past decades, Western scholars had interrogated how disadvantaged youth navigate with structural constraints permeating in schooling. School is the foremost place affected children's identities. Based on the deterministic structuralism, a large body of research has emerged probing into how school shaped children's identities and their life chances. The cultural capitals valued by school are distributed unevenly among different social classes that facilitated educational inequalities and social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The working-class and ethnic students are often described as rebellious and underachieving children who generated counter-school culture to resist the mainstream culture and curriculum (Willis, 1977; Nolan & Anyon, 2004). The white working-class 'lads' in Paul Willis' work, Learning to Labor (1977), provided us a classic example to understand how children opposed school culture and formed their identities by disrespecting teachers and teasing the 'ear'oles'. These marginalized youth partially recognized the illusions of upward social mobility and meritocracy so they formed subculture to resist their school failure and reproduction of social inequalities (McGrew, 2011).

Along this line, some scholars dig deeper into how structural barriers embedded in the schooling to legitimize the social inequalities and division of labor. An abundance of empirical evidence proves that overt and hidden curriculum operating in schools are selected,

distributed and legitimized by the dominant groups which are based on middle-class judgments (Anyon, 2008; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 2011; Lopez, 2016). Specifically, schools and teachers attached higher value to certain knowledge, linguistic codes, social and cultural capitals (Anyon, 2008). As Annette Lareau explains in her book' Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life' (2011), due to lacking economic and cultural capital, working-class children are more likely to drop out of high school and start working at an early age, which reinforces their subordinate position. In contrast, middle-class children have higher chances of attending college and longer school years because their families can invest more economic capital in education that offers them access to professional-type occupations and higher social status (ibid).

The parents in different social classes possess unequal capital to meet schools' requirements of parental supervision and guidance (Lopez, 2016). The middle-class parents are familiar with the educational system and behave in ways that follow teachers' requests because they have the ability to use and understand educated language (Devine, 2009). The parents and children from higher social classes are more familiar with the dominant culture in school and are likely to have sociocultural advantages. However, there is a discrepancy between working-class culture and school culture (Lopez, 2016). Due to the unequal distribution of cultural capital, the children from lower-class are placed at disadvantaged positions in the school. More specifically, children's academic success has been considered as a result of personal efforts through meritocratic competition rather than the outcomes of cultural capital invested by their family (Lareau, 2011). School facilitated the educational inequalities and social reproduction that positioned working-class youth or ethnic minority at disadvantaged position (Apple & Weis, 1986).

However, we could not ignore that there were also successful stories of these disadvantaged youth who recognized the benefits of education and achieved academic success (Nasir et al, 2009). These youth used their academic achievement to break down the social prejudices and stereotype imposed on them by schooling (Yosso, 2002). These works remind me to rethink the relationship between school and social reproduction. It seemed the education leave a little room for youth agency to achieve upward social mobility. Therefore, my research attempts to

integrate structural constraints and children's agency to mediate tensions between deterministic structuralism and agency.

2.1.3 Educational inequalities in Chinese contexts

It is necessary to demonstrate the hierarchical system of different types of schools in China if we want to clarify the plight of the migrant children. Generally, the schools can be divided into three main categories: public school, private school, and migrant school (Xiong, 2015). The public school is established and managed by the local government. The local education bureau is responsible for all aspects of the public school, including student recruitment, teachers' salaries, external assessments, and curriculum settings (Yang et al., 2014). The private school is funded and regulated by individuals and independent corporations. Private schools need to apply for an operating license issued by the local education bureau (Jia & Ericson, 2017). Compared with public schools, the private school tuition fees are much more expensive because it is the primary source of its income (Xiong, 2015; Jia & Ericson, 2017). As a result, private schools usually provide high-quality educational resources to compete effectively in the market.

Most migrant parents had to send their children to migrant schools because of their poor income and the Hukou status. Since public schools and private schools fail to cater for all migrant children, migrant schools flourished quickly in the 1990s, becoming the primary venue for the education of migrant children (Ma et al., 2008). The education quality and facilities of the migrant schools are far below the average standard, so it is hard to get an operating license issued by the local authorities (Qian, & Walker, 2015). Consequently, many migrant schools face closure, suspension, or even demolition (ibid). In 2011, 30 migrant schools in Beijing had been closed by the local education bureau (Kwong, 2015). As a result, around 14,000 migrant students had to suspend their studies (ibid). The migrant schools often change the site to follow rural migrants' moving route, leading to the high turnover of teachers and staff (Li, 2015). The highly-educated and professional teachers are reluctant to work in migrant schools because of their instability and low salary (ibid).

According to geographical locations, schools can be characterized as urban schools and rural schools. All distribution of resources, including social, financial, educational, and public resources was urban-biased, leading to a huge gap between urban and rural areas (Fang, 2020). The dualistic economic structure segment urban and rural areas lead to the fact that urban and rural schools have a significant disparity in educational quality (ibid). Migration represents better education resources for rural children (Qian, & Walker, 2015). My research combines the two classifications above to divide schools into six different types: elite-urban-public school, elite-urban-private schools, normal-urban-private schools, normal-urban-public schools, private migrant schools, and rural public school. Based on the six types of schools, my research establishes a clear hierarchy of schools system in China. Students from different socio-economic backgrounds assume very different positions in this hierarchical system depicted in the pyramid below. The pyramid only reflects the different status of the schools.

elite-urban-public
and elite-urban-private school

normal-urban-private and normal-urban public
school

migrant school and rural public school
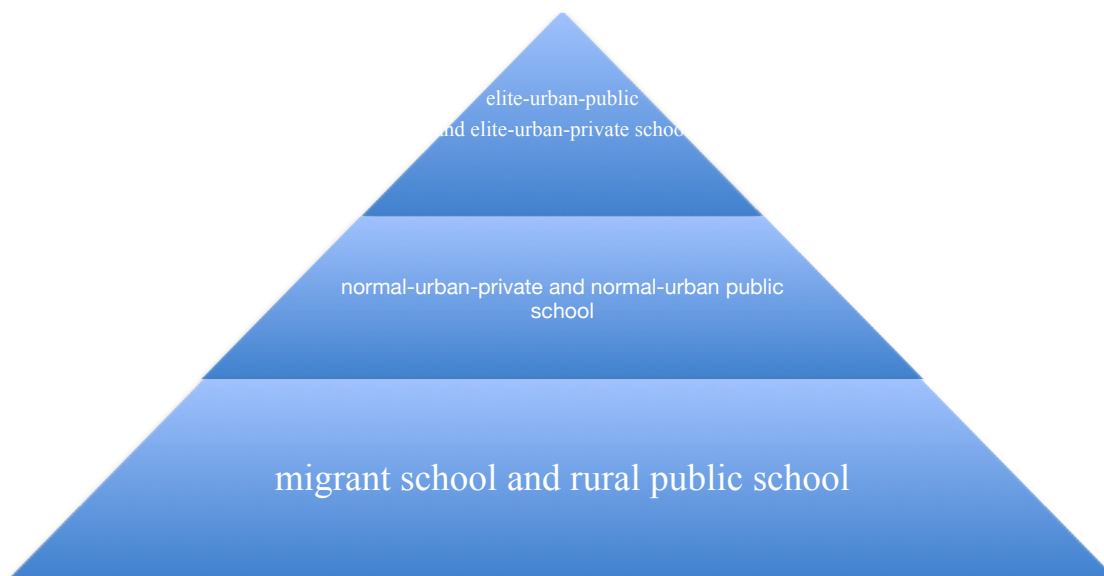
Picture 1 The hierarchical system of different types of school in China

According to Chinese educational studies (Tan, 2010; Xiong, 2015; Wei & Gong, 2019), the elite-urban-public school and elite-urban-private schools rank at the top of the pyramid, rare and known as 'key school' (Zhongdian Xuexiao in Chinese). These schools are notable for the highest enrollment rate and best teaching facilities and equipment, which means that the students in 'key schools' are more likely to achieve academic success. In the middle section of the pyramid are normal-public schools and private schools in the city. These schools enroll

many migrant children and local students from low socio-economic status families (Qian, & Walker, 2015). Private migrant schools and rural public schools are located at the bottom of the pyramid. Many education studies disclose that the migrant schools in cities are unregulated and, with inadequate facilities, under-qualified teachers and fragmented curricula (Ding, 2004; Han, 2004; Kwong, 2004; Ma et al., 2008; Xiong, 2015). Most migrant children are assigned to the migrant schools that reveals their structural positions in the broader socio-economic landscape.

Chen and Feng (2013) suggests that school type is a more significant determinant of academic performance than social capital and family support. Comparing the test scores of migrant children from different school types, they find that migrant students in public schools perform significantly better than their counterparts in migrant schools (ibid). Differential quality of schooling and the social hierarchy based on the Hukou system separate the rural migrant children and local urban children in Chinese cities (Chen, & Feng, 2013). Public schools in urban areas are not willing to enroll the children of migrant workers owing to the national policy of fiscal subsidies (Yang, et al., 2014). Such education inequality originating from the social division is becoming a new socio-political factor, leading to education inequality in the process of urbanization (ibid). Furthermore, migrant children have limited opportunities to continue their post-compulsory education in cities and thus have limited life chances in adulthood (Qian & Walker, 2015).

Selecting school appears to be an individual choice, but it has been limited by the Hukou system and socio-economic status. Most of the migrant children are forced to choose migrant schools, the inferior economic status and social position of rural migrants have been reproduced. Therefore, a large amount of research engaged in the discussion on migrant children's educational rights and proposed educational reform suggestions (Li, 1995; Han, 2004). By the early 2000s, the Chinese government passed the enactment of 'Liang Weizhu'[3] which allowed migrant children to attend public school in cities (Yang et al., 2014). As a result, exploring the migrant children's schooling experiences in urban public school gradually becomes the research hotspots of this field.

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[3] In 2001, the State Council announced an official document, 'Liang Weizhu', that requires local governments to provide compulsory education for all children under their jurisdictions whether they hold local Hukou or rural Hukou (Yang et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, the policy 'Liang Weizhu' could not completely relieve the educational inequalities which were embedded in the school experiences of migrant children. Specifically, the interactions with teachers and local students could be painful for migrant children which reinforced their disadvantaged position. At the same time, the youth identity is shaped by the set of social relationships (Kipnis, 2001). Existing literatures indicate that the rural migrant children are more likely to experience loneliness, anxiety, and frustration in urban schools because of the teachers' negative stereotype (Li, et al., 2008; Lin, et al, 2009; Yuan et al, 2013; Zhang, 2015). A study shows that 75.7% of migrant children had been treated unfairly in their daily lives, and experienced sarcasm and discrimination (Liu & Zhao, 2016). They were frequent targets of prejudice, stereotyped as lazy, lacking manners and low quality (suzhi[4] in Chinese) concerned by teachers and urban peers (Lu & Zhou, 2013; Lin 2013; Kwong, 2011). These negative stereotype and low expectations positioned the migrant children on a track that leaded them directly to school failure.

In addition, the rural-urban division had been reinforced by school settings. They faced unfair treatment since the first day of school in terms of school admission, extracurricular activities and tuitions (Zhang, 2015). The migrant families were required to submit various documents to school which is a complex process, but the urban parents do not need to do (Wu, 2011). This differentiation reflected the institutional segmentation and social categorization of locals versus non-locals under the Hukou system. In a primary school in Shanghai, the migrant children had been separated from local students concentrating in a small teaching building which was far from the main campus (Lan, 2014). Moreover, the local children and migrant children had different teachers (ibid). In another case, the urban school used different timetables to reduce the interaction between migrant children and urban peers (Chen, 2014). These rules separated migrant children from integrating into the urban school. It presented that the social inequalities persisted throughout migrant children's daily life in school. Most of the existing literatures depicted how school experiences influenced migrant children's identities and academic outcomes, but they missed the other half of the story. Thus, my

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[4] Suzhi, an everyday word in China, is usually rendered as ''quality'' but is not an easy word to translate, as it can be used to refer to individuals' physical and psychological characteristics as well as to their skills, aptitudes, education, ideologies and manners. Particular ''lowquality'' groups among the Chinese population are believed by the state to be in need of special attention, and China's peasants are usually seen as the lowest of these ''low quality'' groups (Murphy, 2004).

research attempted to shed light on children's agency by analyzing how children deal with the social inequalities to form their identities and aspirations.

2.2 The intergenerational relationship and youth identity

The migrant children experienced a more complicated process of identity formation compared to the working-class children in the western literature. Apart from the social inequalities in schooling, the migrant children also faced with more intergenerational acculturation gap intensified by migration. Over the past decades, scholars have made sustained efforts to explore how youth identity is influenced by intergenerational relation in transnational migrant families (Rumbaut, 2005; Skrbiš et al, 2007; Marcu, 2012; Ibrahim, 2016; Kustatscher, 2017). The transnational migrant children often find themselves under a tension between culture of host society and that of origin. By showing the different adaptation, scholars emphasize the divisions between 'traditional' parents and 'modern' children (Cook & Waite, 2016). However, there are only few studies exploring the reconfiguration of intergenerational relationship within internal migration. Therefore, I would like to briefly to discuss the relationship between internal and international migration, bringing two fields together that have generally been kept apart.

In the past, internal and international migration were regarded as two different types of migration. Most migration scholars focus on transnational migration, despite the fact that internal migration is more common and larger scale. There is limited research discussing the relationship between internal and international migration (Amara, & Jemmali, 2018). In my research, I regard them as related rather than as two isolated phenomena because they both faced social exclusion and marginalization in host society caused by language and institutional barriers which prevented migrants from accessing opportunities and resources. Most of existing literature in migration studies concentrates on immigrants in developed countries. My study focuses on rural migrant children as the second-generation migrants in the Chinese context which will contribute to wider debates about migration.

2.2.1 Language barriers

Certainly, the distinction between internal and international migration is based on the idea that international migrants cross a national boundary whereas internal migrants do not. The transnational youth moved into a completely different country facing unfamiliar political, economic, cultural and legal systems while internal migrants may not (Amara, & Jemmali, 2018). Linguistic and cultural barriers are usually considered as the most outstanding characteristic of international migration. A body of studies has explored the impacts of language barriers on immigrant children, focusing on the children who moved to English-speaking dominantly societies (Norton, 2013; Moskal, 2014; Ibrahim, 2016). A study related to Polish children in Scotland showed that the migrant children felt difficulty studying and communicating because they had only studied English for several months before moving to Scotland (Moskal, 2014). The language barriers were regarded as the biggest challenge that excluded migrant children from assimilating into the host society and community.

Moreover, language is an important factor to construct youth identity (Spolsky, 2004; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2020). In turn, the personal identity would influence one's language ideologies and practices (Chen & Wang, 2015; Dong, 2009; Zhang, 2016). The shared language ideologies and practices usually provided immigrant a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Norton, 2013), which helped them to build a relationship to the outside world and position themselves in response to the external social environment (Lawler, 2008). Previous studies found that the proficiency in official language was positively associated with immigrants' sense of belonging because the high proficiency would improve efficiency of communication and enable migrants to integrate with the local community (Williams, 2011; Grogger, 2011; Miranda, & Zhu, 2013). The language barriers limited interaction between immigrants and local people that increased mutual mistrust and misunderstanding to each other, especially the first generation immigrants (Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009). Language of host country as universal standard pushed the immigrants with limited linguistic competence to subordinated social status in the host society.

Acquiring a native accent or being fluent in local language is costly and difficult which requires years of formal education and practices (Norton, 2013). The second generation immigrants grew up in the host society and received local education, thereby were more

likely to become bilingual or multilingual which helped them integrate into the mainstream society and access to more opportunities and resources than their parents (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2013; Yang, 2020). The bilingualism often means that the migrant children learned a second language without replacing the native language from their parents' country (Zhu & Li, 2016). It is worth noting that the proficiency in English provided children with an increased sense of agency and challenged the parental authority. For example, some Polish migrant children in UK acted as the brokers between their parents and local people to help their parents' small business (Lopez, 2016). The children felt more confident about themselves by joining the conversation of grown-ups (ibid). An study conducted in Australis showed similar result that some migrant children from African improved their positions in their families by actively helping their parents to communicate with teachers (Renzaho et al., 2017). At the same time, the children found it alienating as their parents could not speak or understand English that diminished parents' authority and the value of their mother tongue (ibid).

Meanwhile, the family played an important role in passing the first language through everyday language practices (Schwartz, 2008). Unlike the migrant children who attended local school to facilitate their integration, the migrant parents do not have such opportunities, so they more likely to hold on to the original culture (Spolsky, 2012). Many minority parents made effort to transmit the heritage culture and required their children to speak the mother tongue at home as they feared that their children would lose their own culture (Kopeliovich, 2010). In other word, migrant parents wanted children to maintain connections with their home country. However, some migrant children refused to communicate with parents in their mother tongue (Renzaho et al, 2017). This might be because the migrant children thought their parents were too old-fashion and traditional, so they resisted the culture and language emphasized by their parents. The poor communication between parents and children led to the intergenerational conflicts. To some extent, the language choices of children displayed that they demanded more freedom and want to reconcile their own demands with parents' expectations (Kopeliovich, 2010). The family language policy provided us a lens to analyze how migration experiences affected the migrant children's identities.

In Chinese context, the rural migrants also faced language barriers when they moved to cities. A national survey showed that 30% of the whole Chinese population could not speak Mandarin by 2014 (Xinhua News Agency, 2014). Mandarin was considered as a form of politeness and civility, so speaking Mandarin symbolized for 'more civilized', and 'open-minded' (Koo et al., 2014, p. 802). The Mandarin, as an identity building resource, provided urban residents a privileged identity than rural migrants speaking regional dialects. In the book 'Gender, Modernity and Male Migrant Workers in China'(2013), the sociologist Lin had revealed that rural migrant workers in Guangzhou, were discriminated and isolated by urban residents only because the migrant workers could not speak Mandarin. According to literatures most rural migrants undertook low-skilled and labour-intensive work such as building worker, cleaner and truck driver without communicate with local people (Lin, 2013). There is a positive association between Mandarin proficiency and employment probabilities in urban areas (Dovì, 2019). The Mandarin acting as a language barriers limited the opportunities of rural migrants and reinforced their disadvantaged position in cities.

The migrant children who were born or moved to cities in early age can speak standard Mandarin as a mark of their urbanized habitus (Jie, 2018). By reviewing the literatures related to educational inequalities, I find that most migrant children did not mention the language barriers. Fluent Mandarin was a valuable cultural capital in the urban school which helped them to interact with teachers, local students and other migrant students (Chen & Feng, 2019). Furthermore, the migrant children constructed an identity as a modern urban citizen by speaking Mandarin that blurred their identities as rural migrants (Xiong, 2015). Findings are similar with transnational migration studying and suggest that the second generation migrant are more familiar with the culture in the host society.

Even the Mandarin occupied the dominant position in cities, the dialects still remained and inherited in migrant family. In rural areas, people often do not attach much importance on the Mandarin because the local dialect as a signal of group boundary is regarded as the official language (Li, 2013). The rural migrants working in one factory were automatically divided into different subgroups biased on their regional dialects rather than their types of work (Lin, 2013). The dialect as native language of migrants provided a sense of belonging and influenced the negotiation of identity. As a result, the migrant parents required children to

learn the rural dialect to enhanced the sense of belonging to the rural hometowns. If migrant children speak Mandarin when they come back to the rural village, they would be teased, and regarded as deceptive and deficient (Xiong, 2015). Other studies showed that the migrant workers felt uncomfortable and strange to speak Mandarin to their relatives or friends left behind, while speaking dialect could close the distance (Mu & Jia, 2016; Jie, 2018). It seems the parents and external environment put pressure on migrant youth restricting their language choice and shaping their identities. The rural migrant children experienced a disjunction between their language habitus in school and home. Thus, my research attempts to explore how migrant children deal with this disjunction, and how they perceive their social relations and constructed their identities in the city.

2.2.2 Intergenerational conflicts

The family language policy is only one aspect of intergenerational relations. Moving to a new environment, the two generations shared different cultural values during the socialization process. On one side, the school and local peers created acculturative stress that forced migrant children to study the local culture in order to integrate into the host society (Kwak, 2003). On the other side, the migrant parents attached importance on the original culture. The cultural transmission across generations in migrant family context influenced children's socialization and identities (Schwartz, 2008). However, the cultural distance between the host and origin society could lead to intergenerational conflicts. Confronted with such dilemma, migrant youth might become confused as they were unclear which culture they should choose. Based on bi-dimensional acculturation model, Renzaho (2017) highlighted the four different cultural orientations:

(1) Traditional or separation (keeps loyalty to traditional culture and does not recognize the host/dominant culture)

(2) Assimilation (rejects traditional culture and fully embraces the host/dominant culture)

(3) Integration or bicultural orientation (retains cultural identity at the same time moving to join the dominant society)

(4) Marginalization (rejects traditional culture and fails to connect with the host/ dominant culture by exclusion or withdrawal).(p.3)

Guided by this acculturation model, many studies explored how migrant children positioned themselves within the new environment facing with two different culture (St-Hilaire, 2002; Skrbiš et al, 2007; Cook & Waite, 2016; Kustatscher, 2017). Based on the 'integration or bicultural orientation', some scholars indicated that the second generation immigrant youth tended to form a hybrid identity by assimilating both their own culture inherited from their parents and the culture from the host country respectively (Rumbaut, 2005, Marcu, 2012). The hidden logic behind this finding was that the host culture is compatible with the origin culture. However, the rural and urban culture in China existed in an oppositional logic, 'with the former being displaced by the latter' (Lin, 2013 p. 65). Thus, it became more complex for the rural migrant children to maintain balance between the two opposite cultures.

To achieve modernization and social transformation, the Chinese government tried to use western enlightenment philosophy to replace the traditional beliefs and rural values by encouraging the new ideas such as liberalism and democracy (Li, 2013). Corresponding with the national modernization project, the western developed countries set standard model for urban areas by encouraging free market and personal freedom which were once forbidden by communist ideology (ibid). However, the rural areas were forgotten world where still maintained traditional values (Xiong, 2015). For example, the rural parents emphasized the value of 'self-sacrifice' and 'simple living' which were necessary to be an ideal youth (Li. 2013). In contrast, the consumerism and materialistic individualism in the city encourage people to chase fashion and personal interests (Alpermann, 2013). The consumerism culture was associated with urban citizenship and social class in modern China (Tian & Dong, 2010; Alpermann, 2013). The children were inevitably influenced by the consumerism through their urban life. As a result, rural migrant children faced a tensions between what they were educated to be modern citizen in school and what they were expected to do by their parents. By the displaying the opposite values between urban and rural culture, I attempt to illustrate why I generalize and employ the theory in transnational migration to Chinese context.

Many empirical evidence indicated that the rural migrant children in China were more likely excluded by both societies because they were strangers to the rural culture and marginalized in the urban society. A study found that the academic achievement and potential social mobility of city-born migrant children were worse than those left behind (Lu & Zhou, 2013). The study had attributed children's school failure to the loss of their original culture and to a perceived alienation from mainstream society (ibid). Another research showed that the migrant children were reluctant to associate with their family members and had difficulty making new friends in school (Chen & Feng, 2019). Consequently, the migrant children faced 'identity crisis' regrading themselves as neither urban children nor rural children (Xiong, 2015).

2.3 Conclusion

Literatures summarized in the previous two sections validate the importance of ethnographic research on the interrelationship among schooling, family and migrant children's identity. Existing studies fall short of providing us a whole picture that connects migrant youth's identities with the social structure and social transformation in modern China. How migrant children act and construct their identities not only reflects their perceptions and aspirations, but also uncovers the institutional barriers and social inequalities embedded in their daily life. However, most of the existing studies focused on what happened in school but ignored that migrant family and urban life also had deep impacts on children's socialization process. In order to understand children's self-positioning in urban society, my research adds intergenerational conflict as analytical lens to explore how migrant children navigate and integrate the values of two cultures. In fact, except the exclusions caused by the Hukou system, the children experienced various stereotypes and symbolic violence hidden in their daily interactions. Therefore, more efforts need to paid on children's experiences of urban-rural dichotomy, in terms of the dialectical interplay of structural constraints and youth agency in modern Chinese society.

In the next chapter, I translated Bourdieu's theory into youth identity studies combing with the concept of agency as my theoretical framework. Bourdieu's work was primarily focused on the dynamics of power in society, especially how the social class is maintained across

generations through education which is close to the aim of my research. Moreover, Bourdieu attempted to combine the impacts of individual experiences with external social structures that makes it possible to understand the subject within objectives structures. Bourdieu provided a 'middle ground' for the agency and structure debate (Bessant, et al, 2020). My research focuses on the facets of society, ranging from school system to out-school activities to family combining with personal experiences of migrant children which are often hidden unless ethnographically brought to light. In this sense, Bourdieu's theory is employed to further exploring the constant tension between being and becoming.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will unpack the theoretical framework for this research, which is built around Pierre Bourdieu's key concepts. Firstly, I briefly look into Bourdieu's influential contribution to the sociology of education, and youth studies, especially in the context of the interrelation between school and youth identity (Li, 2015). Bourdieu's theoretical model draws attention to power relations, change, social reproduction, and social inequality (Lareau, 2011). This helps me to address aspects of how young people cope with social inequalities. To bypass the 'structure versus agency', Bourdieu's concepts offer a 'middle ground' (Evans, 2002: p.250). By drawing on the work of Bourdieu, I connect micro-level with macro-level analysis to interpret the data of my research. A considerable emphasis is placed on Bourdieu's key concepts of capital, field, and habitus, enabling me to build a bridge between migrant children's experiences and social structures. In doing so, I demonstrate how Bourdieu's relational concepts apply to a small empirical study about the identity negotiation process of rural migrant children in China.

3.1 Bourdieu's key concepts

3.1.1 Capital

Bourdieu defined capital when he investigated the social inequalities in French higher education institutions in the early 1970s (Alanen et al., 2015). As part of the centrepiece of Bourdieu's theory, 'capital' is a tool to uncover the unequal structure of the social world and to give expression to its accumulation and reproduction (Winter, 2015). In this study, the concept capital generates rich understandings of how social structures affects the social position and identity of migrant children.

For Bourdieu, the definition of capital is not strictly economic. He extended the idea of capital to different categories including economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The different types of capital can be converted into each other under certain conditions (ibid). For example, the economic capital can be converted into educational credentials (a kind of cultural capital) through a solid investment of money and time (Sullivan, 2002). Due to the unequal distribution of capital, Bourdieu (1986) argued that

children's social class was transformed into different educational outputs and academic performances. In return, the educational credentials were associated with occupational success, where cultural capital was converted into economic capital (Lareau, 2011; Sullivan, 2002). The conversion between different forms of capital helped Bourdieu answer how social inequalities are reproduced and legitimized by the education system. Thus, Bourdieu's capital can be a valuable terminology to analyze the migrant children's academic performances.

Based on the particular types and volumes of capital possessed by individuals, the individuals were located in different positions within a field (Bourdieu, 1986). The individuals' position constrained their opportunities to participate in the field, affecting individuals' life experiences and aspirations (Thatcher et al., 2015). The field's constraints largely determined what individuals could or could not do (Bourdieu, 1986). Individuals' actions based on structural constraints created social reality. Through everyday repeated practices, individuals' social identity was produced and taken for granted (Vuorisalo & Alanen, 2015). Bourdieu argued that the pattern of domination and inequality was the most important characteristic of social structure (Lareau, 2011). From this point, Bourdieu's social theory had been regarded as deterministic and circular which focused on how social structure determined culture and reproduced itself (Jenkins, 1982).

Besides, Bourdieu pointed out that certain types of capital and resources were more valued and rewarded in schools which were unevenly distributed among social groups (Bourdieu, 1977). The working-class students were more likely to fail because they lacked of valuable capital and vice versa (ibid). For example, the written work of working-class students was often stereotypical judged as clumsy, uncultivated, and brash, since teachers favored 'bourgeois parlance' rather than 'common parlance' that reinforced the disadvantaged positions of these students (Bourdieu, 1986). The literature in the Western context also indicated that the youth of color, lower-income, and minorities suffered the stereotypes and inequality embedded in the educational system (Anyon, 2008; Duits, 2008; Lee, 2009; Portes & Rivas, 2011). Bourdieu's capital theory was used to explore the varying forms of inequalities, including teachers' stereotypical judgments, hidden curriculum, and linguistic

codes (Anyon, 2008; Lee, 2009; Li, 2013) that helped us to understand how school maintained and reproduced the existing status quo.

3.1.2 Non-dominant cultural capital

To explore the experiences and practices of migrant children's in school, I would like to divide cultural capital into two distinct forms, including 'dominant cultural capital' and 'non-dominant cultural capital' (Thatcher et al., 2015 p:104). Dominant cultural capital referred to the cultural knowledge and resources valued by the mainstream society which was possessed and used by dominant social groups to maintain and reproduce their social status (Thatcher et al., 2015). For example, the education system attached the highest value to certain taste such as fine art and serious classical music (Bourdieu, 1986). These kind of capitals helped students to succeed in the education system. In comparison, non-dominant cultural capital referred to the cultural knowledge and practices inherited by dominated social groups which had no value out of local communities (Thatcher et al., 2015). Through a series of arbitrary selection and examinations, the educational system filtered out those non-dominant cultural capital. The conventional interpretations of cultural capital only concentrated on dominant cultural capital but ignored the non-dominant cultural capital. Therefore, my research tries to explore how migrant children acquired and utilized non-dominant cultural capital to resist social inequalities and constituted their identities.

The non-dominant cultural capital was also considered as the 'wrong currency' in formal education (Mills, 2008, p.85). Based on this point, non-dominant cultural capital even created adverse effects on individuals because it did not match the rules of the particular social field. An ethnographic study about 'black cultural capital' among black youth in London described a bitter experience of a black student that he had been laughed at by his classmates simply because of the African food in his lunch box (Wallace, 2017, p: 908). To avoid being excluded and bullied, the black youth stopped bringing African food to school to hide his cultural heritage (ibid).

However, the non-dominant cultural capital also had positive impacts in some contexts. For example, Hip-hop culture was a type of non-dominant cultural capital at a British middle school because it was considered useless, disaffected, and rebellious by teachers and parents (Vuorisalo & Alanen, 2015). Meanwhile, Hip-hop culture showed a rebellious spirit highly valued by children that helped a student improve position in peer-group hierarchies (ibid). It encouraged children to express their own ideas freely and keep their unique styles (ibid). Due to the influence of Hip-hop culture, the students tended to challenge the power and authority of adults. In such a situation, the non-dominant cultural capital increased children's agency to resist the school rules which emphasized obedience and compliance. These insights remind us that when investigating the identities of rural migrant children, non-dominant cultural capital should be carefully considered. The non-dominant cultural capital allowed migrant children to break out of the stereotypes and judgments imposed by their teachers, and urban peers. The migrant children could creatively produce self-image rather than accepting the pre-existing identity shaped by the structure. These two different types of capital make it possible to analyze the relationship between agency and structure.

3.1.3 Field

'In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations that they impose on their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs)in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.).'(Bourdieu & Wacquant，1992 p.73)

Bourdieu's 'field' was a space regulated by particular rules (Bourdieu, 1986). Here, the meaning of field can be understood as both physical spaces and metaphorical spaces that constitute the whole social society (Alanen et al., 2015). Through the interaction and competition within the field, the individuals placed themselves in a position and classified other groups into particular social categories (Habib & Ward, 2019). According to positioning

theory, the first-order positioning referred to the position an individual assumes, independent of any influence (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). While the second-order positioning was formed by interacting with others in a social environment (ibid). The positions were hierarchically located that produced feelings of superiority and inferiority (Habib & Ward, 2019) and formed the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1986). According to their positions, the individuals were classified into different social categories and given different accesses to the specific profits and resources within the field (Bourdieu,1992). The social field tended to reproduce its structure by placing the individuals who preoccupied more dominant capital in the privileged position vice versa. Based on this theory, Bourdieu explained how school system maintained the dominance of upper class and eliminated working-class students from higher education by examination failure and self-elimination. The rural migrant in China occupied a subordinate position in cities because they lack economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital (Xiong, 2015). In turn, the city government and systems only delivered services and public resources to urban citizens (Fang, 2020). Administrative allocation of the Hukou system legitimized and reproduced the urban-rural dichotomy that reinforces the subordinate social position of rural migrant children (ibid).

The children did not passively accept those ideas and structures that tended to subordinate them. Whether in the Chinese context (Xiong, 2015; Zhang, 2015) or Western context (Threadgold, 2009; Reay et al., 2010; Sim, 2016), youth from disadvantaged social groups wished to move beyond their original social status when they grow up. The young people located in subordinated positions worked hard to cross the group boundaries (Bessant et al., 2020). Unlike Bourdieu's cultural reproduction, Giddens (1991) suggested that education played a significant role in diminishing the structural constraints such as ethnicity, grace, ender, and social class, leading young people to have more power in controlling their life courses. In order to enter a more elite university, some working-class students in the UK pushed themselves to attend more academic training programs to improve their academic performances (Reay et al., 2010). It seemed that the education system gave chances to the disadvantage groups but they needed to pay more efforts. The personal success could not cover up the structural inequity. Comparing to working class cultures, the cultures of upper and middle classes were preferred by the education system because these dominant groups

had the power to define the rules in education field. They positioned their own culture above others and as the basis knowledge of education system.

However, the disadvantaged groups were not familiar with the rules because of lacking valuable capital. For example, applying to a university was a family affair for the middle-class families, while the working-class students often merely depended on school personnel to receive professional advice and information (Lareau, 2011). Although the education system set up barriers, the working-class children did not give up. As an Australian study had shown, few working-class students took advantage of their social network to get more information about the university's admission requirements (Threadgold, 2009). They asked their middle-class friends' parents to help them prepare for the application interview (ibid). The research demonstrated that young people drew on the cultural capital available to them and utilized these to resist the constraints of social structure. Therefore, the migrant children's educational trajectory should be considered as a combination of individual agency and structural constraints. Examining agency among young people as a set of practices in which they attempt to shape their future social positions and challenge social stereotypes is vital for my project.

3.1.4 Habitus

The inequality of social structure was embodied in individuals as 'habitus' as Bourdieu termed it. Bourdieu defined the concept of habitus as 'a system of dispositions, that was of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking.' (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). The dispositions were embodied in the individuals, such as body movements, consumption, language, and knowledge acquired in ongoing and improvisatory interactions in society (Bourdieu, 1977). The capital inherited and acquired from multiple fields was incorporated into the individuals' habitus. The habitus could be pretty different between working-class children and middle-class children because they possessed different amounts and types of capital (Lareau, 2018). Their clothes, behaviours, and attitudes towards studying were all constituted and influenced by capital (Reay et al., 2010). Guided by this point, my research also paid attention on details of migration children's lives to display the rural-urban division. Furthermore, the social structures were internalized as habitus through individuals' daily

experiences that made people take the social world for granted (Bessant et al., 2020). It implied that individuals accepted their positions and played a role in reproducing the social structure rather than questioning or changing their situations. In brief, people were familiar and accustomed to the routine of external surroundings because they lived in the world, and the world was also in people as the forms of habitus (Reay, 2004). Individuals' habitus were constrained by surrounding structures which acted as boundaries to what individuals might achieve and how to expect future.

However, habitus also provided a way to focus on agency and structure simultaneously. Habitus was 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures.' (Bourdieu, 1977. p72). The intrinsic characters 'durable' and 'transposable' of habitus were essential to incorporate the impacts of social structures and the role of agency in shaping Chinese migrant children's identities. On the one hand, the cultural capital and childhood experiences acquired from home at early ages formulated the children's primary habitus, which was durable and entrenched during their school years (Brooker, 2015). Children acted and responded unconsciously, obeying their habitus (ibid). Thus, social origin predetermined one's habitus as a 'structured structure' that was durable and profound (Reay, 2004). When habitus met a social field of which it was the produce, it was like a fish in the water (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). 'It does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.127). Therefore, migrant children were more likely to generate a sense of alienation and exclusion facing with the unfamiliar environment in the city.

On the other hand, the 'transposable' was another characteristic of habitus. Individuals were not captives of the habitus, they were could make certain choices to react in particular events. Individual's immersion in different fields reshaped the habitus. During lifetime, people participated in some practices within different social fields and acquired various forms of capital, which were distinct from the capital inherited from their families (Thatcher et al., 2015). Individuals searched for ways of transforming their habitus if there was a disjuncture between habitus and field. The insights of field-habitus mismatched relationships enabled us to understand why rural migrant children did not quite fit in the urban areas and to what

extent they changed their habitus. Even though most of the migrant children in my research were born and grew up in the city, they did not feel like a 'fish in water', as part of their embodied habitus was closely tied with migrant families and rural culture.

The habitus was permeable and responsive to the external surroundings, shaped and reshaped by the new experiences. Specifically, the transformation of habitus did not mean that the individuals created an entirely new habitus to replace the primary habitus. The new experiences became a new layer add to the primary habitus structured by earlier socialization. Family was the first place where children learned how to act, think and speak that constructed the children's primary habitus and identities (Revis, 2019). While school was the place where migrant children in-depth immersed in the host culture and achieved 'second-socialization' (Moskal, 2014. p.46). Habitus as a product of social conditionings was endlessly transformed but 'within limits inherent in its ordinary structure' (Bourdieu, 2005, p.47). Following Bourdieu, I suggest the habitus of migrant children revealed the traces of their trajectories, including the experiences they encountered in different fields and the capital they accumulated along the way. The habitus was structured by an individual's past and present experiences and shaped one's future practices. In this sense, habitus provides a useful tool to explore how migration experiences affected rural migrant children.

In this section, I explain the two most essential features of Bourdieu's habitus. The 'durable' habitus emphasizes how the structures and personal histories are inscribed in one's habitus. An Individual's habitus disposes of the individual to do certain things in certain ways that reflect an individual's social position and relationship to the dominant culture. At the same time, individuals' habitus is reshaped when they enter into different fields. The 'transposable' of habitus generates a wide repertoire of possible actions that enables individuals to struggle and resist the outside world based on their positions and expectations. For Bourdieu, 'it is the interaction of habitus, capital and field that generates the logic of practice' (Reay, 2004. P.440). Moreover, I illustrate the interdependence of capital, field and habitus. A change in any one aspect affects the other two. Thus, my research combines three concepts as a framework to understand how migrant children positioned themselves in the city and how agency is achieved by these children in concrete situations.

3.2 Translating Bourdieu's concepts to youth agency

The concept of agency has become more prominent in youth studies as 'children are active meaning-makers in their own lives' (Allen, 2008, p565). Align with a critical youth studies perspective, my research pays attention to young people's agency. In this section, I try to define agency in youth studies, including what the concept implies and, more importantly, how the agency is linked to Bourdieu's concepts. Agency was viewed as a capacity that individuals could act based on their own will, regardless of the constraints of social structure (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Sim, 2016). Likewise, Heinz (2002) defined agency as an ability to develop life plans according to individuals' interests and capacities. Affected by neoliberalism, individualism and postmodernism, a number of youth studies adopted a similar interpretation of agency asserting that young people were free to make choices and decisions (Threadgold, 2009; Spencer & Doull, 2015). Especially in a society where 'opportunities are open to all', individuals were engaged as active agents with the freedom to access wealth and resources (Evans, 2007, p: 13). Therefore, the future was in one's own hands, and individuals would find ways to cope and overcome the challenges to construct their biographies (Beck, 1992). Based on these explanations, the heart of agency is the freedom to make a choice.

However, the agency is more complicated than exercising free will. The definitions above overemphasized the importance of agency and had been criticized for neglecting the constraints of structures such as institutional barriers, gender divisions or social inequality (Coffey & Farrugia,2014; Spencer & Doull, 2015). On the one hand, social origin predetermined individuals' education destinies and career outcomes through the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). According to Bourdieu's theory, people lived within structures and were structured by structures (Bourdieu, 1977). The people from different social groups tended to make different choices including language, behavior and lifestyles because they had different experiences and chances. As a result, individuals' agency in the society was limited by the historically and socially situated conditions. On the other hand, Bourdieu also emphasized the power struggles in the field that left room for the individuals' agency. In The Weight of the World (Bourdieu et al., 1999), Bourdieu showed that the underprivileged people strive and resist

structure restrictions by acquiring economic, cultural and social capital to change their lives. Once people acquired a certain amount of capital through upbringing and education, they could begin to cultivate capital far away from their social origin. This meant that individuals habitus was an infinitive capacity. Again, individuals were not captives of the habitus, they could react differently in particular and novel situations.

According to Bourdieu's theory, the agency should be theorized as the capacity to act within certain constraints. The definition of agency and itself in youth studies is more ambiguous and controversial because children live with a family who cannot be considered independent individuals (Furlong et al., 2011; Lancy, 2012). Thus, some scholars questioned the existence of youth's agency. For example, the children could not make meaningful decisions such as changing their residence, changing school, or changing the social environment around them (Fuchs 2001; Hitlin & Long, 2009; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000). The working-class children in a British town had to attend a public junior high school because their family could not afford the expensive tuition fees of private school (James, 2015). Through their older siblings, these children had already realized the serious bullying problems of the public school, but they did not have any other choices (ibid). The family condition limited the choices of these working-class children leading to the reproduction of existing inequality.

Besides, the dreams and future career plans were not completely determined by children but influenced by their parents' suggestions and expectations. In Davey's doctoral dissertation (2009), he showed how a middle-class mother persuaded her daughter to choose a medical school to maintain her social position. The children from the middle class owned more capital and opportunities than working-class children, but they still could not decide their future(ibid). Most children had a moral debt to their parents for bearing and raising. Consequently, the children would like to fulfil their parents' wishes (Lancy, 2012; Young, 2010). Especially in the Chinese society where emphasized the filial piety requiring children to respect and obey to parents' wishes (Fei, 1992). The young people 'have no choice but to choose' (Giddens, 1991. p:81). Although the strict parent-children relationship and sense of debt profoundly influenced children's choices, children did not always listen to their parents. I would like to quote the title of Nyamnjoh's article, 'A child is one person's only in the

womb.' (2002). Certain capital acquired in the school enable children to be competent and influential agents within migrant family. The agency enabled children to consider 'what I want to be' and 'how I represent myself' and challenge the parents' expectations assigned to them.

3.3 Conclusion

Bourdieu's work highlights several perspectives critical to my research. The concept of cultural capital serves as the primary lens for my observations and analysis. Social identity is not only a cognitive construction because it is associated with capital that shapes one's opportunities and behaviors. Who we are and where we come from based on the history, language, and culture (Hall, 1996), gives individuals a sense of belonging to the social world (Erikson, 1963). Combing with the concept of field, the capital is divided into dominant cultural capital and non-dominant cultural capital. Most of the previous research about disadvantaged children mainly focuses on dominant cultural capital but ignores the impacts of the non-dominant cultural capital which also increases migrant children agency to achieve social mobility and struggle with social inequalities. Based on the assumption of non-dominant cultural capital, I explore how the migrant children acquire and utilize the different types of capital to create their own identities. The concept of habitus provides a middle ground for the debate between agency and structure. The habitus operates below the level of consciousness providing individuals with a sense of how to behave and respond in certain situations. The individuals' identity has been routinely created and reinforced in these activities. Bourdieu emphasized the impacts of the social structure, but he also left space for the agency in how young people make their own choices and construct their lives. Overall, by introducing the Bourdieu's key concepts, I link the migrant children's identities with individuals' agency and social structure. The identities of migrant children are an intricate interplay between urban and rural culture, school and family, agency and structure, past and present.

Chapter 4: Research Context and Fieldwork Methods

This chapter includes two parts: research context and the primary methods of the thesis. At first, the chapter explains the two main sites, including school and home site. Both of them can be considered as a physical space and a symbolic structure that highlights the relationships between those who interact within its boundaries. After that, I explain how I gained access to the field and built relationships with participants. The second part of this chapter, I elaborate on why ethnography is the most appropriate method for this research and describe the principles guiding the research methodology. To demonstrate the rationale of the research design, I explain why I selected participant observation and in-depth interviews and how I used these methods in my fieldwork. The subsequent section explains the data analysis process. At the end of this chapter, the approach to research ethics will be explained.

4.1 The two main fields

The first fieldwork started in mid-January 2019 and lasted for three months. In the first fieldwork, I attended the LS school five days a week from Monday to Friday, and I stayed with the students and teachers from 8 am to 5 pm. During the school day, I participated in and observed classes and activities, including basketball matches, parent meetings and final assessments at the end of the school year. In April 2019, I decided to leave the school because I felt immersed enough in the school context and needed time to analyse the data before the second fieldwork. In October 2019, I came back to China and started the second fieldwork for another three months. During this period, the participants were graduated from the LS school and went to different schools. Therefore, I turned my attention to the migrant children's families and their life outside school. I visited migrant children's houses and interviewed their parents. Although the second fieldwork was less intense, the migrant children's house was a significant site to understand their daily life. The following sections introduce the two primary sites.

4.1.1 The school site: LS school

The Qingdao government established LS school (pseudonym) in 2012 to accommodate children within the nearby communities. There are 1,049 students and 112 teachers and staff in LS school. Almost 70% of students are from a migrant families. This school is a perfect site for me to meet some migrant students, teachers, and parents and observe and participate in their daily routines. Moreover, the school is an important site where migrant children interact with urban cultural, including knowledge, values, manners, languages, and social skills.

The location and surroundings of LS school

The LS school is located at the edge of the Lao district[5] of Qingdao and within a neighbourhood which comprises a majority migrant population. On the macro level, the Lao district is a suburb rather than a downtown district. From the SN district, which is in the city center, and the most prosperous district in Qingdao, (where I was based) it took me one and a half hours to reach the school with a combination of underground travel and walking. Lao districts' education and income levels were relatively lower compared with the central district because Lao district was a new development region that consisted of rural villages and farmlands only a couple of decades ago. Until 2008 when the city government decided to develop this area for urban expansion it was covered in farmland[6]. Relatively swiftly it became converted into new apartments, business areas, and industrial parks. Significant institutions, including the city government, registration agencies, large shopping malls and hospitals, are largely remain in the SN district. All public resources and services are disproportionately allocated to the people living in the city center leading to different levels of citizenship within the city. Therefore, the local residents who are born and grow up in the SN district considered themselves as the real 'Native Qingdaoness'[7] with a sense of inborn superiority. Migrant children have to travel to the inner city districts if they want to access to

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[5] Qingdao has been divided into seven different districts by local government, including four downtown and three suburbs. The four downtown districts represent the historical core of the city. The three suburb districts are historically more recent extensions reflecting the growing population and economy.

[6] Qingdao has been divided into seven different districts by local government, including four downtown and three suburbs. The four downtown districts represent the historical core of the city. The three suburb districts are historically more recent extensions reflecting the growing population and economy.

[7] The first six digits of Native Qingdaoness's ID number was 370202. The first two digits were '37' referring to Shandong province. The third and fourth digits were '02' referring to Qingdao. The last two digits were '02' referring to the SN district. Only the local residents who hold urban Hukou and are born in the SN district can have this type of ID number. The ID number is the most effective tool to identify the Native Qingdaoness.

these services. The spatial separation becomes more distinct when the migrant children hang out in the city, which I will explain in Chapter 7.

Far from downtown, house prices and rents are much cheaper in the Lao district, which became a center for local working-class populations and migrants. Checking property information service website, the average rent in the city center is around 5,000 yuan per month (equal to £557.64) which is two to three times the price of flats in the Lao district (Qingdao News, 2020). The lower living expenses, including rent, food, education fees, and other services, attracted migrant families to gather in this district that also reveals the low economic and social status of this group. In China, as cities continue expanding, there are building sites everywhere which demands for cheap labour (Li, 2015). Almost every city has a peripheral area like the Lao district to accommodate the increasing rural migrant families because of the accelerated pace of urbanization (ibid). Therefore, both the geographical siting of LS school as well as its marginal population structure, are comparable to many other schools of this kind in other areas of China.

On the micro-level, the school building is relatively new, but the school's surrounding environment is disturbing and chaotic. An industrial zone and wholesale market tightly surround the school. There is a large viaduct bridge near the school's sports ground[8] and an endless stream of vans and trucks transporting goods from the vast industrial park on four-lane roads. In the classrooms, the noise of traffic is a constant hum penetrating the windows, and sometimes blaring car horns interrupted teaching. For instance, a Math class was typical.

> While teacher Wang was explaining trigonometric functions, suddenly there was a deafening noise of firecrackers[9]. Everybody was startled and teacher Wang had to interrupt her flow of teaching. Teacher Wang remained calm, she was getting used to things happening. Some students started to look out the window and tried to find out what happened because it was much interesting than trigonometric

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[8] There is a football fields at the center of sports ground which is surrounded by 200-meter plastic racetracks. On the right there are two basketball courts and two Ping-Pong tables. The playgrounds is the main site for students to play and participate in sports.

[9] In China, playing firecrackers is a symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune. Therefore, Chinese people often play firecrackers during the opening ceremony.

functions. Some students sitting at the front complained about the random noise which disturbed their learning. From my field notes 02/03/2019

From students' perspective, the chaotic surroundings exposes themselves to a noisy environment that is not conducive to concentrate on studying. Besides, the dirty and unkempt surrounding also affects the physical activities of students in LS school. Students enjoy walking and playing in the sports ground during lunch breaks. However, there are huge mounds and a construction site near the sports ground, as shown below. The wind blew in, and everything is covered with sand and dust especially in windy winter. For example, after playing basketball I found that students' faces and hands were very dirty. When they washed our hands in the toilet, the water turned black. It was hard to wash, as there was no liquid soap in students' toilets[10]. I worried about personal hygiene, but it seemed that the migrant children had no problem with it and were used to studying in this environment. Moreover, there is a vast industrial park near the school, containing many larger industrial sites and small manual workshops. Most migrant students' parents work in these factories as temporary or permanent workers. Following the local education policy called 'Hua Pian'[11] the migrant parents could only send their children to the LS school. As a result, the migrant children could not apply for the middle school in the city center, concentrating on high-quality education resources. The 'Hua Pian' policy profoundly limits children's educational choices and outcomes.

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[10] In the LS school, the teachers' toilet and students' toilet are separated from each other. Teachers' toilets are located in the office building, while students can only use the toilet in classroom building. The segmentation displays the rules and hierarchy system of the LS school.

[11] In China, the local governments ensure that school-age children and adolescents are enrolled in a school near the places where their residence is registered. If the students do not live in the school district houses, they cannot attend that school. Therefore, the migrant students cannot attend schools in other districts because their parents are working and registering in this area.

Picture 2: The playground of LS school.[12]

The LS school's ranking

The LS school ranked 56th among 62 middle schools in the Lao district based on its enrollment rate. The low rank of the LS school in the educational system implied the low social position of migrant children in the city. Even worse, the lower rank and poor reputation forced the LS school to absorb migrant students rather than academically excellent middle-class students to solve the increasing shortage of student enrollment. Some teachers in LS school claimed that they were working at a 'migrant school' instead of a 'public school', because most students were from migrant families. The first time I went to the LS school,

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[12] To compromise anonymity, this photography does not show the school names or any prominent sign. Through the picture, the school's environment presents visually to readers. The ground, car and green lawn are all covered with dust

teacher Dong gave me a general introduction to the school. He was the director of the administration who was also a history teacher teaching ninth grade. During fieldwork, I stayed at the same office[13] with Dong and the other two teachers. Dong was unafraid to express his complaints and negative opinions of the school in front of other teachers. The other two teachers agreed with him.

> ' ... Basically, this is a migrant school. If the parents have money or social relations, they will send their children to a better school. We all know that most of our students are migrant students, so the parents from the city will not choose our school. The local parents think that the migrant students dislike studying and will have a negative impact on their children. However, this is true. Our teachers do not send their children to this school because they know the school better than anyone else.' I interviewed Mr Dong on 15/01/2019.

In the teachers' minds, the LS school was not 'a good school'. Through short conversations with different teachers, I found that they blamed the school's poor reputation on the migrant students, whom they described as bad performers in both studying and behaving. They ignored that the poor quality of the teaching and limited educational resources might be the main cause of the school's low rank.

The migrant students held different opinions toward the LS school. The 'academically-orientated' students considered that the LS school was not good enough, while the 'troublemakers' [14] hold an opposite opinion. The 'academically-orientated' students placed a high value on the education and wanted to attend top high schools, so they needed to compete with all the students in Qingdao, especially the students from the elite middle schools. The 'academically-orientated' stressed that the quality of teaching was poor in the LS school.

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[13] The office is located on the second floor of the teaching build. The Dong and other two teachers (Wang and Pan) are all administration directors, the middle-level leader in the school, sharing this small office. Typically, teachers are allocated into different big offices according to the subject. Dong, Wang and Pan have administrative tasks, so they stayed together. They are the first persons I had known at school. So they are more open and close to me. We eat lunch together in the staff canteen.

[14] The term 'troublemakers' refers to the students who were not good at study and did not abide by the school discipline. However, if a student's academic performance is poor but keeps school rules, the teachers will not consider the student a 'troublemakers'. In the LS school, the 'troublemakers' usually sit in the back row in the classroom. Teachers always tend to ignore them because the teachers do not want to waste time on these students.

They thought that their teachers were not incompetent and the school lacked educational resources to support them, which forced them to attend cram-school (Buxiban in Chinese)[15] during weekends. Therefore, they were not satisfied with the LS school, but none of them blamed the bad reputation on the migrant students.

Conversely, the 'troublemakers' responded that they are 'satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the LS school. The 'troublemakers' refers to the migrant students who give up studying. Although the 'troublemakers' went to school as other students, they mentally dropped out because they believed that education was useless for their future which I explained in the Chapter 5. Most teachers given up the 'troublemakers', as long as they did not break school rules. Ironically, the 'troublemakers' were satisfied with the school and the teachers, even they disliked studying and school's rules. There were several excerpts from the 'troublemakers'.

Student Feng: The LS school is a nice middle school in the Lao district. Every year, a dozen students join the No.2, No.58 and No.19 high school[16]. You should check the KF school[17], it is the worst school. I interviewed Feng on 24/01/2019.

Student Zou: I like the school. The teachers are not bad, and I feel that the teachers care about us. Even I am not good at studying. Sometimes the teachers push me to do my homework. They do not totally give up on me, especially my physics teacher. I interviewed Zou on 28/01/2019.

Student Xu: The people in our school are nice and friendly. I have many friends in this school. We always play together and have some fun in school. As a migrant student, I feel free and comfortable in school. I had a short conversation with Xu during breaks on 24/01/2019.

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[15] Cram school is an after school institution that provides extra academic tutors and curricular activities to improve students' academic performances. Many parents send their children to cram schools because of the significance of education and school entrance exams.

[16] No.2, No.58 and No.19 are the top three high schools in Qingdao. In order to attend these schools, the students need to score no less than 700 points out of 780 points on the high school entrance examination.

[17] The KF school is another public middle school that ranks at the bottom in the Lao district.

Based on the interview with the 'troublemakers', they invested in the social dimension of school. They did not have much academic stress as 'academically-orientated', because most of them planned to go the vocational school after graduation. Generally, as long as the students could afford the tuition, they could attend the vocational school by meeting a very low academic entry requirement. Besides, the LS school provided a relaxed and familiar environment for migrant children, because most of the students were migrant children or the local children from the working class with similar socio-economic conditions that facilitated the integration of migrant and local students as a homogeneous group. Although the 'troublemakers' were not academically orientated, they felt proud of their classmates who attended the top high schools.

A typical school day

Most students need to take seven lessons from 8 am to 5 pm from Monday to Friday. The first class begins at 7: 50 am. However, the school required students to arrive on campus at 7:30 am. Getting school early gives students time to submit their homework and make preparations for the class. Every Monday morning, before the first class, the school would organize flag-raising ceremony to strengthen patriotic education and announce important information. All the teachers and students are required to stand on the playground. Every week the school selects four 'model students' to raise the national flag in front all students which is viewed as a kind of honor and rewards.

Picture 3: The flag-raising ceremony

After the flag-raising ceremony, the students come back to the classroom and have their first class. Each class period is 45 minutes and there is 10 minutes breaks between every lesson. After the third class, all the students are required to run 800m as setting-up exercise. The principal Fan thought the running directly contributes to students' physical fitness as well as getting relax that helps students get ready for the last class in the morning. After the fourth class, the students have their lunch at 11:45 am. However, there is no students dining halls, so the students need to move the lunch boxes from the canteen to their classrooms. The students have 45 minutes for lunch and breaks. During lunch breaks, the boys often come to the sports ground to play basketball or football, while the girls like to walk around in the campus after lunch. Before 12:30, all the students need to come back to classroom and take 40 minutes naps. Sometime, the headteacher Wang would come to the classroom to supervise the students, in case the 'troublemakers' make troubles.

The first class in the afternoon begins at 13:30. There are three classes in the afternoon. When the first two classes finish, the students have a thirty minutes break for free activity to get some fresh air. After the last class, most of the students could leave the school after they clean

the classrooms and campus. However, the academic students in the ninth grade need to stay at school and have two extra lessons because they are going to participate in the high school entrance examination in few months. The school looks forward to seeing more students go to the top high school which will improve school's reputation. The students have a heavy course load and rigid schedule each day.

The hierarchy system of the LS school

The school rules and daily discourse enhance the unequal power relations between teachers and students. To clarify the unequal relation, I illustrate it with the spatial structure of LS school. There are three main buildings on campus, including *Mingde, Mingli and Huiya* buildings. The principal's office, vice- principal's office and party secretary's office are at the top of *Mingde* building, where is teachers' offices with three floors. Through the windows, the principal Fan can overlook the whole campus, providing a sense that everything is under control. The middle-level leaders' offices and regular teachers' offices are located on the second and bottom floors. Students' classrooms are located at *Mingli* building. The students are not allowed to use the facilities such as cafeteria, meeting rooms and toilet in *Mingde* building which is for teacher-only. Specifically, the students are not allowed to access to *Mingde* building unless the teachers want to talk with them. The students are unwilling to visit teachers' offices where they consider as a 'scary place'. Besides, cleaners are doing the clean work in *Mingde* building. Conversely, students need to clean the classrooms and public areas by themselves. The spatial separation of LS school sets restrictions to limit the movements and behaviours of students that reinforces the unequal relationship between teachers and students, making teachers more powerful and influential in the school.

Moreover, unequal power relations exist in physical space and have been embodied through everyday school practices. For example, students are required to stop and salute whenever they meet a teacher on campus. Before each lesson, the students should stand up and bow to their teachers. If the students do not follow these rules, they will be criticized or punished by their teachers. Based on these little things, LS school attaches importance to obedience and

conformity, which are embedded in school rules and everyday activities. The migrant students are trained to be obedient to authority that matches the goal of Chinese citizenship education (Li, 2015). Listening to teachers and following school's orders are part of the teaching content in LS school, which forms the new habitus of the migrant children. If we considering the school as a whole field, the migrant students are placed at the dominated positions. Once, the school holds a meeting in the gymnasium. The students are required to sit on the cold floor, but the teachers sit on comfortable chairs. However, none of the students questioned the unequal treatment because the students took it for the grant. Through everyday practices, the unequal power relations between teachers and students has been produced and reproduced.

Picture 4: mobilization meeting for the high school entrance examination

4.1.2 The migrant children's houses

Most rural migrant children in my study rent a house from private landlords. Due to the Hukou system, the rural migrants are excluded from almost all housing welfare projects such

as 'public rental housing' (*gonggong zulin fang*), 'economic and comfortable housing' (*jingji shiyong fang*), 'cheap rental housing' (*lian zu fang*) and 'protection housing' (*bao zhang fang*)[18] (Niu & Zhao, 2018). The welfare system set clear boundaries between urban residents and rural migrants. Although the Chinese government reformed the Hukou system to eliminate its restrictions, the influences of the Hukou system have deeply penetrated into welfare systems and institutions that maintained the division between rural migrants and urban residents (Huang et al., 2010). To avoid the financial burden, almost all the city governments in China does not have any housing policy for rural migrants (Tao, 2017). Thus, the Hukou system acted as a stratification mechanism that put rural migrants in a marginalised position and reinforced their identity as 'outsiders' in the city. To save on rent, migrant families must live in poorly constructed buildings in the suburbs. The rural migrants gather around and form the 'urban village'[19] in the city. The 'urban village' is composed of small huts and dirty alleys, creating a dramatic distinction between the skyscrapers and modern constructions in the city that reflected the problem of the polarization of wealth in China.

Besides, overcrowding, poor quality and poor sanitation condition are common problems for migrants (Tao, 2017). According to the official survey from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2015), nearly half of the rural migrant families lived in a one-bedroom hut without a kitchen and bathroom, which means that 4 to 6 people had to share one small room. In the following section, I take Zou's home as an example to display the housing characteristics of rural migrant children.

The location and surroundings of Zou's home

A dozen ago, there was only farmland and abandoned garbage around Zou's home. As migrant workers continued to move and gather in this area, the local residents and government realized that their land was popular for migrant workers. Thus, the local

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[18] The housing welfare projects are a protection scheme for the low-income people in China (Niu & Zhao, 2018). However, only the people with local urban Hukou can enjoy the housing welfare projects.

[19] 'Urban village' is a village serving as a community for low-income migrants in the city. The 'urban village' is a typical phenomenon caused by the urbanisation and social transformation in China.

government pulled land together to build small huts and rented to migrant workers. The first time I visited Zou's home, I almost got lost in the 'urban village', which was like a maze composed of sterile rows of yellow concrete houses. To my surprise, Zou's home was much more remote located than I imagined. As I discussed above, the Lao district is a peripheral area of the city. Unfortunately, Zou's home is located at the edge of the Lao district.

Every morning Zou needed to spend half-hour getting to school by bus. Before he arrived at the bus station, he needed to walk around ten minutes on a narrow dirt road. The school required students to arrive at school before 7:30 am. As a result, Zou had to get up at 6 am. If he got up late, he had to eat his breakfast at the bus. However, the urban peers were living in the communities near the school.

Poor infrastructure was another huge problem of 'urban village'. There is no hospital, shopping mall, supermarket, entertainment, restaurants, or other living facilities near Zou's home. More specifically, the Apple Maps showed that the nearest hospital is an hour away by bus. However, Zou thought his life was not influenced by it. If Zou or his family members became sick, his grandmother would use a folk prescription from her hometown to treat them. Zou told me that when he came down with chickenpox, his grandmother applied honey on his skin and put salt, vinegar, and ginger in the water to wipe his body. Although Zou's home was far from public services, his family tried to use their way to make up for the lacking of living facilities.

The living conditions of Zou's home

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China survey (2020), the average living space of rural migrants in urban areas was only 16.9 square meters per person in 2019, only one-third of the average space compared to urban citizens. Zou, his grandmother and uncle, crowed into a one-bedroom flat approximately 40 square meters in size[20]. Even this tiny room cost a proportion of his family income. The salary of Zou's uncle is around 3,600 yuan per month which is the primary source of family income. Zou's grandmother does not have a job

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[20] Zou lived with his uncle and grandmother because his parents divorced when Zou was three years old. His father got married again and started a new family. Zou never met his mother since his parents got divorced.

because of her age. However, his grandmother tries to contribute to the family income by collecting and selling recycling garbage. When I entered Zou's home, the first thing that impressed me was piles of carefully sorted garbage lying on the kitchen floor. Zou explained that his grandmother collected this garbage from the street, including plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, and cans. The packed and cluttered garbage deteriorated the living condition of Zou's home. However, this worthless garbage is a valuable resource for Zou's grandmother. It is hard to imagine that a 68-year-old woman needed to search trash bins to make a living.

> 'I do not want to be a burden for my family.' Zou's grandmother said, ' However, I am too old to find a job. The factories or individual businesses never hire older people. So I need to find a way to make some extra money.' (Chatted with Zou's grandmother at Zou's home, 05 October, 2019.)

Zou's grandmother lives in the only bedroom. Zou and his uncle have to live in the living room. The tiny living room space bears a full range of daily activities for Zou, such as studying, eating, playing, and sleeping. There are only a few simple and necessary pieces of furniture. A convenient plastic closet is located at the living room corner, which is used to store Zou's books and clothes. Zou is not satisfied with it because he has to compete with his uncle for more storage space. Moreover, Zou's uncle puts his work clothes in the small closet, dirty with a strong sweat odor that makes Zou unhappy. Opposite the closet is a rickety dining table with all kinds of mixed stains which is left by the previous tenant. As long as the dining table could satisfy basic life needs, Zou's family would not buy a new one. After dinner, Zou does his homework on this dining table because there is no room for another desk. However, the urban children usually have an independent studying desk in their bedrooms. Consequently, Zou's exercise books are often spotted with oil and water. In the evening, the living room turns into the bedroom. Zou has to share a sofa bed with his uncle. To avoid suffering from his uncle's snoring, Zou puts on earplugs. There is no private space for Zou that is a common problem for migrant children (Niu & Zhao, 2018). The overcrowding problem and poor living conditions seriously affected migrant children's life.

'I really want to have my own room. The pressure from my grandmother and uncle is intense. I don't have any privacy. When I play games or do my own business, I have to listen to their nagging. I mean, it is annoying.' (Interview with Zou at Zou's home, 05 October, 2019.)

Usually, Zou is required to go to bed before 10 pm because his uncle goes to sleep early. When his uncle turns off the lights in the living room, it is a clear signal to sleep. Zou has no alternative but to obey orders. Otherwise, he might be scolded by his uncle. However, sometimes Zou's uncle has to work the night shift and stay at the factory[21] from 11 pm to 7 am, which is a happy time for Zou. At that time, only Zou and his grandmother stay at home. After his grandmother go to the bedroom, Zou would have some freedom and personal space. Without parental supervision, Zou would stay up late playing games or watching Japanese Animation on his mobile phone.

In this section, I use Zou's home as an example to highlight two common characteristics of migrant children's homes in the city. First, migrant children often lived in a remote 'urban village' to save rent. Due to the lacking of supporting and living facilities, the migrant children are excluded from the public services and urban life, which reinforces their identities as 'outsiders'. Second, the migrant children are seriously affected by the poor living condition, especially the overcrowded problem. All the migrant children in my research have to share a bedroom with other family members or even live in the living room.

4.2 Gaining access to the field

4.2.1 Gaining access to the LS school

Gaining access to a school was a challenge. In mid-July 2018, I emailed six public schools in Qingdao by using their contact information on schools' websites. However, there was no reply. I presumed that the education of migrant children was a political 'hot potato' in China. The schools' leaders might have been worried that my research might damage the school's reputation and cause uncontrolled impacts. I had no choice but to take advantage of my

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[21] Zou's uncle worked in a factory as a security guard.

parents' social network to solve the access problem. Fortunately, they introduced me to Fan, the principal of the LS school, who allowed me to explain my project. The permission from Principal Fan eventually allowed me to get access to LS school. As a condition for access Fan asked me to act as a new intern teacher. The intern teacher's identity helped me get involved in the school system, especially getting familiar with other teachers who regarded me as one of them. Some of them even tried to set me up with single colleagues. Besides, Fan arranged a desk in the dean's office for me. Thus I had many opportunities to talk with other teachers and participate in school activities and work.

4.2.2 Gaining access to migrant children's home

To visit the migrant children's home, I needed to get migrant parents' permission. Compared with gaining access to the school, getting permission from migrant parents was much easier because I had an endorsement from the LS school. The school gave me a public identity as an intern teacher. Due to lacking education, the migrant parents and children could only depend on teachers' supporting. Thus, the migrant parents trusted and respected the school teachers that helped me build trust with them. For example, Si's father asked me to look after his son when we first met. 'Teacher Ma, could you (Nin in Chinese[22]) please pay more attention to my son. He is smart, but he is inclined to be lazy. If he makes any mistake in school, please tell me.' said Si's father. During the conversation, I attempted to explain that I was a PhD student instead of an intern teacher, but Si's father insisted on addressing me as 'Teacher Ma'. The identity as 'intern teacher' indeed helped me gain parents' trust.

Besides, the LS school created many valuable opportunities to directly contact parents. For example, I participated in the parents meeting, and I was responsible for distributing children's academic reports. During the parents meeting, the teacher often spoke in a condescending tone and criticized the migrant children's performances. The teacher occupied the dominant position, while the parents did not have chances to make their voices heard. After the parents meeting, some migrant parents came to me and asked me about their

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[22] 'Nin' and 'Ni' both mean you. Nin is the respectful form of you. The Chinese people use Nin when they talk to someone older than them or want to show respect to that person. Usually, he will use Ni to call me because I am much younger. However, he insisted on using Nin because he thought I was his son's teacher.

children's performances. I often highlighted their children's advantages that had been ignored by teachers. For instance, Zou was categorized as a 'non-academic-oriented student' by the teachers, because he often slept during classes. I told Zou's grandmother that Zou was good at speaking Japanese and had a strong self-learning ability showing a different perspective of Zou. Thus, the migrant parents were eager to discuss their children's situations with me on the 'WeChat' [23].

Most of migrant parents welcome my visits because the teachers visited their home before. The LS school required the teachers to visit students' homes to collect and verify students' information, including home address, contact details and parents' occupations. The parents could not refuse the compulsory home visit. To avoid misunderstanding, I explained to the migrant parents that I was only to represent myself rather than the school before I visited their home. I also asked permission from children before I went to their homes. Generally, the parents were the authorities in the family who could make the decision on behalf of their children. However, I treated the children equally by asking for their permission. Fortunately, the five key participants also welcomed me to visit their home because they viewed me as a close friend through the interaction in school. In the following section, I elaborate on how I built a relationship with migrant students.

4.3 Relationship building process

At the start of my LS school fieldwork, eliminating the distance between students and me was the most urgent and challenging task. Many empirical researchers employed a strategy to act as a volunteer teacher to approach students when doing ethnographic research about the identities of migrant children in China (Li, 2015; Xiong, 2015; Zhang, 2015). This approach provided valuable opportunities to observe migrant youth's behaviours and school lives, but it still maintained distance and unequal power between researchers and migrant children. To overcome these obstacles, I switched my role of an intern teacher to a close friend who

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[23] WeChat is a popular chatting software in China. It allows users to send text messages, images, videos and documents. The parents and teachers are in the same online chat group that provides a platform to promote communication between family and school.

concerned about their feelings and ideas. By spending time participating in migrant children's activities, they gradually opened their hearts and shared their stories with me.

4.3.1 My age and outlook

The trust between participants and me was the most crucial factor determining the quality of the material I collected from fieldwork. Building rapport with teenagers aged 14-16 can be challenging. Due to the acceleration of physical and sexual development, they are sensitive to external circumstances and have a strong sense of self-esteem (Rubin, 2007). My age and appearance helped me to shorten the distance.

The first time I appeared in the classroom, the students stared at me with 'oohs'. I supposed it was because of my appearance and clothes. In order to make a great first impression, I wore formal suit and a pair of brown leather shoes[24]. The math teacher Wang[25] required students to be quiet and introduced me as an intern teacher. After a short welcome, I sat back in the classroom and began to do my observation. It was a math class about the quadratic function, which was boring for the students sitting behind. During the class, I found several students often turned back to look at me.

Some migrant students thought I was 'young and handsome' like an older brother to them. The students were relaxed when they talked with me, especially the boys. However my age and gender became a disadvantage in relation to female participants. Following school rules on safeguarding girls male teachers had to avoid being alone with female students in a closed room and to keep the door open, in cases where this was not possible. Some girls also responded to me with shyness.

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[24] I changed this outfit one week later because most teachers in the school dressed casually except the school leaders. I thought that wearing suits are too formal, which would distance me from the students. Therefore, the first thing I learned from my fieldwork is the dressing code in LS school.

[25] Teacher Wang is the Academic Dean who is a middle-level leader in the school. She is also the math teacher of the class I participated in. Furthermore, in the LS school, almost every staff has teaching tasks except the principal. The teacher Wang complained that she was too busy because she needed to produce double work compared with regular teachers.

4.3.2 As a newcomer

All my participants were students in ninth grade. They had stayed at this school for almost three years, so they were familiar with everything of this school. The daily routine of the students was strict, repetitive and boring. As a new person in this school, I became a novelty, especially for the 'troublemakers'. The students wanted to figure out what kind of person I was.

For the 'troublemakers', collecting and sharing my personal information was a new way to have fun. For example, when I walked around the playground after lunch, a student from another class came to me and asked me whether I am the new teacher from the UK. I asked them where did they get the information. The student answered 'My friend told me.' with a proud face. Apparently, the connections to get information was a kind of social capital the students wanted to show off. Having more friends reflected that they were popular in school. Especially for the 'troublemakers', being famous was an effective supplement to replace dominant cultural capital. The students got friendship, love, social skills and knowledge from school that were valuable and meaningful.

4.3.3 The similar experiences

To conduct in-depth interviews, I tried to mitigate the effect of 'cultural asymmetry' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.611). According to my observation, the students were unwilling to speak to teachers who unconsciously put pressure on students. Based on their previous experiences, they thought I might report their behaviour and performance to their parents. To revise my image, I shared my experiences growing up in Qingdao and gradually detached myself from an intern teacher to become an older brother and a trustworthy secret-keeper. I told them the difficulties I faced when I was in middle school and how I dealt with problems. Talking about my own stories helped me to shorten the distance with migrant students that enabled me to be closer to reality and avoid a set of presuppositions.

Besides, the informal conversations during class breaks allowed me to know migrant students' hobbies. The common hobbies formed a bond between migrant children and me. For example, Feng and Si liked playing basketball and watching the NBA (National

Basketball Association) games. When the students argued about which team would win or which NBA player was better, I joined their argument and put forward my own opinions. During the argument, I was not a researcher, but a basketball fan using basketball knowledge to persuade them. It reduced the impacts of unequal relationships between me and migrant children that helped me to participate in their daily conversation. However, other adults as authorities often made judgments on migrant children's hobbies. For instance, some teachers and parents thought talking basketball is wasting time.

These shared experiences and interests helped me gain acceptance from migrant students, and became a member of their little group. I found that the same student told different stories to me between begin and later stages. It reminded me that becoming a close friend to the participants was a time-consuming process. Until they shared secrets with me, I was convinced that they were open to me. The longer I spent with migrant students, the closer I felt I was getting to the truth of their lives. I knew them as individuals with different hobbies, problems, personalities and family backgrounds that were important to construct and shape their identities. As a young ethnographer, the first fieldwork experience was filled with excitement and quandary. The fieldwork was a learning and reflexing process that changed both sides. By changing students' attitudes, I realized that I should be more reflective and conscious of my image and behaviours, which influenced the research process and data I collected. Only by getting close with migrant children could I understand their world through their perspectives.

When I returned to the UK, we kept in touch through an online chat group at QQ[26], which is a popular social media channel among young people in China. We chatted during the weekends because some were in boarding schools[27] where they were not allowed to use a mobile phone. During the holiday season, we exchanged holiday greetings and shared the holiday plans. I could not follow migrant children to the rural villages, but the QQ offered me a chance to

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[26] QQ is an instant messaging software service and web portal developed by the Chinese tech giant Tencent. QQ is not only a social media. It also provides online music, shopping, microblogging, online games, voice and video chat, email and file transfer. Besides, the account of QQ can be used to log in to other websites, games, social media and applications. Moreover, even in other applications, you can find your friends by searching their QQ accounts. Therefore, QQ is a very powerful application in China, especially for teenagers.

[27] Some of the migrant children go to boarding schools after graduating from LS school. In boarding schools, they need to stay at school from Monday to Saturday morning every school week.

know what happened. For example, Sui had sent me a photo depicting her grandparents making Tofu to prepare for the New Year Eve meal that offered me valuable martials to know what happened when the children came back to the rural villages. Besides, the migrant students posted news about their experiences, feelings, and photos on personal pages and interacting on social media became both an important a tool for staying in touch.

Picture 5: Sui's grandparents are making Tofu[28]

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[28] The picture also shows the living condition in the rural village. Therefore, migrant children's pictures provide amount of valuable information and some nice discussions.

4.4 Profiles of key participants

It was essential to select the right participants who could provide helpful and relatively comprehensive information to answer the research questions. In other words, the key participants being selected should be competent and representative in the research topic (Benjamin & Kanwal, 2012). The gender, ethnicity, class, position of participants might affect data, analysis and interpretation (ibid). I elaborately selected five migrant children containing three boys and two girls to guarantee comprehensiveness and representativeness. Moreover, there were significant differences among participants academic performances to reflect their different attitudes toward education. However, the small sample size could be a potential limitation that led my research to ignore specific aspects of this group. This section provides detailed information about the key participants.

Si

Si is a 15-year-old boy who was born in Anhui province and moved to Qingdao with his parents. In teachers' eyes, he is a smart student with good academic performance, ranking in the top 10 in his class. Si's parents run a small business together selling the decoration material. Si is officially categorized as a rural migrant child because he does not have the Hukou of Qingdao. According to both institutional and cultural perspectives, Si's hometown is the little village called La in Anhui province. When Si was six, he was sent back to La and attended a rural primary school for two years. At that moment, his parents were too busy to look after him and his little sister. They asked for supports from Si's grandparents. Thus, Si has a strong emotional link to the rural village because of the returning experiences. During the interview, Si used two Chinese words, '*Jia*' (literally means home) and '*Lao Jia*' (literally means old hometown), to distinguish between Qingdao and La. Si used '*Jia*' to represent Qingdao and used '*Lao Jia*' on behalf of La. Although Si used '*Jia*' to refer to La sometimes, he never used '*Lao Jia*' to refer to Qingdao.

Sui

Sui is a 16-years-old girl who was born and grew up in Qingdao. Her parents' hometown is a rural county called LY, about one and half hour's drive from Qingdao. She went back to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival and other important festivals almost every year because

her grandparents were left behind. However, Sui felt that she was a stranger in her parents' hometown. Except for her grandparents, she was unfamiliar with other relatives. However, Sui's father reminded her not to forget the rural hometown where their ancestors lived.

Her father is an electrical technician, and her mother is a temporary domestic worker without social insurances. Her parents totally earn around 8,000 Yuan (equals to £880) per month. The income is relatively low in Qingdao, but it is higher than working in a rural area. Sui's father is graduated from high school, while her mother only finished middle school. Her parents experienced much discrimination in the labour market, so they required Sui to study hard and set high academic targets. To meet her parents expectations, Sui studies hard ranking top 3 in the class. In teachers views, Sui is one of the most diligent and clever students based on her model attitude and performance in school. I never saw Sui disrupting the class or breaking school rules. At the end of each term, Sui would receive many awards from school to honour her academic achievement and good behaviour.

Tang

Tang is 16-years-old girl who moved to Qingdao at six years old. Tang's parents are from a rural village called Lc where is located in Shandong province. Tang does not have strong connections with Lc. Tang claimes that Qingdao is her hometown, even she is born in Lc. Her parents moved to Qingdao and worked in the construction industry. Tang has an older brother who is married and moved out. Her older brother lives in the same community as Tang in order to take care of each other.

Tang achieved average marks at middle school and always kept quiet in class, making it easy to ignore her. However, there is one thing Tang is known for by her peers: She is crazy about Chinese celebrities and pop stars. Particularly on her homepage, there are full of pictures and information about the pop stars. If anything happens to her idols, she will update the blogs to express her feelings. She is a big fan of pop culture and can remember every idol's birthday. She will be angry if someone says a bad thing about her idols.

Zou

Zou is a 16 years old boy. His parents are from a rural village in Henan Province. He was born in Qingdao and had never left this city. When he was three, his parents divorced. His mother left Zou and moved to another city. At the same time, his father remarried and had two more children. Zou was forced to live with his grandmother and uncle in a small flat. Zou's grandmother was the closest person to him who replaced his parents raising him. However, his grandmother could only meet the fundamental life needs because of the limited economic condition. Zou claims that when he grows up and makes money, he will definitely repay his grandmother.

The economic condition of Zou is the worst among the five key participants. His grandmother does not have a job, while his uncle is a security guard in a factory. The salary of his uncle is the primary source of income. Zou told me that he had been self-abasement and depressed during primary school because of his family. Zou even cut his arm with a knife. To prove his words, he showed me the scars on his arm. There are many short strips of scars. Fortunately, Zou had overcome these negative moods through watching Japanese cartoons. He loved Japanese cartoons such as 'One Piece' ,'NARUTO' ,'One Punch-Man' and 'Hero Academy', which inspired and encouraged him.

Feng

Feng is 17, a boy whose parents are from the Jiangsu province. He was born and grew up in Qingdao. Among the 5 participants, he was the only one who did not have any siblings. Feng's father is a cook, and his mother is doing small business. His parents' income is relatively high among rural migrants, even his parents without high educational background. His parents are too busy to look after him. Feng's parents believe that it is the teachers' responsibility to educate their son. Feng's father told me, 'I know my son. He is not college material. I just hope he can be safe and health in school.' (Chatted with Feng's father, LS school, 24 January, 2019) Feng's parents hold low expectations of Feng's academic performance. Lacking parental control, Feng is one of the most famous 'troublemakers' in the LS middle school. He ranks at the bottom of his class since he entered the middle school. All the teachers in the school have heard Feng's stories because he often broke the school rules, including smoking, fighting, playing mobile phone and skipping classes. Once, he even

burned a biscuit during a class for fun. Feng noticed that I was taking a photo of his pranks but he smiled at me instead of stopping it. Although Feng has been recognized as 'troublemakers' by teachers, he has many friends and is popular in his class.

Picture 6: Feng is burning biscuit[29]

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[29] This photo was taken on 26 March, 2019 in the classroom. There was a smell of burning in the air. However, the teacher chose to ignore.

There are three main reasons why I chose these five migrant children as the key participants. Firstly, they had different characteristics and situations. In many previous studies, the migrant children were considered as a homogenous group. However, the five participants in my research had different strategies to cope with the external environment that showed significant variability. They actively negotiated their identities in the migration process which might contribute to the different outcomes and future. To answer my research questions, I put them together. Second, the five participants were close to me. A close relationship with participants was necessary to collect more information. Third, the five participants were close to each other, which gave me an excellent opportunity to explore the peer relationship.

4.5 Approach

I tried to explore the experience of marginalization among migrant children in their everyday lives and how they deal with being stereotyped. I was interested in the practices of children in connection with the broader structural forces surrounding them and how the school environment socialized them. According to the fieldwork practices of existing research related to youth identity in this field, ethnography is the most appropriate method for studying a vulnerable social group (Willis, 1977; Duits, 2008; Eisenhart, 2001; Li, 2015). Its empathetic principles allow me to understand the world from their perspective and distance myself from my world. Therefore, I participated in migrant children's real lives, built equal relationships with them, and tried to empathetically understand their thinking and behaviour. This was particularly pertinent as my research focuses on migrant children in school where is a highly hierarchical place with formalized power relations between adults and children. Besides, in the theoretical framework chapter, I demonstrated that I employed Bourdieu's key concepts in my research. Bourdieu revealed a preference for ethnography because it can be a creative and useful methodological device to investigate how social inequality is rooted within the school system and integrate individuals with social structure (Lopez, 2016). That is another important reason that leads me to approach my research through an ethnographic lens. In the following section, I introduce the data collection methods and how I employed them in my research.

4.5.1 Observing and participating

Typically, participant observation includes being a simple observer, being a complete participant, or simultaneously observing and participating (Jorgensen, 2015). Only observation means the researcher does not interact with people within the study, making it difficult for the researcher to understand the meanings of individuals' words and behaviours (Duits, 2008). Conversely, full participation means the researcher entirely becomes a member of the group being studied, which may lead the researcher to be immersed in the world of participants and miss the objectivity and whole picture of the group (Bernard, & Gravlee, 2014). To avoid these limitations, I adopted moderate participation moving between the role of observer and participant during the research that allowed a good combination of involvement and necessary detachment to remain scholarly. In one word, the participant observation enabled me to be an insider and an outsider at the same time.

In the initial phase of fieldwork, the observation was more important than participation because it helped me to be familiar with the daily routines and structure of LS school. By employing participant observation to collect data, I regarded myself as the 'measurement tool' in the study (Duits, 2008 p.64). To dig deep into migrant children's world, I must sharpen myself, the 'measurement tool', first. For example, I spent the first week observing the clothes of students and teachers to learn their dressing code. Dressing like migrant children in sportswear and sneakers was an effective way to get close to them and adapt to the school settings. Once I walked with a group of students at the playground, Principal Fan asked us to go back to the classroom. The students were surprised that Fan did not recognize me. Besides, I also put attention on my behaviour and role. I sat in the back of the classroom to observe various activities during classes and breaks, which were important occasions for me. To alleviate the impacts of my presence, I tried to avoid disrupting activities in class.

In the field, I wrote a research diary and took photos to record the details of my observations and personal feelings that allowed me to track the research process and reflect on my thoughts. The field notes included key activities and unexpected events, which were occasions of migrant children shaping and reshaping their identities. I took the field note in Chinese because I wanted participants to know what I had written down about them. The migrant students often steal a glance at my notebook, especially at the beginning of the

fieldwork. The migrant students were curious about my notes because they probably suspected me as a 'spy' sent by their teachers to monitor their behaviour. When children realized that I was merely observing and recording their daily activities without judgments, they dropped their defences and disguise. Sometimes the field note even inspired interesting conversations. For example, Feng found out that I had written down the incident that the headteacher punished the students who played basketball during the lunch break. Feng was one of these students. Feng: 'You should record more such things. And you know what, this was not the first time we have been punished for playing basketball. We love playing basketball….' The participants would provide more unexpected information if they found the interesting topics in my notebook.

The observation enabled me to record participants' routine activities that generated a whole picture of the social group. Moreover, the time dedicated to observation allowed migrant children to get used to my appearance. As a result, I could smoothly participate in students' activities when we were familiar with each other. Participation means participating in day-to-day activities and becoming a part of the group being studied, the participants include the researcher in the activity and community (Spradley, 2016). I kept myself from becoming too involved in case I lost the focus of my research. When I participated in students' activities, I tried to balance observation and participation, which helped me keep a necessary detachment.

I grasped every opportunity to observe and participate in migrant children's activities inside and outside of school. For example, the ten-minutes break between classes was a great opportunity for me to participate in students' activities, including gossiping, playing mobile phone, and sharing snacks. I also participated in the activities organized by school and teachers, such as the Monday morning flag-raising ceremony, class meetings, parents meetings and extracurricular activities, which were valuable chances to investigate how teachers and students clarify their identities to others. During the second fieldwork, I visited each participant's new school, to observer their changes in the new settings. The visits to their new schools were informal because I did not get the permissions. Therefore, I decided to switch the focus from school to migrant children's families and their urban life.

In addition to school, the migrant children spent most of their time at home. The home visits were the most effective way to observe migrant children's family life. I observed their home's surroundings and living conditions by visiting children's homes, which I had portrayed in section 4.1.2. The home visiting helped us understand how the overcrowded and poor living conditions influenced migrant children's lives.

Furthermore, home visiting offered opportunities to observe the interaction between migrant parents and their children. When I visited the children's home, their parents treated me as a guest accompanying me throughout the whole tour. For example, Feng's parents asked their son to provide services such as making tea and preparing fruits. To my surprise, Feng often ignored teachers' orders and broke school rules, but he obeyed his parents' orders. Even though Feng was considered as the 'troublemaker', he was an obedient son. It seemed the traditional filial piety culture profoundly affected migrant children. Once I went to Si's home, his father required Si to stay in his bedroom with his little sister when we talked in the living room. Si's father did not want Si to join the conversation. Until I was leaving, his father asked Si to come out and say goodbye. I suspected that Si might feel dissatisfied with his father. However, Si told me on QQ that he took it for a grant because his father was the head of the family, who often made decisions for him. I analyzed how parents affect migrant children's identities in Chapter 6.

Besides, the after-school activities were equally significant, often ignored by the studies related to the identities of Chinese migrant children (Li, 2015). Getting rid of the school's strict regulation, some migrant children took advantage of their leisure time doing things they like, such as hanging out, shopping, playing video games, or watching anime. Once I attended an animation show with Zou, who was a huge fan of Japanese Animation. To my best knowledge, so far no other researchers had attended animation show with migrant students to explore how they integrated into urban life. During the animation show, Zou explained the story and culture behind the classic character and how Japanese Animation influenced his life. At present, he could speak Japanese fluently that helped him to find voice acting jobs on the internet. When I shared this finding with the headteacher Wang, who had been taught Zou for three years, she was shocked. In her impression, Zou was a quiet boy

who was not good at study and usually fell asleep during classes. In the animation show, Zou was confident and energetic that showed a different side of himself outside the school. Some types of skills and cultural capital were ignored in the school system. Participating in these activities offered good access to migrant children's world.

However, there is a debate whether an adult researcher can fully participate in children's social worlds (Dyson, 2005). Especially in school settings, children and adults are highly hierarchically structured. Due to the unequal power relationship between adults and children, the children are reluctant to speak with a researcher or let them participate in their activities (Li, 2015). To avoid putting pressure on migrant children, I attended to the activities organized by them rather than forcing them to participate in research activities. Besides, I used multiple strategies to reduce their discomfort illustrated in section 4.3 Relationship building process. Moreover, Mandell (1988) argued that children's voices would be neglected if they were viewed as immature and inferior by age and cognitive skills. In fact, 'Children are the best experts on local environmental conditions as they relate to their own lives (Chawla, 2002, p.14). Thus, my research regarded migrant children as independent individuals who had self-decision, self-awareness and active creativity to resist the external influences. To fully participate in migrant children's social world, I left the stereotypes and prejudices outside the field and respected their choices and lives.

4.5.2 In-depth interviews

I conducted ten interviews with five key participants. On average, each key participant had participated in two in-depth interviews during the research. I started the first one-hour formal interview at the end of the first fieldwork in March 2019. The purpose of the interview was to discuss their experiences of migration and their school life. The second in-depth interview was conducted in December 2019, and concentrated on migrant families. Moreover, I also conducted five in-depth interviews with children's guardians at their homes. With permission from participants, the interview process was audiotaped to avoid missing any important information. The interview content was stored in a password protect folder kept confidential for my transcribing purpose and research only. All the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The problem was that when I translated their talking into English, some content might not be

exactly the same as what they said. To avoid misrepresenting my participants, I used Chinese terms directly and added a footnote to explain the context[30].

The researcher could gain rich qualitative data about how participants described their experiences and interpret the meaning of activities through interviewing participants (Rubin, 2012). During the participant observation, I had short conversations and informal interviews with participants. However, these short interviews were discrete and scattered, lacking a theme. Moreover, I might misread the behaviours, feelings and expressions of migrant children. To explore ambiguous views collected by observation, I employed in-depth interviews to gain an additional understanding of migrant children's world. It offered me an opportunity to ask questions that participants were reluctant to answer in the school setting in front of other students.

Trust was an essential precondition for successful interviews, especially with children (Roulston, & Choi, 2018). Some children were out-going and talkative in their daily life. However, they became shy and nervous during interviews, who could only speak few words or give a short answer that cut down the effectiveness and validity of data (Duits, 2008). To avoid such a situation, I spent two months making friends with key participants before carrying out the first one-to-one interviews. Besides, the time and location for the interview also had a great impact on participants. Children were more open and active in some circumstances than others (Benjamin & Kanwal, 2012). For example, the playground was an appropriate place to conduct unstructured interviewing and natural conversation, even gossip (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Most of the existing research related to Chinese migrant children conducted the interview at school's restroom (Li, 2015) or office room (Liu & Yu, 2017) during school days. Due to the strict timetable and rules in LS school, I argued that the school was not a perfect site to conduct in-depth interviews because it was a structured environment to implement teaching and studying activities. After careful consideration and discussion with migrant children, most of the interviews took place during weekends in a coffee shop. The rest were conducted at children's home. When the migrant children took off school uniforms

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[30] Sometimes meanings are lost in translation because there is no equivalent English word capable of replacing the Chinese words.

and were away from the constraints of school, they became more open and free to express themselves.

The interviews were semi-structured to encourage participants to talk more and share more personal experiences. I had designed and discussed the interview questions with my supervisors before conducting my fieldwork to make sure the interview questions were close to my main research questions. The list of interview questions was set out in the appendix. However, the pre-designed interview questions only provided a guideline for the in-depth interview instead of strict instruction. According to the participants' responses, I changed the order of the questions. Moreover, to maintain the interview flow, I did not require participants to respond to every question posed by me. I kept the interviews as two-way processes like a conversation rather than an ask-answer process. For example, Si, a migrant child from Anhui province, asked me, 'Have you been to Anhui before?' when he introduced his parents' hometown. I told him about my travelling experiences in Hefei, a city located in Anhui province. Then Si told me his stories and experiences of food, customs and people of his parents' hometown with great enthusiasm. Thus, I got a deeper insight into how the social experiences and changes during migration made up the social life and identities of migrant children.

4.6 Data analysis

When I felt there was nothing 'new' to be noted, I believed that I had collected sufficient data. I left the field site and switched my focus to data analysis. The analytical process was based on raw material collected from fieldwork, including field notes, pictures, and interview recording. Data analysis occurred during the fieldwork because the key ideas that jumped out from the data would facilitate and guide the subsequent fieldwork. The findings influenced my focuses on the following observation and interviews. For example, hanging out with migrant children in different locations inspired me to think about how consumerism culture influenced migrant children's identities and formulated a new topic for the in-depth interviews. When I came home, I reviewed my filed notes, which provided rich detailed descriptions of my observation and feeling. After prolonged fieldwork, I found myself among

the immense information. Therefore, I needed to select useful excerpts with particular emphasis on school life, rural life and urban life that I could use to exemplify my research findings. I used a different colour to highlight emerging themes and added my reflection of the initial field notes. The themes were compared, ordered and related. Then I categorised the raw materials into different topics, which could potentially be used as evidence representing a particular theme. I put data in separate files based on their themes. The coding process helped me find out the striking patterns from the data collected from observation and interviews. Therefore, I review raw data at the first stage and put the relevant excerpts under different themes.

However, to some extent, the selecting and grouping process of collecting data was unethnographic because it was entirely controlled by myself. I could not avoid my personal beliefs of what is relevant and significant. Although the ethnographical approach let the migrant children express their voices, I decided how to interpret and evaluate the data. To yield a reliable conclusion, I critically examined and reflected on how my pre-existing perspectives would affect the reliability of evidence. Moreover, I tried to maintain the original perspectives of migrant children and use their words to underpin my arguments. Besides, I needed to claim that the theme construction occurred from the beginning of the fieldwork because I took my research questions into the fieldwork. In the initial phase, I concentrated on picking out the data which could respond to the pre-developed themes. As a result, I might ignore some valuable information provided by the migrant children. For example, I did not pay particular attention to the data related to the different gender roles of migrant children. Before I further categorised and analysed, I reviewed the raw data once more, which I regarded as unrelated to compensate for subjectivity. The new ideas were arising continually throughout the reviewing process. Thus, the analysis and coding were time-consuming and went back and forth, where the initial data became more transparent and more systematic.

After the fieldwork, I had read through the data several times. To fully capture participants' perspectives, I tried to organize the data into a coherent pattern by linking and grouping them and adding new, more abstract categories. The messy and disorder data was finally pieced together to better frame my understanding of the data. I initially established 36 categories to

code data, which were narrowed to 22 by revising and merging. For example, a coding category named 'TSMCF' (teachers' suggestions for migrant children future) was integrated into a broader coding category of 'TPMC' (teachers' perceptions of migrant children) because teachers' suggestions were based on their perceptions of migrant children. Then, I began to create a whole picture of the data to display intricate links between coding categories. Moreover, the selected data were analyzed through the applied theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu's capital, field and habitus to answer my research questions. Therefore, I listed coding categories with associated concepts which made data become meaningful and supporting evidences of my arguments presented in the dissertation report. The coding categories were crucial elements used to report my findings and guide my research. In this section, I illustrated how I analyzed the collected data. The analysis process was an iterative process rather than linear. However, the iterative was far from a simply duplication or repeat, but a kind of a spiral providing more insights.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were throughout the entire process of conducting ethnographies. The research project was approved by the University of Southampton Faculty Ethics Committee on 16th December 2018 (ERGO ID: 46106). Being excluded and discriminated by both the Hukou system and low socioeconomic status, migrant children are more vulnerable and sensitive than urban peers. Thus, I had carefully considered the ethical issues during all stages of the research process to protect these migrant children from potential harm. I had been open with the schools and participants about the aims of my research. I told them my research was about the identities of migrant children. To make sure migrant children understand my research purposes, I explained my research questions. The participants knew I was observing and studying them.

Before the migrant children could participate in the research, I had obtained their parents' permission by sending them consent forms. I gave migrant children a letter to take home to their parents, informing them about the basic information of the research. Most parents agreed with the consent forms because they hoped their children could study with a PhD student. According to the later conversations with parents, I realized that they took me as a

role model to encourage their children to study hard. There were very few opportunities for migrant children to contact a person with experiences of studying overseas. The parents thought my experiences could broaden their children horizons. That was the reason why most of the parents agree with their children to join my research project.

Due to the theme of this research, I realized that some of my interview questions might evoke uncomfortable and upset memories, especially the questions related to discrimination and prejudices. To avoid potential harm, all the participants were informed that they could withdraw at any point during the research process without any reason. Besides, the interviews were arranged at the participants' convenience. The interviews conducted at weekends when they are after school rather than occupying the school time or breaks, so the students would not miss classes. The location of the interview was a coffee shop where was an open and public place. Thus, I avoided being alone with female students in an enclosed complying with Principal Fan's requirement. During fieldwork, I kept reminding myself to be sensitive and attentive to my words and behaviours when interacting with migrant children because I did not want my research to put any pressure or negative impacts on them.

As an ethnographer delving into participants' private lives, I had an obligation to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. For the ethics requirements, the names of the school and the individuals were anonymized used within this project. The pictures I used in the research would not show any personal information or characteristics that could be traced back to the respondents. However, I had to admit that the participants probably could find out who is who in my research because they had seen my field notes and participated in my research. Thus, the notion of confidentiality was not worked for five key participants. Fortunately, the children told me that they did not mind being recognizable. They thought it was good that I would write something about them letting more people read their stories. I believed that they trust me because I did not disclose any secret of migrant children to the teachers or adults. In general, my research strictly followed the rules and regulations of the University's research ethics strategy to protect participants' rights and confidentiality.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter introduces the fieldwork sites, relationship-building process, research methods, analysis process and ethical considerations. I explain the whole process of my fieldwork, including the preparatory process, implementation process, and analysis process, which allowed the readers to evaluate the quality of my data and analysis. The ethnographic and child-centred approach helped me offer a deep understanding and thick description of rural migrant children in China to explore how they position themselves in the urban-rural dichotomy society. In the following chapters, I present the results of my investigation. Chapter 5 focuses on the interaction between teachers and migrant children in school to illustrate how the identity as 'migrant children' had been produced and reproduced in daily school practices. This chapter provides an insight into migrant children's school life and how school maintained the social reproduction. Chapter 6 concentrates on the intergenerational interactions between migrant children and their parents through displaying the annual returning trip. The migrant parents wanted their children to maintain connection with the rural hometown and inherit the rural values they thought important which constituted two main sources of rural traditions. The migrant children have different ideas that revealed how they negotiated their perceptions of rural villages. In Chapter 7, I move to migrant children's urban life. The social distinctions result from consumerism culture deeply influenced migrant children's identities. Thus, Chapter 7 to explore what identities did these children constructed and how they express themselves to deal with the structural constraints.

Chapter 5: Urban School Experiences of Children

In this first results chapter, I focus on children's urban schooling. The purpose of chapter 5 is two-fold. First, this chapter aims to reveal how the identity label 'migrant children' was continuously created by the LS school and how teachers interpreted and imposed the label in everyday conversations and practices. To address this issue, I depict how migrant children interacted with various aspects of the school settings around them, including the rules and curriculum in school, and how they negotiate this positioning. Second, this chapter explores how school experiences shaped migrant children's academic performance, aspirations and educational trajectories. Results reveal that the teachers' low expectations and authority affected the majority of migrant students' academic outcomes and attainment, maintaining social reproduction. On the surface, the result is not different from the previous research on migrant children's educational outcomes (Lan, 2014; Tse, 2016). The contribution of my research is that I also examine the migrant children's agency by revealing their creative strategies to navigate the teachers' evaluations and regulations.

5.1 The strict rules in school

The culture at LS school can be described as hierarchical. The spatial and hierarchical system I depicted in Chapter 4 reflected the distinct demarcation of social status which was reinforced by strict rules. The strict rules regulated students' appearance, behaviour, and language. The school rules applied to all the students, but teachers routinely singled out migrant students for critique and reprimands. Consequently, the migrant students were sensitive to the criticism of their performances.

Appearance requirements

The LS school required all students to maintain a standard appearance, including a clean school uniform, name tag and acceptable hairstyle. Boys were not allowed to have long hair, and girls could not keep long fringes or perm their hair. Every morning, two teachers and two

security guards stood at the school gate to check students' appearance. If the students' appearance did not meet the schools' requirements, the teachers would stop them, record their name, student ID and class number. Then the students were required to stand at the gate until other students entered the school. To enhance the disciplining effect the school would give their class penalty points as part of the weekly 'outstanding class competition'[31]. Every class received 100 points at the beginning of the week. If a student violated school rules, the points would be deducted from his or her class. Judgements about their behavior and appearance were included in the evaluation system. At the end of the week, the class which achieved the highest total points would be rewarded 'The outstanding class', which was associated with headteachers'[32] compensation and performance appraisal. This award could be considered a piece of evidence that the headteacher had strong leadership skills. Zou reported his experience with being reprimanded in this way:

> Zou: My class had been penalized one point because I forgot to bring my name tag last Tuesday. My headteacher asked me to go to her office. She told me that if I make the same mistake again, I should not come to school. And she asked me to write a self-critical letter[33]. It made me feel bad all day. I just left the name tag at home. Come on. It was not a big deal why was she so mad? (Interview with Zou, 26 March 2019)

Interestingly I never saw the teacher Jia blame Zou for sleeping in class. Besides, even though Feng, another migrant student, burned a biscuit in the classroom, Jia did not get angry. In fact teachers displayed ambiguity in relation to behaviour inside the classroom that might have been considered disruptive. Exchanges inside the classroom were not recorded by the school and did not affect teachers' own reputation in more public performances of collective discipline such as the 'outstanding class competition'. This might be one explanation why Jia

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[31] The 'outstanding class competition' was based on the students' daily performance rather than academic performance. The competition was used to motivate students to obey the school's discipline and rules. Moreover, the headteacher would get a 200 yuan bonus if his or her class won the competition.

[32] Every class has a headteacher who is directly in charge of managing the affairs of the class. In addition to academic performance, the headteacher needs to pay attention to students' safety, health, behaviour and appearance. Thus, the headteacher is the person who is most involved with the class.

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chose to ignore certain disruptive behaviours. It also suggested though, that many teachers were not invested in migrant children's academic progress and. At the same time, teachers reserved the right to interpret the school rules in ways they saw fit, and to ultimately decide situationally which behaviour was acceptable and which was not.

Personal hygiene

The school required students to maintain personal hygiene. Teachers often reminded the students to keep school uniforms clean and take baths regularly. However, for migrant children this could be a challenge because of the poor living conditions. While I was not able to always see this first hand, children, such as Tang and Zou, talked about it :

> Tang: The water supply of my home was unstable. I often suffer from a shortage of water. Last time the tap water company cut off the water supply because of the sewage works construction. My parents used every bucket to store water, ensuring that there was enough for domestic needs. I could not shower for three days until the water supply resumed. (Interview with Tang, 11 October 2019)

> Zou: It is so cold, and as there is no heating system inside the home. I need to wear as much in the house as when I go out. Moreover, the solar water heater frequently does not work in winter. So there is no hot water either. That is why I do not like to take a bath. (Chat with Zou, 2 March 2019)

Due to the inferior socioeconomic status, the migrant families were crowded in a shabby rented house at 'urban village'. Compared with the urban standard, the migrants were still in poverty (Zeng et al., 2020). The public media had stigmatized the common images of rural migrants as dirty, uneducated and poor because of their working and living environment (Lin et al., 2011). Poverty and dirty were associated with the label of 'migrant workers' (ibid). The poor living conditions had a negative impact on migrant children's hygiene which reinforced the stereotype. One of the teachers even told me 'If you want to recognise migrant students at first sight, just look at their appearance, their sleeves, cuffs and collars.' Through teachers' eyes, the migrant children were identical to their parents, who were assumed to be dirty and lazy. At the school teachers complained about children's hygiene on different occasions.

As I entered the teachers' office one day, teacher Wang exclaimed, 'The classroom is reeking with the smell of dirty feet!. The migrant children should wash regularly and change clothes.' She stopped and looked at me. 'Especially the boys. Look at their greasy hair!. They have not taken a shower for days!' Wang added after a slight pause. The teacher Dong sitting opposite was correcting students' homework. He joined this conversation without looking up, 'Yes. Especially the boys. They sweat a lot after the PE class. From two seats away, you can smell stale sweat. The migrant children lack adequate hygiene.' Wang continued 'It is all because of their very low quality (*suzhi*)[34] and rural origin.'(Field notes, teachers' office, LS school, 6 March 2019).

Complaints about migrants children's poor hygiene were also made publicly in the classroom . The last class on Friday afternoon was regularly used to review students' performances over the week. All the students stayed quietly in their seats. On one such occasion the headteachers , Jia said, 'Some of you do not forget to wash school uniforms and take a bath during this weekend. Do not be too lazy. Look at your clothes. You are so dirty. Many teachers complained to me that the smell of our class was so bad. You should be ashamed of yourself. Moreover, some of you need to cut your finger nails. Do you think long fingernails are very fashionable? Can you not see the black chunk under your fingernails? It is all dirt and bacteria. Do not bring your rural habits to the school. Please pay more attention to your hygiene...' . As she spoke, her eyes rested on migrant children's faces. (Field notes, classroom, LS school, 8 March 2019)

These reprimands did not only expose migrant children to an experience of public shaming but also suggested that their lack of hygiene was an expression of being culturally 'rural', and therefore unversed in personal hygiene, ignorant and lazy (Lin, 2013). It seemed that teachers had strong doubts about their capacity to become modern urban citizens .

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[34] Suzhi refer to the overall quality of a person, including moral, academic performance, personal hygiene and mental health (Li, 2013). Suzhi was the central theme of citizenship education in the school context, compatible with the modernization of China. The school should educate children to high-quality citizens.

Migrant children's vulnerability to being stigmatized by teachers and urban peers has been noted by scholars (Li & Xiong, 2018; Zhang, 2015). These schools consider it as one of their main tasks to turn migrant children into 'modern' citizens. In my observations it became apparent that one of the routine ways in which teachers put this into practice was to remind children of their place in the urban-rural hierarchy, and had no qualms about engaging in admonitions of blame and shame . After the class meeting described above, some migrant children felt humiliated. 'Our headteacher should not say this in public. I feel she made me lose face. She should remind us privately. And not all the migrant children have poor hygiene.' Si said. Others began to openly resist teachers' directives. For instance, Feng adapted his school uniform jacket with a landscape painting and added the slogan 'peace, love and freedom' .

> As Feng said with a proud smile on his face: I am the first student who paints pictures and slogans on the school uniform. My friends think I am brave. And I encourage them to do the same thing. It is pretty cool.
>
> Me: Why do you do that?
>
> Feng: It is hard to say. I just feel it will be fun. You know it is cool to rebel against the regimentation of school life.
>
> Me: Aren't you afraid of being punished?
>
> Feng: I am not afraid of our headteacher. She gave up on me a long time ago. She does not punish me no matter what I do. (Short conversation with Feng during class break,11 March 2019)

The act of painting school uniforms was perceived as rebellious, and more specifically, the slogan itself could signify resistance and dissent. Feng's behaviour saved face for himself and helped him become popular among migrant peers. Besides, to avoid the scrutiny in the morning, Feng wear a coat to cover the painting and slogan on his school uniform. Therefore, his rebel behaviour only displayed in the classroom that would not influence the headteacher's reputation and benefits at the school. It showed that Feng had insight into the school rules and found a balance between insistence and compromise. Migrant children's agency was located in these moments when they resisted teachers' discriminations that shaped their images.

Speaking Mandarin

The first time I entered a classroom, I was attracted by the various quotes decorating the walls: 'Study hard and make progress every day' ,'Where there is a will, there is a way' and 'There is no royal road to learning' were typical examples. The school used these slogans to encourage students to study hard and stress the importance of education. However, one was different from others. It read 'Speak Mandarin, be a civilized person' (*Jiang Putonghua, Zuo wenmingren*). It did not only appeal to desirable linguistic behaviour but directly associated it with standards of civilization. Speaking Mandarin was mandatory in the school, a policy which made little difficult to urban children those who grew up in a Mandarin-speaking environment. However, many migrants children and their parents could not speak Mandarin that made them incompatible with the modern urban life (Lin, 2013; Zhang, 2015).

There were two potential reasons why schools popularized Mandarin. Firstly, it was national policy to promote Mandarin. In 2000, National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) pass '*Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*' that ensured the official and dominant position of Mandarin (NPCSC, 2001). Its ideological primacy was associated with standardization and modernization (Lin, 2013). National educational policy was about cultivating qualified talents for the Chinese economy and for realizing modernization and development (Lan, 2014). As Bourdieu reminds us, schools tend to impose the dominant class's knowledge, language, skills, and values as universal standards (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Secondly, speaking Mandarin eliminated the linguistic barriers between migrant students, urban peers and teachers. According to Bourdieu (1996), education largely depends on language, specifically, the knowledge that is taught mainly rely on a process of linguistic exchange. The currency of education is language, and it is the medium of knowledge transmission (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, the language is also a significant part of teaching content. During the teaching process, the teachers set examples for students on how to speak and use Mandarin. Before entering the field, I assumed that I could distinguish migrant

children merely according to their accents. The rural migrants and their children were habitually depicted with strong accent and broken Mandarin in public media and existing literatures (Kwong, 2011; Lin, 2013 Dong, 2018). To my surprise, all the migrant children I met in the LS school could speak fluent and standard Mandarin as urban peers. Thus, I determined to help disprove this stereotype through my example.

A Chinese language teacher Liu reminded me that most migrant students had taken pronunciation correction exercises in primary school. Miss. Liu told me 'The age between six and eight is the critical stage for the migrant student to learn standard Mandarin. That is good for them. If they miss the pronunciation training, they may not have a second chance.' Most of the teachers thought that learning correct Mandarin was essential for migrant children, laying a solid foundation for their learning and living in the city. However, the teachers ignored the other half of the story.

> Si: When I moved to the city, the most urgent task was to learn how to speak Mandarin in primary school.
>
> Me: Why?
>
> Si: Because the teachers asked me to study it. The teachers and classmates could not understand what I said. Some of my classmates even mocked my accent. They called me Xiao Anhui[35]. I did not like this nickname. And I felt excluded.
>
> Me: How did you deal with it?
>
> Si: Um, I could only adapt to this life as quickly as possible. I did not want to be laughed at, but I could not stop them. So I spent hours learning Mandarin.
>
> …
>
> Me: How about now?
>
> Si: No one calls me Xiao Anhui in middle school. Now I can speak Mandarin fluently as local people. (Interview with Si, 9 November 2019)

Learning Mandarin was a long and painful process for Si. He had experienced discrimination and exclusion in primary school because of his Anhui dialect. Scholars have pointed out linguistic discrimination in urban school contexts (Jacka, 2014; Lan, 2014) where accents are

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[35] Si moved from Anhui province. Thus, his classmates called him Xiao Anhui to laugh at his rural origin, a discriminatory nickname.

perceived to index a baggage of identities, including family background, social class and level of education (Dong, 2010). The migrant children suffered from low self-esteem and self-confidence due to their rural heritage (Jie, 2018). The capacity to speak Mandarin was part of how one could claim an identity as an urban and 'civilised' citizen. Thus, the linguistic ideology surrounding Mandarin could be regarded as a kind of symbolic violence that put the migrant students who had non-standard accents in an inferior position in the school.

5.2 Everyday communication

5.2.1 Do you want to sell vegetables like your parents?

> The third lesson for Thursday was math class. Before the math class, students were chatting and playing in the classroom. Suddenly, teacher Wang entered the classroom and looked angry. Wang just stared at the whole class without saying a word. The students quieted down immediately. The classroom was silent except for the occasional sounds of students' chairs moving around. Then teacher Wang asked a student to hand out the test papers. The teacher Wang yelled at students, 'Look at your paper. Your test result was ranked at the bottom of the school. Only two of you scored above 90. You are the worst students I have ever met. There is no future for you if you do not study hard. Do you want to sell vegetables like your parents? Remember, education is the only way to change your miserable fate.' None of the students dared to contradict her, even the 'troublemakers' sitting quietly at the back of the classroom. (Field notes, LS school, 10 January 2019)

A thick description of the teacher's criticism would be essential for readers to get a deeper understanding of daily conversations between teachers and migrant students. At that moment, I was shocked by teacher's angry outburst. However, during my stay, I found that this scene was typical. When the migrant children made a mistake or did not finish homework, the teachers offered irritated comments such as 'Do you want to sell vegetables like your parents?' 'Do you want to earn a living for lifting bricks?' or 'Think about your parents' jobs!'. The teachers tried to use migrant parents' occupations to stimulate migrant children to study hard[36]. This strategy also assisted the teachers in regulating the 'troublemakers'. The

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[36] The LS school collected family information including hukou status, ID numbers, parents' occupations, contact details, home address and so on. The teachers had the personal information of every student.

migrant parents' low economic positions were invoked to highlight the vulnerable status position of migrant students. Thus, a central theme of this section is to examine how the daily conversation shaped migrant children's identities.

Most of the migrant parents were working in low-paid jobs such as construction work, housekeeping and manufacturing works. In China's market economy money became the most important measure of success and social status (Lin, 2013). Thus, the occupations of migrant workers became the primary cause of their low social positions in Chinese society (ibid). Parents' jobs came back and forth in the daily conversation between the teachers and migrant students, which reminded the children that they were migrant workers' children. From teachers' perspective, most migrant students were probably following in their parents' footsteps and doing the same jobs. Although the school required teachers not to differentiate students based on their background or origin, they often consciously or unconsciously treated migrant students differently.

> On other occasions, teacher Liu became infuriated with Feng because Feng slipped in and out of the classroom through the back door several times during the class. The students sitting behind were distracted by Feng's actions. Finally, teacher Liu could no longer stand it. He shouted, 'You are a total jerk! Cut it out. I will not let you ruin the whole class. If you do not want to stay at school, go home and do farming.' It seemed that Feng was provoked by teacher Liu's words. Immediately, Feng angrily replied, 'Fxxk you!'. The infuriated teacher ran toward Feng and slapped his face. Then they fought with each other. The students sitting nearby tried to stop the fight straight away. I also tried to play the role of mediator, pushing teacher Liu out of the classroom. (Fieldnote in LS school, 28 March 2019)

These types of fights between teachers and migrant students were very uncommon during my fieldwork. However, it was routine that teachers verbally humiliated migrant children, in ways that typically invoked the negative standing associated with migrant parents' occupations and rural origins. On many occasions, teachers complained about the low quality

(di suzhi[37]) of migrant children that made the children feel embarrassed. Many teachers claimed that most of the migrant children were impolite and uncouth like their parents, and that this 'urban' education was lost on them. For example, the teacher Liu blamed the rural origin for Feng's mistakes and misdeeds. In teachers' eyes, the migrant children were still belonged to the rural villages especially the 'troublemakers' who refused receiving school's education.

These children's parents were not exempt from teacher blame, in fact, their parenting skills were often seen as lacking the right kind of authority. The headteacher notified Feng's parents. Feng's father came to the school and met with teacher Liu in a small office. As a witness to this fight, teacher Liu invited me to join the meeting. When I entered the office, Feng, Feng's father, teacher Liu, and the headteacher were already there. Teacher Liu and the headteacher was sitting opposite Feng's father. Feng was standing behind his father and kept his head down. These are excerpts from their conversation:

> Headteacher: Your son always talks and makes trouble in class. This morning teacher Liu asked him to follow classroom rules, but your son abused and hit the teacher. This was a really serious violation of our rules in the school. Your son is completely out of control. It would be helpful if you educated your son at home properly.
>
> Teacher Liu: Yes. It would be greatly appreciated if you could talk with your child about the importance of listening to teachers and being an obedient student. Parents are the first teachers of their children. It is not entirely school's responsibility to teach your son. If you do not discipline your son, what can we do? You are responsible for your son's fault too.
>
> Feng's father: I am sorry to give you trouble. Yes, it is my fault. His mother and I are too busy to look after him. Feng, come here and apologize to teacher Liu. If Feng makes any mistake in school, punish him.
>
> Feng: Sorry, teacher Liu. I admit my fault.

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[37] The Chinses term 'suzhi' refers to a person's innate and cultivated attributes. The main purpose of school education is to help students to improve their 'suzhi' including physical, intellectual and moral aspects.

Teacher Liu: If I were an irresponsible teacher, I wouldn't even consider being concernd about you. As you grow up, every choice you make defines whom you are going to be, so instead of apologizing to me, you need to look at yourself and ask yourself what kind of person you want to be. (Fieldnote in LS school, 28 March 2019)

Feng was suspended for one week as punishment for his mistake. During the meeting the teacher did not apologize for his offensive words or mention that he had started the fight. Based on Principal Fan, corporal punishment and abusive language were officially forbidden in the school, but the teachers used these measures. As I discussed in section 5.1, all students were required to strictly comply with the school rules and the teachers' orders. However, the school tolerated teachers' violations and improper behaviours without punishment. The double standards for migrant children and teachers reflected the unequal urban-rural dichotomy. The teachers occupied the dominant position in the school and assumed the position of being superior representatives of the 'urban culture' and 'modernization' it represented. As a result, in daily communication the teachers had the power to judge migrant children and their parents. They questioned the migrant children's capability of being a modern urban citizen. The migrant children's mistakes had been connected with their rural origin that put these children at a distinct disadvantage even further.

5.2.2 'Rural migrant children' vs 'new citizens'

Recently, the educational bureau in Qingdao demanded that teachers should use the neutral term 'new citizens[38]' (*Xin Shimin* in Chinese) and eradicate the category 'rural migrant children'. Literally, 'new citizens' means migrants would no longer be treated as temporary residents, but become new members of the city enjoying the same rights and services as local people. Moreover, the term 'new citizens' did not only refer to rural migrants, but also included more privileged and professional migrants from other cities. Compared to 'rural migrant children', the term 'new citizens' was distinctly more inclusive. The migrant students in LS school were aware of these changes:

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[38] Compared with 'migrant children', the term 'new citizen' is more appropriate and politically correct, showing that these children are considered insiders rather than outsiders of this city. In my thesis, I explained the differences between the two terms in detail.

Sui: I prefer the term 'new citizens'. It shows that the government treats us with more respect and dignity. It makes me feel less inferior to my urban peers.

Feng: Yeah. I like 'new citizens' too. Actually, the rural migrant children is a stigmatized identity for me. I was born and grew up in this city, why they still call me a migrant child. Just because my parents are from a rural village? I dislike being labelled as rural people.

Si said soothingly: That is nothing. Both terms are OK for me. You know I am moving from a rural village. You will not feel that bad if you accept that the 'rural migrant children' only suggests that you have migrated.(Group conversation during lunch breaks, LS school, 18 March 2019)

Most of the children I got to know sought to establish a positive social identity associated with their strong desire to stay in the city. The label 'new citizen' of the city helped them to challenge the stereotypes reinforced by their daily interactions with teachers. Particularly children like Feng, who were born in the city, cared about the term. Feng took it as an insult to be labelled as a rural kid. In contrast, Si introduced a different stance. He was not that averse to the label of 'rural migrant children' because he was grew up in a rural village where he had deep emotional connection. I analyzed the relationship between migrant children and their parents hometown in next Chapter to explained why migrant children hold different attitudes toward the rural origin. Most children chose to remain silent on most occasions and were frustrated that they could not escape from their rural origin. As if to compound their frustrations the teachers in LS school largely ignored these government directives and still called the students 'rural migrant children' in public and private spaces. Some teachers simply ignored the discrimination and prejudice contained in this term.

Others intentionally used the term 'rural migrant children' because they thought these children were unqualified for transforming into 'new citizens'. The prejudicial labels attached to students in public and private discourse produced negative impacts on the formation of children's social identity. During the daily interaction, the shortcomings of migrant children were magnified. From teachers' perspectives, most of the migrant children were lazy, rude and hopeless. The teachers asserted that their views were correct because of their rich

experience. It turned out that when teachers made negative comments about migrant children, they did not take into account the challenges and frustrations these children experienced. The migrant children were struggling to meet the requirements of the school. The following subsection displayed how the teachers persuaded children to pursue 'realizable' and 'suitable' jobs that limited children's life chances.

5.2.3 Being a car mechanic is the best choice for you.

There are four available options for rural migrant children after middle school graduation (Lan, 2014; Xiong, 2015; Zhang, Li & Xue, 2015). The first option is to go to a high school in the city, the most difficult one. The educational resources distribution between migrant students and urban students was unbalanced, putting migrant children at a disadvantage in this academic race (Chen & Feng, 2013). Most migrant children did not possess the same economic, cultural, and social capital as urban peers (Li, 2015), making the first option the most difficult one for migrant children. The second option is to return to their parents' rural hometown and attend a rural high school (Zhang, 2017). However, in my research, none of the migrant children chose this option because they had a strong desire to settle down in the city, which I will explain in Chapter 7. The third option is to attend a technical school in the city. After graduation from technical school, the students are most likely becoming blue-collar workers. The last option is to drop out and step into society directly, which cannot guarantee a bright future.

Teachers communicated the low career and academic expectations they had of these students through daily interaction. My fieldwork coincided with the final term before chidlren graduated from middle school, and thus lived through the first important turning point in their educational biographies. The choice to attend regular high school or technical school had become the centre of conversation among all students, teachers, and parents. The teachers were deeply involved in students' decision-making because they were more knowledgeable about the urban education system than migrant parents. They offered private consultations for migrant children and their parents to discuss the benefits and costs of their academic choices. However, the teachers were routinely pessimistic about migrant children's academic journeys.

In response to the non-academic oriented migrant students, teachers persuaded them to believe that choosing technical schools was the most reasonable option. For example, once the teacher Wang asked Zou to come to her office and talk about his future.

> The Math teacher Wang: Look at your grades. You do not have a chance to pass the senior high school entrance examination. If you do not want to become migrant workers like your parents, the Xin technical school is the best choice. I had taught a student who is in the same situation as you. He listened to my suggestion and learned car mechanics in the technical school. Now he can earn around 6,000 Yuan (£ 709) a month. It is a considerable income, right? What do you think, Zou?
>
> Zou: Well, I will think about it.
>
> Teacher Wang: Do not just think about it. Now is an important moment in your life. You should discuss this with your grandmother seriously. Just two months left for you to make the decision. If you make a wrong choice, you probably occupy the bottom of the urban hierarchy. You should understand that my suggestion is helpful for your future. It is for your good. One day you will thank me for this.
>
> (Fieldnote LS school, 25 March 2019)

During the conservation, Zou did not have opportunities to express his view. Teacher Wang, as the authority, advocated the benefits of attending the vocational school. The private consultations and guidance about school choice became more frequently as graduation approached. It was abnormal because teachers were not concerned about non-academic oriented children's academic performance in most of the school life. In fact, the teachers' low expectations were deeply implied in their suggestions, sending a message to the migrant students that they could not achieve social mobility through education system. Ironically, most of the migrant children in the class indeed had low grades and negative attitudes toward education that legitimized the teachers' judgment . Guided by such low expectations, the children were systematically degraded. It seemed teachers' low expectations and persuasion indeed influenced migrant children's choice. The less academic-oriented migrant children began to perceive vocational school as a good choice under this scenario. For example, after graduation, Zou and Feng went to the vocational school their teacher recommended. Zou explained why he chose the vocational school.

Zou: You know my result was not good enough for public high school in Qingdao. Moreover, I do not want to start work right now. How can I get a decent job with a middle school education? I think teacher Wang is right. She lets me wake up to reality. Apart from the technical school, there is no better choice for me. Actually, the technical school is not bad. And my grandmother was pleased with this outcome. At least, I still stay at school. (Interview with Zou 04, October 2019)

It seemed that the education system did not leave much choices for the non-academic oriented migrant students. The teachers emphasized that it was migrant students' inferior academic performances that restricted their choices. Through teachers' eyes, Zou and Feng were the 'troublemakers' judged as lazy and rebellious. The teachers believed that it was the migrant children themselves who should take responsibility for their academic failures. However, they ignored that the school curriculars were selected and distributed by dominant groups reinforcing the inferior position of migrant children in the educational system. As I discussed in section 5.4, the educational inequalities were embedded in the persisting throughout migrant children's school life. The school system played a critical role in social reproduction by limiting the educational trajectory of migrant children and legitimizing the idea of meritocracy. Like poor working-class children in Western literature, the Chinese migrant children were forced to repeat their parents' fate occupying manual work facilitated by school settings (Bourdieu & Passeron,1977; Willis, 1977; Walther et al., 2015).

However, some migrant children tried to defy the fates. They tried to challenge the teachers' arrangement and social stereotypes embedded in the interaction. Although they perceived that they were at a disadvantaged position in the academic race, they still chose the academic track. In a private parent meeting, the headteacher Jia persuaded Tang and her father to abandon the high school and choose the technical school.

Headteacher Jia: Sending your daughter to the Xin technical school is definitely more cost-effective than going to a high school. Even if your daughter can be admitted to a high school, she does not have a chance to succeed in the college entrance examination. How can she compete with other urban students who have

a good foundation and learning ability? You just waste your money and time. Again, the technical school only takes three years. Then your daughter can get a nice job. Many available jobs only require post-secondary education. (Fieldnote, LS school, 20 March 2019)

Headteacher Jia's conjectures expressed her pessimistic view that the predictable academic failures of Tang were inevitable, even though Tang ranked middle in her class. Again, the teachers belittled migrant youth because they thought children's previous school experiences and family education failed to prepare them for more fierce competition in high school. Apparently, teachers deemed that the migrant youth definitely could not compete with the urban children with more economic and cultural capital. Another logic behind teacher's persuasion was that the migrant children should consider her family economic condition. Compared with the college, attending technical school only needed a small investment of money and time, which was more suitable for migrant families. Besides, the college diploma cannot guarantee migrant children a decent job in recent years because of the educational expansion. Thus, the teacher suggested Tang sacrifice her college dream to repay her parents. However, the teachers' words did not let Tang give up her academic ambition. Eventually, Tang went to a public high school. During the second fieldwork, I talked about the transition with Tang.

Me: Why not listen to your teacher's suggestion?

Tang: I do not want to go to the technical school. I heard that the technical school has a terrible reputation. The teachers there are irresponsible, and the students are all troublemakers without hopes. Now I attend a high school, so I have a chance to go to college. However, I will never have a chance if I choose the technical school. Although I may fail in the end, I want to have a try. I think going to college can really make a difference in my life. Based on my parents and brother's experiences, lacking formal education is terrible. I do not want to repeat their footpath.

Me: How do you feel at the new school?

Tang: I just started for one month. Everything looks fresh. The school is much larger than the LS school. The teachers and classmates are friendly. And the

teachers in the new school do not call me a migrant child, which I quite enjoy really. (Fieldnote, bubble tea shop, 20 October 2019)

In the majority of earlier ethnographic work, the future of rural migrant youth seemed filled with gloom. Their academic failure was inevitable. However, not all the children passively accept the labels of failure arbitrarily assigned to them. Tang and other academic oriented students pass the high school entrance examination via individuals' effort and strong will. Si and Sui even entered the top high school. They spent most of their time studying and accumulating dominated cultural capital. As Bourdieu's (1977) theory, the cultural capital provided individuals with access to a higher social status. The success stories of these high-achieving children showed that the meritocratic education system still left little space for migrant children to exercise agency. They used their actions and achievements to resist the stereotypes imposed on them. These children actively participated in shaping and reshaping their identity through fighting teachers' low expectations.

5.3 Citizenship education in school

One of the key research questions of my research is to explore how migrant children negotiate and construct their identities in daily experiences. The above sections showed how the school experiences and teacher-student interactions shaped migrant children's positions in school. In addition, the teaching content and curricula also played an essential role in cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The school was a field where migrant students learned the boundaries of social rules and norms. In this section, I focus on the role of citizenship education in shaping ideas about dutifulness, patriotism and collective service as important nation-building 'modern' values.

Fostering modern citizens is a nationwide project in China, aiming for cultivating qualified citizens who are able to compete in the global economy (Li, 2015). In 2001, the State Council of the People's Republic of China (SCPRC) prod compulsory and mandated school curricula for all levels ranging from primary school to college (SCPRC, 2001). The State Council required all the schools in China to cultivate high quality citizens for the development and modernization of the country (ibid). To meet the state's requirements LS school provided

lessons on 'Ideological and Moral Education' to teach students how to be 'qualified modern citizens' once a week. I will show in what follows how the school interpreted and negotiated the definition of a desirable 'qualified citizen' based on citizen-building goals of the Chinese government. Until now, the core of citizenship education remained same including patriotism, occupational ethics and family morals, which emphasises collectivism rather than individual achievement (SCPRC, 2001; Li, 2015). I argue, though, that there was a correspondence between citizenship education in school and a market-driven economy. Specifically, the overt and hidden curriculum focused on the reproduction of existing social divisions.

Teacher Wu was responsible for teaching the course 'Ideological and Moral Education'. In most cases, she was the only one entitled to speak during the class. She did not allow students to ask questions or encourage them to express their opinions. The teaching process was top-down which was consistent with the school's strict hierarchical system. Besides, teacher Wu often read straight from her PPT and asked the students to copy down notes. The students just sat in the classroom and were passively absorbing what she said about how to be a 'qualified citizen' to support China's economic and social development in tune with national policies. However, the children were disagreed with certain aspects of the moral education. In the following subsections, I analyzed what the school wants the children to be and what children actually learned in citizenship education lessons.

Patriotism

Regarding citizenship education, patriotism, occupational ethics, and family morals are the three essential elements that imply a significant notion of self-sacrifice. To avoid repetition, I only focus on patriotism and occupational ethics in this section because Chapter 6 is about the interaction between migrant children and parents. Patriotism as the core value of being a good citizen is the most important one of them. The children had been taught to love the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese government and the motherland. The textbook used in 'Ideological and Moral Education' says, '*the Chinese citizens must place the national interests above all else. If there are contradictions and conflicts between national interests*

and individual interests, the Chinese citizens must sacrifice personal benefits to satisfy the national interests.' There was an apparent demand in textbooks that the ideal Chinese citizen should put the national interest first. At the same time, citizenship education emphasised collectivism and represented individualism as a risk to social harmony.

Once, the teacher Wu played a patriotic movie called Heroic Sons and Daughters (Yingxiong ernv) during the class. It is a classic black-and-white film released in 1964. The main characters are a young man called Wang cheng and his younger sister Wang fang. They joined the Chinese People's Volunteer Army against the U.S. forces in Korea[39]. The plot reaches its climax when young soldier Wang cheng shouts, 'Target me for victory! Target me!' to his commander when countless enemies rushed towards him. He rather dies than surrender because he swore never to yield the ground to the enemy. After his daring call, the commander let the Chinese artillery fire at Wang cheng's position. In the explosion, Wang cheng dies along with the enemy. Due to Wang cheng's sacrifice, the Chinese army won this battle.

At that moment, I heard some students mutter a curse at the U.S. forces. The students sitting at the back watched the movie attentively and quietly rather than sleeping or playing games like on ordinary school days. It seemed that playing a patriotic movie was a more effective way than cramming method of teaching. When the movie finished, teacher Wu asked students to write an article about their feelings and inspirations. I got an opportunity to read the students' statements:

> … From the movie, we realised the hardship and dangers of a campaign and the self-sacrificing spirit of these heroes. Our beautiful home and happy life are established at the expense of the innumerable martyrs' blood and life. They have heroically laid down their lives for this country and people. Currently, the international situation is undergoing profound and complex changes, which is the time to test our patriotism and courage. We should do everything that our country needs. Let us hold martyrs' banners high and march ahead along their path. It falls

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[39] Under the orders of Chair Mao, Chinese People's Volunteer Army participated in Korean War supporting North Korea from 1950 to 1953. While South Korea was supported by the United States. Therefore, from Chinese perspective, this war is to help North Korea to repel the invaders and prevent the war coming to China.

to our generation to fulfil the great aspirations and to achieve China's revival and greatness. (Sui's article entitled 'Target me for victory', 9 January 2019)

…I am deeply shocked by Wang cheng, who faced death bravely. We shall always memorialise and honour those who lost their lives for the country by completing their work to make our country more secure and powerful. However, we live in a peaceful era. How should we express our love to the motherland? As the new generation of teenagers, we should use our actions to build and protect our motherland and become valuable people to society. We should learn from the martyrs' spirits to overcome the challenges and difficulties in our life. … (Si's article entitled 'The heroes and heroines', 9 January 2019)

Sui and Si's articles scored high because they had a strong message of patriotism which was essential for this course. The extracts reflected that the migrant students realised the significance of making sacrifices for the nation which was in line with teaching content. Teacher Wu also emphasized that migrant children should not complained about unequal treatment, but to take their lack of opportunities was a sacrifice for the nation supporting the social transformation and nation policy of 'allowing some people to get rich before others'. Si accepted this view and defended for Chinese government, '*Our country is the largest developing country where still remains many problems for improving. And now we can study at a urban public school that is the best proof that China is improving.*' (Fieldnote LS school, 9 January 2019). Besides, the moral education required migrant children to be thankful to the country for providing peaceful and stable life. For a country that tightly cited patriotism as one of its core values, the school cultivated students a sense of indebtedness. Both Sui and Si expressed their love for the motherland by declaring that they would take on the responsibility for country's development in the future. It seemed that studying hard was not only for personal interests but to become useful to the country. Citizenship education successfully disseminated the idea that citizenship required a dutiful relationship to the nation.

Ironically though, the rural migrants were treated as second-class citizens who had been excluded from citizenship rights in the cities (Xiong & Li, 2017; Zeng et al., 2020). However, the citizenship education in the school pushed students to ask themselves what they can do

for the country instead of what the country can do for them. The patriotism particularly required migrant children to accommodate themselves within the process of modernisation and urbanisation and make themselves useful to society. It did not encourage students to cultivate critical thinking or questioning about the social inequality and class structure in Chinese society. The citizenship education guided the migrant children to endure the discrimination and exclusion they encountered in the city by only emphasising the citizen's duties but ignoring the rights that were consistent with the self-sacrifice. From this point, the patriotism was used to maintain the social structure surrounding the migrant children.

Occupational ethics

Occupational ethics was another essential element of citizenship education in the LS school. Academic failure was a universal problem for migrant children, which linked them with a possible underprivileged future being stuck in low paid segment of labour force like their parents. Most of them went to technical school after graduating from middle school which narrowed their career options. While citizenship education emphasized specific values to let the migrant students to accept their future careers, the core message of occupational ethics was that all jobs were equal in Chinese society. It tried to cover the unequal treatment between different occupations by emphasizing the socialist ideals.

> Once teacher Wu announced to all students, 'No matter what occupation you will take up, you are equal. There are three hundred and sixty kinds of jobs, and every job offers you an opportunity to achieve success. As long as you work hard and hold an earnest work attitude, you will earn other's respect.' To prove her point, teacher Wu took a little story of Liu Shaoqi, the former Vice Chairman of the Communist Party of China, as an example. Teacher Wu: 'Liu Shaoqi once held the hand of a night man[40], and claimed that although we are working in different jobs, we are equal because we were are both working to serve the people. The story is simple, but the principle behind the story is important. It tells us that serving people and contributing to society is the most glorious and honourable thing to do. ' (Fieldnote, LS school, 5 March 2019)

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[40] The main duty of a night man is to clean and collect the shit of other people because of lacking of developed sewage system in the 1950s.

In contrast to these claims however, the social realities dramatically differ from the teaching content. Before the economic reform, China was a planned economy emphasizing equilibrium and equality (Lin, 2013). At the end of 1956, China had basically completed the socialist transformation under Chairman Mao (Li, 2013). The Chinese government eventually shifted private ownership to state ownership to abolish private economic activities (ibid). The state assigned public resources, jobs opportunities, food, and even the little supplies as a match, and the distinction between social classes had disappeared (Wu, 2014). During this period, Chinese citizens worked for the nation that corresponded with the socialist ideology disseminated by the school's citizenship education. Just like the little story of Liu Shaoqi, the status of Chinese citizens was not affected by their occupations. Moreover, the primary purpose of social transformation was to raise the social positions of workers and peasants, who were key components of the Chinese Communist Party through labour movements and social reforms (Thomas, 2020). During the Maoist period, a son of a worker was in much the same social position as a daughter of a civil servant or a lawyer because they enjoy similar citizenship rights and public services.

Since the economic reform and opening-up in 1978, China's market economy, free labour market, and private ownership reemerged. Without state control, the capital flowed to more profitable yields and industries due to its profit-seeking nature (Zhou & Chueng, 2017). The Chinese government put efficiency above equity to promote economic development by exploiting the working-class and rural people. They became the victims of market reform because the preferential policy and social welfare they enjoyed in the planned economy had been abolished after reform. Therefore, urban China's egalitarian socialist society transformed into a more stratified society with tremendous socioeconomic inequality (Tse, 2016; Zhang, 2017). In the post-Mao era, the economic disparities and social inequalities were increasingly widening (Li, 2013). The Chinese society underwent a dramatic change, but the ideals and values of citizenship education were the same as the socialist ideology in the Maoist period. The migrant children realized and directly experienced that social positions and prestige were associated with different occupations. During the daily interactions in school, their parents' occupations had been used to insult them. The majority of migrant parents did manual labour with a small salary which was the primary reason for

struggling poverty. As a result, the migrant children did not believe the moral messages they received but were eager to improve their economic and social status by getting a decent job and a good wage.

> Feng complained, 'Everyone knows that the citizenship education is full of shit. How can every job be equal? There are no such things in the real world. People will treat you according to your occupations and social positions. If you are rich, you can enjoy privileges.'
>
> Si responded, 'Yeah, you are right. I feel silly to learn such things. I bet even teacher Wu herself does not believe what she said to us. We are not naïve kids who know nothing about the realities. Just look at my parents. They suffered a lot because of their jobs. The textbook should change its content and tell the truth.
> ' (Informal conversation with Feng and Si, LS school, 5 March 2019)

Although teacher Wu did not allow the students to question the content of the textbook, the migrant children were evidently unconvinced by the Maoist narratives of equality. The children thought the content of citizenship education was somewhat remote from the actual world according to their own experiences. It is indisputable that a society needs people to clean the street, spin yard and drive buses. If we take the academic performance as referential basis, while the migrant children are more likely to engage in these kinds of jobs. Thus, the occupational ethics in citizenship education can be viewed as a tool that is used for brainwashing these young students. However, none of these migrant children wanted to be manual workers, vendors, or drivers because they realized that these kinds of jobs ranked at the bottom. In fact many had very specific ideas about their future occupations such as lawyer, e-sports player and voice actor.

Besides, the migrant children and parents were witnesses of the social transformation in China. Raising in an environment of privatization and increased consumerism, the migrant children embraced the increasingly fierce conflicts between consumerist individualism and nationalist collectivism. As China opened up its market, western products and foreign brands began to flood the Chinese market, providing more customer choice and raising desires about covetable 'modern' lifestyles (Tian & Dong, 2010). Inevitably, the rising consumerism was

almost the opposite of the nationalist collectivism (ibid). Pursuing fashion trends and, showing off personal wealth and consuming capability, became a new trend in Chinese society. Acquiring the necessary spending capacity or 'money worship' profoundly affected young people's value systems (Wu, 2014). Apparently, the low-paid jobs cannot satisfy children's consumer demands.

The migrant children at LS school desired to be modern urban citizens by consuming fashion that contrasted with the citizenship education in school. Citizenship education did not teach children how to consume. It only required the youth to maintain a simple living and self-sacrifice spirit and overcome all sorts of 'wrong ideas' such as materialism, hedonism and individualism. In other words, the school wanted to educate children to become 'qualified citizens' who could endure hardship and undertake any jobs to achieve the ultimate goal of serving the national interests. The curriculum embedded in citizenship education instilled the children with a collective way of thinking. The migrant children felt self-contradictory in confronting contradiction between citizens as labourers and citizens as consumers. I will elaborate on how consumerism impacted migrant children's identities in Chapter 7.

5.4 School's curriculum

In this section, I move to the school's curriculums which reinforced the disadvantage positions of rural migrant children. There are two subsections which I entitle learning English and handwriting competition representing overt and hidden curriculum in school. English is a compulsory subject in Chinese school system serving as a gatekeeper in educational attainment and job market that can be considered as a dominant cultural capital in Chinese society. Thus, English also becomes a tool for maintaining the educational and social inequality that limited the migrant children's educational achievement. In addition to English, the hidden curriculum such as handwriting also reinforced the underprivileged of the migrant children and legitimated unequal relations among groups. By analyzing the impacts of English and handwriting, this section provides details about what happened in school and how migrant students deal with the educational inequalities.

5.4.1 Learning English

English language ability has been considering as a national as well as individual asset in modern China since the reform and opining-up (Li, 2020). On the national level, the central government regarded English language education as an important subject that can facilitate economic globalisation and national modernisation (Hu, 2002). Since the reform and opening-up, the Chinese government decided to participate in the competition of the world economy. As entering WTO in 2001, China was faced with many challenges as well as opportunities of globalisation, technological reforms, trade liberalisation and knowledge-driven economies (Hu, 2005). The social transformation and modernization of China was a process of learning from the West. English was a useful tool for engaging in economic, commercial, technological and cultural exchange with the rest of the world. As a result, the Chinese government expanded English language education, emphasising English's strategic role in facilitating the modernisation process (Li, 2020). Speaking English could be considered as a basic requirement of becoming a modern citizen under globalisation. Thus, the Chinese political and cultural elites put English as one of the three core subjects[41] in the Chinese educational system.

On the individual level, mastering English can be regarded as a kind of valuable cultural capital in Chinese society. English is one of the most spoken languages functioning as a tool for international communication and transactions which occupies superior position around the world (Watts, 2011). Influenced by the increasing globalization, having a good command of English can provide more economical, occupational and educational opportunities to a person. In modern China, mandarin is the basic language, while English is viewed as an economic instrument that has huge impacts on individuals' educational and career development (Ma & Wu, 2020). For example, proficiency in English is a passport to higher education both at home or abroad. If the students want to graduate in a Chinese university, they must pass the College English Test for Band 4. Students who want to study abroad need to pass IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English

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[41] The three core subjects are Chinese, Math and English respectively accounting for the primary part on the school curriculums and examination results. Thus, English is crucial to students' educational trajectories.

as a Foreign Language) as a language proficiency certificate. The overseas education and mainly the experiences of being western-trained can improve one's employment competitiveness in a public or private sectors which can help people access economic resources and social prestige (Huang, 2002; Li, 2020). Thus, English is enthusiastically embraced by urban citizens by providing a path to upward mobility that triggers English mania in China.

When I returned to China, I met a group of Chinese pupils on the plane. The pupils were around ten years old studying at a private primary school. They went to the UK to visit some distinguished universities and touch Western culture. I was surprised that at such young ages, they could use English to order food and communicate with their teacher, who was British. Moreover, their pronunciation and accent were good. For these pupils, English was a subject and a language tool that they used and practiced in daily life. However, the LS school never organized an overseas study tour because they knew the migrant family could not afford the expensive fees for it. Some of the migrant children even had not visited other cities except for Qingdao and their parents' hometown. Based on this point, the social inequalities, structural constraints and family background limited migrant children's proficiency of English, formulating the 'mute English' and 'deaf English'. The stratification and inequalities in the educational system were the epitome of the transformation of Chinese society. In turn, English became a tool to maintain the social inequalities excluding migrant children from high paying jobs.

For migrant children, English was far away from their life which only appeared in the 45 mins English class. As a main subject, the school arranged four English classes a week for student[42]. After the school, the migrant children did not have chances to practice English in their daily life. In the English class, the teacher Xu[43] taught them English by speaking Chinese. Her voice was loud, but it could not stop students sitting behind from sleeping. After class, teacher Xu explained her language choice to me, 'If I speak English, the students

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[42] The school made more room on the timetable for three main subjects. However, other subjects such as PE and art class were only twice a week.

[43] Teacher Xu is the English teacher. Normally, a teacher in LS school only needs to teach two class. However, teacher Xu is responsible for teaching three classes because lacking of qualified English teachers.

cannot understand me. Their English are poor.' Even teacher Xu used Chinese, the migrant students did not fully understand the rules of grammar based on their responses. To check whether the student understood the knowledge, teacher Xu would randomly select a student to analyse the structure of the sentences and transfer them into Chinese. If the student could not answer the question, the student should keep standing until the other student answered the question correctly[44]. As a result, during English class, I often saw 3 or 4 students stand in the classroom simultaneously.
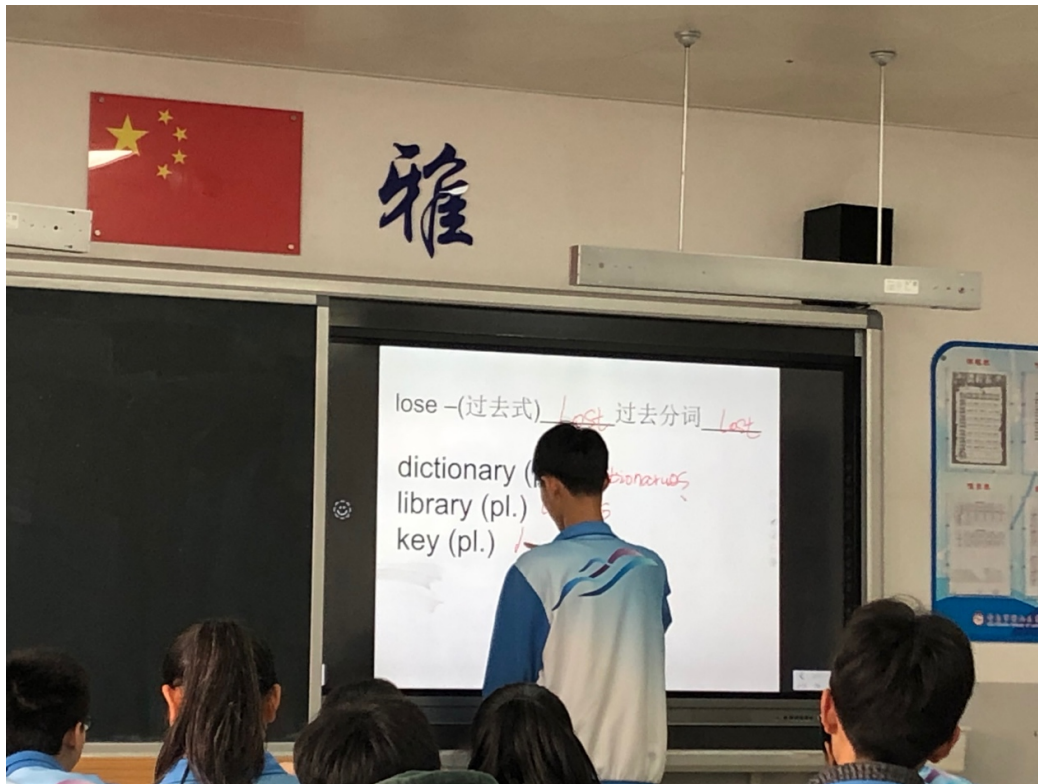
Picture 7: A student is taking quiz[45]

However, we could not ignore that the poor teaching quality in the LS school restricted the English ability of migrant children. As I mentioned before, the LS school was ranked at bottom of the urban educational system lacking of experienced and qualified teachers. When teacher Xu read the text in class, she spoke English with a strong Chinese accent. In the private primary school I mentioned above, it even hired native speakers to teach English. Compared with students in elite schools, it was more difficult for migrant students to obtain

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[44] This teaching method was usual in the LS school. Teachers of other subjects also use this teaching method to punish the students.

[45] From the picture, we can find out that the teaching equipment and facilities in LS school are well-equipped. Comparing with the migrant school, the LS school provides a much better learning environment. Previous studies pointed out that the poor quality of migrant school lead to migrant children's academic failure. However, most of the migrant children in public school still have poor academic performance. In addition to school's quality, the curriculum setting may also hinder migrant children's academic outcomes.

good oral English ability. How could these students learn to speak fluent English when their teachers could not achieve that. Besides, the teacher Xu could not completely handle students' questions. Once Sui asked about a multiple-choice question in class. The teacher Xu explained, 'The choice A and B are clearly wrong. And you can also exclude the choice D. So the choice C is the correct answer.' The teacher's explanation was like nonsense which did not explain the grammatical knowledge behind the question. After the English class, Sui came to me and asked me the same question again. Teacher Xu did not resolve Sui's question, but Sui was afraid to ask one more time in the class because of teacher's authority. This scenario was common for the students at the LS school which epitomized the poor teaching quality and educational inequality. In addition, English was important at every educational stage that exacerbated social inequality between the urban and migrant students.

To deal with the educational inequality, the academic oriented students chose to attend private extracurricular courses during weekends. These children realized that the English was important for their future, even though there was no opportunity for them to use English in their daily life. For example, Sui was one of the best migrant students in English class, but at the same time she disliked studying English. Sui was good at examinations and usually scored around 90 out of 100. During English class, the English teacher often let her answer the questions. Especially when other students could not answer the question, teacher Xu would like to give Sui an opportunity to try. Thanks to the extra English tutorials on every Sunday mornings, Sui's performance was better than her classmates. On 15th December 2019, I had lunch with Sui at a noodle still. Sui just finished her English tutorial class. Therefore, we had a little conversation about English.

    Me: Do you like English?

    Sui: No, I don't.

    Me: Can you tell me why?

    Sui: Because English is very hard for me.

    Me: Why do you say that? You are good at English.

    Sui: No, I am not good at English at all.

    Me: But you always get a high score on the English test.

Sui: Yes. Because it is a compulsory subject. I want to attend a key high school, so I need a good grade. But it is hard.

Me: Can you explain why it is hard for you?

Sui: Um, how to say that. For example, the Chinese lesson is easy. I don't need to spend much time on it. Nevertheless, English is hard. If I want to get the high score, I need to pay more effort. Like, I don't need to attend to an extra tutor for Chinese, but I go to the extra class for English.

Me: I see. Do you think English is beneficial for your future?

Sui: Maybe. I am not sure.

Even for the 'good students' as Sui learning English was full of challenges and frustrations, she had spent more time and effort studying English. She was struggling with anxiety and pressure generated from English because she realized that English played a crucial role in her educational trajectory. Although English was far away from Sui's daily life, she needed to study English as she wanted to achieve social mobility through the educational system. In one word, it was the Chinese educational system that forced Sui to learn English. As for Sui herself, English was more like a subject rather than a language. Although Sui scored highly in examinations, she was poor in spoken English. She did not have opportunities to practice oral English which was a valuable skill in Chinese job market (Ma & Wu, 2020).

In addition, most of the migrant student especially the non-academic oriented students just simply gave up learning English because they realized that English was 'out of their league'. One of the migrant children Feng said 'The English is hieroglyphic. During English class, I feel like listening to lullaby, often unknowingly have already gone to sleep on. It is boring and useless.' The Feng gave up studying English and depreciated its value. Moreover, in different occasions, Feng claimed that English taught in school were just wasting time and were not useful to him. Another migrant student Tang expressed that 'I know that English is important in today's China because of the crazy tendency of globalization. Studying abroad appears quite universal, but it is not for us.' Living in an opening era, Tang realized that China's destiny was increasingly tied with the world's future, as economic globalisation and trade liberalisation developed in-depth. Meanwhile, she recognized that English as a path to upward mobility was not for migrant children like her.

The affluent urban families who benefited the most from the economic transformation sent their children to expensive international schools or exchange program that prepared their children for studying prestigious universities abroad (Li, 2020). Besides, these urban children extensively immersed to the English environment that helped them to develop a near first-language ability in English providing them a ticket to global mobility, foreign education, well paid jobs and western culture and lifestyles (ibid). The process of opening up and social reform in China accompanied a process of increasing preference and demand of western knowledge and technology. The English mania among urban middle class family indicated that English as kind of dominant cultural capital was not merely for education but also for social status.

According to Bourdieu, the privileged groups had the power to define their culture as dominant to that of the underprivileged (Bourdieu, 1998). It was the Chinese political and cultural elites made the language education policy that made English proficiency as a gatekeeper in educational system and job market (Li, 2020). Migrant children did not have a choice but to follow the existing rules and routine of the educational system. English as a kind of dominant cultural capital had been monopolised by the elites group reinforcing the marginal position of the rural migrant children. Through the cultural capital, the academic failure of migrant children influenced by economic, political and social inequality had been disguised and misrecognized as personal efforts or talents. To some extent, English was used to legitimise the school failures of migrant children and reproduce the stratified social structure that excluded migrant children from higher education and social status. Thus, the English epitomized the gap between what the migrant children want to achieve and what they can actually achieve.

5.4.2 Handwriting competition

Except the compulsory subjects, the hidden curriculum also exacerbated the inequalities in school. Significantly since market economy reform had been deepened in China, the socialist educational system gradually became more market-driven. Specifically, private school, training courses, interest classes, overseas exchange programs and private tutoring were all the products of the commercialization education. Due to the increasingly commoditized

educational system, the economic capital was easier to convert to cultural capital that enabled the children of wealthier urban family to acquire valued skills, knowledge, and language capacity. The migrant children did not have access to the high-quality educational resources, which maintained the culture and class reproduction through the educational system. In the following paragraphs, I take handwriting as an example.

The migrant students could speak fluent Mandarin, but the family background affected the migrant students' capacity to use Chinese, especially in writing[46]. In China, handwriting is considered as the 'second face'[47] of a person. Good handwriting is usually linked with positive impressions such as bright, educated and intelligent. According to Bourdieu's theory, cultural capital cannot be instantaneously transmitted, requiring time and effort to acquire (Bourdieu, 1986). Handwriting requires professional training and years to practice that why schools and society highly value this skill. Especially in school, good handwriting can help student to get higher score and more opportunities. Handwriting is a kind of hidden curriculum in the Chinese educational system that reinforces the existing social inequalities. In school, there is no specialized course for handwriting, but the teachers and school emphasized the value of handwriting through daily interactions and activities.

In the LS school, there was a handwriting competition every year that every student could sign up. The winner would receive a certificate, and the winning work would be framed exhibiting on the wall in school. Twenty-four students entered the competition, but only four were migrant students accounting for 16%, which was disproportionate. Around 70% of the students in the LS school were migrant students. The majority of migrant children consciously excluded themselves from the academic activities because they realized that they lacked such skills or abilities (cultural capital). Based on this point, the cultural capital was a more effective and subtle tool to maintain the boundaries between different social groups than institutional barriers such as the Hukou system. Moreover, the schools attached attention and value to the cultural capital they considered important by organizing the handwriting competitions, English writing contests and academic competitions. Without question, these

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[46] In the section 6.1, I explained why rural migrant and rural culture placed relatively little importance on writing.

[47] In China, there is a saying, 'You can determine a man and his personality based on handwriting.'(In Chinese, 见字如见人). Thus, the handwriting can be viewed as the second face of a person in Chinese society.

activities had mirrored unequal distribution of cultural capital among urban and migrant children.

The winner of 2019 was an urban student who had practiced calligraphy for six years. His parents sent him to a calligraphy class since primary school. The urban parents aimed to develop the children's intellectual capacities and skills making preparations for their future. However, according to my interviews, most migrant student in the class never participated to the extra-curricular classes like this. The competition among children in school also accompanied with the competition among their families. The children are equivalent to the 'race car drivers' and their families are equivalent to the 'technical teams'. The driver's skill (children's agency) is a key factor in winning a race. Besides, the 'technical team' (structure) offers technical support to improve the vehicle's performance, which is another essential factor to win. It was difficult for the top racing driver to win a game with a vehicle in poor condition, and vice versa. Good handwriting is equivalent to a powerful engine that helps student-run faster in the education field. Due to urban parents' investments and parenting, their children possessed more dominant cultural capital than migrant children with disadvantaged family conditions. The poor handwriting reinforced the negative impression of migrant children.

> Many teachers had complained about the poor handwriting of migrant children. Once in the teachers' office, Miss. Wang, the history teacher, said, 'It is hard to correct migrant student's homework. The Chinese characters were small and scrawled.' Her colleague Mr Dong added, 'Yes, you are right. The handwriting represents the students' attitudes. Look at this paper!' he raised the textbook of Feng 'I do not know what exactly has he written. He is perfunctory to finish his homework.' Mr Dong showed me the textbooks of Feng. In order to prove his statement, he paired it with the homework of an urban student. He was right that the urban student's homework was clear, neat and easy to read. Reading the homework with good handwriting was much more comfortable that left me a good impression. (Fieldnote, LS school, 10 January 2019)

The teachers made conclusion about the students' attitudes based on their handwriting. For teachers, when they received a good handwriting homework, they felt respected and were often touched by the efforts and conscientious attitude that was transmitted from the handwriting. The teachers did not want to spend time on migrant children's illegible writing that strengthened the stigmatization of lazy and perfunctory. Besides, before the final examination, many teachers explicitly stated that handwriting would influence the scoring criteria. Even if students could not improve handwriting, at least keep the characters clearly with proper space. However, in the examination, the migrant students forgot teachers' suggestions. Their handwriting did not improve, some even worse than usual, due to the time-limited and pressure of the examination. The poor handwriting made it hard for them to get high marks.

Bourdieu pointed out that the people of different social classes employed different language codes. Specifically, the scholastic field favoured the elaborate language code used by middle-class students rather than the restricted language code of working-class students (Myles, 1999). The ability to understand and use elaborate language is a cultural capital passed through the family. The cultural capital helps to cover up the intergenerational transmission of social positions. The students from the urban middle class family are more familiar with the dominant culture of a society. This contributed to schools reproducing inequality because the education system did not assess students only on their intelligence but on the extent to which they had a middle-class language habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). The language has two basic expression levels, including form and content, and plays an important role in the academic field (Bourdieu, 1996). Handwriting as a sort of language form helps students to express their thinking. The poor handwriting reinforced the categorization as 'migrant children' that deprived their chances to compete with urban peers in school and job market.

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter 5 illustrated what the school wanted the migrant children to be through strict school rules, everyday communication, citizenship education and curriculums. In general, the school system limited these children's choices, and reproduced a certain second-class citizen culture

for them. Due to the family condition, the migrant children lacked the dominant culture capital valued in school that strengthened the stigmatization of dull and uncultivated. The teachers in the LS school such as teacher Wang and Liu clearly expressed that the migrant children were hard to educate. The school rules, teachers' pessimistic expectations and curriculums reinforced the underprivileged of the migrant children. Simultaneously, the label as 'migrant children' had been reinforced during the school practices and interaction with teachers. Although the school claimed that it treated every child equally, the stereotypes were imposed in daily conversations. All these factors made it more difficult for migrant children if they wanted to achieve academic success in an urban school. Especially when the migrant children found out that they needed to compete with the urban peers from wealthy families, the promise of education as a tool for social mobility was a kind of illusion for most of them. Under this scenario, only a few academically-oriented children studied hard and stick to the academic path, displaying their agency to deal with educational inequality. Most of these kids consciously gave up studying and were going to technical schools after graduation. It seemed that the children's educational trajectories were profoundly limited by teachers and the low-quality education of LS school. However, these 'trouble students' in teachers' eyes were still hopeful for their futures. For them, the education was not the only way to achieve success in city which I explain further detail in Chapter 7.

Besides, the citizenship education in school seemed not educate migrant children how to become a modern citizen or fight for their interests and rights but attempted to persuade these kids to accept their status quo. By emphasizing patriotism, the school wanted migrant children to view their plight as a kind of self-sacrifice for the whole country because the urban-rural dual structure, unequal distribution and social stratification were the inevitable results of the economic reform and social transformation. Migrant children were required to accommodate themselves within the unequal treatment and make themselves useful to the nation. Moreover, the teachers persuaded the children to choose a technical school and become manual labourers, accompanied by the occupational ethics in citizenship education. The occupational ethics states that all the occupations are equal in Chinese society, which is preparing migrant children to repeat their parents' fates. However, the migrant children were

not convinced because their parents' jobs had been used to insult and discriminate on them by the teachers.

The school system tried to legitimize the social reproduction and remain the unequal relations between urban children and rural migrant children. The moments when migrant children resisted the stereotypes imposed and questioned the belief of the occupational ethics displayed children's agency. To against the discrimination, the children prefer the term 'new citizen' which indicated that they aspired to become a member of the city. They did not like being categorized as 'migrant children'. However, these children had an inseparable connection with their parents' rural hometown, even though some of them were born and raised in the city. Their parents required them to maintain the relationship with the rural village and the people left behind. The children seemed to have ambivalent feelings toward rural villages which deeply influenced how they viewed themselves. In the next Chapter, I move to the relationship between migrant children and their parents' hometown.

Chapter 6: Return to the rural villages

Urban schooling is a key component of migrant children's daily lives. However, school experiences cannot fully explain how these children identify themselves. In this chapter, I move to family life to provide a different aspect to analyze how migrant children deal with the rural-urban dichotomy and why they form a strong desire to become 'urban citizens'. The findings from the interview and home visiting indicate that most migrant parents in my research maintained rural values and a strong connection with their rural hometowns positioning themselves as rural people. Moreover, the parents also required their children to remember their rural origin and the traditional culture of their hometowns by taking them back to rural villages and teaching their own linguistic varieties. Meanwhile, some children thought that what was taught by their parents was obsolete in the urban regions that triggered family conflicts. In children's eyes, 'the parents were ole fossils who were suspicious of anything new'.

Actually, the migration provided both children and parents with opportunity to directly experience both urban and rural life. However, the parents underlined what the rural village had, while the children stressed what the villages did not have because they were more familiar with the life in city. The migration often leads to the change of family dynamics, and within the process, the migrant family tries to find a strategy to embrace the culture of the host society while maintaining their original culture (Renzaho, et al., 2017). At the beginning of this chapter, I examine the parents' actions and strategies to show how migrant children's self-positioning was shaped by their parents' interventions. This will be followed by an exploration of children's narratives to display their different attitudes towards their parents' rural hometowns and their voices and subjectivities. Some of the migrant children were reluctant to return to their parents' hometowns which were perceived as 'backward' in their minds. To make the children obey, migrant parents cultivated a strong sense of indebtedness by strengthening their sacrifices and filial piety education. Therefore, looking at intergenerational relations and conflicts is useful as an analytical lens to understand issues of migrant children's identities and agency.

6.1 Don't forget your 'roots'

As I introduced in Chapter 1, land and farming are still the core of rural society. Despite modernization and globalization, the countryside is still relatively closed where people's daily lives are marked by the seasonal agricultural cycle and simple way of life (Unger, 2016). Fei Xiaotong, a pioneering Chinese anthropologist provided a rich description of rural Chinese life in his book *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society*. Chinese peasants used to sow in spring and harvest in autumn and repeated the same routine year after year and generation after generation (Fei, 1992). Until now, the majority of rural people remained active in agricultural activities (Lin, 2013). The experiences inherited and learned from the older generation were efficient in rural society (Fei, 1992). Thus, the migrant parents, who grew up in a rural village, strongly believed in traditional values and conventional wisdom because stability and periodicity were two basic characteristics of rural life (Willis, 2019). The children were living within a migrant family emphasizing the rural values and traditions. In contrast, the migrant children faced a completely different environment in the city where was full of changes and uncertainty which make their parents' experiences and knowledge not work in the city. The parents and children employed different strategies to adapt themselves to the process of transformation that made the distinctions and conflicts between parents and children more salient.

Falling to the rural hometown

Most of the migrant parents I met maintained strong economic, cultural and emotional connections with their rural hometowns except Zou's family. Zou is living with his uncle and grandmother who nearly not talk about the village. According to Zou, his family moved out of the rural village after his grandfather died. His grandmother and uncle only occasionally return to the village to clean his grandfather's grave in some important festivals. Thus, this section mainly focused on remaining four children whose parents considered their hometowns and villages as grounding their 'roots', and expected their children not to forget their 'roots'.

Si: My father always told me that although a tree grows ever so high, the falling leaves return to the ground. When my father gets old, he will return to the rural village where is the 'root' for us. My father also taught me that if a person forgets his root, he is an ungrateful man who will never be successful.

CM: What do you think about your father's words?

Si: I think what my father said make sense to me. I will not forget that I am coming from Anhui where I spent my childhood with my grandparents. He educated me to love our hometown and to be grateful. (Online chat with Si, by WeChat, 28 February 2020)

For thousands of years, Chinese rural people believed that only back to their hometowns could feel inner peace (Fei, 1992). Although rural migrants have been living in the cities for over a decade, they insisted on returning to the rural village. The parents viewed themselves as 'leaves' who had fed by absorbing nutrients from the 'roots' because their ancestors had lived and multiplied on this land for generations. Ultimately, 'leavers' will return to the ground and repay the 'roots'. The migrant parents used this metaphor to express their ties with their hometowns and family members left behind which was an indispensable part of family education. In addition, Si and Sui's parents sent money back to renovate the old houses in the village which indicated that they had an intense intention of returning to the rural hometown. It also set an example for their children that they need to repay the village. The migrant parents tried to pass the emotional connections with rural hometowns as a kind of moral value to their children and expected that these would influence their children's identity and their sense of belonging.

Many existing literatures related to identity formation of rural migrant children in China suggested that it was the Hukou system (Zhang, 2018), school settings (Lin et al., 2013) and government intervention (Lin, et al., 2019) that forced children to develop a non-local identity. However, they all overlooked one important fact that the influence of migrant parents also had profound impacts on children's identities. Specifically, the migrant parents thought that abandoning the rural hometown was morally wrong. Some children accepted their parents' views especially the ones who had lived in the rural village for a while such as Si. Si told me, 'Both Qingdao and the little village in Anhui province are my hometown. The

emotional connection with the rural hometown has no relation to how long you stay here. This type of connection was born with.' (Online chat with Si, by WeChat, 28 February 2020). However, not every migrant children accepted this view and they even wanted to disconnect themselves from the rural villages because they were born in the city, and did not have many memories of their parents' hometown. The migrant parents tried to persuade their children through taking them to various activities.

Annual return visit

The annual return visit was an important family event. The migrant parents frequently took the children back to their rural hometown especially during traditional festivals such as Spring Festival and Tomb Sweeping Day. Undoubtedly, it shaped the children's perceptions about their parents' hometown by bringing them back on such special occasions. In China, the Spring Festival is the most important festival in a year which marks the beginning of a New Year. During Spring Festival, the Chinese people will get together with their families for the annual reunion dinner and to honour their common ancestors. As a result, every year millions of rural migrants return to hometowns in the same time period forming the largest population movement in the world like birds that migrate back and forth with the seasons (Willis, 2019). The migrant parents passed the meaning, culture and customs of the Spring Festival, and associated it with the rural hometown. By doing this, the migrant parents showed why the rural hometown was the 'real hometown'. For example, Feng shared his holiday experiences with me and sent me many photos to display the traditional ancestor worship activities representing the cultural transmission in his family.

> Feng: At the Chines New Year's Eve, my family and I visited our ancestors' graves and cleaned the tombs. The graves were located at the edge of the field. My father as the eldest son presented food offerings. Then we burned paper money and other stuff for them. My father asked me to kneel down at the graves so that my ancestors would bless my family with good luck and health.
>
> CM: What do you think of these activities?
>
> Feng: Well, you know these are the traditional customs. You cannot say it is good or bad. But as the only son of my father, I need to learn all these customs because

one day it will become my duty to perform these activities. And my father told me that when he passed away, he required me to bury his body near the ancestral graves. He wanted to return to his roots. All the members of my family were born and buried in this land.

CM: What do you think about your father's decision?

Feng: I understand my father. He has a strong emotional connection with the village. My family lived in this area for generations. Actually, the village was built by my ancestors. Most people in this village had the same family name as me, and they could be traced in a particular family line. My father and grandfather always told me all sorts of fascinating stories about my family's past which should be treasured and passed down. (Chat online with Feng, by WeChat, 9 February 2020)

Picture 8 Ancestor worship activity of Feng's family[48]

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[48] Feng sent these pictures to me. At the first picture, Feng's family members put food and paper money in front of the graves to show their respect. The yellow paper in the picture is the paper money which is the currency to use in the underworld. In the second picture, there are house and household appliances model made by paper. In the end, they burn all the stuff so that their deceased ancestors could live rich in the underworld.

Other young research participants also related to the traditional customs. For example, Sui learned some Yangge dance[49] from her grandmother who was in the local Yangge team performing Yangge dance during Spring Festival. Sui recorded some Yangge dance routines and sent to me. She told me that, 'Yangge dance is really interesting that is not only a kind of dance, it also includes cultural spirit. People in my village celebrate the festive together through this unique dance, which enhances the solidarity between the corporate emotion and the collective consciousness that you will never see in the city.' (Online chat with Sui, by WeChat, 28 February 2020). These kind of traditional rituals and activities could be viewed as intangible cultural heritage that were used to maintain the connection between migrant children and the rural village. Although the rural rituals were useless to the modern life in urban areas, grandparents and parents still passed these to children.

The findings of my research were consistent with the description in Fei's book that rural people emphasized oral communication and intergenerational succession (Fei, 1992). In Chinese rural society, the written language is considered tedious and inefficient that might be one explanation why a disproportionate number of rural people are illiterate (ibid). However, the knowledge transfer in urban schools was relying on written materials such as textbooks, homework and notes. Based on this point, it was clear that there were significant differences in cultural transmission in urban and rural regions. When New China was founded in 1949, the illiteracy rate was almost 95% in the rural areas that caused a National Literacy Campaign (Ministry of Education of China, 2019). The Chinese government stressed the importance of education and put forward a slogan 'oriented education towards modernization, globalization and future construction'. (Ministry of Education of China, 2019, p2). Thus, the formal education was associated with modernity, urbanity and progress. According to the Seventh National Population Census (2021), the illiteracy rate dropped to 2.67% in 2021. It means that most of rural population had received basic education especially the young generations (ibid). However, there was still widespread stereotypes and prejudice against rural people who were associated with uneducated and stupid (Lin, 2013). The fact was that the rural people were not stupid but it was more that the rural people's knowledge was unrecognized

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[49] Yangge dance is a kind of folk dance accompanied by strong rhythms music. It is a popular amusement form Northern China, hoping for a good harvest for the year. Yangge dances are different in every village in language, singing, performance style and repertoire

by formal education or urban people. The knowledge gained through intergenerational succession was inadequate for a modern industrializing and globalizing society. The migrant children lacked of the skills or capacity the school emphasized. Like I discussed above in the handing writing section, the migrant parents did not attach importance to writing that reinforced migrant children's disadvantaged positions in an urban school.

Besides, the children's perceptions of rural village had been influenced by the family stories had heard from their elders on these rural home visits. For instance, Feng was proud of the fact that his parents' hometown was created by his ancestors. It was the typical type of Chinese rural village which was mainly comprised of a single-family name that formed the integration of family and village.

'My grandfather told me that the village was founded by my ancestor in Ming Dynasty which was centuries old. And one of our ancestor had been a county magistrate in the Qing Dynasty that is recorded in the family genealogy. My family is well known in the town.' (Chat online with Feng, by WeChat, 9 February 2020)

By keeping alive the memories of their ancestors, the parents stressed their family's origins which was the 'root' uniting all the family members together. The ancestors' tombstone also reminded Feng that his family had lived in this area for several generations. The sense of belonging had been permeated into children's minds. Whilst being placed at the bottom in the urban hierarchical system these return visits and ongoing connections also allowed migration families to boost their social status in the rural hometown. It also explained why migrant children often thought the people in their parents' hometown were more friendly than the urban citizens. In Chinese rural society, there was a common sense that 'More people, more powerful' because the clan culture was the foundation of the public order in villages. On the morning of the first day of Chinese New year, all the males, whose surname is Feng, would visit Feng's grandfather and kowtow to extend New Yea's greetings as traditional ritual. According to Feng, there were hundreds of people kneeled at the same time in front of his grandfather's house that was quite prestigious because all the villagers witnessed this event

that increased the influences of his family on the village. Due to the influence and prestige of the family, the migrant children like Feng were more likely to take their parents' hometown as their hometown where provided them with a sense of belonging and security.

The traditional burial rituals described above were an important part of rural culture that played a critical role in uniting the family and stabilizing community bonds in the rural society. Remarkably, these rural rituals of ancestor worship were expressly forbidden in the city where they were seen to counteract modernity. Ritual practices such as burning paper money and lighting firecrackers were identified as "uncivilized customs" by the Chinese government. The People's Daily (2014) as the China's official media claimed that it was time to abandon the obsolete social traditions and prohibit these 'uncivilized customs'. Whilst official discourse associated them with fire risks and negative impacts on the air quality, but what they actually mean was that the rural rituals were unfitting for modernizing process (ibid). The government and media encouraged people to pay their respects by offering flowers and cleaning the grave. This view was used to discriminate against the rural migrants who were perceived to be morally inferior to their urban peers.

Moreover, the Chinese government encouraged cremation to replace traditional ground burial to avoid land pollution and waste. The school also educated children through the moral education that in order to become a 'qualified modern citizen' they should abandon these traditional rites and honour ancestors in a 'civilized and modern way' corresponding with the modernization in China. Thus, some rituals in rural areas were positioned as outdated and symbolising many negative qualities such as a backward mindset, obstinacy and lack of willingness to embrace a future-oriented modernization. There was a tension between what the children had learned from school and what the parents expected them to do as children were living within a family with strong rural habitus. The tension between modern and traditional burial rituals epitomized the urban-rural dichotomy in Chinese society. The children were struggling with practices and perceptions that positioned them in conflictual social and cultural worlds at the family level.

> Sui: 'Burning the paper money and other offerings is pointless and are outdated
> customs. I think my parents should use a more civilized manner to honour our

ancestors... Moreover, only the males can play the lead role in these activities, but females cannot perform the duties of ancestor worship. That is unfair. It is no longer a man's world. ' (Online chat with Sui, by WeChat, 28 February 2020)

Sui directly expressed her dissatisfaction with the gender inequality embedded in the rural rituals. She also preferred to agree with school ideologies that the rural rituals were uncivilized, probably because of the empowering effects of the urban education. The Chinese rural society was patriarchal where men firmly occupied the dominant position by acting as the primary labour force of the home (Fei, 1992; Lin, 2013). The migrant parents continued to maintain and reinforce the gender stereotypes through daily interactions. There is an old saying in rural China, 'a married daughter is like spilt water.' It means, upon marriage, the woman automatically left her family and became her husband's property. Therefore, only sons were the legal heirs who could bear the family name, inherit property and carry out funerary duties (Tong et al., 2019). While the girls were perceived as ineligible to fulfil these obligations (ibid). Such a division was largely based on gender norms dominated by a patriarchal culture in which girls are expected to be obedient and subordinate to men (Unger, 2016; Willis, 2019). However, the urban school promoted and encouraged gender equality which was a key component of modernization. Sui had absorbed new values in cities that allowed her to question the rationality of the traditional customs and gender inequality. She expressed disagreement with the patriarchal culture in their parents' hometowns and desired more equality between the sexes. For these children, the rural-urban migration was not only a geographical movement, but accompanied by a desire for an increased agency. Sui was educated and raised in a urban society where was far away from her parents' upbringing in a rural village. As a result, the rural-urban migration allowed Sui exercise agency to disarm patriarchal authority and to against the gender inequality by the greater understanding of the meaning of modernization in urban society.

Like in other migrant contexts parents often thought their authority had been challenged by their children because of the influence of the culture of the host society (Ekiaka et al., 2014; Moskal, 2014; Renzaho et al., 2017). For example, a research related to Chinese migrant youth in Australian showed that the children refused to communicate with parents in Chinese and push back parents' corporal punishment through using the legal protection (Renzaho et

al., 2017). The children rapidly transitioned into host society that provided them power to reconcile their own needs with their parents' expectations. In my research, the urban culture and education also gave children an increased sense of agency to against the authoritarian parenting style and rural cultural leading to intergenerational conflicts. However, as the same time, these migrant parents also expected their children to integrate into the city. Being trapped in a disadvantaged position in the urban hierarchy, many parents hoped their children to achieve social mobility and become successful urban citizens (Gu, 2021) whilst retaining values tied to the rural hometown. The parents maintained specific ritualized practices and rural knowledges to transmit 'rural values' to the next generation. As will be seen in the following section these were inevitably tied to notions of ancestral loyalty, respect for family hierarchy, indisputable obedience for elders, the nurturing qualities of the 'home soil'.

6.2 Values rooted in the rural soil

Soil takes the core place in a rural culture which is also the foundation of Chinese rural society (Fei, 1992). The soil provides food, sustenance, firewood, building materials and a gathering point for a rural local community (ibid). The soil nurtures and feeds the Chinese rural population. When rural people died, they are buried in their fields. In one word, the rural migrants come from the soil and return to the soil. The connection to one's home soil runs through rural people's whole life and retains a strong symbolic value even after migration. This became particularly apparent in the food and products migrant parents took with them when returning to the city. As I could observe on my visits, rural products were placed in every corner of their kitchen such as bacon, smoked fish and canola oil. By doing this, the parents found a silent but visible way to embed the rural village into their urban life. These valued items could include small amounts of soil, which were associated with healing power as Si's father explained:

> CM: What is the most special thing that you bring from your hometown?
> Si' father: Probably, a can of soil.
> CM: Why do you bring a can of soil?

> Si's father: The first time I left my hometown, my mother asked me to bring the soil from the village. She told me if I feel uncomfortable or homesick, just add some soil to the water and drink it that will bring me peace.
>
> Me: Is this useful?
>
> Si's father: Yes, it is a traditional folk medicine. You may think that the soil is only exerting a positive psychological effect. But let me tell you, the soil has an undefinable magical power. The unique features of a local environment always give special characteristics to its inhabitants (In Chinese Yifang shuitu Yang Yifang Ren). The wisdom and experiences of the elder generation really make sense.
>
> (Interview with Si's father at Si's home, 10, November 2019)

Before the economic reform, the rural people were stuck to the land with little or no mobility (Lin, 2013). For thousands of years, the majority of Chinese farmers are fully dependent on the land and the products grew from the land for their livelihoods. Every aspect of rural life was related to the land including food, necessities, clothing and costume. The soil provided people with nutrition and serves as the source of its life. It is not surprising that Si's father thought the soil had beneficial effect on the health and the ability to cure the disease. The experiences and knowledges of rural lives roots in migrants and still plays an important role in their urban lives. Wherever the rural migrants go, they cannot leave the soil (Fei, 1992). If we take a step forward, the rural culture and rituals were derived from the land. All these festival celebrations and ancestor worship activities I discussed above coincide with the special rhythm of the agricultural period of a year. For example, the Spring Festival is in the year's slack winter season, and is specially created for farmers to pray and celebrate the harvest. The old generation in rural areas are still following the customs, and want their children to inherited the traditional rituals.

Besides, the rural village is confined and stable forming local characteristics such as local dialect, unique food and customs. For example, people in Sui's hometown used Yangge dance to celebrate New Year, while people performed Huangmei[50] Opera in Si's hometown. The customs are different in every part of China. As Si's father said, 'The unique features of a

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[50] Huangmei Opera is a unique local opera in Anhui province using Anhui dialect which is cultivated in Anhui culture containing rich folk custom.

local environment always give special characteristics to its inhabitants (In Chinese Yifang shuitu Yang Yifang Ren).' Therefore, even though the rural people moved to the city, they tend to form a small social circle or network with their home fellow because the natural feeling of closeness (Lin, 2013). However, as I discussed in Chapter 5, the migrant children are more likely to view themselves as 'new citizens' and keep apart from rural origin because the rural customs cannot help them become popular in school. Some of the rural conventions and rituals are even considered as unenlightened and feudalistic by the Chinese government (Willis, 2019). The modernization and urbanization is dissolving the bond between migrant children and the soil. Unlike their parents, the migrant children did not understand the importance of the soil. In the following sections, I illustrate how the rural culture is torn away.

The 'Tu Techan'[51]

Migrant parents brought 'Tu Techan' to the city including dried fish, bacon, canola oil and other agricultural products which was a common phenomenon. Although these products were cheap and could be easily purchased in the city, the migrant parents insisted on carrying large amounts of rural products when they moved across the country. The 'Tu Techan' played an important role in constructing cultural identity. On the one hand, based on the parents' narratives, the local food could enhance their homesickness and nostalgia by providing the flavors of their hometowns. On the other hand, all parents I interviewed thought that the home-grown and homemade foods were more healthy and safe because they knew the whole production process from the soil to the dining table. They believed that the food sold in cities contained additives and chemicals that could be harmful to their health. This idea is in line with most migrant children's impressions that the rural environment is better than cities.

> Sui's father said, 'For example, the chicken sold in cities contains a hormone that can impair brain development. But the chicken in my hometown is purely organic and free-range. Traditionally reared animals to grow slowly, but they are

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[51] In China, the food and products from the rural village were called 'Tu Techan' which can translate to 'local products' in English. 'Tu' in Chinese refers to soil. It seems that whether the people or the products from the rural areas cannot get rid of the label of 'Tu'.

undoubtedly healthy and tasty.' (Interview with Si's father at Si's home, 10, November 2019)

Feng's mother had the similar viewpoint about the food safety, as she complained, 'The stores in city sell the off-season fruits and vegetables. These may be harmful to health. Not everything in the city is better. The local produce comply with the natural law and seasonal pace which are healthier.' (interview with Feng's mother at Feng's home, 23, November 2019).

Conversations around food revealed a sense of alienation and suspicion toward industrialized society which payed more attention to the efficiency. It seemed that the 'Tu Techan' were linked to higher quality. Even the urban residents have to admit it. For example, the chicken, ducks and carbs raised in paddy field are more expensive which are also popular gifts in urban areas because it is difficult to buy 'Tu Techan' in a supermarket. The migrant parents wanted their children to realize that the rural methods might look dumb or outdated, but it still worked. For parents, the 'Tu Techan' is a great example to display the advantages of rural values.

The children disagreed with their parents' opinions. They did not understand why their parents carried lots of 'Tu Techan', as they were growing up and living in a highly industrialized and modernized world. The soil became unimportant for children as they had moved away from a traditional agricultural society. Unlike their parents' hometowns where were surrounded by boundless fields, the soil had been covered in concretes, steel and asphalt in the cities. The parents witnessed the slow process of agricultural products grown from the soil, but the children directly enjoyed the finished product. They did not get the special meaning embedded in the soil and 'Tu Techan'. Various food and products were available on store shelves, as long as they got enough money. They wanted to eat Western fast food in *McDonald's* and *Pizza Hut* as urban peers which symbolized fashion and modern. The children had been influenced by the consumerism culture in the city which I detailed in Chapter 7. Their ambitions of becoming modern urban citizens made children more likely to embrace the urban culture that caused the 'intergenerational acculturation gap' (Renzaho et al., 2017. p: 4).

The 'Tu hua'[52]

The 'Tu hua' was one of the non-dominant cultural capitals that the migrant children inherited from their parents. In China, each region has a distinct dialect which is named after the region. For example, the dialect in Qingdao is called 'Qingdao hua'. However, the dialects from rural areas are often stigmatized as 'Tu hua' which literally translates as 'soil language'. Unlike Mandarin, which is made by scholars according to officially standards, 'Tu hua' simply grows from the ground lacking of measurements. Moreover, the 'Tu hua' could become unintelligible within 10 miles. For example, the 'Tu hua' in Si's village was slightly different from the nearby villages, although both of them belong to the Anhui dialect. At the age of mass mobility, 'Tu hua' cannot play a role in Chinese society. Thus, the urban residents despised the people and culture from rural areas and held a strong sense of superiority by speaking standard Mandarin (Lin, 2013; Li & Xiong, 2018). As I mentioned above, Si's strong accent had been laughed at by the urban peers in primary school.

However, for migrant parents, 'Tu hua' was the unique and amiable resource expressing their memory and emotion. Only when a person lives in the areas for a long period, can the person master the essence of 'Tu hua' .'Tu hua' becomes as a natural tie to connect rural migrants with the relatives left behind and their hometowns. Some migrant parents insisted on teaching their children to speak 'Tu hua' and used it as family language, even though they knew that the 'Tu hua' could produce adverse effects on speakers in urban context. It took Si a long time to get rid of a strong accent. However, when he returned home, he needed to speak the 'Tu hua' with his parents that reinforced his origin. The parental language ideologies and choice shaped their children's linguistic identities and choices (Yang & Xiao, 2021).

> Me: Why do you teach Si Anhui dialect? He is living in Qingdao.
> Si's father: He just lives in Qingdao, but it does not change the fact that he is from Anhui province. He is my son. His root is in Anhui. He is from the same place as me. (Interview with Si's father, at Si's home, 10 November 2019)

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[52] 'Tu' refers to soil, but in here it also contains a meaning of contempt and backwardness (Fei, 1992). While 'hua' means 'language'. Together, 'Tu hua' could be considered as a 'inferior language' spreading among rural areas.

Once, when I watched a movie with Si, his mother called him. Si naturally and unconsciously used 'Tu hua' to answer the phone. It reflected that the family language choice influenced his language habitus. One of the key components of the rural culture is to obey parents. The migrant parents, as the caretakers, often were the authorities in the family who played a determining role in family language decisions (Spolsky, 2012). Based on Si's father, speaking 'Tu hua' is the mark of being 'Anhui' people. When Si return to his parents' hometown, he did not feel strange owing to people sharing the same dialect. Bourdieu argued that the individuals would be assigned to a particular category based on the particular cultural capital they possessed. To some extent, 'Tu hua' as a kind of cultural capital provided migrant children with a sense of belonging to their parents' hometown.

However, not every migrant children listen to their parents. Some of them refused to interact with parents in the 'Tu hua' as the urban schooling experiences tended to impose the dominant class's knowledge, language, and values as universal standards. As mentioned above, speaking Mandarin was a basic requirement to becoming a modern citizen. Bourdieu argued that the individuals' habitus would be shaped and reshaped by entering the different fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In light of the Bourdieu's framework, the language policy of migrant family can be viewed as a 'structured and structuring' habitus that is shaped by both rural culture and urban culture as they entering to a different socio-linguistic field where influenced parents' language ideologies towards Mandarin. Besides, at the micro-level, the school experiences let children acquire more urban-type cultural capital that provided children with an increased sense of agency allowing them to challenge the family language policy. Except the institutional enforcement of language learning, the individual factor such as educational expectation and cultural awareness can also play a significant role in shaping family language policy. Therefore, some of these children became the agents of urbanization ideals in their families.

Here, I took Sui as an example who preferred to be recognized as an urban child. She persuaded her parents to speak Mandarin at home because she thought the standard Mandarin would help her parents better integrate themselves into the city life and get higher income.

For Sui, it was also a great opportunity to practice and improve her Mandarin as she explained 'Teaching my parents to speak Mandarin boots my confidence. And during the process, I also get opportunity to find my problems and fix them.' Therefore, Sui refused to communicate with her parents in 'Tu hua'. According to Sui's father, 'My daughter study very hard and does well in school. As parents I should fully support her rather than dragging her down.' For the benefits of their child and the whole family, Sui's parents decided to follow her advice and tried to speak Mandarin at home because they acknowledged the value of Mandarin in the educational system and job market.

Combining other existing studies on family language policy of migrant family, it is quite common that parents change family language policy because of concern for their children's future (Renzaho et al., 2017; Wei, et al., 2021). The language of host society as dominant cultural capital can transform into economic and social capital that would help children to achieve social mobility. The rural-urban migration not only changed their living environment but also switched socio-linguistic context triggering the language conflict between parents and children. The different strategies of family language policy shows how migrant children negotiated between parents' expectations and Mandarin acquired in urban school. The finding of my research reveals that the children who had more connections with rural village were more likely to listen to their parents, while the children who preferred urban culture might challenge the family language policy.

6.3 The rural village in children's eyes

The children's descriptions and insights on their parents' hometowns reflected almost every aspect of rural life that helped us get a comprehensive understanding of varying forms of rural-urban divisions in China. When we talked about rural life, the children often began with some positive aspects about the natural environment. In a rural village, they had more opportunities to get close to nature being away from air pollution and crowded traffic. However, the advantage of the natural environment could not counteract the negative effects of a backward economy, which left a 'boring and backward' impression on children. The live

experiences in rural and urban areas constructed children's ambivalent attitude towards the rural hometown.

6.3.1 Rural life is boring

A common complaint among children was that the rural village was boring. Children's complaints and insights on their parents' hometowns reflected the regional inequalities in modern China. The understanding of the urban-rural divisions was originated from what they experienced daily in the countryside and Qingdao. They were two distinct worlds in almost every aspect. In children's eyes, the rural villages lacked resources and facilities such as public transportations, shopping malls, and recreational facilities, as opposed to modernized city life. Tang was particularly outspoken:

> Tang: My parents' hometown is a small remote village. There are not any cinemas or shopping malls. The nearest town is about ten miles away. So I used to stay at home to watch TV or play on my mobile phones.
>
> Me: Is there anything you feel is interesting?
>
> Tang: When I was a child, I enjoyed playing with firecrackers and watching fireworks. Now I have grown up, I am no longer interested in firecrackers. It becomes boring for me to stay in the village for weeks. I want to return to Qingdao and hang out with my friends. (Online chat with Tang, by WeChat, 22, February 2020)

Tang even had quarrels with her parents about the annual return visit because she wanted to spend the winter break at Qingdao. All the key participants expressed their preference for urban life. In the city, the children used to hang out with their friends during weekends. They liked various activities such as shopping, watching movies and attending animation shows that indicated children's desires to share the economic outcomes of social transformation. Feng and Sui also claimed that the little village did not have such facilities to meet their demands. Comparing with colorful lifestyle in urban areas, the rural life is monotonous and simple in children's eyes. It reflects the huge gap between urban and rural areas which motivated children to stay at cities. I will illustrate the urban facilities in Chapter 7 to explain how children establish their urban identities by imitating and pursuing fashion.

Besides, living in the city provided children with a sense of superiority when they interacted with the children left behind. Due to the economic gap, the novel things would first appear in the urban areas. Although the rural children could investigate the information of the urban life through the internet it could not be the substitute for firsthand experiences. Compared with rural peers, the migrant children undoubtedly had more experiences about the modern urban life which became a kind of cultural capital. Consequently, they positioned themselves as urban children in front of rural peers by showing off their colorful life in the city (Xiong & Li, 2017). However, in school, I never saw a child share the rural life experiences with urban peers. From children's perspectives, rural life was boring. It indicated that the children tried to hide their rural origin which caused the discrimination.

6.3.2 Poor living conditions

In addition to the public facilities, the poor living condition in rural areas was another reason why some of these children disliked their parents' hometown. Children's narratives sufficiently presented the rural life in China that remained relatively untouched compared with the fast-changing world in the city. It also explained why millions of rural people had left their hometowns and struggled in the city, even though they were home oriented.

> Feng: There are no flush toilets in my grandparent's home. We need to use the dry latrine which is very disgusting. My grandfather would regularly clean it, but it was still very stinking and dirty. (Chat online with Feng, by WeChat, 9 February 2020)

In Feng's view, the dry latrine was almost a mark of 'backward and inferiority' of his parents' hometown. He could not bear the dry latrine that reinforced his desire to stay at city in the future. In urban areas, the flush toilets are widespread. Take a step further, we can find that the transformations of the toilets in cities is accompanied by the economic transformation starting in 1980s (Cheng et al., 2018). However, the sanitation in rural areas remained virtually unchanged (ibid). If we consider the flush toilet as a symbol of modernization, the rural areas, where did not enjoy the benefits of the economic development, were still caught in the last century. Until 2015, China's Ministry of Health (CMH) started a 'toilets revolution'

to improve sanitary conditions in rural areas by replacing the dry latrine(CMH, 2015). According to the Third National Agriculture Census report (NBS, 2017), around 340 million Chinese rural people accounting for 63.8% did not have access to flush toilets. The Chinese government planned to invest 10 billion Yuan (equals to £ 1.1 billion) and to improve the rural sanitation coverage to 85% at the end of 2020 (ibid). According to the People's Daily (2020), the 'toilets revolution' could be considered as a vanity project that increased financial stress on rural people. To use the 'new toilet' the rural people needed to build a septic tank serving as a supporting facility because there was no underground drainage system in rural areas. The septic tank needed to clean once a month costing around 100 yuan (equals £11.74) (People's Daily, 2020). The rural people did not want to pay the extra expense, thus, most of the 'new toilet' had been abandoned (ibid). In fact, the failure of the 'toilets revolution' was mainly due to the poor infrastructure in rural areas.

The public media is the main way for urban residents to understand the current situation of rural areas. Undoubtedly, the poor living condition associates the rural people with the label as 'dirty and lack of personal hygiene' (Lin, 2013). The problems of poor infrastructure in rural areas and the stereotypes of rural people cannot be solved overnight. The rural origin became the reason why the migrants got discriminated against or judged constantly in the city. Except Feng, Sui also was dissatisfied with rural living environment.

> Sui: The rural life is pretty tough and inconvenient. Especially in winter, there is no heating system in my parents' hometown. My parents need to burn coal on the stove. But it is still cold indoor, I have to wear as much as I can to keep warm. Moreover, it is too cold to take a shower. I can only use hot towels to clean my body.
>
> MC: How do you keep warm during the night?
>
> Sui: The hearth in the kitchen was linked to the heatable brick bed in the living room. When we cook the meal, the waste heat would provide warmth to the brick bed. So during the night, the bed is warm.
>
> MC: Wow, that is so smart! What do you think about it?
>
> Sui: What is good about that? It is very common in my parents' hometown. And the bed is too hot in summer. (Chat online with Sui, by WeChat, 9 February 2020)

The significant differences in living conditions deeply influenced Sui's perceptions of the rural villages. I am surprised about how rural people utilized limited resources to deal with the tough environment. The efficient use of energy is the wisdom of rural life. As an outsider, I was unconsciously fascinated by the brick bed that I never knew before and overlook its disadvantage. However, the brick bed cannot match with advanced heating systems and water boiler equipment in the city which creates convenient and comfortable living environment.

Although the house condition of these migrant children were also poor in Qingdao, the city life offered possibilities and dreams for them. When talked about future, Sui believed that she could make money and live in much better environment in the city. Eventually, the shining points in rural life had been covered by modern technology. For some children, the advanced city was much more attractive than the 'backward' village in their eyes. As mentioned above, the urban school taught the children that maintaining good personal hygiene was a basic requirement of being a modern citizen. The poor living conditions in rural villages could not meet the needs. Therefore, most of the children expressed that they would stay in the city. Just as parents feared, the children gradually lost their own culture and the 'rural root'.

6.3.3 They were strange to me

In addition to the unsatisfactory environment, some children were unfamiliar with the people left behind which made their parents' hometown become a strange place. Due to their long-term residency in Qingdao, they did not have common topics or memories with the separate family members.

> CM: What is troubling you most in the return visit?
>
> Tang: To be honest, I do not like to visit the extended family with my parents. I am not familiar with them. For example, as a junior, I needed to visit my third-grandmother[53] to say greetings during the Spring festive[54]. I basically have no

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[53] Tang called her the third-grandmother is because she is the third sister of Tang's grandfather.

[54] After Chinese New Year's Eve, the younger generation needs to visit the elders of their families and wish them a happy new year. In return, the elders will distribute red envelopes full of cash to the children. This is an important festive ritual that helps to maintain a close intergenerational relationship.

intersection with her. But she had looked after my father, so my father was close to her. They would chat and joke for hours.

CM: Do you know the name of your third-grandmother?

Tang: No, I do not know her name. I just called her third-grandmother. Actually, I know nothing about her, except she is the sister of my grandfather.

CM: What did you do when they were chatting?

Tang: I was sitting nearby and playing on my mobile phone because I was not allowed to leave. Sometimes the elders would ask about my study and urge me to study hard which really annoyed me. Please do not involve me in the conversation! I felt embarrassed being questioned about my academic performance. (Online chat with Tang, by WeChat, 23, February 2020)

Tang was reluctant to visit the extended family members. For her, the third-grandmother was only a distant relative in name. It was her parents who forced her to visit because they wanted their child to show filial respect to the elders. During the Spring Festive, visiting other family members is the most meaningful activity to promote family unity. It was the reason why rural migrants must go back to the rural village, no matter how far it was (Willis, 2019). It was also a great opportunity for migrant parents to payback because they had received care from the elders. The social network of rural people was largely based on kinship which formed a permanent bond because of the stability and closure of the agricultural society (Fei, 1992). However, the urban people often acquired social capital through their occupational and neighbourhood relations. For children, they spent most of their life at school frequently interacting with their classmates and teachers. Without common experiences and topics, they gradually lost the connections with the people left behind.

Although the parents were constantly reminded that the rural village was their 'root', the children did not want to dedicate themselves to developing the villages. The people aged over 60 accounted for 23.81% of the whole rural population as more and more young rural people moved out (NBSC, 2021). Lacking young people, rural life lost its attraction that making the rural-urban migration become an irreversible trend. The division between parents' expectations and children's aspirations made children face a dilemma in the process of migration. The migrant parents as the first generation of migrants only considered the city as

a place to work rather than their home because they had an emotional attachment with the villages. They sent back remittances and were concerned about the news that happened in rural hometowns. In contrast, the children grew up in the city, and they did not understanding the importance of the soil or rural rituals. The parents wanted their children to establish an emotional connection with the rural village through the annual return visits. Ironically, the visit left children with a negative impression of the village that push the children farther away. To ease the tension, the parents used the 'filial piety' to maintain their authority and close intergenerational relation.

6.4 Filial piety culture

As the old saying goes, 'The parents' upbringing is higher than the mountain and deeper than the sea.' This Chinese traditional saying emphasizes obedience and filial piety which is the core of the intergenerational solidarity among families (xiao in Chinese) (Luo & Zhan, 2012; Lin, 2013). Filial piety is the traditional virtue and the most important quality that handles the relations between father (mother) and son (daughter) in present China. The citizenship education in school also emphasized interdependence and conformity to collective responsibility within the family, indisputable obedience and respect for authority, especially respect for the family hierarchy and elders. The engagement with the filial piety culture shaped the children's identities. If we look back at the section about ancestor worship, we can find that the filial piety culture was deeply implied in traditional rituals. The children had no choice but to follow. The children were required to kowtow and offer sacrifices to their ancestors because of the simple fact that they would not exist without ancestors. According to the parents, the ancestors' spirits would bless and protect their descendants, as the children displayed filial respect and cherished ancestors' efforts. Although some children disliked the rural life, they were not allowed to betray or forget their ancestors.

Moreover, the migrant parents set an example for their children by sending remittances back to support their parents. Based on Tang's narratives, her parents spent money to renovate their old house in rural hometown to improve living condition for Tang's grandparents, even though their living condition in the city was severe. Tang's parents also bought TV,

refrigerator and new couch for elder parents. Compared with the past, the quality of old house became much better, but it was still far from urban level.

> Tang's father: Although I cannot earn much money, but I shall repay my parents within my capacity. Looking after parents and satisfying their wishes is my first duty. When I educated Tang, I always emphasized the importance of filial piety. (Interview with Tang's father, at Tang's home, 19 October, 2019)

Tang's parents are not alone, most of the parents educate their children to be filial. The migrant parents' economic circumstance are limited, but they are willing to spend money on elder parents by saving money from themselves. For example, Si, Feng, and Sui's parents never drink a coffee in Starbucks even though they had stayed at Qingdao for over a decade. However, when these parents returned to the rural village, they would buy lots of gifts for their parents. Besides, the parents cut cost on their living expense by bringing cheap agricultural products from their hometown. These parents' urban life was frugal and simple but liked to be generous with elders. The filial culture required the younger generation to look after the elders even sacrifice self-interests. The migrant parents wanted their children to understand the meaning of self-sacrifice.

Besides, the filial culture reinforced children's subordinate position in the family. Only the elder member of a family had the rights to take the leading role in directing the ancestor worship ceremony. According to Fei (1992: 37), in rural society, a father was the 'source of discipline' whose influences would increase as his children grow up. They expect their children to follow family rules and their expectations without dispute (ibid). Feng's father as the eldest son was the authority and power centre within the whole family. The father's stern patriarchal rule constructed Feng as an obedient child, even though Feng was a 'troublemaker' in school. Based on Feng's narratives, he was not afraid of teachers, but he was afraid of being criticized and punished by his father. Ideally, the parent's expectations and suggestions were orienting migrant children's decisions and behaviours because the influences of the filial piety. Although some of these children disliked the rural rituals or living conditions, they still learned a great deal about their family and rural hometown. The

migrant children's attitudes toward the rural villages were ambivalence. Thus, their responses to the urban-rural dichotomy was not a simple transition from rural to urban but advocated the negotiation of conflicts and compromises.

The sense of indebtedness

Due to the education of filial piety, all the migrant children in my research declared that they would repay their parents when they grew up. The filial piety can be viewed as the foundation of the family support contract, especially in the rural society (Gu, 2021). The children received economic, cultural, social and emotional supports from their parents as they were growing up. The children formed a strong sense of debt because the parents had made enormous sacrifices for children's lives. During the annual return visit, the parents or grandparents gave children some moral lesson to reinforce the sense of indebtedness.

> CM: Could you tell me one of the most impressive things in your parents' hometown?
>
> Si: There is a special food called 'Suo Diuer' in my parents' hometown. When I came back to the village, my grandparents would cook this food for us.
>
> CM: What is the 'Suo Diuer'?
>
> Si: 'Suo Diuer' is stir-fry cobblestones with many onions, garlic and ginger.
>
> CM: How can you eat stones?
>
> Si smiled again: No. we do not eat it. Just put it in my mouth and suck it.
>
> CM: Why use stones as food materials?
>
> Si: That is a unique invention of my hometown. My parents told me that when they were kids, they were very poor. Sometimes they did not have meat or vegetables, so they cook the cobblestones to eat with rice.
>
> CM: I am sorry to hear about that. But why do your grandparents still cool the 'Suo Diuer' for you?
>
> Si: They wants me to remember the hard time, so I can appreciate the present life.
>
> (Interview with Si at Si's home, 10, November 2019)

The grandparents and parents of Si had experienced poverty in the small village, so they urgently hoped their descendants could escape poverty and misery. Si's grandmother cooks the cobblestones to remind Si of the tough life in the little village. Thanks to his parents' effort, Si could receive education and enjoy modern living in the city, which offered Si more opportunities and resources compared with the children left behind. As first-generation migrants, the parents took themselves as stepping stones for their children. They left their hometown and moved to a completely strange place standing unequal treatment and discrimination that contained countless hardships and sacrifice. Si's parents doing all these was for Si's education that became as a family project, deeply embedded in the family migration. Si's parents used their migrant stories and experiences to educate their child, so their son would generate a strong sense of indebtedness. Apparently, the moral lesson was successful, and it left deep impression for Si. Based on the conversation with Si, his parents' sacrifices and efforts were both inspiration and pressure that push him to study hard in school because he was afraid of letting his parents down. Si's parents used filial piety to strengthen the family ties that intertwined Si's academic performances and family expectations. It provides further understanding about the intergenerational relationship in migrant families.

In addition to Si, other children also had a sense of gratitude and indebtedness to their parents. Especially for the migrant children who were born and grow up in city, the annual return visit offered a great opportunity for the parents to educate their children. The rural living experiences let these children to understand how luck they were that they did not need to go through the hardship and poverty of rural life.

> Sui: 'According to my father, he had lots of work to do such as gathering firewood, feeding cattle and plowing when he was a kid. My grandparents did not require me to do these work. But I still cannot stand living in the village for weeks. I suppose if I was born in the village, I must be devastated.'(Chat online with Sui, by WeChat, 11 February 2020)

The annual return visit made Sui treasure her urban life more. It was also the rural experiences let her realize that it was her parents who created a better life for her. Without her

parents' efforts, she might be a rural girl who needed to spend more time on housework rather than focusing on studying. Through family education and daily interaction, the migrant children appreciated the dedication and sacrifices that their parents had made. As a result the children directly express that they would like to repay their parents' hard work that permitted them to live and study in the city. A qualitative research related to intergenerational relationship in migrant families showed that parents had more positive feelings when their children were more obedient and had less conflicts (Guo et al., 2020). Thus, at this stage, the best way to repay their parents is to obey their parents and fulfill their expectations.

Some migrant children even made compromises to please their parents because it was an expression of their love and filial piety. For example, although Tang was reluctant to return the rural village and visit the distant relatives, she eventually compromised with her parents. Based on this point, the sense of indebtedness is one-way. It seems that the parents owe nothing to their children, but the children owe a great deal to their parents (Gu, 2021). The sense of indebtedness consolidates parents' dominant position that gives parents the control and decision authority within the family (ibid). The citizenship education in the urban school also stressed the importance of family harmony and respecting their parents. Through the school education, the filial duty in rural society successfully integrates into the moral education in the city. Therefore, these children kept a close relationship with their parents, even though they had different ideas about the rural hometowns.

6.5 Conclusion

This Chapter I analyze the key themes associated with the rural hometown that influenced the identities of migrant children. In particular, to avoid the children losing the rural culture, the parents try to reinforce the connection between children and rural hometown through the annual return visiting, family language and family education. While passing on culture, these activities also shape children's perceptions of the rural hometowns and their identities. When the children come back to the village, they are forced to learn the rural rituals their parents thought important. Based on parents' narratives, they identified rurality positively that provided a sense of belonging and warmth. The data of my research shows that the migrant parents as the first generation migrants have strong emotional attachments to their rural

hometowns. Thus, parents want their children to remember the rural origin and maintain a close relationship with the village where is the root of their family.

Then, this chapter explores children's experiences and perceptions of the rural hometown. The migrant children hold different attitudes toward the rural villages and values. The migration experiences let the children directly experience the rural-urban dichotomy. Some of the children especially the boys, who can play an important role in the traditional rituals and activities, are more likely to take the rural village as their hometown. While the girls preferred the urban life where emphasizes the gender equality and provides more opportunities for them. Faced with a patriarchal culture leading to subordinated position, the girls feel it is difficult to break the restrictions on gender in the rural areas. Due to the urban schooling experiences, some of the children tried to use the cultural capital acquired in city to challenge the rural conventions and values. For example, Sui exercised agency to change family language policy and persuaded her parents to speak Mandarin in home. The different opinions between parents and children lead to acculturative stress and intergenerational conflicts.

To ease the tension, the parents emphasized the significance of filial piety by giving moral lessons. The life in villages and the sufferings of their parents had form a sense of indebtedness for the children. For these children, respecting parents is an invariable moral rules which they could not violated that limited their choices. To repay the parents' sacrifices and efforts, the children chose to make compromises. It is indisputable that the filial piety forced the children to establish a connection with their parents' hometown and inherited the rural culture even though they dislike it. In particular, this chapter uncovers the negotiation of the rural and urban culture through the lens of intergenerational relationship. The Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively present how school system and family education shaped the migrant children. In the next chapter, I illustrate their urban life and what they want to be.

Chapter 7: Shopping and ownership

This chapter focuses on migrant children's urban life. It will provide a picture of their lived experience, highlighting the growing urban-rural dichotomy. **First I will illustrate the relationship between consumption and urban citizenship, in an attempt to show how consumerism positions migrant children** at inferior social status **by giving different symbolic values to different products.** Then I take shoes culture and shopping activities as examples to display how consumerism reinforces the social class and stratification, and how children resist it by reshaping their images.

7.1 Consumption and urban citizenship

The Chinese urban residents experienced a consumer revolution at multiple levels since the economic reform and opening-up policy in 1980s. A variety of international brands such as *McDonald, Nike, Apple and Ikea* had poured into the Chinese market and provided a wide range of products ranging from western food, electronics to clothes (Zhou, 2008). Before the reform, food and other commodities were rationed (Zhao, 1997). Moreover, before the economic reform, individual consumption was seriously limited because the state emphasized investment in heavy industry to promote national capital accumulation rather than consumer products (ibid). Thus, the economic transformation was not only a new market phenomenon, it also challenged puritan communism and egalitarian socialism by encouraging private economic activity and personal consumption (Zhang, 2015). Along with an embrace of modernization and globalization, foreign products were associated with western consumer culture and symbolized a modern lifestyle (Zhou & Hui, 2003). Due to the high symbolic value attached to these products, the desire to buy foreign brands rose and domestic products lost attractiveness (Johansson, 2001).

The economic reform factually improved Chinese people's living standards, but was accompanied by an unequal distribution of wealth and a huge rural-urban gap (Zheng, 2003). During the 1990s, millions of Chinese people questioned the reasonability of social

transformation from the communist to a market economy, especially those who enjoyed secure employment[55] in state-owned or collectivised companies and who had been laid off with little compensation (Tian & Dong, 2010). To promote the economic reform, those who achieved success in the free market were often depicted in state media as well educated, smart, elegantly dressed and making large amounts of money (ibid). The new image of the 'modern citizens' became the persons endowed with the power to consume (Alpermann, 2013). The Chinese government actively constructed the new model citizen as someone who confidently embraced the rising commercial culture and knew how to consume (ibid). Thus, boasting about wealth was no longer culturally obscene but a positive statement about successfully participating in the new ethic of consumption.

Initially, only the elite and rich people could enjoy these expensive and fancy western products and access the relevant symbolic capital such as privilege and superiority (Davis, 2005). During the 1990s the most desired commodities included televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines, forming the 'three modern items' which marked the degree to which a household could be considered 'modern' (Zhao, 1997). Since then, the products such as mobile phones, personal computers, and air-conditioning became the new 'three modern items' symbolising a modern urban household (Zhao, 1997; Zhang, 2015). These products became parts of urban lifestyle as an icon of progressive modernity that shaped the conceptualizations of urbanity and modernity (Ferry, 2003). Through advertising and public media, the image of a 'modern urban citizen' was closely associated with different kinds of products.

The migrant children are influenced by images and practices of urban consumerism, as they consciously or unconsciously compare themselves with urban peers. In Chapter 6, I indicated how the migrant parents made strenuous efforts to educate their children to develop a 'frugality lifestyle'. While the traditional rural value of 'frugality' which emphasized the ability to consume sparingly and save resources was challenged by the consumerism in the city it did not disappear in migrant families. The parents wanted their children to embrace the

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[55] Before the economic reform in 1978, China applied lifetime employment system. Therefore, the employees in state and collective companies were bound to their jobs, guaranteeing a fixed and permanent workforce. Even when they retired, their children could choose to inherit the jobs.

values of 'hard work and plain living' and 'self-sacrifice'. Some students followed their parents' suggestions. For example, Sui wear her elder sister's old clothes. She recognized her parents' hard work, and wanted to be a dutiful child, avoiding adding burden to her parents. However, the frugal living habits often required self-sacrifices. As I will show below some of these children were exhausted by the ceaseless demands for self-sacrifice. They abandoned the 'frugality lifestyle' and desired abundant consumption to pursue the fashion and 'modernity'.

7.2 The shoes culture

In this section, I focus on the 'shoes culture' among migrant children to discuss a central example that illustrates how they navigated consumer culture. There is a strict dress code in the LS school. All the students are required to wear school uniforms, but they can choose the shoes. Thus, the shoes raises the comparison and competition marking distinctions of different groups. The urban children often wear brand-name shoes such as *Nike* and *Adidas* that are still regarded as status symbols. Specifically, those who have the special 'limited edition' shoes become the coolest students in the class. The urban students, especially boys, like to compare their shoes with migrant students, and openly boast about their expensive shoes. They are keen on discussing the values, design, functions and quality of these shoes which is a popular activities during breaks. For children the branded shoes held a kind of 'magic' or 'charm' in materiality which, as I will show, epitomised the meaning of these shoes.

7.2.1 Zou's '*Adibas*'

Adidas is a leading global brand in the Chinese sports market. *Adidas* has successfully positioned itself as a top clothes brand by appointing famous celebrities and sport stars to act as brand image ambassadors to enhance the brand value. A pair of basic *Adidas* sneakers costs around 500 Yuan (equals to £ 57.88) that are expensive for rural migrants. Thus, some

migrant children have no choice but to choose the fake product *Adibas* as an alternative whose brand logo matches the real *Adidas*' signature 3-stripes. The only difference between *Adibas* and *Adidas* is the spelling, so it is hard to distinguish true and fake at first sight. The price of *Adibas* was only one-tenth of *Adidas*.

In January 2019, I went to 'L city' , a shopping mall in Qingdao, with Zou. It was the first time hanging out with Zou, and he was wearing an *Adibas* black jacket. I did not directly ask him about the fake jacket because I was not familiar with Zou at the time. I did not want to embarrass him. Then I looked at his sport trousers which was also *Adibas* with the classic 3-stripe logo. I was struck by Zou's *Adibas*. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I thought the migrant children just looked like their urban peers in the school speaking standard Mandarin and wearing the same uniform. However, Zou's fake brand reminded me that despite living in the city and studying at a public urban school, migrant children still lacked access to urban products, coveted styles of consumption and services.

Back at school, I started to observe students' shoes. I found there was a hierarchy of shoes at school which was arranged in accordance with the price. The famous international brands such as *Nike* and *Adidas* were ranked at the top. What followed were the domestic brands such as *Lining* and *Anta*[56]. The unknown brands and fake shoes were at the bottom of the hierarchy. Zou only had two pairs of shoes based on my observation. The one was *Adibas*, and the other pair was an unknown brand. Zou explained, 'My grandmother thought my feet will be lengthen and widen as I am growing. The shoes will become tight for me. So it is a waste to buy too many shoes.'(Interview with Zou at coffee shop, 7 March, 2019). The poor socioeconomic conditions of Zou's family limited his consumption ability and also excluded Zou from participating in the discussions on popular brands at school.

After I became familiar with Zou, I asked him where he got his clothes and shoes from. Zou told me that his grandmother bought his clothes and shoes in a morning market[57] near his home. There was a variety of products in the morning market including vegetables, meat,

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[56] *Lining* and *Anta* are the beat-know Chinese sport brands which are about half price from *Nike* and *Adidas*.

[57] The morning market is informal market which is spontaneously composed of local peddlers. The opening hours of the morning market are from 5am to 9am.

seafood, and clothing and they were much cheaper than in supermarkets. However, the environment of the morning market was dirty and messy surrounding by garbage and slums. I found the same shoes that Zou owned at this market. The black *Adibas* sport shoes only cost 60 Yuan (£6.98). After I got the price, I was preparing to leave. The owner of the stall stopped me and told me the lowest price was 50 Yuan (£5.82). The owner thought that I was unhappy with the price. I guessed that 50 Yuan might not be the lowest price, there was still space to bargain. Thus, I did not find out the exact price of Zou's *Adibas*. In fact, Zou did not know it either. The first time we talked about his shoes, Zou explained:

> Sometimes, I feel frustrated that I can't buy more things. I know my shoes are fake which is a joke for the urban children. When they get together and talk about their clothes and shoes, I feel excluded and isolated. They will not let me join the discussion, unless I let them make fun of my shoes. But what can I do? I get the fake shoes so I keep losing. I do not have money to buy these things. Nobody loves a poor man. (Interview with Zou at coffee shop, 7 March, 2019)

The urban peers evaluated migrant children by their shoes. Due to his experiences, Zou automatically regarded himself as a 'poor man' and attributed exclusion and discrimination to lacking of money. The shoes let Zou realize the value of money which was different from the citizenship education in school. Zou was not alone. Other migrant children also experienced being laughed because their cheap and outdated shoes. These experiences made them feel frustrated and unloved. There were several opposite adjectives being used to distinguish the shoes of urban students and migrant students including 'expensive' vs 'cheap' ,'authentic' vs 'fake' ,'international' vs 'domestic', and 'fashionable' vs 'outdated'. These binary oppositions constituted the 'symbolic violence' between urban students and migrant students. The concept of 'symbolic violence' was used to explain how social inequalities were maintained by forms of symbolic domination rather than physical force (Bourdieu, 2001). The expensive shoes on urban students' feet could be considered as a kind of 'symbolic violence' that provided a sense of superiority and extra power. As I described in the theoretical framework, individual's position was based on the certain capital he possessed. The urban children placed themselves at the dominant position making judgments on migrant children. The cheap clothes and shoes

reinforced the stereotype of migrant children as 'poor' and 'Tu'(outdated). It separated migrant children from urban kids. Moreover, the symbolic violence was unconsciously agreed upon by both dominated and subordinate group. Migrant children also agreed that the foreign brand was superior to theirs because their cognitive structures were structured by the structure of the society.

These simultaneously material and symbolic distinctions, as they became expressed in shoes and other consumer items, re-produced the 'urban-rural' or 'urban-migrant' dichotomy in ways that were both routine and embodied in everyday school life. Other research has shown that this segregation is also often institutionally ordained. For instance, research about the schooling experiences of migrant children in Beijing showed that the school created separate classes for migrant and urban children, separating them spatially from each other (Lu & Zhou, 2013). Another urban public school used different timetables to reduce interactions between migrant and urban students, because the urban parents feared that their children would be misled by migrant children (Chen, 2014). Unsurprisingly these exclusion were shown to lead to low self-esteem and a lack of confidence among migrant children (Lu & Zhou, 2013; Chen, 2014). In addition to negative impacts on children's psychological wellbeing, these experiences reinforced their identities as 'migrant children' or 'outsiders' (Zhang, 2015). Although there was no spatial segregation in LS school, the different patterns of consumption created more hidden forms of symbolic violence which provided a different perspective in understanding social distinction. Symbolic violence can be less obvious or imperceptible to outside observers but be a vital form of reproducing exclusion in everyday interactions and practices.

Through the interaction with urban kids, the migrant children realized the urban-rural dichotomy as a socioeconomic hierarchy. The migrant children were excluded from many products, services and opportunities created by China's globalization, urbanization and modernization. Additional educational opportunities such as the calligraphy training sessions and overseas exchange programs I mentioned in Chapter 5 were unavailable to them. Moreover, these products and services were associated with being cool, smart and modern, and they marked distinctions of belonging, that positioned migrant children at the bottom of

the hierarchy in the city. Although the migrant children wanted to assume or perform an identity as a 'new citizen', they were limited by family economic constraints.

7.2.2 Feng's new shoes

Some children aspired to be free from stereotypes of being poor and reshape their images by acquiring fashionable shoes. In this section, I draw on Feng as an example to show the agency of migrant children.

> During home visiting I found that Feng put many shoe boxes at the most conspicuous place opposite his bed in the bedroom. According to Feng, these boxes provided a cool and safe place to store his shoes, preventing damage from dust and direct sunlight. The symbolic importance of the shoes stood out. The shoe boxes with huge brand logos showcased Feng's chosen brands, including *Nike*, *Adidas* and *Under Armour*. I was surprised that he got six pairs of shoes because other migrant children only had two or three pairs. Although Feng's family had a higher income than other migrant families, I assumed that his parents would not spend much money to buy so many shoes. Thus, I asked Feng, 'How can you have so many brand shoes.' Feng explained proudly, 'Believe it or not. I used the money I earned to buy most of these shoes.'(Field note at Feng's home 2 November, 2019)

According to Feng, he worked as a waiter in an Italian restaurant to make money[58] during summer vacations. His working day started at 10 a.m. and ended at 10 p.m. and he got two days off per month. His salary was 2,400 Yuan (£264) per month which was lower than other waiters because his work was categorised as a short-term internship. Although this work was pretty tiring and payment was low, Feng treasured this chance to make money. At school, Feng was considered a 'troublemaker' by his teachers. However, he worked hard at the restaurant displaying another identity. Being a good communicator he managed to mix with all kinds of people in his job. The school only emphasized academic performances, and

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[58] In China, the child labour law prohibits the employment of teenagers under 16 (SCPRC, 2016). Thus, Feng meet the minimum age for working.

ignored other capacities. According to Feng, his efforts were recognized and appreciated by the manager who gave him 200 Yuan as cash bonus.

Feng took his salary to the *Nike* store to buy the basketball shoes he had been eager to have for long time. Feng was willing to spend almost half of his salary on a pair of shoes which was clearly not compatible with the rural value of 'self-sacrifice' and 'frugality'. Then Feng posted the pictures of his new shoes and the receipt on his personal homepages. The receipt contained significant information and meaning which might be even more important than the new shoes. It contained the article number, price and address which proved that Feng had bought new shoes in a flagship shop. I thought this could potentially be linked to his past experiences. Once I observed a quarrel between Feng and an urban student, Bi[59], about his shoes.

> Bi: Where did you get your *Nike Air Force* 1? I do not think it has the blue version.
>
> Feng: No, it has. I purchased at Taobao[60].
>
> Bi: Interesting! It must be limited edition. How much is it?
>
> Feng: I paid about 1,400 Yuan.
>
> Bi laughed with a grin: Wow. You are so rich spending 1,400 Yuan on a fake shoes.
>
> Feng: No, it is authentic.
>
> Bi: Uh, whatever. There is only black and white version of Air Force 1. It is stupid to believe in an online store. (Fieldnote at LS school, 1st March, 2019)

Bi, the urban child, questioned Feng's shoes without any evidence because he took for granted that the migrant children could not afford these certified shoes. As a result, this time Feng displayed the receipt on his social media to prove that he could purchase the same product as urban peers. Moreover, Feng published a short blog after he purchased the new shoes. 'It feels great to buy new shoes using my own money. KD 12[61] are the best basketball

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[59] Bi is Feng's classmates. Bi's parents were small business owners. His family had received huge resettlement compensation from Qingdao government because their old house had been requisitioned. Due to the development of real estate, Bi's family became millionaires overnight.

[60] *Taobao* is the biggest online shopping website in China which is the Chinese version of *Amazon*. However, many products sold on *Taobao* are fakes and replicas.

[61] KD 12 is the name of the shoes a special *Nike* collection. This collection is endorsed by Kevin Durant, the most successful and famous basketball player from NBA.

shoes! Amazing!'. (Feng's blog on QQ, 25 August, 2019). This blog received 27 likes and 32 comments from his friends including migrant children and urban children. One of the comments was coming from Bi. Bi wrote: 'Awesome! Nice shoes!'. Feng replied: 'Thanks, dude!'. This time Bi did not make fun of Feng, but offered a positive response. Other urban kids also praised Feng's new shoes and changed attitudes.

The online interaction was a key activity among these children, framing Feng's relations with other children. They discussed the technology, design and material of the shoes which created a platform for these children to display their specialized knowledge as a means of gaining authority and respect. They categorized themselves as "cool kids" who were knowledgeable. These new basketball shoes brought more attention to Feng which he greatly enjoyed. Although a pair of new shoes could not change his social status, it helped Feng reshape his image and break the exclusions. At least, Feng was eligible to join the shoes discussion. Given the value attached to shoes, it was little wonder that Feng endured a heavy workload in the restaurant.

Besides, the phrase 'using my own money' in his blog was interesting. By using these words he emphasized that he was different from Bi who used parents' money to buy the shoes. He realized that his family could not provide same resources as urban families but he did not abandon his dream. Feng was constantly comparing himself to urban kids. He nevertheless believed that he was more independent than the them because of his working ability. Thus, the excitement of purchasing new shoes was mixed with pride and a sense of having out-competed them. He wanted to change his social status through his own efforts. Purchasing new shoes was a little step for Feng on his way to chase his dreams that boosted his confidence to go for what he wanted in the future.

However, Feng ignored the fact that wearing the same as urban children did not change his social status. Legally, Feng was still a rural resident based on his Hukou status. The new basketball shoes could make Feng popular among his classmates, but not eliminate the huge gap between himself and urban peers. He was indulging in the illusion created by consumerism culture which made him feel good about himself. As I discussed in Chapter 5,

the educational inequalities and unequal distributions forced most of the migrant children go to the vocational school that reinforced the social reproduction. Without higher education and strong English language ability, these migrant children would most likely face a future of exclusion from decent jobs in the context of globalization and modernization.

7.2.3 Sui's old shoes

However, not every migrant child attaches much importance to the shoes. According to my observation at LS school, girls rarely participated in the shoes discussion. Unlike the boys who liked to openly discuss, the girls tended to talk in private with the members of their clique. My gender excluded me from the girls' clique. I was not sure whether girls would pay attention to shoes or other items in the same way. Therefore, I interviewed Sui and asked her opinions about the shoes culture in school.

> CM: Do you talk about the shoes with your friends?
>
> Sui: Not much. Just a little.
>
> CM: I think your friends Feng and Si are enthusiastic about the shoes.
>
> Sui: Yes, you are right. I think all the boys love the fashionable shoes. But they do not talk shoes with me because I do not understand the shoes culture. When they talk about the shoes, they would discuss the sports and players as well. It is so boring.
>
> CM: So what is the popular item among girls? I mean the item you frequently discuss with other girls.
>
> Sui: The girls often discuss cosmetic such as which lip color looks better or which brand is more easier to use. But I don't have much interest in these, either.
>
> CM: Are you using these cosmetics?
>
> Sui: No. Cosmetics are not allowed in my family. My parents think I am too young to use makeup. If I use makeup, my parents get angry. They will think I am dating someone. I will be in big trouble.
>
> CM: What do you think about it?
>
> Sui: Actually, I do not mind. Now, I should focus on studying rather than wasting time and money on the wrong things, right?

CM: What is the right thing?

Sui: Education of course! The only way I can totally change my life. (Interview with
Sui at Leke city, 15,December, 2019)

Based on this interview, the girls preferred to enjoyed discussing cosmetics. Although the boys and girls had different forms of expression, all these fashion items displayed the deep influences of consumerism. By comparing with urban peers, these children understood that consumption was associated with one's social class. Thus, they attempted to use these consumer products to eliminate social distinctions in their everyday school lives. However, some of them seemed immune to consumerism. Taking Sui as an example, she thought focusing on shoes, cosmetics or commodities were the 'wrong things'. For Sui, wearing her sister's old shoes was not a problem because she realized that the academic performance was the most valuable cultural capital which could help her to find a decent job and achieve social mobility in the future.

To some extent, Sui was similar to Feng. Both of them wanted to leave the 'migrant child' stereotype behind, but they took different strategies. Feng chose to be a qualified player in the shoes game. It seemed that purchasing fashion shoes was the most direct and effective way to change his images and improve his positions among peers. However, the shoes did not revise teachers' views about him because the shoes was non-dominant cultural capital in the educational system. No matter how many shoes Feng owned, he was still viewed as the 'troublemaker' with no future in teachers' eyes. The academic success perhaps was the more institutionally recognized route for migrant children to resist teachers' discriminations. Teachers in LS school held higher expectations and paid more attention on Sui as I mentioned in Chapter 5. Based on her academic performance, Sui sat in the front row that separated her from most of the migrant children. Consequently, the academic success helped Sui emancipate herself from the stigma of being rural migrant children, becoming the model student at school.

In this section, I displayed the hidden segregation by analyzing the shoes culture in school. Even though migrant children and urban children are sitting in the same classroom and

wearing the same uniforms, there are lots of differences between these two groups. The social inequality and economic disparity had been instantiated as the shoes on their foot forming a kind of symbolic violence. Wearing cheap or fake shoes was associated with rural migrant children positioning them at bottom of the consumerist society. The migrant children experienced exclusions and teasing during the interactions with urban peers that made them engage in the process of social distinction by consumption. Not all the migrant children passively accepted these stereotypes, but attempted to improve their social status by employing different strategies such as pursuing fashion or academic success. This showed the children's agency of becoming a 'modern urban citizen'. As I mentioned in Literature review, most existing literatures related to migrant children only concentrated on what happened in school but ignored their urban life. The next section I dig into the activities out of school to unpack the Blackbox.

7.3 Hanging out and ownership

For migrant children, hanging out is not a specific kind of activity which actually includs watching movies, shopping, dining out or simply walking around. Hanging out is always exciting for the children that provides opportunities to access to urban life. The citizenship education at school and family education do not socialize migrant children into 'consuming citizen' identities. The migrant children learn this by hanging out and observing other people in the shopping malls. Although they do not have enough money to meet their consumer desires, they still enjoy expressing their intentions for acquiring coveted products. The products in the shop windows inspire their dreams and imaginations of an ideal life. At these moments, these children display their unconstrained agency. During weekends, both the migrant and urban children like to hang out with friends to relax. However, the migrant children rarely hang out with urban children because they have different habits of shopping. This forms another invisible boundary between them, which can be considered as separate experiences of urban spatialization.

7.3.1 Shopping malls

There are dozens of modern shopping centers in Qingdao. However, the level and quality of these shopping malls are vary. The most luxurious and expensive modern shopping malls such as, the WangXiang City Shopping center and the Hisense Shopping center, which are located at the center of Qingdao. The Hisense Shopping center offers international luxury brands such as *LV*, *Gucci* and *Prada*. While the WangXiang City Shopping center has a massive skating rink which is unique. These two super shopping centers form a highly developed shopping zone in Qingdao and are generally known as the 'best choice' for shopping, leisure and entertainment.

These two shopping centers are out of bounds for most of the migrant children who live on the outskirts of Qingdao. First, it takes them around one and half hours to the city center. Second, the consumption is too high. Therefore, the migrant children have to choose the shopping malls near to suburb as substitutes. The L City is the most-visited shopping mall for these migrant children which only takes about 40 minutes by bus. The L City is a six-story emporium with hundreds of stores stocking affordable consumer items and domestic brands. Though the L City appears inferior to those fancy shopping centers, it still offers a variety of facilities ranging from specialist stores, restaurants, cafes, movie theatres and KTV. It is a significant youth space for encountering urban fashions and styles.

Huawei shop

> Si, Zou and I were going to watch the movie called '*Jumanji: The Next Level*'. We gathered at the bus station near the L City. There was a period of time before watching film. We did not have any place in mind to go. Thus, we started walking around in the shopping malls. We went to the third floor, where the phones and computers are.

> Si guided me straight to look at *Huawei* mobile phones. He picked up a phone, 'Look! This is the latest *Huawei* phone, the *Mate 30 pro*! It packs the phone with

many new features like night-vision camera, AI technology and iris-scanning for added security.'

Zou: The *Mate 30 pro* is the best-selling phone. I think Jia[62] has one.

Si: Yes. Last time, I used his phone to play the PUBG Mobile[63]. Under the maximum resolution, the phone still ran smoothly without getting hot.

Zou asked: Cool! My phone always gets stuck. How much is it?

Si looked at the price tag answered: It is 5,799 Yuan (£ 679). My goodness, it is really expensive. But you get what you paid for. It is worth the price.

Zou: Ohhh! It almost takes my uncle's two months of salary.

CM: Would you spend 6,000 Yuan on a phone?

Si: My parents certainly are not paying for it. But when I work and earn money, I will definitely buy myself one.

Zou: Yeah, I want it too. However, now I have no money to spend. (Fieldnote in Huawei shop, 7 December, 2019)

Hanging out in the shopping center let the children get first-hand experience of the latest phone. Apparently, they could not have such experiences in the rural areas. Although these children did not have the money to buy the phone they desired, they were excited about touching and handling it at the store. They held the unaffordable phone in their hands and temporarily possessed it. Thus, the core of hanging out was not actual purchasing, but the material experience of it and imagination of owning such a phone in future. Si and Zou were impressed by the differences between their old phone and the '*Huawei Mate* 30 pro'. It was not only a phone, but represented the latest technology and ideas linking people with the future. Therefore, the phone automatically contained the symbolic value of being modern. Even though the price was high, the children stated their future ownership intentions without hesitation. In addition, the shopping malls was full of the coolest new stuff and fashionable clothes. Zou and Si also expressed their desires of possessing other items during walking around. It showed that the children found great pleasure in positioning themselves as modern urban citizens by imagining that they would possess the same stuff and had the same consumption ability as their urban peers.

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[62] Jia is their classmate who is a urban child. Jia's family acquired millions of compensation from government because of housing demolition and relocation.

[63] PUBG Mobile is a free first person shooter games which is popular among the students. It has multiplayer battle modes.

Moreover, the shopping mall's sensory pleasures, its brandishing of large amounts of attractive objects, stylish advertising posters with happy and beautiful people, the colours, sounds and the overall bustle created an enjoyable atmosphere which enhanced images of a more 'modern', more attractive and more affluent urban future. As they immersed themselves in the atmosphere of the shopping mall, the children learned what it meant to be 'modern'. More importantly, they aspired to be 'modern'. Although they could not actually enjoy the services and products advertised in these places, they were utterly attracted by the illusions of consumption in the city.

Starbucks

Foreign brands increase the symbolic value and attractiveness of a shopping mall, and this includes coffee shops like Starbucks (Tian & Dong, 2010). After Starbucks' 1999 debut in China, this coffee brand was closely associated with an upper class and western lifestyle. According to the annual report of *Starbucks*, by 2021, there were 5,100 stores in China and it was becoming one of the most popular brands of coffee shop (Starbucks, 2021). It is probably fair to say that where there are shopping malls, there are *Starbucks*. Although *Starbucks* are pervasive and commonplace in Chinese cities, drinking a coffee in *Starbucks* is still a symbol for 'good life' and 'modern'.

On 12rd January 2019, I invited Zou to hang out in the Leke city. At the beginning, I thought Starbucks was an appropriate place to conduct an informal interview, where created a relaxed atmosphere. Moreover, I could offer Zou a cup of coffee as a little treat. However, unexpectedly, it was the first time Zou had a cup of coffee in Starbucks. He did not tell me until we came to the counter to order.

> Zou: How does one order a drink? This is my first time to have coffee in Starbucks.
> CM: Do not worry. There is a menu on the board. You can choose the one you like.
> Take your time.

Zou: OK. But I do not know much about coffee. Could you order one for me?

CM: What taste do you like ?

Zou: I want to drink sweet coffee.

CM: How about a Cappuccino? It is supposed to be a bit sweet.

Zou: OK. Thank you.

When we got our coffee, Zou asked me: Can I add more sugar?

CM: Yeah. Of course.

I gave him a packet of sugar and told him that he could add sugar according to his own taste. The whole sugar in the packet was poured into the Cappuccino, and he used a spoon to constantly stir. To avoid spilling out, he stirred very carefully while looking into his coffee mug. After it was all done, he picked up his mug and sipped at his coffee. I asked Zou, 'How does it taste?' 'Oh, it tastes good. I like it, he said.' Then he took a selfie with the coffee mug and uploaded it on the QQ[64]. (Fieldnote, conversation with Zou at Starbucks 12 January, 2019)

Drinking coffee in Starbucks is very common for me, but it is entirely new to Zou which clearly excites him. According to Bourdieu, I like a 'fish in water', while Zou likes a 'fish out of water'. Despite living in the same cities, we have different life habits. At the beginning, Zou looked uncomfortable and insecure when we went to the *Starbucks*. I had been worried about his feelings. I supposed that his temporary shyness was due to his unfamiliarity with the environment. Thus, I chose to sit at a small corner table. Fortunately, as we started chatting about school, Zou gradually relaxed. Besides, the novelty of the surroundings diluted his nervousness. Zou told me that he often passed by the Starbucks, but he had never thought to go inside. He received 100 Yuan (£10.89) per week from his grandmother, largely to buy lunch because he did not eat lunch at school[65]. Spending 30 Yuan (£ 3.27) to drink a coffee at Starbucks was over budget. This was similar for the other migrant children I met. Being conscious of their limited budgets they typically chose the cheaper alternatives. The consumption ability created a visible and spatial difference between rural migrant children and urban peers.

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[64] QQ is a Chinese social media which is popular among students. Students like to post pictures and blog on QQ to share their feelings with friends online.

[65] The students usually eat lunch at school. However, Zou had asthmatic. Zou's grandmother is afraid Zou will suffer an allergic reaction to certain food. Therefore, Zou eat lunch at a noodle shop near to the LS school.

At the same time, the shopping mall is like a dream factory for migrant children. The vast array of desirable but inaccessible products, services and advertisements displayed in the shopping malls furnished these children's dreams and self-images. These things were far away from their daily lives. Although they currently could not afford these products, they were optimistic for the future. They believed that the symbolic capital behind the products were essential to obtain equality with urban people. While hanging out with migrant children I always heard exuberant statements such as 'I am going to buy this', or 'I will get it sooner or later.' It is not only about what they want to possess, but also who they want to be in their futures. In their views, possessing these products would help them transform to respected urban citizens with consuming capacity.

More interestingly, both Zou and Si were not ashamed to admit their limited family economic conditions. If we look back at Chapter 5, it is clear that migrant parents' undesirable and low-paid jobs led migrant children to face socio-economic stereotypes and symbolic violence in school. Many studies showed that the rural migrant children were reluctant to talk about their parents' jobs or family income because they felt humiliated and embarrassed to admit their dilemma (Li, 2013; Xiong, 2015). The earning capacity and occupations represented individual's ability. There was cultural shame attached to being poor in modern China. The migrant children in my research also realized the importance of money and their plight, but they did not avoid discussing this topic. It might because they believed that they could free themselves from the economic constraints in the future.

However, the children's agency could not change the fact that these fancy shopping malls were built to satisfy the purchasing demands of the more wealth urban residents. The modern buildings in the city would not exist without the labour power of millions of rural migrant workers (Liu, 2016). Apart from the institutional exclusion of the Hukou system, the rural migrants also faced exclusion caused by consumerism. It seemed that the city only needed rural migrants as cheap labourers or producers rather than consumers. Look back at the citizenship education in Chapter 5 which emphasized principles of self-sacrifice and occupational equality, it required the migrant children to accept their situation for the national

benefits. Hanging out in the shopping malls created an illusion for these children that they were only a step away from the dreamlife. However, when they really needed to buy something, they would go to Liang yuan store[66] which brought them back to earth.

7.3.2 Liang yuan store

Liang yuan store is another place where the migrant children often visit. Liang yuan stores are plentiful in the city's peripheral regions surrounding by small local shops and small restaurants. The more affluent middle-class residents tend to call these small restaurants 'fly diners' (Cangying guan) because they think the food and sanitation are below-standard. When I hang out with migrant children, these small restaurants would be the first choice for them as they could get a bowl of noodles for just eight Yuan (£0.88).

The Liang yuan store is typically simple and a little dilapidated. It is common to see food scraps and garbage on the unfurnished concrete floors that produces an unpleasant smell. There is a speaker at the entrance repeatedly playing the advertisement and loud background music that makes the environment even more noisy. The migrant children would leave the Liang yuan store immediately after they finish shopping rather than hanging around. It seems the children also do not enjoy the unpleasant shopping atmosphere. Besides, the quality of services is terrible. It is hard to find shopping assistants, the children need to find the products themselves. Once we got inside, I found that shelves were filled with low-quality bargains which were much cheaper than regular retailers. The products in Liang yuan store are cheaper because they are soon to expiration date. For example, the price of a can of Coke is only two Yuan (£0.22) at Liang yuan store. However, it is three Yuan (£0.33) in the convenience stores and even cost 10 Yuan (£1.1) at the cinema in the shopping mall. For urban children, they did not care about the price difference, they were more concerned with product quality and shopping experience.

Once I shopped with Si at a Liang yuan store because he needed to buy drinks and snacks to maintain his little business at the high school. His new school required students to live at

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[66] Liang Yuan store is the Chinese version pound shop selling most items at the price of 2 Yuan (equals £0.22) or other fixed price.

school from Monday to Saturday morning, and parents were not allowed to visit and bring food to their children. Si and his classmates called the school 'Qingdao No.2 prison' for that reason. Si created an opportunity to evade the strict school rules by sneaking drinks and snacks and selling to his classmates. Almost every Sunday afternoon, before Si went back to school, he would buy snacks and drinks in Liang yuan stores. This time he decided to buy more because I promised to help him carry the goods as free labour. In return, he needed to show me his new school. Before we started, Si showed me the 'purchasing orders' on his phone. His classmates would send messages to Si to book the products in advance.

> CM: You have got plenty orders.
>
> Si: Yeah. Because I am the only person selling snacks in my class. And the price is reasonable.
>
> CM: Do you have school's permission?
>
> Si: Are you kidding me? No, of course not! It breaks the school rules. Last time, the teacher confiscated all my snacks. And I was banned from living in the school dormitory for one week.
>
> CM: Why are you still doing this?
>
> Si: Because I can earn around 200 Yuan every week.
>
> CM: Quite a few. But if the teacher catches you, you will get severe punishment.
>
> Si: Do not worry, I know what I am doing. Let's go!
>
> Then we moved around the aisles to look for the goods.
>
> CM: I think I have found the Latiao[67]. How many do you need?
>
> Si: Don't hurry. We do not buy it at this store.
>
> CM: Why? It is on your shopping list.
>
> Si: Yes, I know. But the price is 0.5 yuan cheaper in the store around the corner. We will get the Latiao in that store later.
>
> CM: Wow! You are so good! You are fit for business.
>
> Si: It is OK. Every little makes a mickle. I am trying to earn more money. (Fieldnotes shopping with Si at Liang yuan store, 10 November, 2019)

Through shopping with Si, I found that he was extremely knowledgeable about stores, brands, prices and location of the products. Although the Liang yuan store was full of all

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[67] Latiao is spicy dry tofu, a kind of popular snacks among students.

kinds of goods, Si always easily found what he needed. Moreover, Si could afford all the products in the store that turned him into a confident shopper, in ways that starkly contrasted with how he acted in the *Huawei* shop where he was more circumspect and avoided talking to the shop assistants. Due to the consumerism, individuals' identities are influenced and constructed by their consumption capacity that resonated strongly during my many visits to shopping malls with these young people. Especially after the economic reform, the power to consume is concerned as a symbol of different social groups and classes (Alpermann, 2013) and these children had understood their social locations in these terms.

After shopping, Si took a picture of the products he bought and posted it on his social media as an advertisement. Due to the limited products, his friends needed to pre-order through the social media. The screenshot is below to show what Si got in Liang yuan store.

Picture 9 The advertisement on Si's social media[68]

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[68] I use mosaic to cover Si's name to make sure he is not identified. And I add translation, so the readers can understand what Si wrote.

As shown in the picture, Si bought two bags of food for a bargain price of less than 150 Yuan (£17). He claimed that the self-heating hot pot was the most profitable product, as he bought one for 10 Yuan and sold it for 20 Yuan at school. He had clearly learned some 'down to earth' knowledge in doing business, and used the Liang yuan store not only as a place to consume, but also to make money. By selling the goods, Si tried to make more pocket money, to be able to afford watching movies and buying bubble tea in the shopping malls. Based on the interview above, Si was proud of his little business even though he realized it was forbidden in school. For Si, making money was more important than being the obedient student. He even used the social media to expand his influence among peers. Doing business was his way of honing his capacity to navigate the struggle with social inequalities and structural obstacles whilst hoping to become a 'real' urban citizen in the future.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter I selected shoes culture, shopping mall and Liang yuan dian the overlooked areas to uncover the urban-rural disparity and symbolic violence permeating migrant children's urban life. Due to the economic reform, the incomes and consumption of urban citizens have been boosted. However, the rural migrants did not have access to the bonus of the reform but were confined in low socio-economic status. In addition to institutional exclusion in the city, migrant children also faced cultural exclusion caused by the consumerism culture. The migrant children either actively or passively got involved in comparing with urban peers.

My research used shoes culture at school as an example to illustrate how migrant children were influenced by the consumerism culture and how they exercised agency to resist it in constructing their identity. The fake shoes and old shoes on migrant children's foot imposed the label as 'migrant children' associating them with cheap and outdated. The different brands of products were given different symbolic value that reinforced the separation and urban-rural division. Thus, migrant children regarded the consumption ability as a necessary quality of

being modern citizens. In children's opinion, wearing the fancy shoes or shopping in the modern shopping mall would make them popular and obtain a kind of symbolic capital. The consumerism created an illusion for migrant children that they were only a pair of shoes away from becoming urban citizen. Apparently, a pair of new shoes was not enough to change migrant children's social status. It was the Hukou system and urban-rural dichotomy limited and deprived children's rights to become urban citizens. The consumerism masked the social inequalities and institutional barriers through shifting children's attention on the specific consumer items such as phones, clothes and even a cup of coffee. To some extent, the migrant children misidentified their limited consumption ability as the root of the class and social segregation. As a result, they attempted to improve their position in the consumerism society rather than questioning their subordinate and marginal position. According to Bourdieu, the consumption competition is a game where the migrant children are doomed to lose. While the children from rich families are more likely to win because they has owned all these fashion things since they were born. As a result, it is easier for the urban children to get decent job and social status.

The majority of Chinese scholars are gloomy about the prospect of the rural migrant children (Wang, 2008; Li, 2013; Xiong; 2015) because the constraints of their own conditions (Li, 2015) and social structure created obstacles for migrant children to realize their aspirations(Chen & Feng, 2013; Zhou & Cheung, 2017; Yu, 2020). The urban schooling is just preparing migrant children to the low-status and low socio-economic occupations by providing low-quality education (Li, 2013; Murphy, 2014). As a result, they thought that the migrant children just deceived themselves with an unrealistic fantasy who could not escape from the social reproduction. The participants in my research realized that they had been categorized as migrant children at present, but they strongly believed that one day they could achieve upward social mobility. They made plan to achieve their mobility dreams through educational or occupational advancement that displayed a possibility. At the conclusion, I would analyze children's educational trajectories and occupational aspirations as an epilog to display their life after middle school.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Future Work

My research explores how school, rural and urban life experiences shaped migrant children's identities and how migrant children negotiated their identities through everyday practices. I spent over six months fully participating in migrant children's life that enabled me to capture the elusive details of migrant children's daily lives which were under investigation. This kind of engagement is rare, especially in Chinese context. Guided by Bourdieu's theoretical framework, the themes emerged from previous analytical chapter will be draw together to answer my research questions. At the beginning, I shed light on the migrant children's schooling experiences to unpack how structures reinforced the stereotypes of migrant children. School is a place full of constraints and possibilities. Therefore, I reexamine the dialectical interaction between structure and children's agency to explore how migrant children generated different coping strategies to cope with the social inequalities caused by social transformation and modernization. Then, I try to display children's agency, frustrations and imaginations as they struggle with the structural restrictions by paying special attention to migrant children's aspirations. More importantly, the children's aspirations are the best answers to the question why migrant children form strong desires to become urban citizens. At end of the conclusion, I will explain how this research changed my own perspective and put forward the future directions.

8.1 School's influence

School shaped children's identities and played a significant role in their socialization. In view of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction (1984), the school excluded working-class students from higher levels of education and associated them with manual jobs. School practices and discourse placed working-class students at a disadvantaged position and facilitated the social reproduction (ibid). The findings of my research echo earlier research that suggests that the teachers' expectations, citizenship education and school's curriculums deprived migrant children of opportunities to achieve academic success. By analyzing the English studying and handwriting competition, my research provided valuable insight into how economic and cultural capital transmitted to next generation and helped middle-class students maintain

educational advantages. The school legitimized the academic failure of most of the migrant children by emphasizing the ideology of individual efforts and quality to cover up the social inequalities and maintained the social structure. The school shifted responsibility of academic failure to migrant children and their parents. Although the higher education does not guarantee a decent job, it acts as entry threshold blocking migrant youth's upward mobility. Most migrant children had given up school, either because they felt education was useless, or they realized that they did not possess enough dominant cultural capital to compete with urban peers. Only a small amount of migrant children insisted on studying. The educational outcomes strengthened the impression that migrant children were uneducable and uncivilized.

Besides, unlike the working-class students in Western context, the migrant children faced double discrimination because of their rural origin. The teachers openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the migrant children, stereotyping them as impolite. The migrant children were blamed for damaging the school's reputation[69]. According to my observation, the teachers tried to define that the urban culture was better than rural culture during daily conversation. Because of this perceived superiority, the teachers unfairly blamed rural origin for children's bad behaviors and manners. This reinforced the rural identity of these migrant children. In fact, the urban and migrant students made same mistake. However, the rural origin made migrant children more vulnerable to teachers' criticism especially for the non-academic oriented children. The rural origin made migrant children feel inferior that might be an underlying cause that Feng got mad when teacher asked him to go back to the rural village. The migrant children aspired to become 'new citizen', so they could free from constrictive stereotypes.

The school and teachers developed a particular definition of 'modern citizen' who should be well-educated, patriotic, and dedicate themselves to the state's economic reform and modernization. The school instilled a sense of inferiority in migrant children by highlighting the criteria of being modern citizens. Based on this definition, the migrant parents were defined as 'unqualified modern citizens' because of their limited education and low income. During classes, the teachers made discriminative comments about migrant parents'

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[69] The LS school is a public school. However, the teachers and local people recognize it as a migrant school because most students are rural migrant children. As a result, the urban parents are reluctant to send their children to LS school.

occupations that infused a sense of social hierarchy in children. Although the central government reformed the Hukou system, the discrimination and exclusion remained. The citizenship education to some extent legitimized the Hukou system and the inferior status of rural migrants. In fact, every citizen deserved same social welfare and dignity. As children of migrant workers, they needed to pay much more effort to transform from rural Hukou to urban Hukou. Furthermore, the patriotism and occupational equality in the citizenship education required children to be lenient with the unfair treatment by emphasizing on the duty and self-sacrifice. Since the economic reform in 1980s, the egalitarian socialism and planned economy had been gradually replaced by the market-oriented economy which emphasized personal interests and material accumulation (Li, 2013). The rural migrants and their children did not enjoy the advantages of the economic development and social transformation. Ironically, the citizenship education asked migrant children to sacrifice themselves for national economy without mentioning equal rights.

In sum, this section provides a summary of key findings related to how school and teachers shaped migrant children's identities and constrained their aspirations. The schools attempted to socialize migrant children to accept the existing social hierarchy and maintain the social reproduction. Most migrant children had been diverted to technical school and trained as manual labor. After graduating, they might face a similar fate as their parents being 'second-class citizen' in the city. Yet this is only half story. Although migrant children were influenced by schooling experiences, they did not consider themselves as 'unqualified citizens'. What makes my research stand out is the children's agency and conscious resistance to the social inequalities embedded in their urban life. The migrant children were questioned on the ideology imposed by school because it was divergent from reality. To improve their social status, all the migrant children desired to achieve academic or occupational advancement. Most strikingly, some students even expressed their aspirations to improve the life circumstances and social status of the whole group. The following section will investigate how migrant children constructed their identities and future by displaying their aspirations.

8.2 Children's aspirations

These migrant children were familiar with the questions 'What do you want to be in the future?', as they had been repeatedly asked similar question for many times by different adults. More than that, the adults would judge and correct children's answers by telling them what they should do as I showed in previous analytical chapters. The teachers' and parents' expectations influenced children's educational and life trajectories. However, the migrant children navigated different pathway about their future. Therefore, it is valuable to listen to children's voice. In this section, I take Sui's and Feng's educational trajectory and career aspirations as examples.

I want to be a lawyer

Sui was a high-achieving student. The poor teaching quality and learning atmosphere in LS school did not change her faith in education. She believed that the education was the most effective way to improve her social and economic status by providing opportunity to secure high-paying jobs. After middle school, Sui was enrolled to a top high school[70] where was known for its high quality educational resources. In the new high school, Sui was still ranking at the top. By taking advantage of the resources in the top school, Sui accumulated more dominated culture capital, which potentially helped her to become the first college student in her family. The academic performance was her strategy to cope with structural constraints. Sui's educational trajectory was a ray of hope in the picture that was often bleak. In this case, school retained chances for meritocratic mobility.

Talk about the career aspirations, Sui claimed that she wanted to be a lawyer because she hoped to protect the legal rights of her parents with the law. Due to the low levels of education, her parents only got low-status manual jobs in the service and construction sector, and they often suffered embezzlement wages and extension working time. With a strong

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[70] The reform of the Hukou system loosens its control on education. In Qingdao, the migrant children were allowed to attend the high school entrance examination without a local Hukou, which was a big step to promoting education equity.

sense of injustice, Sui desired to change the unequal treatment of rural migrant workers. The road she chosen was full of hardship. Sui also realized that the educational inequality hampered her mobility, such as poor oral English. She focused on studying to make progress on the steps towards her goal. By pursuing higher education, Sui navigated her way to become a modern urban citizen.

I want to be a e-sports player

From the teachers' view, Feng was a complete 'troublemaker' who enjoyed doing anything except studying. The teachers persuaded Feng to choose the technical school. Teachers' pessimistic attitude were associated with the Feng's poor academic performance. Feng's parents also hoped their son can keep both feet on the ground and learn some technique to feed himself. As a result, Feng went to a technical school to learn auto repair. Neither the teachers nor Feng's parents knew that Feng wanted to be a e-sports player. It seemed the adults tried to instill the 'correct aspiration' in the kids rather than listening to children's voices. An important theme of my research emerged by contrasting the adults' expectations (What you should be.) with children's aspirations (What I want to be.).

In the existing research, the Chinese scholar generally linked the technical school with the low-paid manual jobs and bleak forecast (Lan, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). If we stop here, it was just a similar story we had heard many times that school system reproduced the social division of labour by pushing these children to the bottom of urban hierarchy. However, the educational trajectory did not determine children's future because the non-academic-oriented students did not compromise to what fate had allotted him. They realized that they could achieve social mobility through occupational advancement. No matter what types of school he went to, Feng persisted in his dream of being a e-sports player.

'Attending a technical school was not the end of the world. I have to go to the technical school because of my parents. But I never give up pursuing my dream. I had joined the school team and some local games. These experiences can help me join a professional team

in the future.' (Chat with Feng on WeChat, 5 October, 2020). Feng even earned money by playing game for other players. The formal high school only attached importance to academic performances and managed students strictly. Conversely the relaxed regulation in technical school gave Feng more freedom and time to participate in various activities he interested. Although the migrant children's educational choices had been constrained by the social inequalities, they did not surrender to the harsh reality. Due to the rapidly development of the Internet, there are increasing number of well-paid new jobs such as E-sports player, short video maker, webcaster and fashion blogger which are promising occupations for youth. In these industries, the formal education becomes less important. As I mentioned above, the low-status job was an important reason why rural migrant workers suffered discrimination and exclusion. Based on Feng's occupational aspiration, it was clear that he hoped to become a qualified modern citizen by linking his future with development trend of modern technology. Therefore, it was too early to draw conclusions that non-academic oriented migrant children were linked with a gloom future.

The two examples showed that the migrant children navigated two different pathways to resist social inequality and achieve social mobility. The academic-oriented students believed that the formal education could improve their social status and their competitiveness in labour markets. While the non-academic oriented students believed that education was not the only way to succeed. The social inequalities and discrimination embedded in schooling experiences, let them generated counter-school culture to question the function of education system. Both academical-oriented or non-academical-oriented students wanted to be qualified future citizens sharing the benefits of economic and social development.

The aspirations of migrant children were the constant negotiation between the structural constraints and agency that gave children a possible vision of their future. More important, children's aspirations were not constrained by school and parents' discourse. The future of migrant children in most of the existing research were represented as inherently gloomy because of the Hukou system (Kwong, 2011; Zhang, 2015), social exclusions (Xiong, 2010; Lan, 2014) or educational inequalities (Ding, 2015; Wang, 2020). Thus, one implication of my research is to provide more information about children's own understandings of their future and how they positioned themselves in the social hierarchy. Notably, these children

stated their future optimistically involving social mobility, equality and autonomy that was contrary to popular belief. Adult authorities might suggest that the children's aspiration blur the 'reality' and 'illusion' . However, my participants showed that they were taking action to accomplish their aspirations. They attempted to use educational resources or occupational chances in city to against the identity label of 'rural migrant children'.

8.3 Urban-rural dichotomy

In addition to the educational inequalities, the migrant children were constantly faced the tension of urban-rural dichotomy including language, rural rituals and living conditions. Migrant parents hoped their children maintain close relationship with the rural hometown and rural culture. However, most of migrant children felt alienated because they had been socialized in the city where look down on rural areas. In their eyes, some of the rural rituals were outdated and uncivilized. The children, like 'fish out of water', felt uncomfortable with rural life. On the other side, the migrant children did not completely integrate into city life because of various discriminations and exclusions. The consumerism created a clear boundary between rural migrants and urban citizens. Even so, the children closely associated their future with the city. It raised one of my key research questions: why migrant children want to stay at city and become urban citizens? To answer this question, the following section will reexamine the children's experiences in the rural village and the city.

The living environment was one of the most direct expression of the urban-rural dichotomy. The three-decade reform and opening-up enriched the products and infrastructure in urban areas that increased the gap between rural and urban areas. Based on children's description, the poor infrastructure and living conditions made the rural life inconvenient and tough that left a negative impression with them. Children's increased awareness of personal hygiene stimulated demand for clean latrines and bathroom. The rural village obviously could not meet children's demands. Although their living condition in city was scarcely better, they could enjoy flush toilets and heating system. The city also provided children with the possibility that through the individual's efforts they could improve living condition.

Moreover, there was no modern shopping mall in the rural areas that excluded rural people from enjoying the economic development. Due to the influence of consumerism culture, the children realized that shopping activities and products were given symbolic value which was tied with being modern and capable. Some children tried to reshape their identities by pursuing fashion. The city's prosperity offered a sharp contrast to the economic gloom in rural areas. The migrant children noticed that the prerequisite for better life was staying at the city. Thus, their decisions of staying at city were based on the evaluation of possibilities and constraints.

Though migrant children chose to stay at the city, it did not mean that they could cut off the connections with rural villages. The migrant parents required their children to learn and inherit rural culture, dialect and customs because they hoped their children to remember their rural origins and regard it as 'root'. Through the traditional ancestor worship and festival celebrations, parents reminded children where they came from and the history of their families. The migrant children who had a strong emotional bond with their parents' hometown were more likely to embrace the rural culture. The moral education also requested children to obey their parents because of a combination of filial piety and the fact that their parents had sacrificed so much for them. It explained why some of the migrant children formed a hybridity identity by positioning themselves as both urban and rural people.

Meanwhile, some children were not willing to accept the rural origin, which had been regarded as the source of discrimination. In Chapter 6, boys and girls exhibited strikingly different attitudes toward the ancestor worship activities. It was clear that women were placed on subordinate position within migrant family and had been excluded from many activities in rural areas. While the urban culture espoused gender equality in all aspects of life that empowered girls with more choices and freedom. The girls tried to use the urban-type cultural capital they acquired to break the limitations imposed on them by the rural society. This strategy acted as a strong challenge to parents' authorities leading to intergenerational conflicts that displayed obvious inconsistency between what the children want to be and what their parents want them to be.

In general, this section interpreted how the migrant children's identities were shaped by the urban-rural dichotomy. As the people who directly experienced urban and rural life, the migrant children were able to see the gap more clearly. The rural village could not satisfy children's demand. By comparison, the migrant children reinforced their aspirations of staying at city and becoming modern urban citizens. The migrant parents also expected their children to have bright prospect in the city. Meanwhile, the parents required children to maintain connections with the rural hometown. The migrant family played an important role in transmitting the culture of rural society to the next generation. In the school, the children were socialized to support urbanization and modernization that looked down upon rural culture. The finding of my research demonstrates that migrant children were in the tension between rural and urban dichotomy. The intergenerational conflict was the epitome of contradictions between urban and rural areas in China.

8.4 Future directions

This research employed Mandell's (1988) method of 'full participation' with children. By conducting fieldwork in this way, I gained unique access into children's world including their school life, daily life and even some hidden aspects of their live. Before I met the migrant children, I already constructed an image and understanding of this social group according to the existing literatures. I assumed that the children were frustrated and angry about their future because of examination failure (Kwong, 2011; Fang et al., 2016), social exclusion (Li & Rose, 2017) or self-elimination (Li, 2013). However, the key participants of my research were optimistic, active and enterprising, and striving for bright future. Even though they were going through a difficult period, they were still struggling with life.

The fascinating stories of migrant children did not only provide valuable information, but also changed me. Having survived and succeed in the exam-oriented Chinese education system, I was committed to that only education could change one's fate. Therefore, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I focused on the students' studying and their performances during classes. I even divided the children into 'good' and 'bad' students only in terms of academic

performances which was consistent with previous studies (Lu & Zhou, 2013; Ma, 2020). It seemed that the education achievement determined who they are and who they would become. Until I became friends with migrant children I found that their life was not only about education or school, but also creating themselves and pursuing what they were passionate about. The little stuff like a pair of shoes could influenced children's identities. Thus, I turned my attention to these overlooked details which were often seen as worthless by teachers and parents.

On the one side, these little details offered me with rich data source. I tried to write down everything I met, but there were still parts of their life being omitted. On the other sides, sometime I felt that I was lost in the minutiae of everyday conversations and practices. I decided to focus on what I set out to explore paying more attentions on children's urban schooling, intergenerational relationship and urban living experiences. Therefore, this thesis only scratched the surface of migrant children's life. There are two more particular areas of children's practice that I would like to explore in future.

Gender is a huge important topic. In fact, the gender issues had appeared several times in this thesis such as Tang talking about marital status and Sui criticizing traditional patriarchal culture and rituals. The migrant girls absorbed education and new values in the city that displayed a shift from rural to urban. There was a prominent tension between what they were expected to do as a filial daughter and what they want to pursue as they were living in city where offered them with more choices and power. The urban identity became an effective tool for girls to free from the gender constraints. However, the boys tended to accept the rural values because the traditional patriarchal culture and ancestral idea entitled them to a position of power within the family (Lin, 2013). In other words, there was a tension between the gender roles imposed by rural and urban culture. Future studies could incorporate the transition of gender roles to estimate the urban-rural dichotomy and the distinction between girls and boys in identity formation process.

Besides, I found that the Digital life played an important role in migrant children's life. Based on my observation, the Internet provided various leisure practices for children including social media, online games and short videos App. The children enjoyed communicating and

sharing information with each other on the social media where they could block out teachers, parents and the people they did not like. They built different small online groups based on different functions and interests such as game group, Animation group and shoes group. Like I mentioned in Chapter 7, the boys had a shoes group to discuss the latest shoes. It is easy to find out who are in the small group and who are excluded from the group. Therefore, the future study should analyze children's practices on the social media that would help us understand how their identities were shaped by interactions.

The digital life helped the children to make sense of their lives in the new age. Apart from school and family, they gained understanding of the world through the information from the Internet. Unlike the products and services in the shopping malls, most of the content and resources in Internet are free which provided more choices and power for children. For example, migrant children found part-time job on the Internet which boost their confidences to the uncertain future. Some of them, even connected their career aspirations with the Internet. Besides, there is no institutional barriers such as the Hukou system on the Internet that effectively closed the gap between urban and rural, and rich and poor. Given this perspective, the digital life might help children to escape from structural constrains and achieve social mobility. The digital ethnography has risen up in recent years, and growing literatures have paid attention on children's practices in online spaces (Sim, 2016). However, there is no enough attention paid on the online practices of these rural migrant children in China. Thus, it is worth to explore how the Internet influences migrant children's identity and future.

At last, the social identity of migrant children is constantly changing as they are going to different phases of their life. At present, the participants of my research are still studying at high schools or technical schools. It is valuable to keep tracking their life after school including their employment, marriage and family relationships to display a whole picture of this group. Let these young people to express their anxiety, dissatisfaction and aspirations. When millions migrant children enter society, they may affect the class formation and class structure of China. Only the time can answer.

Appendix I: Participant **Information** Sheet

Study Title: **Becoming modern urban citizens: The experience of schooling, intergenerational relations and social identity formation among rural-urban migrant children in China.**

Researcher: Chuan Ma
ERGO number:46106

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This is a student project and I am working towards a PhD degree. I am Chuan Ma, a PhD student in Modern Language in the University of Southampton. The reason why I am doing this research is that I care about the situation of young migrants in China. The young migrants are generally more vulnerable than their parents when facing their new urban environment, integrating new values, and encountering prejudice and discrimination. This proposal aims to look at rural young migrants in the context of a Chinese urban school and investigate their social identity formation from an in-depth, ethnographic perspective. The key research question is to explore how school, family and environment work together to form migrant children's identities and the impacts of the rural-urban divided on their futures. There are many studies using quantitative approaches to analyze the impacts on young migrants including education, health and family. Only few of the studies follow qualitative approaches to explore the identity and social integration of the young migrants who are displaced from rural to urban areas in China. My study will analyze how these rural young migrant experience, encounter, and negotiate identity in daily school life. My research is self-funded.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been chosen as a research participant who is young migrants from rural areas living in Qingdao. You have more comprehensive and deep understanding of internal migration in China than other people. Your experience, story and feeling are valuable information for this study. You have right to express your opinions. Your participation will be helpful to give voice to the needs of the young migrants from rural areas in a receiving society. There will be 10 participants in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will do the fieldwork by myself without any assistants or collaborators. Before my fieldwork, I have already got the permission from the headmaster of the school. I will select randomly 10 second grade students from the LaoShan No.7 middle school as my research participants. When I go to the school, I will get informed consent from all participants and their parents.

At the beginning of my study, I will hold a meeting with potential participants. I will give the information of my research to every participants in the meeting. Let them know the research aim, research question and methods. Then I let them know how I collect and use data.

The data collection instruments include participant observation, interview and photography. With the permission, I will visit the middle school at least twice a week to conduct participant observation from December 2018 to March 2019. The participants do not ask to travel to other areas. I will organize

two group interview. One is at the beginning of my fieldwork, one is at the nearly end. Both of them will hold within in 30 minutes. After group interview, there will be individual interview which takes about 20 minutes for each participants. Therefore, my research will take around 80 minutes per person to do the interview. I will ask the participants to take photo once a week by using their smart phones. They can send me the photos through email or WeChat. I will store the photos safely in a folder with password. The subjects of photography are various including the people, daily activity, places and things they like or dislike. To make the research smoothly I will conduct the research activities in Chinese, because Chinese is participants' first language.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

Your participation, experiences and opinions will be very helpful in giving voice to the migrant community through spreading awareness of their experiences and social challenges in a receiving society. This study may help improve our current understanding of the area. Moreover, I will give you some English lessons and little gifts to thank you for your participation.

Are there any risks involved?

My research will use child-centred and child-friendly approaches including group interview, taking photos and participant observation. That means that I will try my best to reduce the potential harm and any adverse effects from my study. I will not use any devices that may endanger their psychological or physical health. And I will not address sensitive topics which may cause emotional or mental harm. If at any point of the interview you sense there are sensitive topics touched upon, you are entitled to refuse to talk about them. It is participants' prerogative to withdraw from the research at any time when they decide to do so without any reason.

Moreover, I will let participants give me some suggestions about my research plan. If they feel upset or unsatisfied with research activities, they can tell me directly. Therefore, I can adjust my research strategies and method to make the participants feel more comfortable and relax in the subsequent fieldworks.

What data will be collected?

I will do the fieldwork by myself without any assistants or collaborators. The data collection instruments include participant observation, interview and photography.

As part of the study, I will record the personal details of participants. This will be stored on a password protected University of Southampton computer and hard drive. I will store the information in the cloud of University of Southampton and keep it safely in a folder with password. All personal data will be deleted 12 months after the end of the study. I will contact the participants and send them the research result through University email. All the emails should be kept in a password protected University of Southampton email account and all emails will be deleted after the study is finished.

Names and email addresses will be recorded in order to arrange participation and allow me to feedback results of the study. This will be stored on a password protected University of Southampton computer and hard drive. All personal data will be deleted 12 months after the end of the study. Any emails to from participants regarding the study will be stored in a dedicated file in a password protected University of Southampton email account. All emails will be deleted 12 months after the end of the study.

Will my participation be confidential?
Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

All the collected information and data will be stored on a password protected University of Southampton computer and hard drive. I will store the information in the cloud of University of Southampton and keep it safely in a folder with password. The audio recordings will be transcribed and then destroyed.

Only my supervisors will have access to the data for guiding my research projects. My main supervisor is Dr Heidi Armbruster who is an Associate Professor of Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of Southampton. My second supervisor is Dr Adriana Patiño-Santos is an Associate Professor in Modern Languages and Linguistics at the University of Southampton.

Do I have to take part?
No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part. If you decide to take part in this study, you can inform the researcher by talking face to face, sending email, message or making phone call. You should obtain a reply within 24 hours from receiving your email. The email address of researcher is cm5n17@soton.ac.uk and chuanma12@icloud.com. The mobile phone number of researcher is (+86) 13021675318.

What happens if I change my mind?
You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. It is your prerogative to withdraw from the study if you do not want to participate any longer in it. Your decision will not affect you in any way. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only. For example, if you withdraw during an interview, the information collected about you up to this point may still be used for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only.

If you change your mind, you can inform the researcher by talking face to face, sending email, message or making phone call. You should obtain a reply within 24 hours from receiving your email. The email address of researcher is cm5n17@soton.ac.uk and chuanma12@icloud.com. The mobile phone number of researcher is (+86) 13021675318.

What will happen to the results of the research?
The research project will be written up. And every participants will receive a copy of the results. Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

Where can I get more information?

If you want to get more information of this research project, you can send email to the researcher Chuan Ma (cm5n17@soton.ac.uk). You should obtain a reply within 24 hours from receiving your email.

What happens if there is a problem?
If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

You can contact the researcher via email if you have further questions or comments about the research project. You should obtain a reply within 24 hours from receiving your email.

Chuan Ma cm5n17@soton.ac.uk and chuanma12@icloud.com

Data Protection Privacy Notice
The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research.

Appendix II: Participant Information Sheet (Chinese Version)

研究同意书

研究题目:成为现代城市公民：中国农村到城市流动儿童的学校经历，代际关系以及社会身份认同

研究者姓名: 马川
ERGO 编号: 46106

如果你同意下列声明请签下你名字的首字母

我已经阅读并且理解信息表 *(23/11/2018 /PIS-1)* 我有机会提出与研究相关的问题。	
我同意我的孩子参与这项研究并且同意将我孩子的数据用于研究目的。	
我知道我孩子是自愿参加，并且我孩子可以在参与研究权力没有受影响的情况下，在任何时间，以任何理由终止参与。	
我知道当我孩子从研究退出时，之前所收集的关于我孩子的数据仍然且只会被研究者采用，用来实现本研究的目的。	
我知道我孩子可能会被研究报告直接引用，但是我孩子不会被直接认出。（例如我孩子的名字不会被研究使用。）	
我知道参与研究包括被录音。录音内容将会被转录然后销毁。录音及转录数据只会用于参与知情书上所陈述的研究目的。	
我同意我孩子参与与研究目的相关的访谈和小组讨论。并且我知道这些访谈将会被录音或者笔记记录。	

我知道在这些访谈中我孩子的匿名权不能被保证，但是研究者所收集的任何信息都将保持机密。	
我知道研究者将会收集我孩子的个人信息包括我孩子的名字和住址。研究者不能将这些信息向外界透露。	
我知道在参与研究期间任何关于我孩子的信息都将会储存在一个有密码保护的电脑里。并且这些信息仅用于研究目的。所有包含个人信息的文件都将匿名储存。	

参与者父母姓名 (打印名)...

参与者父母签名...

日期... ....

研究者姓名 (打印名)...

研究者签名 ....

日期...

Appendix III: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Study title: Becoming modern urban citizens: The experience of schooling, intergenerational relations and social identity formation among rural-urban migrant children in China.

Researcher name: Chuan Ma

ERGO number:46106

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (*23/11/2018 /PIS-1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree my child to take part in this research project and agree for my child's data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my child's participation is voluntary and my child may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without his/her participation rights being affected.	
I understand that should my child withdraw from the study then the information collected about my child up to this point may still be used for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only.	
I understand that my child may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that my child will not be directly identified (e.g. that his/her name will not be used).	
I understand that taking part in the study involves audio recording which will be transcribed and then destroyed for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	
I agree my child to take part in the interview and discussion groups for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet and understand that these will be recorded using audio and written notes.	

I understand that my child's anonymity cannot be guaranteed in these discussion forums but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that my child's personal information collected about my child such as his/her name or where she/he lives will not be shared beyond the study team.	
I understand that information collected about my child during his/her participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data	

Name of parents (print name)……………………………………………………………………………

Signature of parents…………………………………………………………………………………………….

Date…………………………………………………………………………………….. …………………

Name of researcher (print name)……………………………………………………………………………

Signature of researcher …………………………………………………………………………………….

Date………..

Appendix IV: Consent From For Parents (Chinese version)

研究同意书

研究题目:成为现代城市公民：中国农村到城市流动儿童的学校经历，代际关系以及社会身份认同

研究者姓名: 马川
ERGO 编号: 46106

如果你同意下列声明请签下你名字的首字母

我已经阅读并且理解信息表 *(23/11/2018 /PIS-1)* 我有机会提出与研究相关的问题。	
我同意我的孩子参与这项研究并且同意将我孩子的数据用于研究目的。	
我知道我孩子是自愿参加，并且我孩子可以在参与研究权力没有受影响的情况下，在任何时间，以任何理由终止参与。	
我知道当我孩子从研究退出时，之前所收集的关于我孩子的数据仍然且只会被研究者采用，用来实现本研究的目的。	
我知道我孩子可能会被研究报告直接引用，但是我孩子不会被直接认出。（例如我孩子的名字不会被研究使用。）	
我知道参与研究包括被录音。录音内容将会被转录然后销毁。录音及转录数据只会用于参与知情书上所陈述的研究目的。	
我同意我孩子参与与研究目的相关的访谈和小组讨论。并且我知道这些访谈将会被录音或者笔记记录。	
我知道在这些访谈中我孩子的匿名权不能被保证，但是研究者所收集的任何信息都将保持机密。	

我知道研究者将会收集我孩子的个人信息包括我孩子的名字和住址。研究者不能将这些信息向外界透露。	
我知道在参与研究期间任何关于我孩子的信息都将会储存在一个有密码保护的电脑里。并且这些信息仅用于研究目的。所有包含个人信息的文件都将匿名储存。	

参与者父母姓名 (打印名)..

参与者父母签名..

日期.. ....

研究者姓名 (打印名)..

研究者签名 ....

日期..

Appendix V: Interview question

1 The interview questions for young migrants

1.1) City
When did you arrive this city?
What challenges did you face during the migration process?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of migration?
What were your expectations prior to departure and perception of city life ? Is there a huge difference between imagination and reality? Why or why not?
How do you like the city?

1.2) Friendship
How do you make friends?
What is the difficulty to make friends?
How do you maintain friendship with those left behind?
Can you describe your best friend?
Can you tell me a story about you and your friend?

1.3) School
How do you like your school?
How do you perceive the teachers in school?
What is your favourite activity in school?
Who are you playing with in school?
What do you think of your performance in school?

1.4) Family
Can you describe your parents for me?
How do you feel your relationship with your family?
Did the migration change your relationship with your family? Why or why not?
What is the family's expectations for you?

2 the interview questions for parents

What are the advantages and disadvantages of migration?
Can you describe your children for me?
How do you feel your relationship with your children?
What is your expectations for your children? Do your children know your expectations? If they know, what is their reactions?
Do you understand your children?
Can you tell me a story about you and your children?
You hope your children stay at city or go back to hometown when they grow up?

3 the interview questions for teachers

Can you describe the migrant students for me?
What is your perception and expectation for migrant students?
Do you distinguish between the migrant and local students?
Can you describe the relationship between migrant and local students?
Is there any difference between local students and migrant students?
Can you tell me a story about you and migrant students?
How do you evaluate the migrant students' performance in school?
Is there any challenge or difficult during the teaching process?

It is worth emphasising that the use of a previously devised questionnaire is not necessary as the research participants will not have to adhere to a predetermined set of questions.

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