

CARRYING OUT MODERNITY: MIGRATION, WORK, AND MASCULINITY IN CHINA

By

Xia Zhang

B.A. in Chinese Language and Literature, Beijing Normal University, 1999

M.A. in Chinese Folklore, Beijing Normal University, 2002

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
PhD in Anthropology**

University of Pittsburgh

2011

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Xia Zhang

It was defended on

March 21, 2011

and approved by

Joseph S. Alter, PhD, Professor

Kathleen M. Blee, PhD, Professor

Gabriella Luckas, PhD, Assistant Professor

Evelyn Rawski, PhD, Professor

Dissertation Director: Nicole Constable, PhD, Professor

Copyright © by Xia Zhang

2011

NICOLE CONSTABLE

**CARRYING OUT MODERNITY: MIGRATION, WORK, AND MASCULINITY IN
CHINA**

Xia Zhang, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2011

This dissertation is a historically and politically grounded ethnography of *bangbang*, an estimated 200,000 to 1,000,000-strong crew of male porters, who serve the transportation sector of Chongqing in southwest China. *Bangbang* are mostly Chinese rural migrant men who work as informal day laborers. Based on fifteen months of ethnographic field research conducted in Chongqing in 2004 and 2006-2007, my research examines the labor and gender inequalities that *bangbang* experience within the context of post-reform China's economic development and modernization. My dissertation examines the cultural logics, social and cultural forces, and the discursive conditions and contradictions embedded in *bangbang's* decisions to migrate, their occupational choices, their imagining of modernity and success, as well as their understanding of masculinity. It also documents the strategies *bangbang* adopt to defend their dignity and the changes that *bangbang's* migration brings to their social relations.

I argue that in Chongqing, rural men's migrations are not just an important attempt to pursue economic advancement, but also part of their quest for decency and masculine pride. Out-migration constitutes a valuable approach for these men to elevate their reputation as responsible and capable men. However, the majority of poor rural men experience systematic and gendered violence during migration which forces them to remain exploited and socially marginalized in

the urban region. I also argue that the informality of *bangbang*'s employment is the result of China's labor market deregulation and economic restructuring. The rhetoric of "freedom" which is made popular among *bangbang* by the Party-state, functions as a pro-growth strategy that reorganizes the flow of knowledge, capital, labor, social relations, and the formation of worker subjectivities. Lastly, this research has found that the fragmentation of employment contributes to the lack of large-scale, public, collective protests among *bangbang* against the government.

Overall, this dissertation contributes to anthropological studies of development, labor, migration, and post-socialism. Furthermore, it contributes to gender studies in general and to masculinity studies in particular by contributing to an understanding of Chinese working-class masculinity. This research also provides insights into gender and class conditions in post-reform China.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1.	LITERATURE REVIEW	5
1.1.1.	<i>Rural to Urban Migration and Gender in China.....</i>	5
1.1.2.	<i>Masculinity Studies</i>	10
1.1.3.	<i>Globalization and the Changing Nature of Work.....</i>	14
1.2.	FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY.....	18
1.3.	CHAPTER OVERVIEW	23
1.4.	CONCLUSION.....	26
2.0	THE CITY AND THE <i>BANGBANG</i>.....	28
2.1.	CHONGQING’S RAPID URBANIZATION AND LABOR MIGRATION	30
2.2.	<i>BANGBANG</i> IN THE PORT CITY	33
2.3.	CONFIGURING <i>BANGBANG</i>	35
2.3.1.	<i>Ahistorical Bangbang</i>	35
2.3.2.	<i>“Beautiful Scenery”</i>	39
2.3.3.	<i>Gangsters and Secret Societies.....</i>	41
2.3.4.	<i>“Embodiment of Spirit”</i>	42
2.4.	CAN <i>BANGBANG</i> REPRESENT CHONGQING?.....	43
2.5.	CONCLUSION.....	49

3.0	GOVERNING THROUGH <i>ZIYOU</i>: <i>BANGBANG</i>'S OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE AND THE FORM OF THEIR WORK.....	52
3.1.	INTRODUCTION	52
3.2.	NEOLIBERALISM AND THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENTALITY.....	54
3.3.	THE ATTRACTION OF <i>BANGBANG</i> WORK.....	57
3.4.	COMMODIFICATION OF LABOR AND THE RISE OF <i>ZIYOU</i> AS A POPULAR DISCOURSE	59
3.5.	“FREEDOM”’S CONDITIONS AND LIMITS	64
3.6.	WHAT DO <i>BANGBANG</i> DO WITH “ <i>ZIYOU</i> ”?	67
3.7.	CONCLUSION.....	72
4.0	NARRATIVES, VALUE TRANSACTIONS, AND THE SUCCESS STORY OF A CHINESE RURAL MIGRANT WORKER.....	73
4.1.	A <i>BANGBANG</i> WITH A“WRITER DREAM”	75
4.2.	CONFIGURING SUCCESS, CONFIGURING A SELF-MADE HERO.....	82
4.3.	FROM <i>BANGBANG</i> WRITER TO ENTREPRENEUR	86
4.4.	AN <i>BANGBANG</i> -TURNED-ENTREPRENEUR WHO HAS NO TIME TO WRITE.....	87
4.5.	CONCLUSION.....	92
5.0	<i>BANGBANG</i>'S GENDER STRATEGIES IN THE WORKPLACE.....	96
5.1.	INTRODUCTION	96
5.2.	GENDER AND WORK	100
5.3.	RECONFIGURATION OF CHINESE MASCULINITY IDEALS.....	104
5.4.	THE CHALLENGES TO MANHOOD.....	106
5.4.1.	“He doesn’t have a real job”	107

5.4.2. <i>Bangbang Work is Pure Physical Labor (chun xia li)</i>	110
5.4.3. “A bangbang does his job without asking”	113
5.5. BANGBANG’S GENDER STRATEGIES	115
5.5.1. <i>Emphasizing physical strength and the advantages of bangbang’s work</i>	115
5.5.2. <i>Telling Bitter Stories</i>	118
5.5.3. <i>Making use of socialist morality</i>	119
5.5.4. <i>Resisting performing deference to customers</i>	122
5.6. CONCLUSION.....	125
6.0 RELATIONSHIPS.....	127
6.1. THE DECISION TO MIGRATE.....	128
6.2. MIGRANT MARITAL RELATIONS	136
6.2.1. <i>Husbands Migrate and Wives Plow</i>	137
6.2.2. <i>Marital Relations in the City</i>	142
6.3. RELATIONSHIP WITH LAOXIANG, FRIENDS, AND URBANITIES	152
6.3.1. <i>Laoxiang and Friends</i>	152
6.3.2. <i>Bangbang and Urbanites</i>	154
6.4. CONCLUSION.....	156
7.0 CONCLUSION	159
BIBLIOGRAPHY	169

Preface

In this dissertation I focus on rural-urban migrant men who work as informal day laborers in the transportation industry of Chongqing, in southwest China. In documenting the labor and gender inequalities that a group of rural migrant men called “*bangbang*” (male carriers or porters) experience, I critically examine the logic of development and modernization in post-Mao China that often devalues rural migrant men, depicting them as obstacles to China’s modernization and divorcing the economic imperatives of rural to urban migration from its cultural and social meanings. I also question such development tropes as “freedom,” “self-development,” and “modernity” and the truth-effects that they produce.

I chose to focus on *bangbang* and their lived experiences of migration for the following reasons. First, labor migration is vital to China’s economic rise and provides a crucial lens through which the logic of China’s economic development and its social and cultural implications can be clearly observed. Second, in focusing on *bangbang* as itinerant laborers, I aim to challenge the popular view about China’s labor migration that tends to merely emphasize workers in the manufacturing industry, such as factory workers in labor-intensive off-shore factories in Shenzhen or Guangzhou. I attempt to shift academic attention toward the huge nomadic workforce whose members remain outside of the formal economy and that has been largely invisible because of the lack of public representation. Third, in treating *bangbang* as gendered beings, I examine the complicated connectedness of migration, work, and masculinity in post-reform China. I argue that rural men’s gender identities influence almost every aspect of their lives and that migrant men have suffered gendered violence when they participate in post-Mao China’s development and modernization. The interplay of gender and power within the

context of China's century-long pursuit of modernity is particularly important to an understanding of rural migrant men's gendered experiences.

In carrying out my dissertation research, collecting ethnographic materials, and writing this dissertation, I have received enormous help from many individuals. My gratitude is first of all due to the *bangbang* and their family members, friends, and colleagues whom I met and worked with as an ethnographer. In particular, I would like to thank Brother Lu for his kind assistance and companion in the first stage of my fieldwork. I am also grateful to Lao Zhang and his family who accepted me as their fictive neice and to Sister Yang and her family who accepted me as her daughter's Godmother. Without the support and trust of the *bangbang* community, I could not have completed this research.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my dissertation committee members Joseph S. Alter, Kathleen M. Blee, Nicole Constable, Gabriella Lukacs, and Evelyn Rawski who provided valuable advice, sustained interest in my project, and great academic support during my graduate training at the University of Pittsburgh. I would especially like to express my profound gratitude to my advisor, Nicole Constable, under whose guidance I became an anthropologist. Her constant inspiration, encouragement and support were crucial for the completion of my graduate studies and dissertation. During my dissertation writing period at the University of Washington and the University of California, Berkeley, I benefited greatly from the unflagging intellectual communication and academic assistance from both the faculty members and the graduate students. I especially want to thank Ann Anagnost, Yomi Braester, Madeleine Yue Dong, Miriam Kahn, Xin Liu, and Sasha Welland for their kindness in providing me with valuable access to their courses, intellectual resources, and relevant academic activities. I am grateful to Ann Anagnost for making me part of the Value Theory reading group that she organized. I thank

her and the other reading group participants, especially Cheryll Alipio, Allan Lumba, Chingchai Methaphat, Evi Sutrisno, Bonnie Tilland, Hsun-hui Tseng, and Ta Trang X., for their close engagement with my dissertation project and their encouragement. I also benefited from several important intellectual conversations with Kam Wing Chan, Stevan Harrell, and Lisa Hoffman. In addition, I am indebted to two dissertation writing groups that I participated in. At the University of Washington, I thank Cheryll Alipio, Tami Blumenfield, Kasumi Yamashita and at the University of California at Berkeley, I thank Kun Chen, Zongshi Chen, and Eli Friedman for reading and commenting on various chapters of my dissertation and for their friendship and encouragement during the dissertation writing process.

Over several years this dissertation has greatly benefited from intellectual communication with Mary Beth Mills, Hairong Yan, Renqiu Yu, Everett Yuehong Zhang, and Xiaodan Zhang. My colleagues and friends at the University of Pittsburgh, Frayda N. Cohen, Yi-tze Lee, Kevin Ming, Melody Li Ornellas, Joseph L. Cichosz, Nell Ning Zhang, Jianhua (Andrew) Zhao also provided valuable comments and suggestions on various versions of my dissertation proposals, outlines, and chapters. Yu Huang was both a great intellectual companion and kind friend, whom I consistently turned to for constructive critique and valuable insights. Matthew A. Hale must be credited for his generous intellectual assistance and constant inspiration. I am grateful to Sunny Xiang for her enthusiasm and her invaluable editorial assistance. I thank Andrea and Stan Washburn for their encouragement and friendship. I am also grateful to friends who have inspired me with their research and concerns: Chong Eun Ahn, Jeff Chan, Tapoja Chaudhuri, Hsiao-wen Cheng, Va Cun, Daisy Yan Du, Lyle Fearnley, Jingyuan Du, Xiang Gao, Yizhong Gu, Hao He, Ge Jian, Lu Jin, C. Michelle Kleisath, Minhua Ling, Xiao Liu, Qinyan Ma, Jeanette Ng,

Mari Quenemoen, Joseph Segar, Yun-ling Wang, Zhuoyi Wang, Guilan Weng, Jun Xu, Xiaohui Yang, and Jerry Zee.

I am deeply thankful to Tieliang Liu and Lihui Yang at Beijing Normal University, who nurtured my initial interest in social sciences and anthropology and who provided enormous support for my fieldwork in China. My thanks also go to Yuhua Guo, Ge Sun, and Yunhua Yu for their helpful suggestions and advice for my project.

My deepest debt is to my father, Chengquan Zhang, and my husband, Liming Wang, who always believed in me and supported me with unconditional love. I cannot possibly repay the great deal of understanding, care, and support they had provided me over the years. I dedicated my dissertation to them.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On October 18, 2004, a 57-year-old male porter, named Yu Jikui, carrying a bag, passed a husband and wife (Hu Quanzong and Zeng Qingrong) on a sidewalk near the downtown Wanzhou Subdistrict, Chongqing municipality, in Southwest China. Yu's bag touched Zeng's pants, leaving a trace of mud. Zeng shouted at Yu at first, then jerked his shirt collar and slapped his ear. She would not stop even after Yu repeatedly apologized to her. Zeng's husband, Hu, picked up Yu's pole and repeatedly struck him in the legs and on the back, intending to break his legs. Hu also claimed that he was a public official and was reported to say that "If this guy (Yu) causes me more problems, I will pay 20,000 kuai (about \$2,500) and have him knocked off" (Kahn 2004). This scene attracted hundreds of onlookers. Quickly, word spread in the city that a senior official had bullied a helpless porter. By nightfall, tens of thousands of people had gathered in Wanzhou's central square, where they protested against the abuse of the porter, tipped over government vehicles, and set fire to the city hall. The protest lasted until the next morning when the protesters were driven away by the police's tear-gas grenade and rubber bullets. Many were arrested and put in prison. Although the local government later announced that Hu was a fruit vendor, not a government official, and that Hu's confrontation with Yu was a mistake, few local residents bought this story. The riot was widely reported by Hong Kong and Western mass media. The photos and video clips taken of the scene were quickly circulated in the Internet.

Yu missed the riot that occurred in his name because he was kept at the hospital by local officials for two weeks. His children were told to take a vacation, paid by the government. Then he was forced by the government officials to make a statement on the local TV station's evening news, emphasizing his faith in the government's capacity to deal fairly with this "incident." His speech irritated people who had

defended him at the protest; he was criticized for propagandizing for the government. He and his family members were threatened by neighbors and strangers. Yu was reported to say: “First an official tries to break my legs because I am a dirty porter. Now the common people want to break my legs because I spoke (was forced to speak) for the government” (Kahn 2004).

Yu was one of an estimated 200,000 to 1,000,000-strong crew of male porters who work in the transportation industry as informal day laborers in Chongqing, China’s fourth municipality,¹ which has been undergoing rapid urbanization and globalization since late 1990s. In Chongqing, male porters like Yu are referred to by local Chongqingese as “*bangbang*.”² When appearing in groups, they are also called “*bangbang jun*” (an army of *bangbang*). Arriving from the countryside of Chongqing municipality³ with limited skills and minimal education after China’s economic reform (1978), they eke out a living by using bamboo poles, ropes, and their own bodies to lug anything from bricks to fridges along this city’s steep lanes. Most of the *bangbang* live in poverty and belong to the lowest rung of society.

This so-called “Wanzhou Incident” not only demonstrates Chinese citizens’ deep-rooted dissatisfaction toward the corrupt government officials and their anger with social inequality, but it also exposes the vulnerability of poor *bangbang* as a social group in Chongqing. On the one hand, Yu became the victim of violence because of his vulnerable position; but on the other hand, the incident also won him great sympathy from the public. His vulnerability was used as a political flag to call for collective action against the repressive government. However, the same vulnerability also made Yu an easy target for social criticism when people found out that he was not a poor, helpless migrant worker who desperately needed salvation. This event highlights the social tensions around the lower working class in post-Mao

¹ The other three municipalities (*zhixiashi*) are Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin. Chongqing became the fourth municipality in October 1997.

² In Chinese, the word “*bangbang*” literally means a pole. In Chongqing, people call the carrying sticks (often bamboo poles) as “*bangbang*.” They also call the porters “*bangbang*” because the porters use bamboo poles and their own bodies to carry goods.

³ “Chongqing Municipality” and “Chongqing city” are two different concepts. Chongqing municipality has an alleged population of 32 million and has jurisdiction over 19 districts, 17 counties, and 4 autonomous counties. Chongqing city, on the other hand, refers to the major urban region of Chongqing municipality, which has a population of approximate 6 million, and includes 9 districts. The city lies on steep hills at the confluence of Yangtze and Jialing Rivers.

China. It exposes the complicated and even conflicting attitudes that the public in Chongqing hold toward *bangbang*.⁴

In Chongqing, *bangbang* often become the focal point of social attention. One reason is because in China, only Chongqing has such a huge population of male porters working in the transportation industry. In order to promote Chongqing's tourist industry, the local government made an ahistorical statement: it claimed that the *bangbang* in contemporary Chongqing are doing the same old job that the longshoremen did along the Yang-tze River after Chongqing was forced to open its port to Western merchants in 1891. The government's goal of promoting this ahistorical narrative is to stress the uniqueness of Chongqing city as the transportation hub and center of businesses in Southwest China. By doing so, it aims to create a glorious image of Chongqing as an economic center of the upstream Yang-tze River, which has a long history of trade and business. Another reason is that *bangbang* are highly mobile, rural, adult men who often serve female customers with no supervision. The existence of a huge number of *bangbang* often gives rise to social debates over gender relations.

I became interested in studying *bangbang* in Chongqing during my preliminary fieldwork in Chongqing in the summer of 2004. First, Western scholarly works suggest that Chinese rural migrant workers are subject to rigid body discipline and control in the work place and that they face extreme poverty and great difficulties in the cities, but many *bangbang* whom I met claimed that they enjoyed a great degree of "freedom" in doing their work despite the insecure nature of this work (Please see more in Chapter Three). I was puzzled about why this discourse of "freedom" is so powerful among *bangbang* and what "freedom" means in this specific context. Second, while dominant urban culture in Chongqing rarely represented *bangbang* as masculine and vigorous (instead, it depicts them as dangerous men or romanticizes them as exotic uncivilized men), the *bangbang* I talked to commonly prided themselves for being responsible and rational men. In their home villages, most of them were household heads and even village cadres; they led respected lives and were considered "capable men." I was interested in how they

⁴ I use the term *bangbang* to refer to men, when referring to female porters, who are much fewer in number, I specify *bangbang* women.

(re)position themselves and (re)evaluate what it means to “be a man” when they travel between the countryside and the city. Third, the local government insisted that *bangbang* represented revolutionary spirit and “traditional Chinese virtues,” such as perseverance and hard work. It also argued that this spirit should be cherished and kept for the benefit of the city’s economic development. However, it refused to include *bangbang* when it came to representing the image of urban Chongqing (Chapter Two). The local mass media even claimed that the vocation of *bangbang* work and the whole population of *bangbang* would eventually disappear with the construction of high-speed transportation in Chongqing. How was this self-contradictory narrative created, and for what purposes? How does it influence the making and implementation of the government policy in managing *bangbang*? What are *bangbang*’s strategies for countering this cultural logic of development and modernization that diminishes them and shun them as valuable subjects?

This dissertation, based on a total of fifteen months of ethnographic field research conducted in 2004 and 2006-2007, is a historically and politically grounded ethnography of *bangbang*. It examines the gender and labor inequalities that *bangbang* experience within the context of China’s turbulent transformation from socialist collectivism to market-oriented economy and accelerating incorporation into the global economy. Urbanization is also an important context in my analysis. In particular, I am interested in how Chongqing city’s rapid rise to prominence constitutes one of the most important attempts of the Chinese central government for strategic economic development. This dissertation is an ethnographic investigation of how *bangbang* make decision of migration, their occupational choice, their imagining of modernity and success, as well as their understanding of masculinity based on their lived experiences of migration and work. This dissertation also challenges the dominant discourses of developmentalism in post-reform China that often devalues rural migrant men as obstacles to China’s modernization and that often divorces the economic imperatives of rural to urban migration from its cultural and social meanings.

In focusing on *bangbang* as footloose laborers, I aim to challenge the popular view about China’s labor migration. Such a view tends to emphasize the contracted workers in the manufacturing industry,

such as the factory workers in the labor-intensive off-shore factories in Shenzhen or Guangzhou. The economic restructuring in rural and urban China since the reform in late 1970s does not merely result in a mass exodus from the agricultural sector to the manufactory industry, but also produces a huge nomadic workforce whose members remain outside of the formal economy. *Bangbang* are significant members of these “socially deprived contingents” (Breman 2010:4). Recruited on a temporary and casual basis, they are at the lowest rung of the job market hierarchy. I would like to call attention to this large workforce that has been invisible because of the lack of public representation.

1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

My research on Chongqing’s *bangbang* draws from and contributes to three domains of literature. In this section, I give a brief overview of this scholarship, the main arguments and intellectual debates, as well as the areas to which my research contributes. Here I will only highlight a few key points that are relevant to my dissertation research. Additional important scholarly works are cited at the beginning of each chapter.

1.1.1. Rural to Urban Migration and Gender in China

Rural-to-urban labor migration is not something unique to Chinese society; but as Li Zhang (2001) correctly points out, the specific cultural process of naming such migrants as “floating population” (*liudong renkou*) and the cultural and political meanings attached to these migrants are distinct to post-Mao China. My dissertation builds on Zhang’s claim as well as on a number of scholarly works that discuss the process of such a large-scale labor migration in post-Mao China. These works highlight several key issues.

First, China's *hukou* policy⁵ and the dichotomous economic system are keys to understanding migrant workers' inferior and vulnerable positions in Chinese society. Solinger (1999) is among the earliest to examine the politics of migration in China. Her main argument is that the *hukou* system is at the center of how the socialist-era political system operates which explains why migrant workers are categorized unfairly as "secondary citizens." She also argues that the questions of citizenship, membership, entitlements, and access to resources are crucial for understanding rural migrant labor politics. Solinger's approach and arguments have been quite influential. Much research on China's rural-urban migration since the reforms has centered on the concerns with the *hukou* system that allegedly victimizes migrants.

While *hukou* policy is commonly portrayed in Western literature as designed by the Chinese government to block rural-urban migration, Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang point out that this argument is too simplistic (Chan and Zhang 1999). Their research finds that the *hukou* system was "part of a larger economic and political system set up to serve multiple state interests." It has two basic functions: one is to classify and record people's residence; the other is to determine one's socioeconomic eligibility. The two authors argue that this policy is a tool of the authoritarian regime and a product of China's planned economy and societal segregation. Even after the relaxation of the *hukou* system, the economic and social divide persists in the cities, and millions of peasants remain at the bottom of social hierarchy as they did before the reform. But why is this the case? What is the purpose of maintaining such a policy when China's planned economy has been replaced by a market-oriented one since the late 1970s? I argue that at this stage of China's economic development, the *hukou* system enables a policy that excludes the migrant

⁵ *Hukou*, or Household Registration, policy, implemented in 1958 in order to keep peasants on the land, requires every Chinese citizen to register at birth with the local authorities as either an urban or a rural *hukou* holder from a particular place. This system divided the entire Chinese population into two categories of subjects with unequal power. It regulates access to government services that range from housing to education to health care. Chinese people who worked outside their authorized domain or geographical area would not qualify for grain rations, state-provided housing, education, health care, and so on. According to Kam Wing Chan, "for the past 52 years, the system has served to segregate the rural and the urban populations, initially in geographical terms, but more fundamentally, in social, economic and political terms. It is the linchpin of China's divisive dualistic structure (*eryuan jiegou*), and the foundation for its two classes of citizenship" (Chan 2010).

Although government controls over rural labor migration have been relaxed since the 1990s, migrant workers often remain second-class citizens in cities due to their non-urban *hukou* status and are deprived of social benefits and public services. Migrant children often miss out on education opportunities in the cities because of their rural *hukou*.

laborers from any social provisions; furthermore, this is a deliberate action that aims to keep the price of Chinese labor low and globally competitive. At the same time, my research argues against a simplistic dichotomous divide of rural and urban. Instead, it sheds light on the dynamic processes of rural-urban relations, especially between migrants and urbanities. I point out that class, instead of rural/urban residential status, may play a bigger role in determining social relations in and outside of the production process (see Chapter Six).

Second, rural migrant workers are not merely either rational economic calculators or passive subjects who serve their families' interests; the decision-making process for migration is much more complicated than it looks. Most earlier scholarly work on China's large-scale labor migration considers rural migrants as mere economic agents who seek better financial opportunities in big cities such as Guangzhou and Shanghai (Guldin 1992, 1997; Johnson 1992). Scholars such as Cindy C Fan, however, pursue this question from a new angle (2008). Fan highlights the importance of household strategies in shaping the migratory process. She shows that from the peasants' perspective, even if the *hukou* barrier is removed and peasants can freely choose where to stay, they still would not stay in the cities because they have developed a special migration pattern based on a "split-household strategy" that enables them to benefit from both urban and rural sectors at the same time. Fan's approach is valuable in that she takes seriously the interests and concerns of both the migrants and their families and she views the process of migration from both their perspectives. She also shows that the migrants have agency in controlling the whole process, making decisions and protecting economic and other benefits of their families. Migrants, she argues, are not passive victims but active social agents.

However, Fan's argument that household strategies will eventually prevail over institutional structure and state policies seems too optimistic to be convincing. After all, the "split household strategy" can also be understood as a survival strategy developed by the peasants to compensate for the risks of migration and the lack of social security. An examination of both the institutional and structural limitation *and* the migrants' household strategies is needed. My dissertation takes this approach to analyze the *bangbang*'s migration decision-making. I argue that family reasons can not fully explain rural men's decision for out

migration. My fieldwork shows that migration decisions were often made after a full consideration of both the migrants' individual desires and dreams and their families' needs. These desires, hopes, dreams, and family needs reflect structural influences as well.

Third, labor migration is inseparable from the state's modernization and development project and reflects a developmental logic that focuses on re-molding citizen-subjects into proper modern subjects. The Chinese government has initially viewed migration as a social problem, an intrusion of "outsiders" whose presence in the cities interrupt the order of the urban society. The state tends to view migration as a "learning process" through which rural residents learn to be "civilized." Hairong Yan's works (2003; 2008) provide a valuable critique of this state-promoted idea of migration. By examining young women who migrate from Anhui to Beijing to provide domestic service for middle-class families, she demonstrates how the meanings of professional domestic work are produced and reproduced in China's pursuit of neoliberal economic success. These meanings shed light on a range of state discourses about development, modernity, consumption, *suzhi* (quality) and individualism. Her Marxist-based and feminist-informed post-structural ethnographic research points out the "liminal subject position" that the domestic workers occupy. She argues that the keywords of "*suzhi*" and "self-development" play an important role in reorganizing reproduction and social relations in China's economic development. Migration is the vehicle through which "self-development" through the acquisition of *suzhi* is propelled. However, these "keywords" and their political, cultural, and social implications justify and disguise the overexploitation and marginalization that migrant workers (especially women workers) experience when they reform their subjectivities through their participation in the state's development project. Building on Yan's critique of the logics of development and modernist discourse, my dissertation argues that "freedom" is yet another development trope that the state uses to shift the economic risks and the cost of labor to the individual migrant workers' shoulders, quite literally in the case of bangbang. The discourse of "freedom" also implies a training ground on which the migrant workers, by taking on casual, low-end, low-payment jobs in the city, craft modern selves and realize "self-development."

Fourth, anthropologists do not focus solely on the demographic facts of migrants and their impact on China's urban economy; in fact, they are more interested in the migrants' lived experience and in the social and economic inequalities that shape migrant workers' experiences. My dissertation pays special attention to the politics of exclusion that result in the segregation of the rural underclass in all walks of life. Wanning Sun (2009) concludes that the presence of migrant workers in the informal economy can be characterized as "ubiquitous invisibility," "enduring transience," and "intimate stranger." These characteristics, which point to the specific nature of migrant workers' presence in the city, largely result in the cultural politics of boundaries. Such politics can be based "not only on gender, sexuality, class and place, but also on such factors as rural versus urban attributes (behavior, dress, attitudes,) work versus non-work, and the domestic versus the public" (Sun 2009:18). In studying the *bangbang*, I would also like to add two more differentiating mechanisms: the favoring of intellectual labor over manual labor and of skilled labor over "unskilled" labor. These two factors, combined with the other cultural politics of boundaries that Sun mentioned, largely form the social, cultural, and economic position that *bangbang* occupy in the city.

Fifth, gender is a recent scholarly concern in this literature. Gender is a key "trigger" of rural-to-urban migration since it points to contemporary Chinese notions of modernity that characterize cities as wealthy and modern and rural regions as poor and backward (L. Zhang 2001; Yan 2003b; Schein 2001). Many scholars have looked at women's agency and the difficulties they encounter as women labor migrants (L. Zhang 2001; Lee 1998; Solinger 1999; Davin 1999). Ethnographers have also offered important insights about gender and migration by providing vivid account of the experience of women migrants (Lee 1998; L. Zhang 2001; Yan 2003a).

However, studies of domestic migration focus almost exclusively on women (Schein 1999, 2005; Meng 1995; Lee 1998; Yan 2003a; Davin 1999) whereas scholarship on men and masculinity tends to be situated within a transnational context (e.g., Margold 1995; Osella & Osella 2000; Goldring 2001; Levitt 2001; Gamburd 2000; McDowell 2000; Newman 1999). Little attention is paid to how Chinese rural men's decisions and experiences of migration are also intimately linked to gender. Male migrants are

rarely treated as gendered entities, but often appear as an unmarked universal category that stands for humanity in general. Men have also been assumed to have power to dominate women. This literature thus fails to address the diversity of Chinese rural men's migratory experiences and the ways that perceptions of masculinity vary by setting. It also eludes a nuanced examination of the relations between power and gender.

What factors attract men to move to urban centers? Do rural men migrate for different reasons than rural women? What approaches or networks do male migrants depend on to choose where to migrate and what kind of work to engage in? What gendered experiences do rural migrant men have in urban areas? How do experiences of migration influence their sense of self and their ideas about masculinity in general? How does migrant life change their gender roles? What are the reactions of their home village mates when they return home? The answers to these questions will not only allow us to reconsider migrant men as gendered individuals, but will also help us understand what gender means and its important role in shaping rural migrants' experiences in urban public spaces and within their village homes. My research contributes to this literature by exploring how male migrant workers' decisions to migrate, experiences of migration, and occupational choices connect to their understanding of what it means to "be a man." It argues that rural to urban migration cannot be fully understood from an economic perspective. Economic imperatives underlying the massive labor movement in China fail to account for this phenomenon unless social and cultural meanings are taken into consideration. The decision to migrate and to work in the informal economy is meaningful for Chinese rural men, not just as an attempt to pursue economic advancement, but also as a part of their quest for modern subjectivities and masculine pride.

1.1.2. Masculinity Studies

My dissertation research on masculinity(ies) in China mainly benefits from studies of men of color and working-class men. This literature did not emerge until the mid-1980s when gender construction theory largely supplanted sex role theory. Rather than viewing gender in terms of a preordained script with

which men and women act out their sex roles, this theory focuses on the making and remaking of gendered conventions in social practice itself. This theoretical trend focuses on the system of “hegemonic power relations” (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985). It also focuses on the diverse ways femininity/masculinity is experienced by women/men in various social groups. It maintains that assessing the process of making femininities/masculinities requires consideration of the social differentiations (race, class, religion, education, etc.) of men/women and the interaction of different social categories such as class, ethnicity, race, religion, and age.

Rather than treating masculinity as monolithic, scholars prefer to use the plural "masculinities" than the singular "masculine sex role." The variations of men's experiences are seen as crucial to understanding men's lives and the construction of masculinities. Men of relatively underrepresented status – such as working-class men, men of color, gay men and younger and older men – all become the center of scholarly work. Studies of the diverse men's experiences and lives challenge the previously dominant definition of masculinity as white, middle-class, middle-aged, and heterosexual. Gender, thus, is not understood as a set of fixed features, but as a multifaceted, dynamic process suffused with power relations (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985, 181). In other words, gender is made in a "historical situation, a set of circumstances in which power is won and held" (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985, 94).

Scholars such as Cornwall and Lindisfarne have pointed to the “imbalance” in gender studies when it comes to ethnography (1994). While women are rarely treated as social agents except as mothers and wives in kinship and marriage studies (Moore 1988:1), men “have been described as social actors in all manner of different locations and positions, yet their gendered identities have usually been taken completely for granted” (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 27). The two authors argue for “dislocating masculinity” from power, masculinized power, or representation of powerful figures and for relocating men in their gendered positions, which are shaped by the intersection of class, race, ethnicity, sociopolitical status, and so on.

There have been wonderful intellectual analyses of Chinese masculinity(ies) from both literary critics and anthropologists. The literary critics focus on the representation of Chinese masculinity, especially

masculine ideals. The anthropologists, on the other hand, focus more on the specific social and political basis of dominant type of masculinity in post-Mao China. Several factors have been considered crucial in understanding the construction of Chinese masculinity(ies). Firstly, the binary construction of *wen* (scholarly talent, literati) vs. *wu* (martial valor; military strength) indicates a social preference of intellectual labor over manual labor throughout the course of China's history. Kam Louie's pioneering work *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity* (2002) pays much attention to the *wen-wu* dyad. He correctly points out that *wen* has become a masculine ideal that has prevailed throughout much of Chinese history, with the exception of the Maoist era. Secondly, Song claims that an understanding of Chinese masculinity requires a post-colonial reading of the masculine ideals that Chinese society adores because of China's semi-colonial history and because the dominant Western notion of masculinity has been widely taken as the universal norm in China and other parts of Asia (Song 2004). My research, following Song's methods in reading the production and reproduction of *caizi* (fragile scholar) in Song-Yuan periods, pays specific attention to images of masculine figures in post-Mao China's popular culture and treats them as a group of discourses on ideal Chinese masculinity. I examine the production and circulation of some specific types of masculine ideals as well as the impact of these types on the desires of rural migrant men. I also examine how the migrant men appropriate and resist these images and discourses to their own ends.

Literary critics' groundbreaking works also provide rich material and valuable perspective to my study of masculinity. Many of them should be given credit for locating their literary analyses in a social and historical context. However, literary criticism leaves out the question of how masculinity is constituted and experienced in contemporary Chinese men's daily lives. It does not provide insight into how individual Chinese men today understand the meaning of masculinity and (re)articulate their masculinity in a specific social and cultural context that intersects gender hierarchies with many other social forces such as class, religion, economic status and so on. But this is exactly where anthropologist's work can contribute to the field of masculinity studies.

Anthropologists have found that masculinity in post-Mao China has been primarily defined by wealth and social status, given the redistribution of wealth and power and increasing social inequalities. Men are

also said to be under greater pressure to achieve economic success (Jankowiak 2002). However, scholars such as Everett Zhang argue that wealth is not enough to bring masculinized power, especially since China's market economy is conditioned by socialist legacies. According to Zhang, the fact that male entrepreneurs must for business purposes go through *goudui* (activities such as banquets, mahjong, night club entertainment, and saunas) with government officials exposes how the Party state can easily emasculate wealthy men with its power (Zhang 2003).

Other scholars have argued that Chinese masculinities are constructed not only around wealth and political power, but also with the West as a reference. Erwin (1999) analyzes the gendered and racial implications of Chinese modernity. Despite the fact that it is more common for Chinese women to marry overseas Chinese and foreign men, the TV drama she examines reconstitutes the modern Chinese family by creating a model Western wife for Chinese men (though this wife must be a *Zhongguotong*⁶). The process of creating such an "ideal" family in mass media demonstrates the desire for a Chinese masculinity that is constructed around a feminized West. In his dissertation on men's experiences of impotence and the popularity of *nanke* (men's medicine), Zhang (2003) suggests that contemporary Chinese men's "complex of impotence," a sentiment about the inferiority of Chinese male body and potency in comparison with Western white males, is not just a physical experience, but a social and cultural product that reflects Chinese men's imagination of and desire for modernity that take the "West" as a model. The impotent men's experiences also reflect the transformation of a gendered value system produced by China's transition from a planned economy to a market economy in the last several decades. Song (2010) points out that there is also a strong connection between the construction of masculinity in popular culture and the conspicuous rise of nationalism in Mainland China since the early 1990s. A "good" man is expected to bring honor to China and to safeguard national dignity on the international stage.

However, these scholars rarely touch on the issues of class difference and labor when discussing the production of the meaning of masculinity. In the case of migrant worker, among which male rural

⁶ *Zhongguotong* is a Chinese phrase that describes a person (often a foreigner) who knows China very well.

migrants are the majority, the factor of class and the politics of labor are essential to developing a more thorough understanding of the migrants' experience of gender. I argue that masculinity in China does not revolve around a single or uniform concept but contains many diverse and conflicting meanings in relation to class, forms of work, and deep-rooted rural-urban divisions. I also argue that this inconsistency in the meaning of masculinity in contemporary China reflects the persistent changes in the different values surrounding what it means to be a man over the course of Chinese history. Three key factors have actively contributed to making and remaking Chinese masculinities: (1) growing rural-urban inequalities that render rural men less valued than their urban counterparts and rural migrant men more valued than impoverished non-migrant rural men; (2) persistent shifts in the dominant discourses about the manual/mental division of labor over the course of China's modern history, which contribute to the changing social positions of manual and intellectual workers in different historical periods; (3) the denial of the gender order and values of the Maoist era in the post-reform period and the revival of a highly gendered division of labor and the recoding of gender differences. My dissertation, taking *bangbang* in Chongqing as an example, demonstrates how these three factors contribute to the changing discourse of Chinese masculinity and shape the experiences of *bangbang* in Chongqing.

1.1.3. Globalization and the Changing Nature of Work

Since the 1970s, technological advances have facilitated greater connectivity among people, organizations, and countries and accelerated the movement of goods, capital, and people within and across borders. Social scientists commonly use the word "globalization" to emphasize the increases in the volume and the velocity of such movement, not only of capital, but also of people, ideas, and things. David Harvey's (1989) and Anthony Giddens's (1990) research provide a framework for turning abstract and ahistorical discussions of globalization into ones that concern the cultural dynamics of globalization. Both authors demonstrate that globalization intensifies worldwide social relations. As a result, local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990: 64).

This global increase of connectivity intensified economic integration, increased competition among companies, provided more opportunities to outsource work to lower-wage countries, and opened up new labor pools through immigration. With the development of high technologies, employers are no longer constrained by conventional temporal and spatial patterns and are able to seek greater flexibility in their relations with workers. The entry of China, India, and countries of the former Soviet bloc into the global economy in the 1990s doubled the size of the global labor pool. These changes have also reinforced the competitive pressure of global markets. All these factors contribute to a spatial restructuring of work on a global scale. As Lourdes Beneria observes, labor market deregulation and increasing flexibility of work emerged in both high and low income countries (Beneria 2001).

Although this labor production restructuring is a world-wide occurrence, the case of Asia is of particular importance. Before the 1997 financial crisis, the economic growth and the rise of Asian tigers made people believe in the model of export-processing industrialization. Although work became more informalized and temporary and part-time employment increased in Asian countries in the 1970s and 1980s, it was widely held that increasing labor productivity and relatively low wages could eventually improve income levels and living standards, which would eliminate the poverty associated with informal economy. From this perspective, the significance of the informal sector would decrease as the formal sector absorbed the marginal working population and expanded its employment possibilities (ILO 1972). However, in both Asia and Latin America, the proportion of the population engaged in the informal sector has not decreased. Scholars have pointed out that “far from absorbing informal activities, the formal/modern sector often relied and fed on the former as a way to increase its competitiveness and profits” (Beneria and Roldan 1987). The distinction between the formal and informal has become increasingly vague (Perez-Sainz 2000).

In addition to this informalization of the workforce, scholars since the 1970s have found that the changing character of labor markets around the world has led to a rise in female participation in the labor force and to a relative if not absolute decline in men's employment. There has also been a feminization of many jobs traditionally held by men (e.g., Ong 1991; Cheng 1999; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). In

country after country, women laborers dominated off-shore factory production lines, family firms, subcontracting arrangements, and informal work sections. Global factories reproduced similar models of organization wherein women dominate the lowest levels of both pay and authority, whereas men occupied most positions of supervisory and managerial rank (Write 2001). Hierarchical gender ideologies define women's labor as secondary and at best complementary to men's labor (Ong 1991). Cheng (1999) suggests that capitalist systems define work as a process of production that can contribute to the accumulation and exchange of capital. This definition contributes to the devaluation of women's work, which is not considered productive work involving exchange value. Corporate production, on the one hand, identifies desirable sexualized bodies for their preferred labor force—often young, deferential and “nimble-fingered” female laborers. In other words, by defining women's labor as cheap and as less valuable than men's labor, hegemonic gender ideologies, along with the capitalist system, cheapen the direct costs and facilitate global capital's strategies of accumulation (Mills 2003).

Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) offer brutal insights from a feminist perspective on the force of globalization on women and the feminization of global labor. Their work shows the global persistence of patriarchy is never the only cause of the subjugation of these third world women: first-world rich women can exploit poor women just as effectively as rich men can. Although the authors neglect the differences among rich career women in the first-world, their work convincingly warns us that the category of “Third world women workers” is not sustainable because of the severe disparity of women's positions and power in the world.

Anthropologists working in Aisa emphasize the junior position of female workers as factory daughters, working daughters, and village daughters. Most are considered secondary labor in the sense that they earn lower wages than men who are of comparable rank; some also consider wage work as an interlude before marriage. Salaff's work (1981) on Hong Kong working daughters, for example, demonstrates how a patriarchal system denies young daughters a sense of belonging to their families and how these daughters seek to compensate for their structural alienation by providing economic and emotional loyalty to their families. Salaff sensitively points out that in Hong Kong, unmarried working daughters continue to

subordinate themselves to the goals of patriarchal family. Furthermore, scholars point out that the “daughter” status at home is reproduced in the workplace, generating tensions between new feelings of personal freedom and persisting familial and social requirements (Ong 1987, 1991; Mills 1999; Wolf 1992). Other scholars, on the other hand, point out that in some areas of Asia, it is women’s position as wives and mothers that devalue their labor and make their wages lower (and, in some cases, nonexistent) (e.g., Kondo 1990; Lee 1998; Zhang 2001).

This body of literature has offered wonderful analysis of how globalization is made possible through the exploitation of labor from developing countries. This phenomenon has accelerated the growth of contingent and feminized labor in off-shore factories, domestic work, and high technological businesses, among others. Yet very little ethnographic research has been done concerning the changing nature of work in the transportation industry, despite this sector’s significant role in the circulation of goods in local, national, and global economies. There has been even less research on porters or shoulder pole carriers, who earn a living by carrying goods and traveling on foot for great distances between markets or between the markets and individual residents’ homes. It is especially interesting to study the form of work that porters engage in when China is undergoing large-scale development in transportation infrastructure; such developments include the building of roads and railways that reduce the amount of travel time between urban regions. How are *bangbang*’s working habits and lifestyles impacted by China’s obsession with efficiency and high-speed transport? How do *bangbang* justify their importance in this “age of technology”? Do they feel proud of what they do? When the low-skill low-pay jobs are increasingly dominated by women whose labor is devalued by the global economy for the purpose of flexible accumulation of capital, how do male workers who are trapped in the informal economy maintain their masculine pride? Do they feel that their masculine authority is being challenged when their wives and daughters are preferred by labor recruiting agencies in the job market? What does working in an informal service sector do to their sense of manhood?

Furthermore, while Western intellectual inquiry into China’s labor conditions has focused on the workers in off-shore factories in the manufactory industry, scant attention has been paid to the informal

sector and to the casual workers. The countless footloose laborers such as the *bangbang*, just as the millions of factory workers, contribute to China's economic rise on the global stage. However, the nature of their work keeps the workers fragmented and separated, thus making them less visible than formal workers in the manufacturing industry. Although there have been many wonderful academic studies of the process of informalization of employment in developing countries such as Latin America and India (Jan Breman 2010), current academic research on China has barely touched this topic. My dissertation attempts to bridge this gap in this scholarship by documenting how China's labor reform and labor market deregulation generate the growth of precarious jobs in the transportation industry in Chongqing and how China's development and modernization impact individual transportation workers. My research also addresses the relations between Chongqing's rapid urbanization/industrialization as one of the most important engines of China's strategic economic development and the growth of the informal economy, particularly the growing number of migrant workers who participate in the street haulage business.

1.2. FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY

My research methodology is an important part of my dissertation research. Given that I am a woman studying Chinese masculinity among male migrant workers in a male-dominated occupation, and given the large difference in socioeconomic status and education level between the *bangbang* and me, carefully designed fieldwork methods became even more important to the success of my dissertation research. I conducted preliminary research in the summer of 2004 and year-long fieldwork in Chongqing from August 2006 to August 2007. I focused my fieldwork on three hardware and electronic machine markets, one wholesale daily utensil market, and two food markets in a High-Tech Industrial Development Zone of the Wanbei (pseudonym) Subdistrict of Chongqing. I chose to work in this area because this industrial development zone is one of several places in Chongqing that draws a large number of *bangbang*. There was simply no official data available on the exact number of *bangbang* working for these markets. The

estimate ranges from 300 to 500 for each market.⁷ I visited these six markets at least once a week. Sometimes, I visited two markets a day. Each market had one to two places where *bangbang* gathered. They often sat on the ground or stairs, placing their bamboo poles aside, chatting and exchanging business information with each other. Sometimes, they just smoked together and joked around. I often went to these gathering places to meet them.

I conducted observation more than participant observation in the workplaces because I could hardly carry the same weight of goods as the *bangbang*. But I worked side by side with them whenever the goods were not too heavy. For example, I helped Old Zhang and Fat Kid Yan, two *bangbang* whom I knew well, to unload a whole truck of boxed hardware. The hardware weighed around ten ponds each and one person could hold them with both hands. Our job was to move the boxes away from the back of the truck and to organize them on the ground based on the type and size. Then we moved them into the warehouse. It took over two hours to finish the work. But it was not as physically demanding as what *bangbang* normally handled. I often joined *bangbang* when they delivered goods, especially when they used carts instead of bamboo poles for delivery and when the clients did not accompany them. On these occasions, they could talk to me because they did not need to use their bodies to carry the goods. I accompanied them from the beginning of the process (when they were called on by the client for the job) to the end (when they successfully delivered the goods and received the payment from the client). I also participated in their chats at the gathering places and in their leisure activities after work, such as dining together, watching TV, buying groceries, getting haircuts, playing card, and celebrating holidays. Such activities typically involve a group of people, sometimes including the *bangbang*'s wives and children.

In addition to interviewing *bangbang* themselves, I also conducted informal and formal interviews with the *bangbang*'s family members (wives and children), colleagues, clients, friends, and relatives. I often conducted formal interviews in *bangbang*'s homes or in the places where they felt the most comfortable. With one interviewee, I normally had casual conversations and conducted informal interviews first. I conducted hours of informal interviews and casual conversations; my questions varied

⁷ A few *bangbang* who worked in these markets made rough estimates.

person to person. For informal interviews, I did not use a recorder. This tactic was specifically intended to lower the interviewee's anxiety. It was easier for people to talk freely without the recorder, especially at the early stage of communication. But I used a recorder for formal interviews. After one formal interview, I typed out all the information given by the interviewee and asked the interviewee to read it (I read it to the interviewees in many cases if they asked me to do so) and to correct any wrong information in the text. I also double-checked with them and made sure that they had no objections about letting me reveal the information they had given me in my dissertation and in future publications. I did this for all the formal interviews. This, I find, is a very useful strategy for cultivating mutual trust between my interviewees and me.

During my fifteen months of fieldwork, I talked to 112 male *bangbang* and 12 female *bangbang*, who worked side by side with their husbands. I also talked to the wives of 23 *bangbang* as well as other family members. In addition to working in the urban regions of Chongqing city, during the Spring Festival of 2007 (02/07), I accompanied a *bangbang* to his home village and spent five days in his house (02/14/07-02/18/07). This trip gave me a precious chance to observe and better understand his family's living condition, various aspects of the rural life, the difficulties and conflicts around migration, and the family's opinion about the *bangbang*'s migration and work. In the July of 2007, during the busy farming season, I went on another trip with this *bangbang* to his home village, in order to observe how the *bangbang* had made his decision to go home in the peak season of farming (harvest season), the significance of his return to his family, and his and his family's strategies to both secure his job in Chongqing and to make sure the farm work at home could be done. This trip was also made by the *bangbang* to pay a fine for his third grandchild. The man had wanted a grandson for a long time, but the birth was illegal because of China's one-child policy. The trip was a great opportunity for me to observe the interconnectedness between gender, work, and migration.

During my fieldwork, I lived in the neighborhood where *bangbang* with families chose to live. It was close to the *bangbangs*' workplace, mostly within a ten- to twenty-minute walking distance. Because I lived in this neighborhood, I also went grocery shopping with *bangbang* and their wives and hosted

dinner for a few close *bangbang* co-workers and their families. I was also invited to lunch and dinner at their places. Living in their community provided me wonderful opportunities to observe and participate in their daily life activities – cooking, washing, gossiping, grocery shopping, dining out, and so on.

During my time in Chongqing, I spent one day each week doing archival research; collecting historical records in the city library about shoulder-pole porters and their socioeconomic and cultural practices;; reading and collecting media representations of contemporary porters; and buying newspapers and popular magazines that carried stories and reports not just about the porters, but about gender, labor politics and migration stories in general. I also actively participated in several art exhibitions and performances organized by university scholars and NGOs in both Beijing and Chongqing; these events aimed to empower rural migrant workers. I observed the dynamics, compromises, contests and conflicts between the elite organizers and the rural migrants as well as the public's reactions to these events. These experiences enriched my understanding of the varied ways in which rural migrants fight for social justice and the complexity of this process.

During my year-long fieldwork, I was honored to be accepted by one old *bangbang* couple as their fictive niece and by a younger couple as their daughter's Godmother (*gan ma*). While all of the *bangbang*, their family members, friends, neighbors, customers, as well as the scholars who participated in empowering *bangbang* were fully informed of and approved of my research, I have used pseudonyms for them to protect their privacy. I have, however, kept the real names of the scholars.

As a young, female scholar who received her advanced education in the United States, I encountered many challenges conducting research that involved participant observation with men in public. The fact that I lived and worked alone in the city made the situation even more challenging. The gender difference immediately became a concern for both me and my *bangbang* co-workers. And my attempts to get to know them were occasionally viewed as an irresponsible media journalist's manipulation of the poor.

My entry into the *bangbang*'s community was at first made possible by one former *bangbang* man, Brother Lu, who was a small private company employee when I met him in 2004. I was introduced to him by two mutual acquaintances and very quickly he expressed interest in working with me. He was thirty-

four when I first met him. He had worked as a *bangbang* for over three years before being recruited by a private business owner who ran two hardware and electronic machines stores in Wanbei subdistrict. At the time when I met him, he had three brother-in-laws and a group of friends who worked as *bangbang*. He accompanied me to visit the *bangbang* in their workplaces and in their homes. He helped immeasurably in breaking the ice between his former *bangbang* colleagues and me.

When Brother Lu accompanied me, I was treated well by his *bangbang* friends and colleagues because he introduced me as a younger sister (*xiaomei*) of his who needed to write her “homework.” This scenario brought both benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, it made me less threatening to the *bangbang* and gave me more opportunities to ask questions. It is culturally “natural” for a junior outsider to be curious and ask questions. The down side of it was that the *bangbang* would not talk about “men’s issues,” such as the topics of sex, romance, husband-wife conflicts, etc, in front of me, because these are inappropriate topics to talk about by older brothers in front of a younger sister.

Brother Lu and I stopped working together in late October of 2006. Working alone, I developed more strategies than before in terms of dealing with gender, social status, educational gaps between *bangbang* and me. My photo-taking strategy helped the most. I brought my camera with me everywhere I went. When taking pictures in the *bangbang*’s workplaces, they would become interested in my camera and ask me all sorts of questions about it – for example, why I shot pictures of this and that, how long I have been learning photography, how much my camera cost, and so on. Then they would become interested in who I was. That was a good opportunity to begin a conversation. Depending on the situation, I would decide how many details about myself that I would reveal at the first meeting. In many cases, they would insist that I was a journalist, even though I stressed that I was a scholar and was merely attempting to better understand their lives. Very often, after a casual conversation, they would allow me to take pictures of them, especially when I promised that they could have these pictures for free. Some *bangbang* refused to have their pictures taken because they did not trust me. But in most cases, they would change their attitudes when I sent back the pictures to their colleagues as promised. Taking photos was very often a happy moment for the rural migrants and it broke the ice between us quite efficiently. It was a good

opportunity to conduct informal interviews, and sending the prints back to them helped cultivate mutual trust. I incorporated myself into several *bangbang* communities by using this strategy.

Another useful strategy was to bring my male family members and friends (they are urban men) to *bangbang*'s workplaces and to invite them for a group meeting. I like this type of "collective interview" because I got the chance to observe the interaction between the rural men and their urban counterparts. The presence of urban men often changed the "chemistry" between *bangbang* and me. These rural-urban encounters often created wonderful conversations.

The third strategy was to explain clearly and patiently to the *bangbang* my work. Despite the fact that it is not socially favored for a young adult woman to work closely with a group of rural migrant men in public, my identity as a "researcher" provided a way out. Some *bangbang* called me "college student" (*daxuesheng*); some called me "teacher" (*laoshi*). Once they understood that my work was not done merely for my own benefit or for commercial purposes, but for serious academic research, they normally treated it more seriously and were more cooperative. It took time to reach mutual understanding; but achieving this understanding was worth the effort.

The fourth strategy was to make friends with *bangbang*'s wives. They, as women, were easier to access and safer to approach. They liked to talk to a researcher about their lives. When talking about their husbands, some wives had a lot to say, especially after we knew each other for a while. Also, they often provided different perspectives on their husbands' work and lives.

1.3. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This dissertation is organized thematically. In these chapters, I explore the intimate and intricate interconnection between migration, work and masculinity, including the socioeconomic forces and gender ideologies that shape the motivations and experiences of rural men's migration and their engagement in

bangbang labor in Chongqing, China. I investigate male rural migrant workers' agency in the face of labor regulation and exploitation, urban discrimination, and familial obligations.

Chapter Two explores cultural politics in the process of urbanization and the city-branding of Chongqing which impact on the working and living conditions of *bangbang*. I focus on the post-Mao regime's political rationale, economic development policies, urbanization policies and Chongqing's government projects which aim to "remove the rural surplus labor from the countryside" (*nongcun laodongli zhuan yi*). This chapter examines both the material and symbolic forces that shape the livelihood of *bangbang*. It also examines the ways in which *bangbang* cooperate and unite in work. Various forms of labor organizing serve as an important strategy for the *bangbang* to protect themselves from harsh competition and the lack of labor protection in the city. But at the same time, these labor organizations reinforce the already existing stereotype of *bangbang* as law-abiding gangsters or secret society members and further legitimize the government's attempts to discipline and control them.

Chapter Three examines the meaning and importance of *ziyou* (freedom), a concept that has been taken by *bangbang* as one of the major reasons for choosing their jobs. It explores the question of why so many rural migrant men would trade the security of contract work for the "freedom" that *bangbang* labor is supposed to afford them. I argue that for rural migrants, the discourse on *ziyou* (freedom), as promoted by the state and expressed by *bangbang*, plays a significant role in facilitating the migrants' subject formation as modern individualized laborers, transforming them into self-reliant and enterprising workers even as it makes them vulnerable to fierce exploitation.

Chapter Four analyzes the success story of Xiaoxiao Liu, a *bangbang* who is said to have turned himself from a penniless migrant into an entrepreneur and local celebrity. In this chapter, I close read both Liu's own narratives and the narratives that scholars and media sources have produced about him. By comparing the dominant assumptions about rural migrant experiences with Liu's own narratives, this chapter suggests that Liu's narratives confirm, strategically use, and indirectly contest the official representations and dominant images of rural migrants. It further explores the cultural and social factors that enable Liu to extract representational value from his own derogated status and to convert it into

monetary capital. Instead of dismissing the success stories of rural migrants as mere government propaganda, this chapter investigates the values and principles that these stories ascribe to rural migrants. These values and principles are linked to the technique of government and the production of worker subjects in contemporary China.

Chapter Five argues that although rural migrant men who work as *bangbang* do a “man’s job,” they fall short of the contemporary Chinese masculine ideals on at least three fronts. First, *bangbang*’s low income and marginalized social position deprive them of avenues and opportunities to become the masculine ideals that urban middle-upper classes favor. Second, they face gender critique for their lack of a “decent” and “real” job (that is, a full-time career with stable-income and benefits). Third, their work that requires the performance of deference and submission calls into question *bangbang*’s presumed masculinity. The resulting gender strategies reveal how male *bangbang* achieve a sense of manhood. In particular, I argue that *bangbang* emphasize the masculine aspects of their work (physical strength, solid body). Their strategies include distancing themselves from the “feminine” aspects of the work by telling stories, making use of socialist morality that favors peasants and manual labor, valuing their own job over that of their wives, and refusing to perform deference to customers, especially female customers. However, although *bangbang*’s gender strategies challenge the gender norms that emasculate them, they also serve to naturalize it and reconfirm the masculine ideals favored by middle and upper classes. Furthermore, while socialist morality empowers *bangbang* in some ways, these moralities also reinforce negative stereotypes of peasants as backward and uncouth.

Chapter Six examines what rural migrant men in Chongqing say about their relationships with the people closest to them. An examination of the migrant men’s relationships is important because these relationships motivate rural men’s migration and heavily influence how migration is experienced by individual workers. Migration, in turn, brings changes and reorganizes migrants’ social relations. These relationships are shaped by powerful gender discourses, cultural expectations, and the social resources available to individuals. By examining the relations between migrant men and their close kin, friends, and employers, this chapter shows how gender and power are intertwined to shape migration experiences. I

argue that urban migration is not simply an economic activity but a process that is embedded in social relations and cultural expectations. Economic benefit for the family is one important reason behind migration, but relations with close kin, available resources, and social positions are also part of the “rationality” of migration. The experience of migration influences and transforms such social relations. In any case, rural migrants make their decisions with full agency and control their lives. They are not “blind flow” or simply followers of others. They are the “bosses” of their own lives.

1.4. CONCLUSION

In this Introduction, I introduced the reason I choose to study *bangbang* in Chongqing, the research questions posed by my dissertation, the theoretical framework for my research, my fieldwork methodology and experience, and the organization of my dissertation chapters. Overall, my dissertation addresses the gender and labor inequalities that Chinese rural migrant men experience when they participate in China’s economic development and modernization. My research pays specific attention to the large reserve army of labor in the informal sector (as opposed to the factory workers in the formal economy) because this fragmented labor force has not been widely studied within the context of China, despite China’s significance to the world economy. In studying the interconnected meaning of migration, work, and masculinity for *bangbang*, my goal is to examine the logic of development and modernization and its impact on individual Chinese migrant workers’ livelihood. A relevant theme that I focus on is how individual migrant workers encounter these challenges and struggle to take a control of their own lives. In the case of *bangbang*, I am concerned with how they strategically prevent themselves from being belittled as “not manly enough” because of their casual work, unstable income, and derogated social status.

Working with the *bangbang* in Chongqing, I was deeply intrigued by the intimate relations between this migrant group and the sprawling development of the booming metropolis. This dynamic is not only because that such a large “army” of *bangbang* can only be found in Chongqing, but also because in

Chongqing, *bangbang* have become a sort of cultural icon, signifying Chongqing's uniqueness in transportation and in regional development. In what way does Chongqing accommodate the thousands of *bangbang* who wander around almost every street and corner of the city? What is the relationship between *bangbang* and the local government? What urban social and cultural factors that contribute to the working and living conditions of *bangbang*? How does the urban setting exclude/include *bangbang*? These are the questions addressed in Chapter Two.

2.0 THE CITY AND THE *BANGBANG*

In studying China's economic development, project of modernization, and labor migration, researchers normally focus on either the largest metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai or the manufacturing centers and Special Economic Zones in the east costal area, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou. However, in the last decade or so, the rapid, sprawling development of Chongqing municipality can not be ignored. In 1998, Chongqing's GDP was just \$21 billion; by 2009 it had quadrupled to \$86 billion. In 2008, when China's growth significantly slowed to only 9%, Chongqing's GDP grew at an eye-popping 14.9%. This rapid economic development of Chongqing has been widely reported by domestic and international media. In the media, Chongqing has been called "Chicago on the Yangtze" (Larson 2010), "the megalopolis you never heard of" (Watts 2006), and "China's Chicago" (The Economist 2007). At the same time, since the mid-1990s, Chongqing has attracted about 1.5 million Chinese rural migrants every year.

Chongqing municipality covers 82,400 sq km — more than Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin combined — and has an alleged population of 32 million. Its urban region lies on steep hills at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers. Because of its precipitous topography, Chongqing has been nicknamed the "mountain city" (*shan cheng*) in China. Many of the city's hills are so steep that bicycles are scarce; motorcycles are a far more common sight. Largely determined by its mountainous topography, Chongqing's districts are spread over a series of hilltops and separated by major rivers. The precariously stacked apartment buildings clinging to the hillsides make for a unique view of the city. Because of its mountainous features, Chongqing was regarded as a safe haven and chosen as the capital of the Guomindang government during the Sino-Japanese war (1937 – 1945). Many important institutions and industries were relocated there, laying the foundations for the city's industrial power base. After the PRC

was founded in 1949, Chongqing was a sub-provincial city within Sichuan Province until March 14, 1997, when it was promoted to be the fourth municipality after Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin.

But what caused Chongqing's quick rise in 1990s, given the great challenges that its hilly topography posed to the urban developers? Chongqing's development is due in large part a national economic development strategy. The patronage of former premier Li Peng (the driving force behind the Three Gorges dam project⁸ on the Yangtze) and Deng Xiaoping (a native of the Chongqing area) is said to have played a crucial role in Chongqing's elevation in status. According to a report from the Urban-Rural Coordinated Development Group of the Party School of the CCP (2008), Chongqing was chosen because of the typical structure of its rural-urban dichotomy, the geographic closeness to the Three-Gorges Dam, and its lagging economy compared with coastal cities. In other words, Chongqing was a guinea pig for the central government's economic reform experiments, especially the reforms aiming to reduce the imbalance between rural and urban regions, to urbanize the countryside, as well as to expedite the so called "rural land transfer"⁹ project. The central government also aims to promote Chongqing as one of the major hubs for economic growth and development in Southwest China. Against this backdrop of the state's plan to reduce the imbalance between the prosperous coast and more sluggish interior, Chongqing has been undergoing rapid urbanization since the 1990s. Money from state-owned banks and the government has poured into Chongqing to initiate the Three Gorges Dam Project in 1996, and the "Western Development" project¹⁰ in 2000.

⁸ The Three Gorges dam a hydroelectric dam that spans the Yangtze River in Yichang city, in Hubei Province. So far, it is the world's largest capacity hydroelectric power station. But the building of this dam caused the displacement of about 1.3 million people and ecological changes to many regions. The dam has been a focal point of controversy in both China and abroad.

⁹ Rural land transfer (*tudi liuzhuang*) is a term coined by the Chinese government to refer to the land leasing or transfer between peasants. Under China's household responsibility system, peasants can use the land but do not own the land. When peasants went to the urban region to work, some of them transferred or leased the land to others. Rural land transfer also refers to a recent land regulation policy by the Communist Party. The main purpose of this policy is to seize the land from the peasants for the urban development.

¹⁰ The "Western Development" project is a policy adopted by PRC to boost its less developed inland western regions. It began in 2000 and is an ongoing economic development project. The whole project covers six provinces (Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan), five autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet, and Xinjiang), and one municipality (Chongqing).

2.1. CHONGQING'S RAPID URBANIZATION AND LABOR MIGRATION

Because of the central government's economic priorities, Chongqing's government has been able to invest huge attention and resources into the so called "rural surplus labor transfer" (*nongcun shengyu laodongli zhuan yi*) project, which is in fact a state-sanctioned project that aims to speed up Chongqing's urbanization and to turn millions of peasants into urban laborers. Why would the local government want to "transfer" the rural labor, and what would it transfer the rural labor into? The government's logic is that the huge number of rural laborers in contemporary Chongqing countryside constitute "surplus labor" (*shengyu laodongli*), a serious barrier for China's urbanization and development. Keeping such a huge army of reserved labor unemployed is considered a potential threat to China's social stability. The resolution to this problem, according to the Chongqing government, is to push the rural "surplus labor" to seek employment opportunities in the city so that they can be absorbed by expanding urban industries.

In 2003, Chongqing's government began to develop training programs called "Rural Labor Transfer"¹¹ Training," for the purpose of pushing rural peasants to migrate to cities. In 2004, the local government formally carried out another project called "Project of Transfer and Employment of One Million Rural Laborers" to push peasants to leave their land and their rural homes at an even faster pace (Yu 2005). The goal of the government is to train more than 200,000 rural laborers every year and to turn 400,000 rural peasants into migrant workers every year. The government planned to convert 7 million rural laborers into migrant workers until 2007, with the goal of increasing the rural service revenue more than 10% every year. To serve this purpose, some subdistrict and township governments were designated to be the "rural labor export bases," which are responsible for organizing and exporting rural laborers to work in high-need urban industrial areas. The local governments were also made responsible for establishing training bases and job agencies to channel the flow of rural labor. In 2007, the government announced an "Opinion about Developing Labor Economy and Expediting Urban-rural Integration," in which the government planned to turn 30% of rural young and middle-aged surplus labor into urban and township

¹¹ Transfer (*zhuan yi*) is a term that the government created to refer to the transfer of rural "surplus labor" to urban working labor during the government-promoted fast-paced urbanization.

residents by 2010 (Li 2008:23). In 2007, the city also began implementing a plan called the "one-hour economy circle" through which it aims to transfer two million rural residents into newly urbanized areas that are within an hour's driving distance from the city center. This transfer is intended to take place within the next five years. Another two million residents are supposed to be transferred in the five years after that (Howard 2007).

In order to facilitate the flow of rural labor to the needed industries in the city, the local government has used several strategies. The first strategy is to seize the peasants' farm land from them and to push the landless peasants to look for employment in the city. In China, peasants have never officially owned farm land; they only have the "right to use" (*shiyong quan*) the land through the household contract responsibility system.¹² But many migrant workers have been informally transferring their land to other peasants. This form of land transfer was popular from 1984-1995. Beginning in 1995, the local government actively institutionalized land transfer. The land seized by the government is used either for the urban development or for the rapid industrialization of agricultural production. Since 2000, land transfer has sped up. Until 2006, around 6.46% of the agrarian land in Chongqing, has been transferred or is in the process of transfer (Yang 2009:167).

The local government also persuades peasants to give up their farm land as a pre-condition to applying for the urban *hukou* (registered residence status). This strategy has been used by other provincial governments, such as those in the Pearl River delta region. However, this policy was not as successful as expected. Sun Yat-Sen University's research in 2007 shows that only 24.8% of the local peasants would give up their land. On the one hand, urban resident status can no longer bring as much benefit to the *hukou* holders as it did in the Maoist era (Southern Urban Newspaper May 18th 2007). On the other hand, since 2006, peasants who have land in hand have been eligible to receive agricultural subsidies. Giving up land equates to giving up the right to get these subsidies. But the most important reason for peasants'

¹² The practice of household contract responsibility was initiated by a group of farmers in Xiaogang Village in Anhui Province in 1978. The system contains two features. First, the farmland is owned by the collective. Second, production and management are entrusted to individual farming households through long-term contracts. During the contract period, the farmers pay taxes to the State and to local government and keep all the other produce for themselves.

refusal to give up their land is the lack of a social welfare for peasants in China. A piece of land is the only resource that peasants can ever have for survival if they lose the capacity to work or become unemployed. Land is the lifeline for Chinese peasants, which they cannot afford to lose.

The second strategy the Chongqing government adopted to draw the peasants from their land was to promise to train them to be professional workers. The government claims that the *suzhi* (quality) of peasants is generally low; they will not make good workers unless they learn some professional skills. In particular, the government-subsidized professional training programs persuaded peasants to attend the training classes. The training programs are said to be free, and those who attend the programs were given an average of 200 yuan (around 30 dollars) by the government. But no matter how rosy this promise looks, the Chongqing government did not budget enough money to support this policy. Only a small number of extremely poor peasants could have free classes. Most peasant trainees needed to pay around 500-1000 yuan per person out of their own pocket to get some sort of profession training. Those peasants whose financial conditions were already vulnerable could barely afford it. Even worse, news reports exposed that some training programs inflated the number of the trainees in their classes in order to get as much subsidy from the state as possible. When interrogated by a journalist, the local government refused to provide any information about this problem (Liu et al. 2005).

The Chongqing government's third strategy is to keep issuing new policies to relax administrative controls over rural to urban migration. Before 2005, rural peasants who wanted to work in the city needed to go through complicated procedures to prepare all kinds of "permits" before they could officially move to the city. They needed to have in hand the ID card (assigned by the local Public Security Bureau), "Certificate of the Status of Marriage and Child Rearing" (*hunyu zhengming*) (assigned by the family planning administrative department of local governments or Subdistrict Offices), "Temporary Residence Permit" (*zanzhu zheng*) (assigned by local public security bureau), "Migrant Worker Employment Registration Card" (*waichu ren yuan jiu ye dengji ka*) (assigned by local labor security department), as well as "Health card" (assigned by local medical and public health institutions). Since 2005, Chongqing has begun to implement "one permit/card" policy. One card refers to "resident card." Theoretically, with this

card, rural migrants can “send their children to the schools near where they work without paying ‘temporary schooling fee’ (*zanzhu fei*) for it. Children of migrants have the right to get free state-sanctioned vaccinations. Migrant workers can register with the local government to find employment. They can also have occupational consultation with the labor recruit agents. They also have access to legal aid for labor conflicts (2005). However, most of the new policies and bills are vaguely worded, and there is no official institution or government department to supervise the execution of the policies. In the end, many such policies turn out to be empty promises.

2.2. BANGBANG IN THE PORT CITY

China’s binary economic structure, the relaxation of the *hukou* system after reform, and the post-Mao China’s labor politics have contributed to the presence of a large population of *bangbang* in Chongqing. But the city’s economic development and its subsequent rise as the “hub” of transportation and as a commercial center in Southwest China are also reasons why such a large population of porters can exist in Chongqing. Chongqing’s major economic “pillar” is manufacturing. One “card” that the local government plays in attracting corporations and foreign investment is to guarantee corporations plenty of low-cost labor. A number of prominent domestic appliance manufacturers whose production was previously concentrated in coastal provinces—including Haier Co., Ltd., Media Group, and TCL International Electrical Co., Ltd.— set up operations in Chongqing because of the lower costs of labor. At the same time, Chongqing also plays important role in the production and exportation of aluminum and certain chemicals. A number of growing multinational corporations have also developed rapidly in recent years. Carrefour Group and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., have each opened three stores in Chongqing. Metro Group of Germany opened the largest supermarket in Chongqing's downtown area, along with shopping centers in the Economic and Technological Development District. According to Lammie, Chongqing's economy grew 12.6% annually between 2002 and 2007, hitting 411.2 billion yuan (60.2 billion US dollars) in 2007.

Foreign trade expanded 36% in 2007 to reach \$7.4 billion, of which exports comprised 4.51 billion US dollars (Lammie 2009).

Having an adequate supply of cheap labor is also important for Chongqing's local transportation industry. Located further upstream than any other significant port on the Yangtze, Chongqing is one of the most important port cities in Southwest China. The city emerged and developed as a port city in the Qing dynasty. Scholars have pointed out that as early as late Qing, Chongqing had become an important trading center and economic hub in Southwest China (Zhou et al 2002). Most natural resources and goods such as salt and rice were exported to other cities via Chongqing and via the Yangtze River.

Nowadays, Chongqing is still the major transshipment point for outbound freights in the Southwest. Lammie reports that "anticipating a surge in throughput as a result of shorter river journey times to the coast, Chongqing will invest 15 billion yuan (2.2 billion US dollars) in river port expansion and is building the most modern container terminal on the upper Yangtze. On November 25, 2008, the PRC State Council approved Chongqing's application to give Cuntan Harbor bonded port status" (Lammie 2009). However, due to the hilly topography, Chongqing has always faced the challenge of efficient transportation. The road network cannot reach many places, even in the city; neither can it reach some docks along the Yangtze River. The difficulties of transporting goods provide an opportunity for the booming labor market of *bangbang* and longshoremen.

Not only are *bangbang* economically central to Chongqing, but they are also symbolically significant to the city. This cultural significance is what distinguishes *bangbang* from the other migrant workers. The city of Chongqing and the *bangbang* as a social group have such an intimate relationship that the latter have become a symbol of the city.¹³ This relation, I argue, is mostly a production of media and cultural forms. The media provide the most important discursive space for generating discussions about the *bangbang* work and the *bangbang*. *Bangbang* as a social group is routinely discussed in the urban media; vividly shown in the newspaper stories, television dramas, and movies; and widely written about in

¹³ In media, TV dramas, movies, Internet circulations, *bangbang* are depicted as one of three symbols of the city of Chongqing (hotpot, beauty, and *bangbang*).

literature and blogs. Media outlets regularly carry statements by government officials, policy-makers, and scholars. These statements, however, are often contradictory and reflect the government's multiple ideological needs and desires.

2.3. CONFIGURING *BANGBANG*

Longshoremen in recent Western history belong to typical blue-collar working class and often organize themselves through unions to protect their rights and interests (Nelson 1990). *Banbang* men in Chongqing, however, pose a difference case. With the disappearance of the social analytical category of “class” in post-Mao Chinese society, the representation of *bangbang* in media outlets has not focused on their class identity, but on their cultural significance.

2.3.1. Ahistorical *Bangbang*

One of the most popular narratives about *bangbang* – one that the Chongqing government actively promotes -- is an ahistorical account that aims to explain the presence of a large population of porters in Chongqing. According to this narrative, Chongqing's booming trading business and waterway transportation business in mid-19th century attracted many poor, bankrupt peasants to look for work in the city. Most of the migrants were males. The proportion of male migrants were exceptionally high during Jiaqing period (1760—1820), even higher than that in new industrial cities in modern period (Zhou 1997: 238). Some of the male migrants made a living by carrying drinking water from the Yangtze River to the city residents¹⁴. These water carriers, according to this narrative, were the precursor of

¹⁴ Chongqing city was built on the hills above the Yangtze River. In the pre-modern period, the hilly terrain of the city makes it extremely difficult to extract drinkable water from the Yangtze River. This special geographic condition paves the way for the emergence of a service – water carrying – mostly by rural migrants. Their job was to deliver the water from the river to the city residents.

bangbang.¹⁵ What this narrative shows, first of all, is that Chongqing was historically the center of trade and transportation in Southwest China. Second of all, it shows that the presence of large quantities of porters in Chongqing is part of the local tradition. Overall, this narrative naturalizes the presence of a large army of casual laborers who make a living by doing the dirty, low-end job that most urban dwellers would not like to do for such a meager wage.

This ahistorical account neglects to take into consideration the specific subject positions of *bangbang* as a historical construction that generates unique cultural and social meanings about this group of people. The term “*bangbang*” is a recent creation, which did not exist before the 1990s. The specific cultural meanings attached to this group are also unique to and can only be fully understood within the context of China’s turbulent transformation from a socialist collective to a market-oriented economy and of post-Mao China’s labor politics and socioeconomic structure. In the following section, I briefly explain how the cultural meaning of porters in Chongqing is historically and socially constructed and changes over time.

Historically, people who made a living by carrying goods for others were called “wild coolies” (*ye li*) or just “coolies” (*li fu*) in Chongqing. It is beyond the realm of this dissertation to examine the origin of these terms; yet given the length of time that these terms were widely used and the social and cultural meanings that became attached to the porters in a specific historical period, it is worth pointing out that scholars in China commonly agreed that coolie was popularly considered despicable occupation in pre-modern and modern China.

After the CCP came into power in 1949, almost every aspect of Chinese society changed, and, accordingly, the coolies were organized by the local transportation enterprises and turned into *gongren* (workers). During the Maoist era, some of the coolies became formal employees of either the state-owned transportation enterprises or the collectively-owned transportation crews. Theoretically, the work unions

¹⁵ It is not my intention to argue the validity of this proposal. My goal is to show that the casual service heavy labor has historical roots in this area and is not something that exists only in post-Mao era. I also want to show that rural to urban migration was and has always been part of the local history (except during most of the Maoist era).

¹⁵ I asked about the difference between “*bangbang*” and “*biandan*” and was told that “*biandan*” was

protected the rights and interests of both groups of porters. Now the leading class in the country, the porters theoretically held a higher social status than they had before the founding of the People's Republic of China.

However, I argue that the advancement of the porters' social status should be understood as a discourse that circulated through political propaganda and public representation. The porters' experiences varied during that period. The differences were mostly caused by the workers' varied employment statuses, political statuses, and the rural-urban divide. Besides the formal transportation workers in the state-owned transportation enterprises, two new types of porters also emerged in early 1950s. One type of porters was unemployed urbanites. Under the slogan of *shengchanziji* (to provide for oneself by production), the local government mobilized the unemployed urbanites to join the labor force. At that time, many housewives and lower-class people in the city were encouraged to join the *bangbang* working groups to carry goods for state-owned work units. They supplemented the porters in the state-owned transportation enterprises, providing extra hands when needed. My interviews with some "supplemental" porters in 2007 reveal that the recruiting policy was highly gendered. While most of the porters in the state-owned enterprises were men, the "supplemental" porters were largely women. Another type of "supplemental" porters were rural migrant men. Before the household registration system was implemented in 1958, a small number of male rural residents were also employed by the "supplemental" porter groups to work as longshoremen along the docks of Chongqing port. Unlike the workers in state-owned and collectively-owned transportation enterprises, these porters were not viewed as *gongren* (workers) and thus did not enjoy the state-subsidized food and medical care. They were called "temporary workers" (*linshi gong*).

The three types of porters were employed with very different entitlements to social provisions and welfare and also held very different social statuses. The workers in the state-owned enterprises were at the top, the supplemental porters in the collectively-owned working groups were in the middle, and the temporary workers were at the bottom of the hierarchy. Looking back, one "supplemental" porter admitted that she had barely paid attention to the "temporary workers" because the latter frequently came

and went. “They were hired as needed, but we barely kept them long,” she said. While the *gongren* porters worked with the temporary workers now and then, they did not bother to conceptually include the latter as part of their crews.

During late 1950s and early 1960s, especially with the reinforcement of the 1958 Household Registration Policy in 1958, these “temporary workers” were no longer permitted to stay in the city and were forced to return to their home villages. This action caused a labor shortage in the *bangbang* business. The supplemental porter groups were called on more frequently to share the workload of the workers in the state-owned transportation enterprises.

With the relaxation of the Household Registration policy in the 1980s, and especially after the 1990s, more peasants began to look for jobs in the city. Many of them became porters, but not in state/collectively-owned transportation enterprises/working groups as they had in the past. These enterprises and working groups faced the serious challenge of competition from private transportation enterprises and moving companies. Migrant men who worked as casual porters were offered even lower rates and were hence more welcomed by customers. Many state and collectively-owned transportation enterprises went bankrupt and were pushed out of business. Huge numbers of workers were laid off.

However, workers in the state-owned enterprises got laid off with much better compensation packages than those in the collectively-owned enterprises. Not only did they receive compensation packages, but in some cases, they also received life-time medical care. Meanwhile, workers in collectively-owned working groups received much less compensation. Some of them were forced to leave their work without any compensation. The collective properties of these working groups were also pocketed by the corrupt cadres. The laid-off workers protested against these cadres in April 2006, asking for monthly basic living allowance of 240 yuan (around 40 US dollars).

In the 1990s, more *bangbang* could be seen in the city. People began to call the porters “*bangbang*” (bamboo shoulder pole) instead of “*biandan*” (wooden shoulder pole). Local residents commonly attributed the change in terminology to the fact that the porters began to use bamboo poles instead of

shoulder poles.¹⁶ However, the real reason is hardly known. The influx of thousands of low-cost porters into the city and their presence in almost every corner of the city has made for a new and unique urban scene to the local residents. People who want to hire a *bangbang* just need to shout “*bangbang!*” on the streets or to wave their hands, and a *bangbang* appears. In some cases, a group of *bangbang* rush to the customers and compete for the job.

This brief history of the presence of porters in Chongqing demonstrates that in different historical periods, the social groups who worked as porters vary, as do the meanings and implications attached to porters and their work. The narrative that the government of Chongqing created is ahistorical and invalid. By considering the historical figure of porters and the contemporary manifestation of *bangbang* as interchangeable, the government has produced an essentialized image of the porter that transcends space and time. This narrative has emerged against the backdrop of the local government’s desire to legitimize Chongqing’s leading role in the transportation industry and trade in Southwest China and to naturalize the presence of a large number of porters in the local economic development.

2.3.2. “Beautiful Scenery”

Another narrative has emerged in relation to the government’s desire to make Chongqing attractive to domestic and foreign investors and to promote the local tourist industry. To serve these ends, the government considers *bangbang* and their work part of the “unique and beautiful” urban landscape of Chongqing, especially in tours and in media representations. One tour guide says: “What do you expect to see in Chongqing? Let me tell you – the beauty, the hot pot, and the *bangbang*! All the *bangbang* are iron men with strong Chongqing characteristics. They speak a language that you do not understand, they like to curse with no reason, and they practice kung fu with their bamboo poles on the street. But they can also

¹⁶ I asked about the difference between “*bangbang*” and “*biandan*” and was told that “*biandan*” were made from wooden sticks, and were more expensive than “*bangbang*” which are made by bamboo. The advantage of “*biandan*” is that it is more flexible so when bearing heavy load, it is more comfortable to use “*biandan*.” But the *bangbang* always prefer the cheaper tool.

treat you like you are their brothers, talking and laughing with you, as if you are a family member...The *bangbang* are the unique part of the scenery of this city.”

Such descriptions of *bangbang* often exaggerated their bodies (stout torso, muscular calves, incredible strength in lifting goods, and high endurance of hardship), the way they behave and talk, and their innate wildness. Furthermore, this exoticization makes use of the *haohan* (good fellow) stereotype in pre-modern Chinese literature and popular culture, for example, as represented in the novel *All Men Are Brothers*.¹⁷ *Haohan* are heroes who come from the underprivileged classes; their social mobility is very limited. The stereotype is that they have a high tolerance for alcohol, like to eat meat, and generally abstain from sex. In Chongqing contemporary writer Dequan Cao’s fictional text, *The Legend of Bangbang in the Mountainous City* (Cao 2005), he mentions that meat and alcohol were the presents he chose to give to *bangbang* when they first invited him for a dinner in their place. He writes that the *bangbang* drink copiously, and “after three cups of wine, they began to vie with each other in telling [Cao] their experiences” (Cao 2005).” Literary descriptions such as this one reinforce the stereotypical image of *bangbang* as masculine social outcasts.

It is worth noting that *bangbang* seem to hold the most symbolic value in the urban setting only when they appear or act in groups. Individual *bangbang* are not considered “a beautiful scene” and are represented much less in media. There have barely been any literary works or media discussions that feature a single *bangbang* man and that shed light on his humanness as an individual. Local Chongqing residents use “*bangbang* army” (*bangbang jun*) to refer to *bangbang* as a whole. This politics of naming implies a homogenous, undistinguished mass of reserve labor. What the media is really concerned is with their quantity, not the quality or the uniqueness of each individual laborer. The word “*Jun*” (army) seems to indicate the opposite of *min* (civilians). In the CCP’s propaganda, the military soldiers (*jun*) are civilians, but different from the civilians; *Jun* is educated with Marxist and Maoist thought, obeys the CCP with full

¹⁷ *All Men Are Brothers* is a novel about one hundred and eight male outlaws who lived at the margins of society and resisted government repression by using military force. Scholars debate who the author of the novel is and in which historical period that this novel was written. One dominant opinion in China is that its author is Shi Nai’an, and the novel was written in late Song and early Ming dynasty.

obedience, and serves civilians whole-heartedly. The word “Jun” also implies a disciplined workforce that is ready to be deployed for the state’s economic development.

This quantification of *bangbang* in the cultural politics, I argue, is a politics of exclusion that differentiates the working masses of *bangbang* from an urban setting that emphasizes individualism and uniqueness. This quantification also reflects the way that the bodies of *bangbang* are imagined and conceptualized in post-Mao China. Ann Anagnost argues that the Chinese body has been transformed from a producing body in the Maoist era to a consuming body in the post-Mao period. While decades ago the proletarian masses were viewed as a progressive force in history and the most productive class, they are now seen as bodies with consuming demands that are “out of balance with [the bodies’] productivity” (Anagnost 1997:126). In the post-reform Chinese society, the “quality,” not the “quantity,” of the masses matters. *Bangbang*, being large in quantity but presumably low in quality, can barely be included into the urban productive workforce. It is no wonder that these “backward” and “valueless” workers are often accused of being an obstacle to regional development.

2.3.3. Gangsters and Secret Societies

One popular discourse about *bangbang* describes them as gangsters or secret society members. A scholar in the Chongqing Academy of Social Sciences told me: “People often think that they [*bangbang*] are just peasants who work in the city. It is not that simple. These people [*bangbang*] have miscellaneous backgrounds (*zhe qun ren hen za*). Some of them were/are mafia members (*hei shehui*). Some of them were/are secret society members (*paoge*).¹⁸ All in all, they are from Three Religions and Nine Schools (*sanjiaojiuliu*).” This description of *bangbang*, however, seems to contradict the image of obedience and dedication that the term *bangbang jun* conveys. Depicted as gangsters or members of secret societies, *bangbang* are largely “crafted” to be potential criminals at the margin of the society. They are on the opposite side of the law and order, and they pose a threat to social stability and harmony.

¹⁸ *Paoge*, literally means “gown brother”, actually means the member of *Gulu/Gelao Hui* (secret society). They are in fact gangsters.

The problem with this characterization, though, is that just as with the *bangbang jun*, it represents *bangbang* in quantities, not as individuals.

2.3.4. “Embodiment of Spirit”

Media discussions often argue that *bangbang* embody *chiku nailao* (diligence, toughness, indomitability, and hard work), the “spirit” that “ensures the success of Chongqing in economic development” (Li and Li 2007). In 2004, when Chongqing held an International Forum of the Image of Cities (*chengshi xingxiang guoji luntan*), the conference participants fervently discussed whether it was appropriate to use the image of *bangbang* to represent Chongqing. One participant argued that “*Bangbang* is the unique product (*te chan*) of Chongqing – they have the spirit to climb up (the ladders). They embody the virtues of diligence and perseverance” (Li, Cao, He and Liu 2004). Xu Jialu, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, also told the public that he was moved by the spirit of *bangbang*. “The *bangbang* spirit is the high point of the Bayu (Chongqing and Chengdu) culture.”

Most commonly, the so-called “spirit” of the *bangbang* is turned into a metaphor for the “spirit” of Chongqing. For example, in 2007, in a news program entitled “Four-Scholar Talk about Chongqing’s Humanistic Spirit,” organized by the Department of Publicity of Chongqing City and the Xinhua News Channel, the former head of Industry and Commerce University of Chongqing said, “Chongqing has a [big] group of *bangbang*, which is rare in [other cities in] China. This is the hardest kind of labor but reaps relatively low payment. But many Chongqing people are doing this work for a living. They can ‘eat this bitterness’ because they have been climbing [Chongqing’s] steep terrain like this. Historically, Chongqing has been through ups and downs. But [because Chongqing people have a high spirit, just like *bangbang*], they can persevere through [the ups and downs] with the hope of going up again.”

Most of such narratives are simply repetitions of the CCP’s official speeches. While embodying the “spirit” of *chiku nailao* (eating bitterness) had enormous political significance to individual people in the Maoist era, such significance has largely disappeared in the context of post-Mao China. “The spirit of

chiku nailao” has become an empty shell with no concrete political meaning in/to it. It is one of the fragments of the socialist past that lingers in today’s Chinese society and that today’s people have struggled to appropriate to capture the social reality. For the government, this narrative naturalizes the exploitation and social inequalities that *bangbang* experience. The logic is that *bangbang* are supposed to experience suffering (eat bitterness) because they represent the spirit of *chiku nailao*. However, narratives such as this make visible the “mental elevation” of the privileged classes. After all, people who come from these classes and marvel at the “spirit” of *bangbang* would never allow their children to become part of the “beautiful scenery.” When an urban child does not perform well in school, middle-class parents often point to the *bangbang* on the street and tell the child, “If you don’t study hard, you will just end up like him!”

2.4. CAN BANGBANG REPRESENT CHONGQING?

Since 2003, Chongqing’s government has carried out a series of projects to brand the city. The officials decided that a delegate should be elected to represent the “image” of Chongqing. Unlike other municipalities such as Beijing which is said to be the center of politics and Shanghai which is said to be the center of trade, Chongqing has not found its strength and established its reputation. And this, the government thinks, has ruined Chongqing’s capability of attracting investment and its economic development. Thus, it is crucial for Chongqing to have a symbolic delegate, or as they call it, a “business card” that would be able to represent the uniqueness and the strength of Chongqing to the outside world.

Michalis Kavaratzis, in his research on city branding, states that city branding and the creation of so-called “city images” originate from the idea of the “entrepreneurial city” and the marketing of places, which have been one of the defining features of the entrepreneurial modes of urban governance in the Western world since 1970s. The entrepreneurialization of cities means that cities are “being run in a more businesslike manner” and that the city governance has taken on certain characteristics that were once

distinctive to business, such as risk taking, promotion and profit motivation. As Ashworth and Voogd's research (1994) shows, image marketing is one of the three most important developments in the emergence of place marketing and "solves the difficulty of transferring marketing knowledge from its initial field of industrial goods and services to places" (Kavaratzis 2004:59). Hubbard and Hall (1998:7, cited by Kavaratzis 2004:62) actually conclude that entrepreneurial city can be considered as an imaginary city, constituted by a plethora of images and representations.

It is not difficult to understand why the Chongqing government wants to brand and market this city when we consider its desire to balance the economic development of the inland and the coastal areas. But it does raise the questions of which images and whose images the local government prefers to use to represent Chongqing and why. The interesting thing is that during these projects – which include elections, campaigns, conferences, public forum discussions, and so on – the local government and the regular city residents normally held quite different opinions regarding whether *bangbang* should represent Chongqing. Among the city residents themselves, different opinions also emerged, causing fierce debate. These discrepancies in opinions show not only the awkward social position that *bangbang* occupy in the urban setting but also the conflicting value systems that shape people's opinions about *bangbang* as a social group.

In 2005, the city government sponsored a city-wide election with the purpose of choosing ten "business cards" for the "image" of Chongqing. The so-called "business cards" must be items or individuals that represent certain aspects of Chongqing politics, economy, products, history, and urban culture. The winners, which were disclosed later, included "beautiful women, hot pot, monument of Liberation, the Red Cliff¹⁹, the slang '*xiongqi*',²⁰ the Three Gorges, the young revolutionary martyr Zou Rong,²¹ the capital of bridges, the *Diaoyu* Castle, and the family tourist site – hot spring. Although *bangbang* were proposed by some city residents, they did not make it to the finalist.

¹⁹ The Red Cliff is a Kuomintang prison in Chongqing during the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949).

²⁰ It is a popular local slang, meaning "cheer up."

²¹ Zou Rong was born in Sichuan province in West China in 1885. He became interested in Western ideas, and went to Japan to study in 1901, where he was exposed to radical revolutionary and anti-Manchu ideas. In 1903, he

In 2009, the government sponsored another election, calling on the local residents to vote for the “representative spokesman” of the city. Funded by a toothpaste company, *Leng Suan Ling*, the election was named “*Leng Suan Ling* Cup 2009 Election for the City Representative Spokesman of Chongqing.” The main webpage of the election read: “At the starting point of the next ten years [of development], Chongqing has reached a new high. We live in the same city, and drink water from the same river. As a part of this city, who do you think is the representative of Chongqing? This red May will feature the great election for the city spokesman. Let’s establish the new city brand image (*chengshi pingpai xin xingxiang*) for Chongqing.” According to the *Chongqing Evening Newspaper*, a total of 8,370,000 people voted for the representative spokesman. The winners, announced by the government on July 23, 2009, were two males, Li Gu and Yundi Li. Both of them were born and raised in Chongqing. The former is a multiple-time world champion of the game of *go*. The latter received the world championship in the International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 2000 when he was 17 years old. Again, *bangbang* were nominated by unnamed local residents to be candidates for the “spokesman” election. However, again, the panel of judges (mostly comprised of government officials) left out *bangbang*.

Journalist Yixing Zhou wrote in the *QiLu (Shandong Province) Evening Newspaper* that the election ignored the *bangbang* as whole. He writes: “...‘*bangbang* army’ mostly came from the countryside and lives in Chongqing. As a social group, ... they are quite well known in Chongqing and in China. Moreover, this social group has a spirit of self-reliance and embodies the spirit of the plain laboring people. In this sense, the fact that the “*bangbang* army”...cannot become one of the business cards of Chongqing...is to be regretted in terms of the authenticity of this election.” He continues: “The business card of a city.....should put the ‘human’ in the center of city life, paying attention to ‘human,’ especially the groups living at the bottom of the society.....So I [the author] would like to ask the relevant [government] departments and experts: ‘Why not include the *bangbang* army into Chongqing’s business cards?’.”

published his most important work “The Revolutionary Army,” a tract that inspired many revolutionary radicals before the 1911 Revolution. Zou was arrested for publishing the tract, and died in prison in 1905.

However, such questions were never answered by the government. During the 2009's city spokesman election, *bangbang* became one of the top 50 candidates. However, one of the local celebrities, painter Qikai Zhang, publicly stated that "*bangbang* is the distinguishing feature of Chongqing, but they cannot be promoted (*xuanchuan*) as the representation of Chongqing." But very quickly, the *Chongqing Evening Newspaper* published a reader's letter, which expressed the readers' dissatisfaction with Zhang's statement. The reader writes: "Taking into account the proportion of the *bangbang* in the local population, the symbolic meaning of their coming into the city and their contribution to the city-countryside integration policy, and their contribution to building the city...*bangbang* is the best representative spokesman of Chongqing. No matter whether Mr. Zhang admits it or not, ... the characteristics of diligence, warm-heartedness, and kindness are enough to offset minor shortcomings, such as bad hygiene and poor education..." At the same time, the assistant (government) minister of the Publicity Department (*xuanchuan bu*), Bo Zhou, tells the public that "... the '*bangbang* army of the mountainous city' is a special group of people unique to Chongqing. My understanding is that they definitely can represent Chongqing. However, *bangbang* are a group of people. The question of how to make a group represent Chongqing is worth further research later" (Yi 2009). But the government has never reported any further research or research results.

It is worth noting that it is not just the government that has a negative attitude toward using the image of *bangbang* as a delegate of the image of Chongqing; some city residents also dislike this idea. On an online message board on the famous Chinese website *tianya.com*, a web user asked in a post whether the Chongqing netizens supported *bangbang* as representatives of Chongqing. In the 64 responses to the post, about 18 respondents supported this proposal, but around 25 expressed strong opposition. One opponent posted, "'*bangbang* army' doesn't fit in. How can they be integrated into the international environment (*yu guoji jiegui*)? They are too rustic (*xiangtu hua*).'" This person's opinion was echoed: "The original poster just wanted to shame Chongqing by asking that question [of whether *bangbang* should represent Chongqing]. His question also invited all of China to make fun of Chongqing for its lack of cultivation, its lack of talented people, and its being a typical peasants' city. That's the goal of the original poster." A

similar opinion reads, “The *bangbang* need regulation. It is beyond my imagination to have them to represent Chongqing.” Another one reads: “How can the ‘*bangbang* army’ represent the ten-year (1997-2007) achievement of Chongqing, the young municipality? The term ‘*bangbang* army’ is itself a negative one. The original poster is definitely not from Chongqing. Maybe someone whose motivation is evil (to shame Chongqing).”

Another group of opponents agreed that *bangbang* have some merits; however, *bangbang*, in their opinion, cannot represent how modern and developed the Chongqing municipality has become. One post reads: “The ‘*bangbang* army’ is a product of one period of development in Chongqing, but it cannot represent the image of a [modern and developing] municipality, even though the local residents have connection with them...” Another one reads: “It [the fact that *bangbang* cannot represent Chongqing] is not because the city residents are biased but because you (the original poster) have a parochial view (*yanguang xia'ai*) of Chongqing. *Bangbang* can at the most represent the past (of Chongqing), but must not represent the fifth municipality (meaning, the young and hopeful modern city) of China.” Some other poster expressed similar opinions: “The ‘*Bangbang* army’ in Chongqing embodies the spirit of those who are hardworking, are fearless in the face of difficulties and sacrifice, and are dedicated (to nation-building). However, they don’t seem to represent the local history and culture, the contemporary city residents’ spirit, and the future development of Chongqing.”

The third group of opponents thought that *bangbang* were the shameful evidence of the city government’s incapability and, thus, could not be the image of Chongqing. One such post reads: “The ‘*bangbang* army’ is a malformation of the city...One either enters the city and becomes a city resident, or goes back to the country to become a peasant. Who are these people when they are neither urban nor rural residents?...The ‘*bangbang* army’ is concrete evidence of the incapability and the shame of the local government. How can the government choose [*bangbang*] as a candidate for the spokesman?”

One person tried to communicate with these opponents and persuaded them to respect *bangbang*: “My friend, you said that the term ‘*bangbang* army’ has negative connotations. That is because for a long time, many people look down upon the *bangbang*, just like you. ... The ‘*bangbang* army’ doesn’t steal from

others. They work hard to earn money in order to raise their families. They are much better than the thieves, cheaters, and beggars. Yes, they were peasants. They are poor and dirty, but they are simple, friendly, hard-working, and strong. They don't trouble the society and the government or become defeated by poverty. On the contrary, they provide convenience for thousands of Chongqing city dwellers. We should respect them and learn from their courage and spirit." However, this poster's comment did not raise reflection or critical thinking, but only more aversion. One post reads: "Actually *bangbang* in real life are thieves and steal everywhere. No way can they be considered simple and friendly!" Another post reads: "How many *bangbang* are real Chongqingese? How can they represent Chongqing?"

The fierce debate between the regular city residents and the city government as well as among individual city dwellers themselves about whether the "*bangbang* army" can represent Chongqing shows the different values that the government and individual city residents hold toward the rural migrant workers. On the one hand, the past socialist period leaves a long legacy of socialist values and morals such as valorizing manual labor, poor laboring people, and the "spirit" of hard-work and living simple lives. Therefore, nowadays, continuing in this tradition, the rural migrant workers, instead of the urban residents, are chosen to convey such values and morality. On the other hand, the *bangbang* are viewed as backward, low quality, and belonging to the past, a group that the quickly developing Chongqing would like to leave behind or transform. The fierce debate also shows the awkward social position the *bangbang* occupy in Chongqing society. It is not just the awkward identity of the *bangbang* of being neither peasant nor urban resident; rather, it is more about the awkwardness caused by China's desire to simultaneously keep the "skin" of socialism and to continue its privatization and capitalization under the name of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics." In many cases, maintaining that "skin" of socialism is for the purposes of helping the market play a bigger role in China's economic and social transformation.

Baozhuang, a Chinese term that literally means "packaging" or "packing," denotes the desire to make commodities look attractive and sell better in the marketplace. Given this trend of post-Mao China, goods with fancy packages can be sold at a much higher price than those that look plain. Fruits cultivated in greenhouses that are bigger, shapelier, smoother, and more neatly packaged are much pricier in

supermarkets than the regular fruits, even though the latter may taste better. The “business cards” and the “representative spokesman” of Chongqing as well as other urban design projects carried out by the Chongqing government can be understood as strategies to package Chongqing as a brand. Contributing to efforts toward increasing Chongqing’s marketability and thus its profitability, “business cards,” city symbols, and the representative spokesmen help make the city “a total concept, a timeless essence” (Anagnost 1997:162). To compete with other cities domestically and internationally, Chongqing is eager to show its brightest and most developed “face,” among many other “faces,” to the potential buyers in the global market. To this end, *bangbang* must be left out. For the Chongqing government, they are not only useless for the purpose of selling the city, but are also barriers to Chongqing’s modernization and development. While Chongqing city is assumed to have a bright future, the government is careful to make sure that *bangbang* are not part of that picture because they belong to the darker, duller past.

2.5. CONCLUSION

The former mayor of Chongqing city, Hongju Wang, made a proposal in a government meeting about the regulation of rural migrant workers. He said that the urban residents should stop calling the porters “*bangbang*” because “this term has negative connotations.” The proposal provoked heated debate among the city dwellers. *Xinhua* news reports that over one hundred urban residents made phone calls to the government offices, supporting the mayor’s proposal. These people proposed eight other appellations for the *bangbang*, including *Lige* (literarily, laboring brother), *shifu* (master), and so on (Zhang 2005). The Labor Service Office of the city government also supported the mayor’s proposal and suggested that the new name for the shoulder-pole porters can also be packaged as a new brand of workforce, something unique to Chongqing. This brand of workforce can then be “channeled” to the needed places outside of Chongqing.

However, Chongqing residents disagreed with the officials. *People's Daily* reports that many city residents thought that it was no use to merely change the way *bangbang* are hailed. "'Bangbang' is not necessarily a negative term. The problem is not what the *bangbang* are called, but whether they are respected." Some local residents think that merely changing the name for the *bangbang* would not change their identity. The key [to stop urban discrimination against *bangbang*] is to encourage tolerance and respect for them and to help them learn more survival skills" (Zhang 2007).

What do the *bangbang* think of the mayor's proposal? When I asked this question to a group of *bangbang*, the majority of them told me that they were concerned not with what people called them but with how much they could earn. "If I can earn one hundred yuan (around 15 dollars) a day, I don't care if I am referred to by a different name," one *bangbang* said. Another one complained about the mayor's proposal. "I am used to being called '*bangbang*.' When people call [*bangbang*], I know they are talking to me. If people called me '*shifu*' or '*lige*,' I won't be able to react as quickly and might lose my business." His opinion received the support of other *bangbangs*. According to a survey by Southwest University in Chongqing in 2007, 80% of *bangbang* interviewed showed no interest in the debate regarding their label. Rather, they are considerably more concerned with their daily earnings and survival in the city. These *bangbang*'s responses show clearly that the former mayor's "care" for the *bangbang* is superficial and just another performance of "humanistic care" by government officials.

In claiming that the intimate connection between *bangbang* and the city of Chongqing is largely a product of the media and a discursive construction, I want to emphasize the significant role that *bangbang* play in the city's local economic development and to highlight the social inequalities that they experience every day. At play are the cultural politics of both exclusion and (in)visibility. These politics naturalize the exploitation and inequalities to which *bangbang* are subject.

Early in my fieldwork, when I asked the *bangbang* why they chose this job, they told me that they liked their work because they felt a sense of "freedom" in doing it. Their response confused me. What do they mean by "freedom"? What type of "freedom" do they enjoy in doing this work? Is there a limit to

their “freedom”? What does this “freedom” imply in terms of labor politics and power relations? These are the questions that my Chapter Three attempts to answer.

3.0 GOVERNING THROUGH *ZIYOU*: *BANGBANG*'S OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE AND THE FORM OF THEIR WORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after I started my fieldwork, I began to notice one “strange” phenomena emerging from my question requesting for the reasons why and how the *bangbang* ended up with doing this job. Their work, in its contingent and casual form, is very different from contracted work that factory workers and construction workers do. Given the fact that a large proportion of rural to urban migrants work in the off-shore factories in the Pearl River Delta region and many migrant men either work on construction sites, collective farms, or mines, why does this huge population end up in Chongqing, working as porters, the lowest rung of the job hierarchy? How do they make that occupational choice? What are they concerned with in making that choice?

When I asked the porters these questions, surprisingly, they often gave to me a very simple answer: “*Ziyou* (freedom).” They told me that the job gave them the sense of *ziyou*; many *bangbang* also perceive their work as more *ziyou* or “free” than other jobs. It made me wonder what kind of freedom this sweating heavy-labor low-payment job could possibly provide to the migrant workers. Yet, this “*ziyou*” rhetoric was so frequently heard in their responses to my questions about their occupational choice that I began to question its meaning. Furthermore, my interviews with urban business owners and regular urban residents also showed that they commonly viewed *bangbang* as “having uncontrolled liberty” (*ziyouzizai*). They perceive *bangbang* as highly mobile and “lighthearted” because *bangbang* appeared to spend a lot of time wandering around, doing nothing in the daytime, while waiting for business. Through an examination of their experience in choosing occupation, this chapter seeks answers for the following questions: What

does *ziyou* mean for these rural migrant workers? What kind of *ziyou* does *bangbang* work give them? Why are the narratives of *ziyou* so significant among *bangbang*? What subjectivity does the discourse of *ziyou* form among these workers?

While in China, rural migrants are widely represented as the responsible, self-reliant subjects who rationally take advantage of the costs and benefit of migration, just like the neoliberal notion of rationality would have it, this chapter explores whether neoliberalism alone deliberately and vehemently transforms these laborers into enterprising, calculating, and self-governing subjects. Some scholars who argue that the Chinese Party-State is "regrouping" rather than "retreating" (Sigley 2006) and that the post-socialist state continues to condition the occupational choice of young professionals of the post-Mao period through appropriating the Maoist era norms and values of serving the country (Hoffman 2006). Following these scholars, this chapter argues that, for rural migrants, the discourse of *ziyou* (freedom) promoted by the state played a significant role in facilitating migrants' subject formation, transforming them into self-reliant and enterprising laborers, even as it made them vulnerable to fierce exploitation. At the same time, *bangbang* turned this neoliberal rationality around and used it to struggle for the security and aid that the state refuses to provide because it externalized the "technologies of the self." *Bangbang* internalize neoliberal techniques of governance that are framed as *ziyou* (freedom), not from the social responsibility or patriotism, but from disappointment with and distrust of the state.

3.2. NEOLIBERALISM AND THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENTALITY

This chapter is framed by theoretical debates on neoliberalism as a "tactic of governmentality."²² It connects rural migrant workers' occupational choice with their subjectivity formation and analyzes the dynamics of these two elements from a perspective of governmentality. As Lisa Hoffman's study of governmentality in Dalian's talent service center and job fairs wisely suggests, choice and autonomy are actually a part of the processes of governing and subject formation. "Freedom is not indicative of the absence of power or control over the working bodies but is a technique of governance for which the regulation and management of subjects happens through the rhetoric of 'freedom'" (Hoffman 2006).

Neoliberalism has different meanings from different points of view. As Aihwa Ong suggests, in the United States, neoliberalism is usually termed as "market-based policies" and "neoconservatism" and indicates the seeking of strategies "to eliminate social programs and promote the interests of big capital" (Ong 2006). In Asia, neoliberalism is viewed by politicians and pundits as "America's overweening power" for destructive market domination over Asian economics; in popular discourse, neoliberalism represents "unregulated financial flows" that threaten national currencies and living conditions. But in general, neoliberalism is often viewed as a market ideology that opposes the governance and activity of state (Ong 2006). Some scholars construct a framework of a neoliberal North versus a South under siege, stating that neoliberalism from the North sweeps the South and engenders conflicting responses. Some scholars seek to identify "neoliberal states" that centralize capital and monopolize power "at the global

²² There is a body of scholarship that considers neoliberalism as the "tactics of governmentality." Here are a few examples. Burchell, Graham, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller. 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two lectures by and An Interview with Michel Foucault*, University of Chicago Press. Rose, Nikolas. 1993. "Governmental authority and expertise in advanced liberalism," *Economy and Society* 22: 283-299. Barry, Andrew, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (ed.). 1997. *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government*, University of Chicago Press. Lemke, Thomas. 2000. "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," paper presented at the Rethinking Marxism Conference, University of Amherst (MA). Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Duke University Press.

level.” However, as many scholars have pointed out, neoliberalism can also be understood as the technology of government, “a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions” (Ong 2006:3).²³ In other words, neoliberalism is a newly developed technique of Foucault’s “biopolitics” that relies on market knowledge, the politics of subjection and subject-making to govern modern human beings. Since the state, as Foucault suggests, has no essence, and the institutional nature of the state is a function of changes in practices of government (Gordon 1991), neoliberalism as technology of government should not be taken as the natural existing sphere that contradicts the overpowering state, but a new form of state planning for optimizing public resources and population control. In Lemke’s terms, neoliberalism is above all a political project that endeavors to create a social reality whose forms of governance need to be studied (Lemke 1999).

Foucault defines government as “the conduct of conduct,” meaning “the array of knowledges and techniques that are concerned with the systematic and pragmatic guidance and regulation of everyday conduct” (Ong 2006). As a guidance of subjects’ daily life, governmentality covers a range of practices from “governing others” to “governing self.” The concept of governmentality helps us open the conceptual space to recognize that neoliberal rationality functions as a politics of truth, insinuating market-driven truths and calculations into the domain of politics, “producing new forms of knowledge, and inventing new notions and concepts that contribute to new domains of regulation and intervention” (Lemke 2000). From the perspective of governmentality, the retreat of the state in advanced liberal democracies under neoliberal policies is in fact a prolonged government. Neoliberalism is far from the end of politics, but is a transformed politics that restructures the power relations in society. Neoliberal forms of government extend from political government to forms of self-regulation, featuring not only

²³ Similar argument can also be found in many scholars’ works, for example, Bourdieu, Pierre. December 1998. “The Essence of Neoliberalism: Utopia of Endless Exploitation.” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition); Gordon, Colin. 1991. “Government Rationality: An Introduction,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-51; Barry, Andrew, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (ed).1997. *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, University of Chicago Press.

direct intervention of state apparatuses, but also indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals (Lemke 2000).

The question of whether it is appropriate to apply the concept of neoliberalism to study post-colonial, authoritarian, or post-socialist situations in emerging countries with non-liberal/illiberal traditions has been lively debated among scholars. I agree with Ong (2006) and others (such as Hoffman 2006) that we should focus on “the active, interventionist aspect of neoliberalism in non-Western contexts,” where “neoliberalism as exception is introduced in sites of transformation, where market-driven calculations are introduced in the management of population and the administration of spaces.” Sigley has also proposed “liberal despotism,” meaning “authoritarian and illiberal measures are constitutive of the way in which a liberal art of government operates” (Sigley 2004). Following their arguments, I argue that we should use *neoliberalism as exception* to understand the dominant principles of labor control and labor management in post-socialist situation in China because neoliberal ethos has been constitutive of the government operation, even with neoliberal practices not being the general characteristic of technologies of governing. The “wedding” of neoliberal techniques and active state regulations has paved the way for the mode of “governing through freedom” and producing “self-enterprising citizen-subject[s]” that aim to “[optimize] conditions for responding technically and ethically to globalized uncertainty and threat” (Ong 2006).

3.3. THE ATTRACTION OF BANGBANG WORK

Bangbang do not just blindly “jump” into this occupation; neither do they choose this job because they do not have other options. On the contrary, many of them have previous working experiences in other occupations and deliberately choose this job for reasons such as immediate cash, closeness to their home village, and the lack of requirement for an educational certificate. But as noted earlier, the reason that came up repeatedly in my interviews with the *bangbang* was that this job afforded them “*ziyou*.” The term *ziyou* has multiple meanings for the *bangbang*.

The first meaning of *ziyou* is being free from an employer’s bodily discipline and control, which is often a feature of other manual jobs, such as factory work. One *bangbang* and former factory worker compared *bangbang* work with factory work, saying:

“I began to work in a motorcycle accessory factory in 2000, before I quit it in 2004 for the *bangbang* job. In the factory, I had to work at least twelve hours a day, sometimes even fourteen hours, from eight in the morning to ten at night. I worked at the assembly line, polishing the accessories. The work is boring and backbreaking. I had Hepatitis B and needed rest occasionally. When I did, the supervisor would come up and criticize me loudly. I felt humiliated ...because I thought of myself as a hard worker. He also turned to the boss, saying that I was lazy. There was no way for me to argue back because I did not want to lose my job. I could do nothing but go back to work. After a while, I found myself sick of this job, expecting a break all the time. But the break never came to me until I finish a whole day’s workload. The *bangbang* job is different. I can take a break whenever I want. ...Nobody bosses me around. I think this is great!”²⁴

These words reflect the firm and relentless control over the worker’s body in a factory. As Pun Ngai argues, the moving assembly line “coupled an individualized body with a specific position, but at the same time it linked the individuals to form a collective social body devoted to the singular aim of maximizing production” (Pun 2005). The worker’s body is thus individualized and forced to adapt itself to the speed, time, and movement of the moving belt. By contrast, *bangbang* jobs do not require a worker to accommodate a certain production line, and there is no boss around. The workers, then, feel they have the

²⁴ The author’s fieldnotes, November 3, 2006.

option to decide when, where, and how long to work, as well as for whom they work, just like an entrepreneur.

The second aspect of *ziyou* is to have the flexibility of making short trips back to the countryside and to maximize the benefits of both rural and urban regions by making a circular migration. This type of freedom is important because many *bangbang* still farm land in their home villages. They return to the village during the peak farming and harvest season (usually in early March and the middle of August). Similarly, many *bangbang* have wives and children in the villages who they want to visit occasionally. Working as a *bangbang*, they can leave for home at any time and stay in the village for a certain length of time with no worry of being fired or fined by an employer. The flexibility of *bangbang* jobs meets their needs.

Big Brother Mo, a fifty-two-year-old *bangbang* and former quarry worker, told me that he liked *bangbang* work and would never go back to the quarry where he had worked for ten years. I asked if it was because quarrying was more arduous than *bangbang* work. He answered: "Both jobs require almost the same labor. But I get more *ziyou* by doing the *bangbang* job." I asked what *ziyou* he enjoyed. He seemed surprised that I asked this question but answered: "That's obvious. Don't you see we *bangbang* have no bosses? I'm my own boss. I decide if I work today or not, when and where to work, for whom I work, how long to work, and with whom I want to work. No one has the right to order me around. Can quarry workers have such *ziyou*?" He then told me about his painful experience, working in a private quarry where the quarrymen had to obey the boss's orders:

"My wage was in the boss's hands. What could I do? One time my son was in the hospital. I wanted to go take care of him, so I asked for a short-term leave. My boss said okay, but to come back to work as soon as possible or I would risk being fired. I'd just had enough of it. You know we rural men are not like urban workers who are accustomed to obeying the discipline of the *danwei*. We never have *danwei*, and we've been accustomed to *ziyou*."

The third aspect of *ziyou* refers to the fragmentation of labor across an enormous span of makeshift occupations. *Bangbang* do not have written agreements with their customers. This allows them to change occupations easily. Many *bangbang* have several part-time jobs at the same time in order to make ends

meet. Some *bangbang* do short-term jobs for immediate cash. They want, in their own words, "double security" and extra money.

A *bangbang* nicknamed Lao Tang, worked as a temporary part-time worker in the sculpture department at a fine arts college. He worked most often in June and July when "most students are graduating and they need helpers." This temporary job "almost doubles the monthly earning of a *bangbang*," he said. Whenever the *bangbang* job did not enable him to make ends meet, he went to the college to find work. In addition, he collected cardboard and other scraps to sell for extra money. Such jobs require that the laborers not be bound by any contract, employer, work time, or workplace.

Finally, some *bangbang* refer to *ziyou* as freedom from state regulation. The household registration system which requires each rural migrant to register at the local branch of the Public Security Bureau does not work well in the case of *bangbang* for two reasons. First, there are too many *bangbang*, and they are hard to trace. One local authority to whom I talked said: "Actually you never know where a *bangbang* plans to go, because he often moves." Second, many *bangbang* do not bother to register because they think the process is costly and time-consuming and does not provide them substantial benefits. One *bangbang* said, "Nobody can govern (*guan*) us *bangbang*, not even the Emperor of Heaven (*tianwang laozhi*)!"

3.4. COMMODIFICATION OF LABOR AND THE RISE OF ZIYOU AS A POPULAR DISCOURSE

The narratives of *ziyou* are so strong among *bangbang* in contemporary Chongqing. But if we look back to the socialist era, *ziyou* was not such a big concern for the shoulder porters. When Mao was in charge, the porters worked under the supervision of the cadres who told them where, when, and how long to work, how much the workload was, and how far they had to carry the goods. Like workers in other occupations, they also had to fulfill a lot of political tasks, such as attending political meetings and doing volunteer work for work units. The majority of the porters at that time were urban residents who were controlled by

the work units through the welfare system and redistributive economics. Their labor force was not a commodity to sell in the marketplace and was not a personal resource to be used flexibly and efficiently. The laborers also did not view themselves as individuals, but rather as one member of the collective.

It was against this socialist regime that the emergence of a free labor market and the legitimacy of workers choosing jobs at will were seen as representing freedom from the state and a resumption of agency for individuals. This attitude can be explicitly seen in my conversations with porters who worked during the Maoist era. One woman porter said: "If you asked me what I think of the present *bangbang*, I would have to say that they have too much *ziyou*. When I worked as a *bangbang* in my work unit, I had to obey the cadre's assignment all the time. We didn't have choice as for when and where to work, with whom to work, like today's *bangbang*. We didn't have time to relax. What we thought all the time was how to contribute to our country in a better way." When I asked how she felt about working under the planned economy, she answered: "Well, I didn't think that much about myself. What I considered the most was how to finish the workload as efficiently as possible. I devoted my whole life to the state, not like today's *bangbang*, who do everything only for themselves."

The change in the significance of *ziyou* to regular Chinese people is intimately linked to China's transformation from Maoist socialism to the "socialism with Chinese characteristics" beginning in the late 1970s. Post-reform China witnessed a growing prominence of the term *ziyou* (freedom) in people's daily life, such as *geren ziyou* (individual freedom), *yanlun ziyou* (freedom of speech), and *xiaofei ziyou* (freedom in consumption), freeing individuals from the highly socialist state and political coercion and reclaiming individual autonomy and choices that had been largely erased during the Maoist era.

The concepts of *ziyou* were first introduced to China by Fu Yan in the early twentieth century as he translated John Stuart Mill's work *On Liberty* into Chinese. Yan used the Chinese term *ziyou* for the word "liberty." Yu Gao correctly pointed out that the meaning of *ziyou* is actually quite different from what is understood as freedom or liberty in the western world (Gao 2004). According to Gao, the concept of *ziyou* has been constructed at two interconnected levels: the level of individual freedom and the level of national liberation. The *ziyou* discourse implies that nation-building and liberation have priority over

individual freedom, and it is morally proper for individuals to sacrifice their personal freedom for the liberation of the nation. Individual freedom, Gao argues, was hardly the end of revolution but always a political tool in bombarding feudal despotism.

After the foundation of the PRC in 1949, the concept of individual freedom, which quickly mobilized many intellectuals and radical youth to revolutionary cause, collapsed in the face of the vehement lashing out of socialist collectivism. Individual interests had to obey the nation's interests, and the discourse of individual freedom largely disappeared in a highly collective society (1949-1978). However, right after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a "de-Maoification movement" emerged in China, and the state was criticized for cruelly intruding on people's personal lives and for harshly repressing individual freedom. So-called "trauma literature" (*shanghen wenxue*) and "reflection literature" (*fansi wenxue*) emerged in the 1980s, reflecting people's traumatic experience in the Cultural Revolution and spurring a popular craving for individual freedom in the post-Mao period.

The prevalence of the discourse of *ziyou* in the post-reform period also goes hand in hand with China's labor reform. According to Becker and Gao (1989), labor had a "unique role" in socialist China, where the labor system was based on three important principles. First of all, labor was owned by the state rather than the individual, and the labor produced social value instead of private value. The state required that all able-bodied citizens contribute their labor to it and assigned jobs to workers through "unified allocation" (*tongyi fenpei*) (Becker and Gao 1989). This principle left little room for workers to choose their preferred occupations. The second principle was a principle of egalitarianism that assumed that individual interests and state interests were one and that individual workers were supposed to work for the larger national goals. The third principle was that the labor system provided a compensation system to the workers where compensation varied with labor "input." However, factors such as education and tenure rather than past or current productivity determined payment. This labor system made possible a relative balance of losses and gains among members of the society. Individual preference and gain were considered incompatible with the concepts of true socialism; labor contracts were considered tools of capitalism, especially during the Cultural Revolution period (Becker and Gao 1989).

However, with the economic reform in the early 1980s, these principles were disavowed as "out of date" in the official discourse. The job allocation system, the control of employment, and the egalitarian view toward wages were said to have hindered productivity and undermined the incentive to work. It was also said that a new environment would need to be constructed so that the labor force could flow freely in the market in accordance with the demands of enterprises and individual preferences. This new "freedom" to work for individual material rewards, according to some leading proponents of the free labor market in China, "guarantees a free labor market, in which people are allowed to choose their own jobs in an environment of equal opportunity and fair competition ... with laborers bearing the economic risks for their own decisions on labor input" (Du 1995).

On the other hand, in order to achieve the responsiveness of labor to the free market forces, the labor contract system (*laodong hetongzhi*) was constructed to replace the systems of job security (the Iron Rice Bowl) and egalitarian wages (eating from the big pot) in state-owned enterprises. Then the labor contract system was extended to both state and collective sectors in urban areas. Chinese economists such as Feng Lanrui and Zhao Lukuan praised the new labor system for achieving a breakthrough in productivity. However, the labor contract system encountered vehement resistance from workers and was poorly implemented in state and collective sectors, although this resistance was interpreted by officials as the result of bureaucracy and a poor understanding of why or how things were to be done (White 1987).

At the same time, large numbers of state enterprise workers found that more freedom and autonomy in occupational choice did not bring them better material rewards and profits as was promised by the reform. Instead, they were subjected to massive layoffs, a rampant reduction in earnings, and strict labor discipline in the workshops. Furthermore, they were largely excluded from the process of privatization or liquidation of their enterprises and were considered morally "incorrect" for asking for further social benefits from the state. They were expected by the state to take care of themselves. They considered themselves to have been abandoned by the state.

The labor control of peasants during the Mao era, like that of the urban workers, was closely monitored by the socialist state, although the official regulation was not always effective (Zhang 2001;

Solinger 1999). As explained by Dorothy Solinger, peasants were always reserve labor for the socialist state. Rural-to-urban migrations between 1949 and 1978 were legally permitted by the state only when they met the state's economic ends. But after the reinforcement of the 1958 Household Registration Policy, the movement of peasants to the cities was rigorously prohibited. This program forced farmers to remain in the fields, growing the foodstuff to feed urban workers and to sustain the cities. It was backed up by a series of labor recruitment rulings, selective food allocation, and a lack of residential space for migrant peasants in the cities (Solinger 1999).

The advent of economic reform in the late 1970s, however, changed the peasants' situation dramatically. The socialist communes that had firmly controlled peasants' labor power and movement were dissolved beginning in 1979, generating a surplus of nearly 200 million rural farm laborers (Jeffery 1988). An urban economy quickly developed, and foreign and overseas capital poured into China, which demanded large amounts of cheap labor. As a response to this new economic development, the Household Registration System began to relax and allowed rural migrants to live and work in the cities on a temporary basis. A series of economic policies authorized and facilitated peasants entering the cities for employment opportunities, calling on the government to "set the peasantry on the path to the market through ideological campaigns and policy designs and to lead, push and pull the peasantry from being 'small producers' to being 'commodity producers' in the market economy" (Yan 2003).

Central to constructing a market economy was the making of new subjects out of rural migrants whose labor was commodified and ready for sale in the free market. Ironically, although the state led peasants to the cities and encouraged their connection to the market, the government officials also worried that the migrant population might possess too much *ziyou*. Rural migrant workers were labeled as a "floating population" (*liudong renkou*). (The word "floating" has the negative cultural implication of being rootless, unstable, and dangerous.) (Zhang 2001). Zhang's research on rural migrants from the Zhejiang Province in Beijing reveals that the state conducted everyday forms of regulation over this population through mandatory registration, close monitoring and diffused surveillance, and birth control policies. Supervision

and control of the "floating population" became the "big headache" for the local government (Zhang 2001).

This brief review of the establishment of the free labor market in both rural and urban China clearly shows that the neoliberal rationality, when applied to the labor system by the state, produced the discourse of *ziyou* (freedom) in relation to work. State-produced discourses endeavored to create a new mode of subjectivity, namely a responsible and moral individual, and also an economically rational individual, who assessed the costs and benefits when choosing an occupation. This discourse emphasizes individualism, free choice, free trade, and the free flow of labor in the market. It also stresses individual responsibilities in shouldering the economic costs and any consequences caused by flexible employment and job insecurity. In Lemke's terms, neoliberalism made individual life into an "entrepreneurial form" (Lemke 1999). However, this new mode of laborers' autonomy in occupational choice was not a natural product of the free market but largely a product of the state's intervention and regulation, which aimed to achieve certain economic ends for the nation-state.

3.5. "FREEDOM"'S CONDITIONS AND LIMITS

It is worth noting that *bangbang* themselves had contradictory feelings about *ziyou*. On the one hand, they felt that the casualness of this work gave them autonomy to make many decisions themselves; on the other hand, they realized that this sort of *ziyou* involves a high degree of insecurity, which exposes them to exploitation and danger. When these migrants chose *bangbang* work, they may have had to give up regular wages, written contracts, or work protections that contract work might provide. One *bangbang* sighed and said, "Sometimes I think ... *bangbang* have too much *ziyou* ... If [*ziyou* means] nobody wants to take care of me... then, what's the point of having so much *ziyou*?"

This *bangbang* was one of many who expressed their concern about "too much *ziyou*." While I do not mean to discount the flexibility of *bangbang* work and *bangbang*'s agency in making decisions about

their lives, what I want to know is whether *bangbang*, in possessing “too much *ziyou*,” really have the autonomy and choices they claim to have? My ethnographic research suggests an answer that is not so optimistic. Further examination of the relations between *bangbang* and their customers shows that bodily discipline and control in fact permeate a *bangbang*'s work. Many customers have specific and sometimes even detailed requirements about the ways *bangbang* move their bodies, place their goods, and use their tools. There is also an expectation for the degree of efficiency that *bangbang* should demonstrate.

The working experience of one *bangbang*, Uncle Zhang, serves as an example. A customer asked him to unload a large load of goods from a truck. The customer told him in detail how to move the goods. First, Uncle Zhang was required to move the goods from the truck and put them on the ground. Second, he was asked to distinguish different model numbers printed on the shipping boxes and to put goods with the same model number together. Third, he was to pile the goods in groups, five pieces to a group. Fourth, he was to count the total number of pieces and report it to the customer. Fifth, he was to use the customer's cart to move the goods into the customer's truck, but he had to be very careful not to break the cart. Sixth, he was to sit in the truck to protect the goods from moving around and getting damaged when the truck was in transit. Seventh, he and other *bangbang* were to carry the goods into the customer's storehouse. Last, he was to return the cart to the customer's store. The work included many messages directed at the discipline and control of Uncle Zhang's body. While he was working, the customer came and watched, and gave further instructions on how Uncle Zhang should work. Such detailed supervision indicates that a *bangbang* may not have a single employer who strives to make the maximum profit out of them by controlling their bodies along the assembly line, yet they nonetheless can be subject to minute discipline by any customer for any service.

In some extreme cases, the customer not only verbally “guides” a *bangbang*'s bodily movements, but also commits physical violence against the *bangbang*. One *bangbang* named Xiao Peng informed me that his customer “kicked his ass” to “indicate” to him that he should speed up when unloading the goods. I asked Xiao Peng if he kicked back. He answered: “No. I could have, but I just chose to ignore it. I can't be too upset with it, you know. Otherwise, I might lose my customer.” Then I asked whether he hated such

"physical guidance," He replied: "Of course, I don't like it. But what can I do? I am just a *bangbang*. I can only think, hmmm, he (the customer) is just an unconscious child."

As Xiao Peng mentioned, since *bangbang* do not have any social welfare or insurance, customers are the life blood of *bangbang*'s livelihood. When a negotiation between a customer and a *bangbang* threatens the *bangbang*'s relationship with the customer, a *bangbang* often chooses to follow the customer's requirement and give up his or her *ziyou*. One *bangbang* said, when asked about the customers' "guidance," "I told myself that I have to swallow it. I repeatedly reminded myself that I need nothing but my wage." However, the *bangbang*-customer relationship is full of conflicts, especially when the customer refuses to pay for a *bangbang*'s medical treatment in case of an on-the-job injury. Sometimes, this type of conflict results in vehement physical violence. A *bangbang* sighed to me. "Our lives are as cheap as one *jiao*; the customers' lives are as valuable as one *yuan* (one *jiao* is ten cents; One *yuan* is worth ten times of one *jiao*)."

Furthermore, *bangbang*'s use of labor in a flexible way does not necessarily afford them freedom, but rather often places them on a work schedule that squeezes every drop of strength out of them. A female *bangbang* said that she was fully consumed by her work schedule. She mainly worked as a *bangbang* but also had two part-time jobs. She began the day's work at five thirty in the morning, working as a *bangbang* in a food market. Then she went to a restaurant to pick up lunches to white-collar workers in a nearby building. After the delivery, she went to another restaurant to wash dishes. She could eat her lunch only after she finished washing dishes. Then she went back to the food market around 2 or 3 p.m. and looked for customers until six or seven o'clock. Before going back home, she also collected cardboard to sell and firewood with which to cook her dinner at home. She has a young son attending school in the countryside and her wage pay for her son's expenses. She told me that she was often exhausted and longed for a break, but she couldn't afford to stop working.

The majority of *bangbang* I met did not want their children to become *bangbang*. They expect their sons and daughters to be well educated and to work "in an office," instead of "on the street." However, most of them do not expect their children to support them economically when they get old. "You know,"

one told me, "there is no life-long job anymore. You never know if you will be fired. My child might lose his/her job and depend on me for a living. What can I expect from him/her?"

3.6. WHAT DO BANGBANG DO WITH “ZIYOU”?

My central research question is why do *bangbang* celebrate that the *bangbang* work gives them *ziyou* when in reality their experiences suggest that this *ziyou* is circumscribed by various forms of constraint? I argue that many factors contribute to the strong narratives of *ziyou* among *bangbang*. The concept of *ziyou* is packed with meaning against the historical backdrop of China’s highly socialist past and in this particular juncture of Chinese history and socioeconomic transformations. The “freedom” of *bangbang*, “the pretension that they are self-employed in whatever they do at any moment” as Breman describes, needs to be examined critically (Breman 2010:64).

I would like to highlight one factor — the role of the Chinese state in promoting the discourse of *ziyou* as a strategy of development. This development project which highlights the significance of *ziyou* transforms the process of development into a policy focused on remolding workers/citizens into proper modern subjects. And as I mentioned in the previous section, this policy is a continuation of a broader modernist discourse of “freedom” that can be traced back to China’s revolution at the beginning of the 20th century, which called on the young revolutionaries to free themselves and the people from feudal despotism and patriarchal families. However, the meaning of “freedom” has changed significantly in accordance with changes in historical periods and specific social and economic context.

Under the present neoliberal rationality, the post-Mao state infuses the discourse of *ziyou* into society through policy-making, political intervention, social regulation, education, and media representation. One strategy of the state is to reject the Maoist economic principles as unproductive and to condemn high collectivism for suppressing individual freedom. For decades, the state has been transforming rural migrants into self-reliant and self-enterprising subjects who expect social welfare from the state. The

bangbang, and other migrants, ought not at the bottom of society and become the cheap labor that fuels China's economy.

This state project is implemented not through political persecution, suppression or coercion, but through "softer" ways. On the one hand, the state promotes the neoliberal ethos of autonomy and choice through policymaking, political intervention, social regulation and through the cultural processes of media representation, education, and discourse production. On the other hand, the state extends its micropolitics to "a value articulation of human subjectivity" through the discourse of *suzhi*. This "neohumanism" (Yan 2003) functions to encourage peasants to migrate to the cities, "learn in the 'comprehensive social university,'" and aspire to urban middle-class standards of material consumption. Since rural migrants are devaluated as backward and having low *suzhi*, the extended risks of bodily impairment and exploitation at work are justified as the necessary training process that can improve their *suzhi* and disguise the exploitation of migrant workers' labor.

With its focus on economic growth, the state does not provide support and insurance for peasants and migrant workers. It sides with factory owners and investors. The workers have no power in bargaining wages, work protection, or contract assignment; in the worst case, they are not even able to collect their pay. An extreme case that illustrates the helplessness, hopelessness, and agony of rural migrants is what happened throughout the coastal area in 2005. Workers were so infuriated that they did not return to their jobs after a New Year's break. Factories in the Pearl River Delta were unable to recruit enough workers (Yardley and Barboza 2005).

Some of my interviewees had had other jobs at which they were unable to collect their wages. "Bangbang Chen" was a construction worker in Guangdong Province. He once worked with a group of *laoxiang* (people from the same place) for a headman who was hired by a businessman to manage the workers. He was told that he would get his wages after the job was done. For half a year, he lived on the work site, working day and night, with no immediate cash available. When the work was finished, however, the headman ran away with all the money for wages. When they asked the businessman for their pay, he claimed that he had already paid the workers and then left. They wanted to sue the headman but

could not afford the fee. They finally gave up and returned to Chongqing. After that, Chen decided to work as a *bangbang*. "At least I have cash!" he said.

In recent years, aware of the mounting inequality between social classes and concerned about the social unrest it may cause, government officials and leaders have repeatedly attempted to intervene in the market and soothe the agony of the rural migrants. So far, however, scattered efforts from central and local governments to provide social welfare to peasants and rural migrants have been meager and never gained traction. For example, a policy introduced in 2006 by the City Council of Chongqing City aimed to extend pension welfare to migrant workers by promoting a new system with primary individual contributions, collective contributions from local enterprises, and government subsidies to replace the current system (Li, Li and He 2006). For migrant workers, the current system requires a contribution of two to twenty four *yuan* per month (between 26 cents and US \$ 3.20), with a payout rate of eight to nine *yuan* per month (\$1.00), which is insufficient to provide any protection. It is no wonder that the policy has only about 56,000 subscribers among migrant workers, a 1.71 percent enrollment of migrants. However, the new system requires an even higher individual contribution ratio, while the government subsidy is ambiguous. It is not expected to change the situation that requires peasants and migrant workers to be self-reliant in old age. I asked some *bangbang* if they thought the new policy was helpful. Their answer was, "I don't care." One *bangbang* explained, "Nothing changes. I have to have money in the first place to pay for the premium of the pension, don't I? But I don't have that much money! See, the new policy changes nothing."

Similar situations can be easily observed with other welfare policies, such as medical coverage. Skyrocketing medical expenses have become an increasing burden for Chinese citizens, especially for peasants and migrant workers. In an attempt to alleviate this burden, in 2005 the Chongqing government designated certain hospitals for migrant workers, where presumably they would enjoy a waiver or discount on some medical fees. However, the *Chongqing Business Daily* reported that the prescribed medicines in these hospitals were 15-20 percent more expensive than elsewhere. These hospitals wanted to recover the loss they suffered from lower fees by raising the medication prices. Migrant workers were

fully aware of this trick. In the month after these hospitals opened the "migrant worker window," they had only one migrant worker patient (Peng 2005). For many *bangbang*, the only hope is to accumulate personal savings for medical purposes and old age. As a *bangbang* told me, "We have nothing to rely on but a small amount of money that we saved throughout these years. No welfare, no insurance, no secure job for me. There is nobody there for us, either. Nobody can be trusted. That's why money is important. If you have money, you are the master."

The marketization and commodification that prevailed after the reform in 1978 dramatically changed the subjectivities, responsibilities, occupational choice, working conditions, and living state of peasants and migrant workers. The state provided no valid aid, no welfare, and made little effort to protect the legal rights of migrants. Rural migrants had to switch from a planned economy, where the state controlled every aspect of their lives, to a socialist market economy, where the state had regrouped basic functions and always sided with the market. They have found that the state was unreliable. The only security and aid available to them is to earn as much money as possible and to get the payment in cash as soon as possible.

Thus, the *bangbang* work becomes an "ideal" occupation for migrant workers who lack skills and education. Although it provides no benefits or security beyond the cash payment, it gives the workers "freedom" to intensify their labor to earn a little extra money, especially immediate cash. Under the neoliberal regime, *bangbang* are not transformed without resistance into self-reliant and self-governing subjects. They are fully aware of the "tricks" that the state plays on them. Their agency of resisting and struggling is ironically expressed in choosing *bangbang* work, choosing to be responsible for themselves, and choosing to bear the consequences. They make use of the ethos of neoliberal rationality and take advantage of the morality of "ziyou." As a result, earning as much money as they can is seen as the only way to bring a semblance of security to their lives. This is barely a conscious choice of resistance, but more a survival strategy. Yet, when thousands of migrant men chose to survive by taking on casual work, they somehow formed an indispensable power. One *bangbang* man said during my interview, "If

we *bangbang* are not happy with one place, we do whatever we like and just leave. No one can find us because we are floaters (*liudong de*) and we have *ziyou*.”

However, this power has never been turned into collective action against the repression and exploitation. Ching Kwan Lee, in her research on the labor unrest in China (Lee 2007), argues that Chinese laborers’ protests against the capitalist labor relations are localized, dispersed, cellularized and seldom evolve into large-scale, trans-local rebellion. Compared to migrant workers working in the factories where Lee conducted her fieldwork, the collective resistance of *bangbang* is even harder to bring to fruition due to the casualty of their work. During my fifteen months of fieldwork, I did not see the *bangbang* organize even one collective action against the government. The state’s repression against labor unrest surely played an important role; the lack of class consciousness and sense of solidarity among the workers also contributes to the lack of collective resistance. In fact, class consciousness is often muted among the workers as they rarely seen themselves as a unified class with shared interests. Constable writes that among Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong, collective action was difficult to organize because domestic workers work in different homes and for different employers (Constable 1997). The lack of collective protest among *bangbang* is similar. Although *bangbang* have to be careful to retain their clients, they still have a certain degree of “freedom” to choose or drop a client. This degree of individual “freedom”- helps to alleviate the immediate tension between the employer and the *bangbang*. Dropping an employer is more practical for an individual worker than collective resistance by multiple workers against different employers.

3.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined *bangbang*'s occupational choice and its relationship with the discourse of *ziyou* from a perspective of neoliberal governmentality. My finding is that, although the neoliberal ethos has played an important role in *bangbang*' occupational choice, neoliberalism alone cannot fully explain the transformation of rural migrant workers into self-reliant and enterprising laborers, who are vulnerable to fierce exploitation. From the perspective of governmentality, neoliberalism in China is facilitated, authorized, and in many ways intersects with the Party-State. In other words, the state never "retreats from," but rather reinforces government and is in fact an extension of the neoliberal economy (Lemke 2000). Therefore, neoliberalism is a transformation of politics, an alternative form of governance by the state, and a restructuring of power relations in society.

Bangbang are the subjects of this neoliberal governmentality; however, they are not totally docile and submissive. They take advantage of this ethos and struggle for the security and aid that the state refuses to provide by, ironically, internalizing the "technologies of the self." Hoffman has argued that the state conditions the autonomy of Chinese young professionals with socialist notions of social responsibility and patriotism (Hoffman 2006). I argue that the state has lost its credibility among rural migrants because it provides no aid to them. Migrant workers respond to this neoliberal government rationality by choosing an occupation that meets their needs for securing their needs as much as possible.

4.0 NARRATIVES, VALUE TRANSACTIONS, AND THE SUCCESS STORY OF A CHINESE RURAL MIGRANT WORKER

Shortly after I went back to China to conduct my pilot fieldwork in the summer of 2004, one of my relatives, upon hearing that I was doing research among *bangbang*, insisted that I meet Xiaoxiao Liu, whom he called “the chief commander of the army of bangbang.” He said that Liu was a role model for the *bangbang* and that “all bangbang should learn from him.” Later in my fieldwork, the name of Xiaoxiao Liu was mentioned on various occasions by local residents, including the *bangbang* with whom I worked. Not believing that the “army of bangbang” truly had a “chief commander,” I was intrigued by this case. I did some research on the Internet and got a handful of media reports about Liu’s success. He was said to have effectively turned himself from a penniless *bangbang* man to a business owner.

In the winter of 2006, I met this “chief commander” in his office, located in one of the city’s subdistricts. When I arrived at the place, I found that the office was in a huge, highrise residential building in a bustling commercial area. The whole office was in fact an “office-to-be.” It was being remodeled from a former condominium and undergoing extensive reconstruction. The condominium had been huge, totaling about 170 square meters. Ample sunlight shone through from a large and beautiful French window. An interior design team was busy working on the ceilings under the guidance of Liu’s office staff (later, I learned that two of them were Liu’s former business partners, also former *bangbang*).

Liu came out from one of the rooms to meet me. He was in his early forties and about 5’3” tall. He wore a pair of reading glasses. He showed me around the condominium and told me that he had just bought this property and was going to move his office here from a much older building. He was obviously proud of himself for able to buy such a huge condominium when the housing price was skyrocketing in Chongqing. He was also eager to show off his connection with the global market. He indicated that he

was famous not only in China but also abroad, as he had been interviewed by media from Japan, Germany, and the U.S. It was clear that he was proud of his international charm. It seems to me that showing off his wealth was a way for him to show that his business is growing and that he is successful. Indeed, he was a very busy businessman. Our first interview was interrupted twice by business telephone calls.

Legends of successful migrant workers have been widely circulated in China as well as in other parts of the world (Yan 2006; Ventura 1992). These testimonies of success have traveled freely across national borders in the global market economy, accompanied by flows of labor and capital migration. The protagonists of these stories are often poor migrants whose talents, efforts and labor pay off in the market economy. Fabricating and promoting success stories to mobilize the masses are by no means unique to Chinese society. Yet these success stories of migrant workers circulating in the contemporary Chinese media have special meaning to a China that is becoming the “world factory” and that is eager to demonstrate to the world its achievement in relieving poverty.

Mao’s China features stories of revolutionary heroes/heroines. In their success stories, the protagonists work unreservedly and selflessly for the Party’s “socialist cause” and for their political convictions. Their stories, writings, public speeches, and even diaries were widely circulated through media reports and official publications. In the post-Mao era, as the Party’s emphasis shifted from class struggle to economic development, the heroes who were promoted and praised by the state were no longer revolutionaries who focused on social antagonism and struggled against class enemies but those who “added value” to themselves through continuous training, hard work, and a competitive desire to “win the game” in a highly unpredictable global economy. For the post-reform state, such a hero is valuable because his/her success points to the possibility of a similar fate, not only for the average Chinese who struggles for a competitive edge, but also for the state in its fear of being left behind in the project of development.

This chapter analyzes the success story of Xiaoxiao Liu through a close reading of both Liu’s narratives and the narratives about him by scholars and the media. By comparing the dominant assumptions about rural migrant experiences with Liu’s own narratives, this chapter suggests that Liu’s narratives confirm, strategically use, and indirectly contest the official representations and dominant

images of rural migrants. Furthermore, I explore the cultural and social factors that enable Liu to extract representational value from his own derogated status and to convert it into monetary capital. Instead of dismissing the success stories of rural migrants as mere government propaganda, this chapter investigates the values and principles that these stories ascribe to rural migrants. These stories, then, are a part of the practices linked to the governing strategies of the state and the production of neoliberal workers' subjectivities in contemporary China.

4.1. A *BANGBANG* WITH A "WRITER DREAM"

Liu was born in 1964 to a poor peasant family in Fushun County of Sichuan province, a village about 185 kilometers away from Chongqing city. He received a regular education until high school when his family's poverty forced him to drop out. But Liu was interested in reading and writing and was especially talented at writing. He attended an adult education program part-time and served as a part-time journalist for the town's newspaper. He also volunteered in the local branch of the town's culture ministry. According to Liu, in early 1992, after a severe fight with a village gang from whom he was protecting a young woman, he ran away to Chongqing, the city where his older brother worked as a migrant, to escape the gang's revenge. But contrary to his expectation, his brother refused to help him stay in the city. Instead, he urged Liu to go home. He didn't see any possibility for Liu, a short, skinny, badly nearsighted, physically weak man, to survive in the urban labor market. Because of his physical shortcomings, Liu did not meet the standard for "desirable worker" that urban employers would like to hire for the heavy manual work that most rural migrants end up doing.

But Liu refused to accept his brother's advice. He longed to become a writer and knew that the only possibility for realizing his "writer dream" (*zuojia meng*) was in the city. This might not be his only reason, but he chose to stay and support himself by selling vegetables as a street vendor. However, he soon went bankrupt and had to give up on his vendoring business. The primary reason, he said, was

because he did not know “how to do business.” Liu had many depressing and even dark memories of his vending experiences. In one article he later wrote about this experience, he complained that he “could not master the quickly changing market prices” and that he “could not allow himself to cheat the customers by manipulating the weigh scale that he used to sell vegetables” (Liu 1994). He also complained in the same article about the disdainful attitude people around him had toward his desire to read and write. He was mercilessly teased by his vendor colleagues when he used part of his meager earnings to buy newspaper every day. In other words, he felt that he was out of step with the business world and that his conflict with his colleagues reflected their contrasting value systems. One value system was market-based, and the other morality-based. But after Liu was forced to resign from the vegetable business, with no money and no educational certificate, he had little choice but to become a *bangbang*.

For the next five years, Liu earned his living by working as a *bangbang* most of the time and doing several part-time jobs on the side. He tried working in a factory, as a waiter, and as a newspaper seller, but none of these part-time, short-term jobs could pay him enough to survive. He did not get along with the *bangbang* business world. According to Liu, he could not earn much money working as a *bangbang* because he “did not know how to ‘talk business’ or to bargain with the customers;” he also “did not know how to steal a *bangbang* colleague’s’ customer by reacting more quickly [than that colleague] when hailed by the customer.” He just “stood at the corner of the street, waiting for customers to come” or “waited by the stump of a tree for the appearance of hares,” in his words (Liu 1994). Despite his “failure” in the business world, he kept “learning.” He bought a copy of *Chongqing Evening* newspaper every day, hoping to find life-changing opportunities from the job listings; his desperation to change his life can be seen in one vignette he wrote:

“The newspaper finally disclosed a ‘golden path’ – an center office was hiring clerks! I went to that center, bringing my shoulder-pole with me. The gatekeeper thought I was carrying goods for someone working in that building and did not stop me at the gate. I went upstairs with others and put my shoulder-pole in the hallway [because I was afraid to be recognized as a *bangbang*]...... The application form asked me to fill in the category of ‘previous work unit.’ I felt awkward and didn’t know what to tell them.

At last, I gave them my temporary address [because as a *bangbang*, I do not have work unit as my mailing address.].....A notice reached me three days later, saying that I was being offered the job but that I needed to find a guarantor and I needed to submit a cash deposit of 800 yuan (around US\$100). As a *bangbang*, I was penniless and had no relatives from whom to borrow that amount of money. My ‘golden path’ was cut off. I cried like a baby” (Liu 1994).

This account by Liu shows how desperate he was for an opportunity to change his life when he failed to find compassion from his *bangbang* colleagues. The big chasm in manual and mental work also affected Liu’s pursuit of an ideal job. Even though a clerk job ranks low on the job hierarchy and, in many cases, is considered a “woman’s job” in Chongqing, Liu still considered it “a golden path” because mental work is always preferred over manual work. And Liu is just one of many *bangbang* who disdain and loath manual work, even though they do it everyday. Many *bangbang* with whom I talked had expressed their preference for doing mental work but did not have the education and opportunity to do so. Most of them hope their children work “in offices” instead of “on the street.”

Liu had a passion and desire for a literati lifestyle. While working as a *bangbang* in the daytime, Liu wrote about his migratory life at night. He explained his motivation for writing in an interview in 2005.

“In early 1990s, I went to Chongqing as a rural migrant worker. Due to my poor eyesight and lack of education certificate, I was unemployed for a long time. In order to survive, I did what most rural migrants choose to do – work as a *bangbang*. Since then, I have scrambled from place to place in this city, carrying a bamboo pole and a rope, rain or shine, all year long. But I still did not earn enough to send any money back home. I was always poor. Moreover, I knew that many *bangbang* were enduring hunger and hardship in this city, just like me. I once saw a *bangbang* who fainted and fell to the ground due to hunger and exhaustion. When he regained consciousness, he wept. He cried [not because of pain and physical discomfort, but] because he lost his customer and the earnings! And another *bangbang* got no money, only physical violence after he worked for his *zhuren* (literally, this mean “master,” but here, it actually means “customer”).... Sympathy for this population piled up in my heart and gradually filled my chest. I felt that I would die if I didn’t speak out [abiyt the feelings inside me]. So I took my pen and began

depicting the experiences and feelings of us *bangbang* by writing poems, short stories, and vignettes” (Li and Zhu 2005).

Here, during this stage in Liu’s life, we see his ambivalent attitude toward the migrant community. On the one hand, he was not in tune with his *bangbang* colleagues and obviously did not like the coping strategies they used. On the other hand, he had deep sympathy for the suffering and hardship that *bangbang* (including himself) experienced. He was trapped in his conflicting roles: an observer who, from a distance, watched and recorded things that happened in the *bangbang* community and a member of and participant in the *bangbang* community. In other words, he was an insider and outsider to the *bangbang* community at the same time.

Liu submitted his writings to various newspapers but his work was rejected many times. Finally, one essay was published by a major local newspaper — the *Chongqing Evening*. He was encouraged by this success and also excited to find that the newspaper had remunerated him with 50 *yuan*. Liu used 20 *yuan* to pay his rent and the remaining 30 *yuan* to treat his *bangbang* colleagues to drinks. When recalling this experience later, he explained the significance of this publication. He felt that his talents and efforts, after many years of being unacknowledged, were finally recognized. The 50 *yuan*, moreover, ignited his imagination about the financially secure life a writer could lead. Therefore, following that experience, he had practiced writing all the more intensively and submitted his work to newspapers, hoping to be published again.

At this stage, Liu’s writing focused on the social inequalities and injustices that *bangbang* and other poor people suffered. For example, in one of his early articles, entitled “*Bangbang Master (bangbang laoda)*,” he wrote about the tragedy of a *bangbang* man. The *bangbang*, nicknamed “Master,” was an honest, friendly, and hard-working young man with a sturdy body. He was a popular, well-liked figure among *bangbang*. But one day, because of a street conflict, he was badly beaten by the gang members while he was working alone. He was found injured and lying unconscious on the street. He was sent to the hospital; his *bangbang* friends went to the police, asking them to deal with this case. However, the police ignored the *bangbang*’s request and drove them away. The *bangbang* then decided to pursue justice by

using their own strength. They called on a big group of *bangbang* colleagues and collectively protested the gangsters' bullying of their colleague, Master. The gang members, frightened by the power of angry *bangbang* in groups, compensated for Master by paying his medical bill. However, Master suffered brain damage, and he could no longer function normally after the incident.

In this story, Liu shares with readers his acute observations of the vulnerability of migrant workers such as Master. He also points out the structural reasons that contribute to the migrants' vulnerable position in society. While migrants are often said to be the cause of social instability, they are actually often victims of urban violence. When the legal system refuses to uphold justice on their behalf, migrants have to resort to their own strength. That is what happened in Master's case. However, the damage had already been done, and Master paid a very high price.

The chief editor of a sub-district TV Guide Newspaper²⁵, Chenglin Li, happened to read one of Liu's articles and was very impressed by him. He was surprised that a *bangbang*, the type of worker who was often regarded by the urban residents as illiterate and backward, could write. He wrote a letter inviting Liu to meet in person at the newspaper office. Liu was very excited upon receiving Li's letter. He explained to me during the interview, "You have to keep in mind that it happened more than ten years ago when the urban society was more conservative toward us outsiders than today. What I mean is that I came from the underclass (*dicing*) [and there had not been any urban residents paying attention to me, let alone an intellectual and editor]. He sympathized and promoted (*tiba*) me. It felt so gratified that he looked up to (*qiao de qi*) me... He is an intellectual with wisdom and great love, I would say... You know in any circumstance, a person with strong sense of inferiority, like me, would greatly appreciate any recognition from a [dominating] group [such as the urban intellectuals]." ²⁶ At the time Liu considered this meeting a life-changing event. During our interview, he mentioned how nervous he had felt when going into the office of the TV Guide Newspaper editor. He was so anxious that when he entered Li's office, his face

²⁵ These TV Guides were newspapers that informed the audience about the weekly television schedules. Such newspapers were mostly published by the local television stations and were only popular during the 1980s and 1990s.

²⁶ Author's fieldnotes Nov. 7, 2006.

turned red, and he forgot to sit down. He just stood awkwardly in the middle of the room, without knowing how to behave. Li was friendly and warm to him and decided to help him with his writing after their first meeting. He gave Liu advice on what to write and how to write. Basically, he thought that Liu had gone in the wrong direction by focusing so intensively on imitating the literati's writing styles. Li told Liu that he should write about *bangbang* since his experience as a *bangbang* was rich enough for him to write creatively. He also advised Liu to write in a severe and plain style and to use "colloquial language" (*richang shenghuo yongyu*) instead of words that sound too literary. He was willing to protect Liu from losing his "authenticity", or "true color" in Li's own words. For a certain period, Li and Liu frequently wrote each other letters, exchanging opinions about how to write "properly." Li also helped Liu revise his manuscripts.

Then Li invited Liu to write a column entitled "The Panorama of the World and Hundreds of Livelihoods" (*shi qing bai tai*)²⁷ in his newspaper. Although the TV Guide newspaper was not a major newspaper, to become a column writer in an officially published newspaper of Chongqing city was already a major coup for Liu. Most of the stories that Liu wrote in this column were short, around five- to six-hundred Chinese characters. According to Liu, his inspiration for writing from drew from the life stories of people he got to know through migrant work.

It is true that the leading characters in his short stories are mostly underclass people, including *bangbang*, rural peasants, and the urban poor. However, the stories were laden with mainstream values and moralities. In many of them, migrants are depicted as greedy, morally bankrupt, and having a "get-rich-by-all-means" mentality. The stories themselves are hardly a form of fine arts, but more like a documentation of the grotesque underclass. Among the six stories that were accessible during my fieldwork²⁸, four of them concerned the moral problems of *bangbang*. The story of "The Playboy Named Youngest Brother" is about a young male *bangbang* who had sexual relationships with urban women for

²⁷ In Chinese, the column's name indicates an intention to exhibit the various living conditions of the underclass and their life stories.

²⁸ The six stories are "Dark Heart Hei Zi" (*hei xin Hei Zi*), "Playboy Youngest Brother" (*hua hua yaoge*), "Loafing Mao Mao" (*hunshi Mao Mao*), "Fei Fei," "Mountain Wind" (*shan feng*), and Gousheng Bridge (*Gousheng Qiao*).

money but was then abandoned by them once he became weak and sick. The story begins with a first-person narrator who meets a beggar on the street. The beggar, it turns out, is the narrator's former colleague, a man nicknamed Youngest Brother (*yaoge*). Though the narrator does not initially recognize *yaoge*, his memory of *yaoge* rushes back. *Yaoge* was "a tall and handsome young man" who was not satisfied with his *bangbang* life, the only job he could possibly find. He always dreamed about becoming rich overnight and complained about the fact that the reality turned out to be the opposite of this dreams. His unrealistic attitude often got him into trouble with other *bangbang*, who tried to persuade him to use more practical ways of making money, such as working for longer periods every day. Instead of looking into the sociopolitical factors that contribute to *Yaoge*'s awkward situation, the story focuses on his moral deeds, particularly how his immoral behavior ruined his own life. According to the story, *Yaoge* chose to take advantage of urban women to lead a better life. He fooled around with "sisters" (*jie mei*) who were actually his short-term girlfriends or sex partners and asked them for money. His ideal, the story told us, is to "lean on a moneybag (*bang dakuan*)." He got the nickname "Playboy" because of his debauched life style. Tensions emerged between *Yaoge* and his *bangbang* colleagues when he brought his "sisters" back to the room he shared with other *bangbang*. Rather than delving into an analysis of the psychological complexities and sociocultural factors that caused the tensions, the story simplistically attributes these tensions to *Yaoge*'s wrong deeds. In the end, *Yaoge* pays a terrible price for his "corrupt life." "Too much night life and too many women ruin Playboy's health. Without his health and physical strength, he could not work as a *bangbang* any more. He became a beggar wandering around street corners, with two sunken eyes as hollow as holes" (Liu 1996). In my interview with Liu, he concluded that his motivation to write this story was that "the story is a moral tale persuading people to know the correct way to achieve success – to depend on no one but yourself."²⁹

²⁹ Author's interview with Liu. Dec. 14th, 2006

These stories vividly remind the reader of the widely circulated moral stories of underclass people's lives in story magazines like *Gushi Hui* (Story Sessions).³⁰ The plotlines of Liu's *bangbang* stories resemble these sensational and lucid stories in many ways. In many cases, the stories reinforce rather than challenge the mainstream values of the time. A lot of them also function as intensive moral sermons that persuade people to eliminate evil and eulogize good (*cheng e yang shan*). In these stories, the protagonists' fates were mostly determined by their behavior. Kindness repays kindness, while evil intentions result in bad endings. Furthermore, Liu's column stories contrast sharply with his previous writings, which pay close attention to the discrimination and marginalization that *bangbang* experience in the city.

But these stories garnered a wider range of readers for Liu. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, he became famous, locally and nationally. His name appeared in the headlines of almost all the major local newspapers. TV stations, including CCTV (Chinese Central Television Station) and Phoenix Satellite Television, competed for his interviews. Finally, his fame reached international media. French National TV station came to Chongqing to interview him. From 1998 to 2004, more than nine documentaries were made based on Liu's story.

4.2. CONFIGURING SUCCESS, CONFIGURING A SELF-MADE HERO

Most of the media reports focus on the fact that Liu, as a rural migrant worker, pursued a life that was very different from the one that his social status designated. He did not just make his name known to the urban society, but also to the local government. On the Fushun³¹ government's website, he was praised for "not being satisfied to be a regular *bangbang*" and for "always thinking of ways to achieve something more" (*gao chu mingtang*). Even though Liu himself stated that his original motivation for writing was to

³⁰ *Gushi Hui* (Story Sessions) is a short story magazine published by Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House. It is one of the most popular periodicals in contemporary China. Most of the stories published in *Gushi Hui* are similar to tabloid stories, concentrating on sensational and lurid news or social events.

³¹ Fushun is the township which is in charge of the village that Liu came from.

express his feelings and to vent his anger over the social inequality and labor exploitation that he witnessed, the media has largely ignored his words. Instead, it has focused almost exclusively on his so-called “fighting spirit” (*pinbo jingshen*). They have made Liu the role model for the *bangbang* masses, claiming that the latter does not possess Liu’s fighting spirit. Even academic writings have taken a similar perspective. For example, in Shiming Jian’s sociological research on the *bangbang* in Chongqing, Shi portrays Liu as an ambitious young man who has valuable characteristics that are missing from other peasants, “...But unlike his peasant ancestors, Liu is a young man with ambition. He would not like to farm in the country for his whole life. So he decided to be a writer.” (Jian 2000:179). Jian also dismisses the fact that Liu went to the city to escape the revenge of the village gangs. He explained Liu’s migration as a necessary step toward success. It goes, “Since he wanted to relieve his poverty and to achieve his ambition, he decided to leave his home town and go to the city in 1992.”

Furthermore, despite Liu’s own statement that he was not willing to become a *bangbang* and that *bangbang* work was just a survival strategy to cope with his financial hardship at that time,³² the media romanticized Liu’s suffering and naturalized it as a necessary training/education (*duanlian*) that a person must receive in order to be successful. “Although he was forced to become a *bangbang*,” a local writer, Dequan Cao, wrote in his reportage about Liu, “this working experience is necessary for his success in that it ‘brings out his best qualities’ (*molian*). Without this experience, Xiaoxiao Liu would not be the person who he is” (Cao 2005).

Liu was also praised for his perseverance in pursuing his “writer dream,” despite his poor working and living conditions. His success, in other words, was said to be completely due to his individual effort and his “fighting spirit,” the features that other *bangbang* supposedly did not possess. For example, in the CCTV documentary which was shown as a part of the “How to Become Rich” program on the agricultural channel, one scene shows Liu’s poor living condition. The camera pans the several-square-meter room that Liu shared with more than ten other *bangbang*. An off-scene voice (Liu’s voice) says: “(I

³² In one documentary called “Bangbang Is Great,” Liu said during the interview, “I didn’t mean to be a bangbang when I first come out. I wanted to be a writer, with social responsibility. When I just get to the city, I had no other way to survive but to become a bangbang.”

lived in this place for about four years. The light (in the room) is very dim. When nobody is around at midnight, I read and write under the street lamp outside the room.” He also says in this documentary that “[Even though the living conditions are difficult, I have never given up writing], for example, if I earn ten *yuan*, which can keep me going for two to three days, I would go back to where I lived and stay there the next day, continuing my writing.” Media reports and documentaries like this attempt to show that Liu’s success was a product of his willingness to “eat bitterness” (*chi ku*). Following their logic, it seems that he was fated to be successful because he could endure the suffering that others could not.

Liu was not a passive recipient of the sophisticated media compliments. Rather, he was an active participant in this hero-making process. He confirmed the media’s narratives by distinguishing himself from his *bangbang* colleagues. In my interview with him, he said: “My success has much to do with my own effort to learn new things. I never believed that I could not change myself. The crucial problem for other *bangbang* who fail [to be successful] is that they don’t like to study. They don’t know the importance of learning.” In another interview, he reconfirmed this distinction when asked about the most important factor that contributed to his success: “It is continuous learning...By reading and writing, I kept gaining new knowledge and thinking through various things. It enabled me to know more about this changing world, the changing Chongqing, and my future” (Zhang 2007).

Another strand of narrative around Liu’s success emerged against the backdrop of the state’s desire for social harmony and emphasized the care and help that Liu had received from the urban residents during his struggle to success. The local writer Dequan Cao, in his reportage entitled “The Legendary of Chongqing Bangbang,” depicts Liu’s editor Chenglin Li as a great mentor to Liu. Cao mentioned that Li not only improved Liu’s writing skills, but also changed Liu’s writing style from “sentimental twaddle” to “facing life with true feelings.” Furthermore, based on his interview with Liu, Cao listed in his book several other urban people who had helped Liu with his writing and his livelihood. Cao considered these interactions as “the city’s generous accommodation (reception) of the huge army of peasants (rural migrant workers).” Cao also argues that these helpers’ kindheartedness toward Liu should be regarded as “the generosity and love that the city gives to a *bangbang*.” “China is a country full of benevolence.” Cao

writes, “True love exists in the world” (Cao 2005). In this romanticized picture, Liu was the desperate poor migrant who wanted to become a writer, and the urban residents were his saviors. Liu was recorded to say that “My life today was given by them [the urban residents who helped me]. I will not forget them. If I forgot them, I would not call myself a human being” (Cao 2005).

It is worth noting that Liu expressed his gratitude toward his urban helpers in a way that highly resembles the compassionate discourse which was and continues to be popular in China’s official statements and mainstream media coverage. A typical example of this compassionate discourse, which can easily be heard or seen even in the post-reform period, would be the poor peasants thanking the Party for helping alleviate their difficulties. This narrative was especially popular during the Maoist era when people thanked Mao and the Party for saving them from feudal and imperialist oppression. Take, for example, popular political slogans such as “People Who has Been Saved Do Not Forget the Benevolence of the Communist Party” (*fanshen buwang gongchandang*) and “the Communist Party is the Savior of Chinese people” (*gongchandang shi renmin de da jiuxing*) and in various art works. In the post-reform China, the savior is no longer Chairman Mao, but mostly the “government” and the Party. The saviors to the migrant workers are the urban middle-upper class, who reach out to their poor counterparts with “love.” Notably, the people who need salvation have always been the poor peasants.

In commenting on the politics of news production in post-Mao China, Wanning Sun argues that news by nature relies upon a mechanism of myth-making, or in Barthes’s words, is a mythology (Barthes 1972). She holds that news “depoliticizes beliefs and ideas that are products of specific social and historical relations, and turns them into ‘natural attitudes.’” In other words, the narrative forms and strategies in news-writing function as a major form of knowledge production and are “fundamentally ideological” (2009:69). However, Sun reminds us that news as myth is contingent on two conditions: the compassion discourse must never depart from the predictable discursive formula of a “compassionate story,” and “(t)he recipients of compassion must agree to enter the discourse consistently as ‘poor,’ ‘weak,’ and ‘helpless.’” This analysis aptly explains the way Cao interprets Liu’s relations to his urban counterparts.

4.3. FROM BANGBANG WRITER TO ENTREPRENEUR

The media called Liu “*bangbang* writer” and tried to take advantage of his status as a poor *bangbang* to create sensational stories. Liu was no longer a regular *bangbang*, but nor was he a professional writer. While his writing brought him fame, it did not bring him enough money to live. However, Liu chose to keep the halo that media forced on his head. For a period, he had to both work as a *bangbang* in the day time *and* keep writing articles when off work. At the same time, he was also made to actively interact with the media in exchange for fame and publication opportunities. However, the media interviews and writings took a lot of his working time, and the economic reward was meager.

Although Liu was under great economic stress, he refused to take a contract job, even when there were chances to do so.³³ When asked why, Liu tended to emphasize his connection to the poor porters and his unwillingness to leave his *bangbang* colleagues behind: “I am a person who cares about feelings (*zhong ganqing*). I have had deep connections with *bangbang* throughout these years. Let me put it this way, when I went back to my home village these years, I could not stay for more than two days. I even could not sleep well. I knew I missed something; I wanted to go back to Chongqing. I felt better once I came back to the city.” The local reportage writer Cao then concluded: “(Liu) feels uneasy to leave Chongqing and the *bangbang*. He even thinks it is cruel to leave them. He loves this city so much; he loves his *bangbang* work so much!” The media representation pigeonholed Liu into the social category of *bangbang* in order to extract more news value out of it. As long as Liu has connection to the underclass, he has value for the media and for the urban readers’ consumption. Liu took full advantage of the media’s desire to exoticize and romanticize him as an urban spectacle and collaborated with the media to create this image of “*bangbang* writer.”

³³ For example, Liu said that an owner of a flower cuisine restaurant in Chongqing read about his story, contacted him and offered him a management position and promised to pay Liu a monthly income of 1500 yuan for him to work in the restaurant. This is a good salary for a regular worker in mid-1990s’ Chongqing. Liu tried this job for a month and decided to quit. He complained that the long working hours made it impossible to keep writing. Later, he received another job offer from an entrepreneur in Chongqing. The entrepreneur expressed his admiration of Liu’s “integrity and talent” (*guqi he caiqi*), and invited Liu to work in his company. He promised to support Liu for his writing. However, Liu declined the offer.

4.4. AN *BANGBANG*-TURNED-ENTREPRENEUR WHO HAS NO TIME TO WRITE

Unfortunately, Liu's "love" of writing and *bangbang* work did not last long. Just when everyone expected Liu to pursue the art of writing and become a professional writer, he declared in 1998 that he would give up writing, at least temporarily, and became an entrepreneur. He borrowed nearly ten thousand yuan (around US\$1438) from his "media friends" and founded a moving company, Army of the Shancheng (Mountainous City) *Bangbang*, with two other *bangbang* business partners.

His abrupt transformation attracted tremendous media attention. There was both positive and negative feedback. The positive side hailed Liu's successful transformation from a penniless *bangbang* to an entrepreneur and praised his "fighting spirit." The negative focused on Liu's "disloyalty" to his writer dream and his degradation in the business world. But either way, Liu once again became a local focal point. Almost all the major local newspapers reported on the opening of his company. This time, the focus of the media was on the question of "why he gave up his writer dream to become a boss." Liu offered two reasons on different occasions. The first reason was that he was under great economic pressure and wished to support his literary pursuits with the money from his business.³⁴ The second reason was that he wanted to provide an organized, ordered, and reliable source of *bangbang* labor to the labor market. The idea was that his company, like the labor recruitment company that Yan documented in her research in Anhui Province (2003), offers not only commercial activity and services, but also the "reformation and education" that would bring efficiency and order to the labor market. This idea is especially attractive to the local government as the officials have associated the *bangbang* labor market with social disorder and criminality. The urban residents have also complained with the unruliness of *bangbang*. The local government thus applauded Liu's company for promising to replace the unruly *bangbang* labor market with labor security and social stability.

34 In the documentary "*Bangbang Is Great*," there is a scene showing the economic pressure Liu faces. The script goes: "Seeing that he could not help with his family's poverty after many years of migration, Liu made a painful decision between his ideal and the reality—giving up writing. The priority for him is to find a way to earn money."

The goal of providing organized and secure *bangbang* labor is achieved through what Liu describes as “reconstructing the collective image of a new generation of migrant workers” (Jian 2000:181). Liu also believes that rural migrants were not accepted by the city because “their mind, lifestyle, and behavior did not meet modern urban culture’s requirement. Migrants as a group were largely backward” (Jian 2000:181). A good way to solve this problem, Liu thought, was to “organize them,” to conduct “self-education and self-reform among the *bangbang* through education, and to raise their quality in order to meet the urban modern culture’s requirement and to construct a new image of the migrants.” Liu also said: “I am also a rural migrant worker. I must first commit to learning and reform (*gaizao*) myself; then I must unite other migrants. Together, we can finish the reform task (*gaizao renwu*).”

In Shiming Jian’s interview with Liu (2000), Liu stressed the significance of discipline. The first step of reconstructing the new image of *bangbang* was to set up a strict recruiting policy to make sure that his *bangbang* employees were trustworthy and obedient. Any *bangbang* candidate seeking a job in Liu’s company needed to go through the company’s evaluation process. Those who received positive evaluations were asked to sign a two-year contract with the company but only on condition that an urban resident served as his guarantor. This, Liu believed, minimized the risk of recruiting an unruly migrant. Moreover, the *bangbang* would not be formally employed until they undergo a one-month probation period. This recruiting policy, Liu told me, was to guarantee the “quality” of the company employees.

Liu also formulated a monetary penalty and reward policy for his *bangbang* employees. He evaluated their performances every month and punished or rewarded the workers based on their performance. For example, in Liu’s company, workers were divided into groups in the workplace; each group had a leader who supervised other workers. If no customers issued complaints about the workers, then the leader received a monetary reward of 20 yuan each month. But those workers who did garner complaints were financially punished. Liu considered this an efficient policy for disciplining the unruly workers (Jian 2000:187).

Furthermore, Liu emphasized the good service *bangbang* could provide if they were well-disciplined. When his company just opened, he distributed 30,000 copies of a Service Promise to the city residents.

This document, as an advertisement of sorts, ensured residents that his company provided high-quality service at a low cost. “Don’t worry if you have a problem; come to the “army of *bangbang*” for a solution,” the Service Promise said. It also said that the company had a corporate philosophy that cherished “honesty and righteousness, the spirit of eating bitterness and enduring hardship, warm-heartedness and good service.” The company ensured the customers that its *bangbang* employees “do not smoke the customer’s cigarettes, eat with the customers, or accept tips from the customers” (Jian 2000:186). These advertisements tried to ensure the potential customers that the company provided safe and reliable laborers who did not cause trouble or inconvenience. In other words, the *bangbang* employees were represented as the goods whose “quality” the company needed to guarantee in order to attract buyers.

Lastly, Liu highly valued the “flexibility” of his company’s workforce. He promised the potential customers that the service could be delivered “day and night, on the spot, regardless of the weather” (Jian 2000:186). In my interview with Liu, he also stressed that the importance for his company’s workers to work on a flexible basis: “They need to be ready whenever they are needed (*sui jiao sui dao*).” Yet this “flexibility,” as analyzed in my Chapter Three, is an alternative form of labor control. It made the workers work for prolonged hours and in difficult conditions at nearly no cost to the company owner since the company did not pay extra money or provide any subsidies as compensation.

Liu justified his labor regime by appropriating both socialist moralities and market rationality. On the one hand, he mentioned that one of his major goals was to sincerely serve the urban citizens. This narrative resembles the political slogan “Serve the People,” which was popular during the Maoist period. However, the privileged class at that time, “the people,” was replaced by the privileged class in the post-socialist period, “the urban citizens.” On the other hand, Liu also drew on market economy logics to justify his labor regime. Liu thought that *bangbang*, as a workforce, was disordered and fragmented, which made the workers blind to business opportunities that require not only discipline in each individual worker but also collaboration among different sectors of the market. In other words, he was critical of the *bangbang*’s lack of market economy consciousness. But his company, Liu insisted, could dispatch the

bangbang to places of need and make them work collaboratively and efficiently by using proper disciplining techniques.

Even more interesting, Liu vowed in our interview to protect *bangbang*'s legal rights and benefits. He represented himself as the spokesman of "the army of *bangbang*" and claimed that he knew what the latter wanted. But when I asked him about his insurance policy for his workers, he answered: "My company pays the full medical expenses for even the slightest worker injury. If the injury is the fault of the worker – for example, if it is caused by not wearing a helmet at the construction site – the company covers 50% of the medical expense. But if the injury is quite serious, then the company negotiates with the worker about the coverage of the medical expenses. My company buys accident injury insurance for the workers, which stops this July" [he didn't explain why]. "Then, what about the medical insurance? Do your *bangbang* workers have it?" I asked. "My (office) staffs (*bangongshi yuangong*) all have medical insurance," he answered after a pause, "but I can't cover the *bangbang* workers' medical insurance." I asked if that was because his company was not profitable enough to provide the medical insurance. He denied this and came to his own defense: "None of the enterprises in Chongqing can cover all their employees' medical insurance. They are not required to; I shouldn't be required to either. It is what this society is like; I cannot change the way it is." His words indicated that though he sympathized with *bangbang*, he obviously would not buy his workers insurance because it would be too costly for him and his company. As he put it, "I am an owner of a company, not a charity."

How successful is Liu's enterprise? One interesting finding is that there is a discrepancy between what the scholars in China have found and what I have found. Shimin Jian, in his research on Liu's company, states that Liu is exceptionally successful in saving himself from poverty and in rescuing other *bangbang* from a disordered labor market, from a low-income lifestyle, and from unprotected working conditions. He reports that Liu's company is unusually successful, as evidenced by the fact that it had made a profit every month in 1999 when the consumption rate had dropped in Chongqing for 22 months in a row. At

that time, the monthly income of *bangbang* employees in Liu's company was 450 yuan.³⁵ When I interviewed Liu in 2007, he refrained from directly telling me his company's profits. Instead, he chose to roughly tell me his individual wealth. He owned two offices in Chongqing city, ten trucks, and hoisting apparatuses such as lifting equipment and fork lifts. He hinted that running this business provided a steady profit, and he seemed eager to convince me that his company was well-managed and developing steadily.

Liu's company is also widely considered to be successful in providing work opportunities and in disciplining *bangbang*. Jian's research documents one of these "achievements." A local wholesale market invited Liu's company to take over all the street haulage business. Jian writes: "(Since the takeover of Liu's company,) the market got its order back. Both customers and business owners were satisfied." However, this "achievement" shows that Liu's company, as a corporation supported by money and fame, excluded the casual freelance *bangbang* workers from their workplace. These casual workers would have no bargaining power at all to compete with a corporation. Yet this labor exclusion was hailed as a success of market reorganizing in China.

But what about Liu's literary dream? What about his promise to keep pursuing literary advancement with his business profits? When asked these questions in my interview, Liu answered: "I feel sorry that I haven't written anything after my company was established. You see, I've been too busy. Ever since I've earned more money, I've been busy buying a house and a car, or busy with business. I have little connection with the [poor people's] lives now,³⁶ and I just can't write anything." He said that he would like to write a book about his success story after he retires. "Right now, it is just not possible," he said.

It is interesting that Liu listed "having little connection with [poor people's] lives" as one of the reasons why he stopped writing. When he says "life," I think he actually means a specific type of life – the rural migrant's life from which he drew writing materials. He knows that this type of life had the

³⁵ Liu was reported to provide both three meals a day and the lodging to his *bangbang* employees. Jian reports that the food and lodging cost about 250 yuan per month per person. He thus estimates that the average monthly income of Liu's *bangbang* worker is around 600 yuan per month per person.

³⁶ Liu's original words are "*wo xianzai meiyou shazi shenghuo jingyan le*." Literarily it means, "I have little living experience [of a poor migrant] now."

representational value that makes it sellable in the market. Once he moves to a more privileged social status and loses this connection to the lower strata, his literary voice is no longer marketable. After all, who in the hubbub of the great city cares to read stories about a regular entrepreneur's business life?

4.5. CONCLUSION

"If one sheep leaps over the ditch, the rest will follow" (*bangyang de liliang shi wuqiong de*), Mao Zedong told his people about fifty years ago. In post-Mao China, it seems that the society still operates under the shadow of Mao's words in terms of making myths about the heroic features of the "leading sheep." But revolutionary heroes are no longer needed; instead, everyone is encouraged to be economically successful in the market and to leave poverty behind. Success is no longer defined as revolutionary spirit and loyalty to the socialist cause, but as fame and money. The narrative of success and the changing meaning of success in post-socialist China point to a differentiation between "deserving citizens" and the less deserving citizens (Song 2007), between the people who "embrace risk" and the people "at risk" (Mark Driscoll 2007). The chasm between the "*bangbang* scholar" and the *bangbang* mass reconfirms a moral narrative that pushes poor migrant men to pursue success in the market economy in order to encounter the challenges and risks of a global market economy.

In post-Mao China, Liu's success is viewed as the success of a self-disciplined and self-reliant subject. The most frequently cited factor for Liu's success is his "spirit" in fighting the odds. In such narratives, structural factors and social inequalities that contribute to migrant suffering are largely ignored. Liu's success story can be understood as the perfect example of the "entrepreneurialization of self" (Gordon 1991:44), not just in a literary way. "Self-making," "self-development," and "self-management" – these are mere fables that suggest the normalization of neoliberal developmentalism in the production of human capital.

The Agriculture Channel of CCTV nationally broadcasted Liu's story to teach people "how to become rich" (*zhifu jing*). The media referred to him as an "extraordinary example of success" (*chenggong dianfan*). In a widely-circulated article entitled "Seeking for the Starting Point in Commonplace," the author cites Liu as a model for illustrating how peasants can get rich. The article concludes with the "precious lesson" extracted from Liu's story that "at the beginning of your career, hardship is unavoidable, especially for those who are economically poor and eager to start their own careers. So you should not be picky in choosing your job. If you start with one job and work hard enough, you will be rewarded. Small business can be highly profitable."

However, despite the mainstream media and local government's efforts to promote success stories such as Liu's, *bangbang* were cynical about the easy connection between success and "neohumanism" being advocated. During my fieldwork, most of the *bangbang* I met said that they had heard Liu's story. Their opinions about it, however, varied. Some of them thought that Liu was admirable, but they did not think that Liu's success was due to his much-praised personal characteristics, such as his self-development mentality. Instead, they attributed Liu's success to fate, luck, and good networking skills. One *bangbang* called Liu "that lucky guy." Given good network and plenty of money, he said, he could be just as successful as Liu. Some *bangbang* viewed the media reports of Liu's success as government propaganda. They told me that Liu was not as wealthy and successful as the media made him out to be. One *bangbang* who used to work for one of Liu's business partners told me: "I was told that he had a hard time with business. He brags about his success, but he actually does not make much money. I wouldn't be surprised if he does not earn as much as I do." Most *bangbang* expressed their unwillingness to work for a moving company and to be bossed around. They told me that only old and uncompetitive *bangbang* sought jobs in Liu's company because they were unlikely to do well as freelance *bangbang*. Some *bangbang*, however, yearned for a more secure job that would provide a stable monthly income. For them, Liu's company was not a bad option. What is worth noting is that *bangbang* generally desire and value success, despite their varied opinions about Liu's success. Even my relative who accompanied me during

my interviews with Liu urged me to learn from the latter. “It was not easy for a person like him to be so successful,” this relative said. “A person has to work on himself in order to change his fate.”

Yan writes that the notion of self-reliance and self-development point to the fact that human subjectivity has been treated as the most important agent for market growth and economic development (Yan 2003). The value of the human being is directly linked to the productivity of capitalism. Poor migrants such as the *bangbang* in Chongqing become the fuel for economic take-off and the “standing reserve” (Anagnost 2006) that silently absorbs the hidden cost of producing a flexible and cheap workforce that capitalist accumulation needs. Zhao describes the effect of neoliberalism as such, “Though the benign state, various social institutions, and exceptional individuals are doing their best to help, the only road to salvation for the economically and socially displaced is the personal will to survive. Those who overcome their own psychological barriers have fame and fortune to gain” (Zhao 2002: 129).

In summary, the success of Xiaoxiao Liu reflects the changing development rationality and social landscape of China and illustrates the circulation of value from the representation economy to the economic realm. The value of Liu’s writing lies in its capacity to reinforce the social divisions between the orderly and well-disciplined urban setting and the chaotic and unruly rural migrant masses. The fact that Liu was a rural migrant worker himself adds the flavor of “authenticity” to his writing and makes his work more marketable. Once the representational value has been extracted from his own degraded social status, Liu quickly turns it into social and monetary capital by establishing his enterprises. The use value of Liu’s writing goes beyond satisfying the urban reader’s voyeuristic desire into the underclass society. It also justifies the overexploitation and labor regime in the economic realm and makes possible the capitalist accumulation of the surplus value in the workplace.

Liu, who gave up literary success for economic success, represents the type of citizen that the state desires. A rural migrant who can write and demand sympathetic recognition of migrants’ suffering is too dangerous. Even a migrant who documents the lives of the lower social strata for some monetary reward is unwelcome. But an entrepreneur with no time to write is acceptable, even highly valued, in the post-socialist society. Those *bangbang* who have neither the writing skills nor opportunities to be

economically successful are largely ignored as a homogenous mass. But how do individual *bangbang* survive the discriminating effects of social classification and social marginalization? What are their strategies in the face of exclusion and humiliation? Do they take collective action to protest social inequalities? These are the questions explored in Chapter Five.

5.0 BANGBANG'S GENDER STRATEGIES IN THE WORKPLACE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

On a hot and humid summer afternoon in 2007, I visited some *bangbang* at their workplace – a hardware and electric appliance wholesale market, one of the biggest in Southwest China. I got to the southern gate, which was formed by two big cement pillars, an iron arch on the pillars, and a cement wall. This was the place where the *bangbang* stayed for a rest when between jobs. The long shadow of the big pillars and wall provided some shade and coolness during the hot summer afternoon. In front of me was an enormous building of 35,000 square meters, comprising two floors – the ground floor and the upper floor. Over 500 privately-owned wholesale stores packed both floors like sardines. Iron wires, plastic boards, and metal goods separated one store from another. Hundreds of business owners, employees, customers, market managers, truck drivers, and *bangbang* worked in the market. Their movement and voices created a hubbub akin to a pot of boiling water. Outside the market, three highways connecting Chongqing and Chengdu (the capital city of Sichuan Province) converged near the southern gate. Cars and trucks were coming and going while people were walking in and out. Dust flew upwards when large vans whizzed past. A bit further out, numerous highrise buildings and large mansions made up the skyline, serving as a reminder of the rapidly ongoing urbanization process in Chongqing.

Old Zhang, a *bangbang* man in his sixties, was asked by a store owner, a woman in her forties, to carry over goods from another market. Because of his age, Old Zhang could not compete with the young and middle-aged *bangbang* colleagues. His strategy was to not bargain with his customers over the workload and payment as other *bangbang* would. I have heard bosses praising Old Zhang for his obedient, easy-going attitude. But some bosses have abused his friendliness and asked him to do extra work for free,

to work for longer periods of time, or to carry goods at a price that younger *bangbang* would not accept. This time, Old Zhang and the female boss agreed that she would pay him after the work was finished.

I went with Old Zhang for the delivery and went back with him to the female boss's store for payment. However, the female boss did not pay him as they agreed but asked him to put the goods in order. Old Zhang tried to ask her for extra payment for the extra work, but her response was: "You greedy *bangbang*, do what I ask you to do." Old Zhang tried to argue with her, saying that if she did not want him, he could work for other bosses, but that she should pay for his service. The female boss took out her calculator, punched in a few numbers, and then told Old Zhang that she would pay one a half yuan (about 25 cents) for him to do the extra work. That price was way too low for the workload – almost an insult. But the boss justified her payment, "This [the work] is pure manual labor (*chun xia li*). No skill involved at all (*meiyou jishu hanliang*) and no brain work needed (*bu dong naozi*). How much do you expect me to pay?" Old Zhang was irritated and went back to the southern gate as a gesture of protest. I accompanied him to the gate. He told his *bangbang* colleagues that he was annoyed but he still considered accepting the "offer" in order to get his payment. However, the *bangbang* colleagues stopped him. They said that the female boss had treated them badly and that they should "teach her a lesson." Old Zhang was hesitant about seeking revenge, but the other *bangbang* assured him that he would get his payment back in the end. One of the *bangbang*, Yan Fat Boy said, "It is right and proper (*tian jing di yi*) to pay for what you buy. You can call it reasonable wherever you go" (*zou dao near dou shuodei zou*)." Little Peng agreed and said: "Without us, she has to move them (the goods) herself. How much (physical) strength has she (to handle the heavy labor)? She needs us (to work for her); we don't beg her (for it)."

After a while, the female boss came out of her store, located near the southern gate, to call Old Zhang's name. Old Zhang tried to make a compromise, asking her to add one yuan (about 50 cents) to the original payment. She became impatient and said: "A *bangbang* bargain with *me* [the boss]! Do you think I have to hire you? I will ask others." Then the female boss yelled at other *bangbang*: "Anyone of you, come over! The money [for the extra work] is yours!" However, none of the about ten *bangbang* moved.

A *bangbang* named Little Li had just finished a job and come to the scene. He thought the female boss was calling him; he ran to her but quickly found out what was going on. He went back to the southern gate and joined his colleagues. The female boss kept yelling. Tan White Hair began to yell back: “You are a boss [who has money], not a *bangbang* like us [who has no money]. Why are you so stingy? Just pay us more, and we will work for you.” Other *bangbang* joined Tan, asking the female boss to pay Old Zhang and to raise the payment. Old Zhang was a little nervous, worrying that if female boss would be too upset to pay him for the work he had already done. He tried to find excuses to justify the boss’s rudeness, saying, “Women have long hair but little brains” and “A good man doesn’t fight with women” (*haonan bu gen nü dou*). Some *bangbang* nodded their heads, but others said: “A good woman doesn’t fight with men either” And “That evil woman (*e poniang*) didn’t learn how to be a woman at home.”

The battle between the *bangbang* and the boss did not seem to be a serious fight. On the *bangbang*’s side, they were careful that their resistance did not irritate and humiliate the female boss. They spoke in a half-joking tone; the “battle” was more teasing than a serious conflict. At one point, Little Peng said: “Hey boss! You are too ‘smart.’ Thinking too much damages your health. Calculate less and you will become young and beautiful. Your husband will love you more.” “Bravo!” other *bangbang* exclaimed in support of Little Peng’s words. The female boss yelled back: “Better watch your own wives closely. Be sure that she doesn’t run away with wealthy men!” Tan White Hair responded: “I am not afraid of that. If she runs away, I will find a better one, young and pretty!” “Right! Dream on!” the female boss said. All the *bangbang* laughed. Later, Tan White Hair continued: “Nowadays, a man with money has whatever he wants. Wait and see, one day I might become a millionaire.” The female boss replied: “Yeah right, a *bangbang* millionaire. Let’s wait and see.” In the end, the female boss took a step back and agreed to raise the payment to two and half yuan.

After the female boss left, Tan White Hair commented: “How come she [the female boss] is so arrogant? Not like a woman...She is from rural Zhejiang Province ... [I]n the Maoist era, these ‘bosses’ were just like us – digging the earth. They were peasants too!” A male store owner who stood by Tan said:

“That’s true. We are all *dagong de* (working men). The real boss is the official who does not need to expend labor to earn huge amounts of money.”

As this anecdote demonstrates, male *bangbang* face great challenges to their sense of masculine pride when working in the urban setting. Their capacity to hold their families together is brought into question because of their meager economic opportunities and marginalized social position. When the female boss challenged Little Peng, she said: “Better watch your own wives closely. Be sure that she doesn’t run away with wealthy men!” Such words illustrate the inferior positions that *bangbang* have in a post-Mao Chinese society which is becoming increasingly commercialized and stratified along class lines. In such a society, money buys not only goods, but also human relations. A rural migrant man who does not earn enough to raise his family risks losing his wife and children. The structural violence resulting from the intersecting lines of gender and class can be poignantly felt for these working men. However, instead of being passive victims, *bangbang* also actively make use of varied strategies to protect their decency and dignity.

This chapter aims to delineate the gender strategies that *bangbang* adopt in the workplace to empower themselves against humiliation and violence. My goal is to reveal the gender inequalities in contemporary Chinese society, particularly in relation to the dynamics of labor and class. The concept of “gender strategies” comes from Hochschild (1989), who traces how husbands and wives negotiate and rationalize the apportionment of domestic labor. Hochschild defines a gender strategy as “a plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play” (1989:15). She argues, “To pursue a gender strategy, a man draw on beliefs about manhood and woman hood, beliefs that are forced in early childhood and thus anchored to deep emotions. He makes a connection between how he thinks about his manhood, what he feels about it, and what he does” (1989:15). In this chapter, I use the concept of “gender strategy” to refer to how men draw on their beliefs about manhood and womanhood and the dominant gender discourses for the purposes of cushioning themselves from the challenges to their sense of masculinity in the urban workplaces. In some cases, the “gender strategies” were more akin to displays of manhood rather than acts of protest. Such displays, however, could

empower the male workers to some extent but, in doing so, they put women in a more vulnerable position. For example, Tan White Hair said that if his wife (a rural migrant just like him) left him, he could find a young and beautiful girl as a replacement. By putting down his wife, Tan tried to exaggerate the value of migrant man over rural migrant women.

5.2. GENDER AND WORK

Men and women participate in work that is gendered. The occupational imperatives that shape interactions in the workplace naturalize and essentialize cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity for men and women (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Kimmel and Messner 2007). Contemporary ethnographic research on gender and work has focused on inequalities in the global economy and on the diverse practices that produce a gendered global labor force. Such scholarship offers insights into how the lived experiences of work are shaped by gender and labor inequalities (e.g., Constable 1997; Mills 2003; Parrenas 2000).

Women become highly visible within this literature because of their underprivileged positions in a gendered economy. Against the backdrop of the new forms of flexible accumulation of transnational capital, anthropologists have provided rich and sensitive ethnographies on the feminization of global labor and gendered patterns of labor recruitment and discipline as well as on cultural struggles and various forms of resistance. Since the 1970s, scholars have found that the changing character of labor markets around the world has led to a rise in female labor force participation and a relative if not absolute fall in men's employment. Many jobs traditionally held by men are also feminized (e.g., Ong 1991; Cheng 1999; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). In country after country, women laborers have come to dominate off-shore factory production lines, family firms, subcontracting arrangements, and informal work sections. Global factories reproduce similar models of organization wherein women dominate the lowest levels of both pay and authority, whereas men occupy most supervisory and managerial positions (Write 2001).

Hierarchical gender ideologies that define women's labor as secondary and at most complementary to men's cheapen the direct costs of labor to capital (Ong 1991). Cheng (1999) suggests that capitalist systems define work as a process of production that can contribute to the capital accumulation and exchange. Such a definition contributes to the devaluation of women's work as that which is not productive and has low exchange value. Corporate production, on the one hand, identifies the desirable sexualized bodies for their labor force—often young, deferential and “nimble-fingered” female laborers. In other words, by defining women's labor as cheap and as less valuable than men's, hegemonic gender ideologies, along with the capitalist system, serve to lower the direct costs of global capital and to facilitate its accumulation strategies (Mills 2003).

Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) offer pointed insights from a feminist perspective about the feminization of global labor and the influences of globalization on women. Their work shows that global persistence of patriarchy is never solely responsible for the subjugation of these third world women. Wealthy first-world women can exploit poor ones just as effectively as men can. Although the authors neglect the differences among career women in the first-world, their work convincingly warns us that the category of “world women workers” is not sustainable because of the severe disparity between women's socioeconomic positions on a global scale. Anthropologists have observed the emergence and circulation of a recruitment discourse that justifies the great need for cheap female laborers for assembly-line factory work. In this discourse, female laborers are viewed as having nimble fingers, a higher endurance for longer hours and a greater workload than men, and traditional virtues of sacrifice for supporting families by working in factories (e.g., Mills 1999; Pun 2005; Salaff 1981; Cheng 1999; Morokvasic 1984). There have also been significant academic analyses of how gendered patterns of labor recruitment impact local gender relations (e.g., Orton et al., 2001; Dolan 2001). Similar to recruitment, the patterns of labor discipline are also highly gendered (e.g., Mills 2003; Lee 1998; Salzinger 1997) and change over time, especially relative to political transformation (e.g., Rofel 1999; Rosenthal 2002).

In addition to factory workers, transnational migrant labor also includes a large number of workers in the service economy, such as restaurant workers, domestic servants, and day laborers. These workers are

also subject to many kinds of gendered labor regulations and discipline. Constable (1997) examines how employment agencies both in Hong Kong and in the Philippines “domesticate” Filipina women to suit the ideal image of domestic workers for Hong Kong employers. The employers also set informal rules and regulations to amend domestic workers’ behaviors and attitudes to suit their tastes and expectations. These informal rules are not only imposed within the private domain of the household, but may also extend to the more private domain of a domestic worker’s body, personality, voice and emotions. The local laws and legal policies generally support employers, and thus reinforce, if not enhance, control and domination of domestic workers. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) offers a study of Latina domestic workers in Los Angeles. This sociological study devotes much attention to how employers establish networks that facilitate the recruitment and hiring of domestic workers and how such a process creates standards of employment that often fail to recognize domestic workers as full human beings who have feelings and intelligence.

Ethnographers are just beginning to pay attention to the fluid and complex relations between the material conditions of labor and the configuration of masculine identity. Some ethnographers are concerned with how economic restructuring and localized globalization have incurred a crisis of masculinity (e.g., George 2000; Goldring 2001; Levitt 2001; Gamburd 2000; McDowell 2000; Newman 1999; Roy 2003). They provide insights about the significance of work and economic power in determining masculine pride. A significant portion of the existing literature explores the emotional labor that men perform in highly gendered and prestigious occupations (Pierce 1995; Cheng 1996) and the struggles that male workers undergo in maintaining their manhood in women-dominated occupations (Henson and Rogers 2007; William 1989, 1992, 1993, 1995). Scholars such as Christian Williams argue that some men doing “women’s jobs” actually “benefit” from their token status and are able to ride the “glass escalator” to more prestigious, better-paid positions within women’s professions (Williams 1995;

Maume 1999).³⁷ However, other scholars find that men in a female-dominated clerical occupation with little opportunity for promotion lack the advantages of upward mobility; they adopt various gender strategies to reassert the feminine identification of the job while rejecting its application to them, such as renaming and reframing the work, distancing themselves from the work with a cover story, and resisting the demands to perform deference (Henson and Rogers 2007). They argue that these strategies help to reproduce and naturalize the gendered organization of work and to reinvigorate hegemonic masculinity and its domination over women and men.

Comparatively less discussed in this line of scholarship is how low-income working-class men such as *bangbang* assert their masculine pride in the absence of resources that signify other types of masculinity. This chapter argues that although rural migrant men who work as *bangbang* do a “man’s job,” they fall short of the ideals of urban masculinity on at least three fronts. First, due to their low income and marginalized position in society, *bangbang* lack avenues and opportunities for becoming the ideal type of men. Second, they face gendered assessment because they do not have a full-time, well-paid permanent job. Third, *bangbang* work, as a service job, often requires *bangbang* to perform deference to customers. However, the performance of deference and obedience challenge *bangbang*’s sense of dignity and pride. The resulting gender strategies reveal how male *bangbang* reject the application of femininity by put on a show of manhood.

In particular, I argue that *bangbang* defend their masculine pride and integrity through the following tactics. First, they emphasize the culturally constructed masculine aspects of the *bangbang* work, such as the high demand for physical strength; second, *bangbang* tell bitter stories of their lives; third, they make use of socialist ethics that favor peasants and manual labor; fourthly, they resist performing deference to customers, especially female customers. These do not constitute the entirety of strategies that *bangbang* use, but are representative of what I saw in my fieldwork. However, although *bangbang*’s gender strategies do provide the potential to challenge the dominant gender order, they nevertheless naturalize

³⁷ By using the term “women’s job,” the author does not mean that she thinks that these jobs ARE “women’s jobs” or that certain jobs are supposed to be done by women. She is aware of the significance of historical construction of the gendered division of labor.

and reconfirm the urban hegemonic ideal type of masculinity that contributes to the exclusion and marginalization of *bangbang*. Furthermore, while socialist ethics empower *bangbang* in some way, they also reinforce negative stereotypes of peasants as outdated and uncouth.

5.3. RECONFIGURATION OF CHINESE MASCULINITY IDEALS

The negative stereotypes of *bangbang* as unvalued men were formed in post-Mao China in relation to the reconfiguration of masculine ideals in the course of China's modern history. Since the 1930s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) consistently promoted the value of manual workers and peasants. Mao Zedong extolled the virtues of rural life in contrast to the corruption of the city. With the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CCP promoted workers, peasants, and soldiers (especially men) as heroes. State-promoted art and literature featured male revolutionary heroes who exhibited exaggerated physical strength and courage, rejected bourgeois lifestyles, and expressed devotion to communist ideals. The CCP also launched the Great Leap Forward, concomitant with communism of 1958-1960, in order to tackle the difference between city and countryside, between worker and peasant, and between mental and manual labor (William Hinton 1984:207). However, the official celebration of manual male work did not completely eradicate the popular stereotype of manual laborers as poor, uneducated, dirty, and less desirable. Urban Shanghai girls would rarely marry rural men, no matter whether these men were wealthy or not (Croll 1984). Despite the CCP's effort to move workers, peasants and soldiers from the margin to the center in literary representations and on the stage, the traditional sense of *wen* (literati, scholarly) masculinity still had an upper hand in daily life. As Yiyan Wang suggests, CCP cadres (the majority of them men) were the modern literati in a sense. With their literacy and a communist education, they were seen as superior to the illiterate and uneducated masses of workers, peasants and soldiers (Wang 2003:46).³⁸ Also, peasants remained materially disadvantaged. China's *hukou* (household registration)

³⁸ For discussions of how meanings of Chinese femininity have changed from pre-1949 to Maoist China, see Tani Barlow's study of the genealogy of womanhood in China (Barlow 1994), Mayfair Yang's research on Chinese

system prevented peasants from working in relatively wealthy urban areas, thus reinforcing rural men's socioeconomic inferiority in relation to urban men.

With its quick transformation from a planned economy to a market economy since 1978, China has witnessed increasing economic and social stratification. In an era of commodification and consumption, individual social positioning no longer depends on one's *chushen* (class of origin), but in many ways depends on the level of personal income and educational capital. With the widening rural-urban gap since the 1980s, the countryside and rural people have been stigmatized materially and symbolically as backward, ignorant, and despicable (Yan 2003). Previously glorified images of masculine and powerful peasants have largely disappeared.

As poor rural migrants, *bangbang* fall into the category of unwanted men in the post-Mao era's urban settings. Because they do manual work in urban regions and because they are economically poor, they immediately incite prejudice from more established urban residents. They are depicted by many urban locals as not manly enough. When young urban women look for a marriage partner, *bangbang* are not an object of desire but rather the topic of jokes and condescension. In many ways, *bangbang*'s experience of gender echoes what Margold found among Filipino migrant male workers in Saudi Arabia (Margold 1995). Migration, to some *bangbang*, is a search for decency and dignity, but in reality, many experience a disintegrating sense of their masculinity and, therefore, of their selfhood.

The social derogation of *bangbang*'s work also contributes to the demasculinization of male *bangbang*. Their work is highly male-dominated (about 99% of *bangbang* are males), but is not viewed by the urban residents as a good job for decent men. As Lisa Rofel observes in *Other Modernities*, female factory workers' ideal boyfriends were "men who had proven their masculinity in these market achievements" (Rofel 1999:233). Indeed, well-educated and/or economically successful men such as CEOs, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, government officials are more highly desired by women. Peasants, soldiers, or factory workers, on the other hand, are not as desirable. The rural-urban gap is an important

women's social position in the May Fourth era and the Maoist era (Yang 1999), and Lisa Rofel's research on gender transition in relation to historical changes in Mao and post-Mao China (Rofel 1999).

factor that rules out rural men as desired marriage partners for urban women. But with the gradual collapse of the *hukou* system in post-reform China, urban residency has come to matter less as a good occupation with a stable income and a high social status has come to matter more. A *bangbang* worker who is the father of a nineteen-year-old daughter told me that it would not concern him whether his future son-in-law was urban resident or not. “What matters,” he said, “is whether he earns enough money to financially support his family, including my daughter. In my opinion, many urban young men are useless, taking drugs, prostituting, and having extramarital affairs ... If the young man (who pursues my daughter) is hard-working, who cares if he is a rural or an urban citizen?”

Service work in contemporary China is dominated by women workers. But while *bangbang* work in Chongqing is considered part of the service economy, it is mostly done by men. Thus, *bangbang* actually work in a highly female-dominated economic sector, yet the occupation itself is male-dominated. As a service work, *bangbang*’s business requires deference and care-giving. Depending on the context, *bangbang* utilize different strategies to display deference and obedience to their customers.

5.4. THE CHALLENGES TO MANHOOD

Bangbang’s sense of dignity and manhood were challenged mainly on three fronts. First, in a society where a person’s value is largely decided by his/her job, *bangbang* who work on a casual and temporary basis are often derogated as “having no job” and thus as possessing no value. Such a scenario presents a major challenge to *bangbang*’s sense of dignity and pride, particularly given the fact that in the countryside, men who have opportunity to migrate and to find a job in the cities are generally viewed as especially capable. Second, since *bangbang* work is considered a form of physical labor that requires no skills, *bangbang* are normally devalued as “merely” manual laborers. Therefore, they do not possess much bargaining power in the labor market. Third, *bangbang* need to show deference to their customers most of the time; some *bangbang* felt humiliated working for the urban residents. To make the situation

even more threatening for male *bangbang*, their work does not provide opportunities for promotion. Unlike male nurses and elementary school teachers who also work in the service sector and are often subject to social discrimination, *bangbang* do not have institutionalized means for upward mobility in their jobs, no matter how hard they work (Williams 1995, 1989). Also, unlike the situation of male clerical workers (Henson and Rogers 2007), *bangbang*'s work does not provide an institution from which the workers can draw resources.

In the following pages, I detail these challenges and highlight the connections between labor and masculinity. The social classification and hierarchical ranking of jobs are not just power-laden, but also very much gendered. For example, in post-socialist China, a permanent job is considered crucial for men, but not necessarily important for women. Women who stay at home or only work part-time are sometimes thought of "having a good fate" (*hao ming*).

5.4.1. "He doesn't have a real job"

As many scholars have pointed out, the ability to secure a permanent job that provides sufficient financial rewards for the person to assume the breadwinner role at home is a core component of masculine identity (Connell 1987, 1995; Kimmel 1994; Cheng 1996; Kimmel and Messner 2007). The idea that men, instead of women, should hold permanent employment and should assume the breadwinner role is widely shared among *bangbang* and their wives. For example, a female shoe shiner mentioned that since her husband, a *bangbang*, has not been earning much money recently, she was the major source of her family's income. However, she obviously did not think that she was the breadwinner. She said, "My earning can only pay for the food and some daily expenses. Women's money is just the complement (to the family's income). A man must be depended upon to raise a family (*yang jia kao nanren*). I'd like him to keep looking for a job, to work for a company or to have our own business (*zuo shengyi*) ... Sometimes I push him to look for better jobs. ... *Bangbang*'s work is not for him. I often reminded him that we have two kids who go to school. We need money."

What her words demonstrate is that the uncertainty, irregularity, and poor remuneration of *bangbang*'s work often challenge male *bangbang*'s abilities to live up to the ideal of a man's role as the self-sufficient breadwinner and head of his family. Both *bangbang* work and shoe shining are low-pay and temporary jobs, but the *bangbang*'s wife seems to think that such work is natural and unproblematic in her own case, but not in her husband's. She believes that "a man must be depended upon to raise a family" while she earns money as "a supplement."

When male *bangbang* fail to fulfill such family responsibilities, they often feel guilt and shame. A *bangbang* nicknamed White Kid felt frustrated for not being able to earn enough money to keep his family together in the city. He lived alone in Chongqing while his wife and two kids remained in the countryside. He said: "I want to go back home to be with them, but I am afraid to.... It is not the money (spent on the travel)...It is that I am afraid to hear my younger daughter's words -- she is lovely, really adorable -- she asked me, 'Dad, when can I go to Chongqing and live with you?'" White Kid stopped talking and sighed before continuing. He told me that he felt proud to be able to afford the expense of inviting his wife and two kids to come to Chongqing and live with him for three months last summer. "We had a good time, all of us." He said, "The younger one got sick because of the (hot) weather and I paid all the medical expenses -- (it was) really expensive! But she was very happy to see me and the place where I work. I am saving every cent so that I can invite them to visit me this summer too."

One of the major challenges that *bangbang* face in doing their work is the inability of the job to provide enough income to raise their families. Some *bangbang* I met told me that they had planned to change their career path at certain points of their lives, even though such work is not ideal and does not allow for a flexible schedule. Some *bangbang*, however, did not like what they were doing and even refused to think of their job as a job. When I asked one male *bangbang* about his job, his response was: "What is the 'job' (*gongzuo*) we are talking about here? I don't have a job ... This (*bangbang* work)? I wouldn't call it a real job. This is what I do for food (*hun fan chi*)."

I asked him to explain the difference between "*hun fan chi*" and a "real" job. He said: "A real job is a job that makes a large amount of money. (It lets) you not worry about tomorrow's dinner. We *bangbang* have to earn money every day no matter

what. Otherwise, my wife and kids would starve.” He also told me that “I am preparing for a change (of job). ... I want my wife and kids to never worry about survival any more.” I have heard similar words from a few others and their wives. Some *bangbang*’s wives also did not see street carrying work as a real job. One such wife, when asked about her husband’s occupation, looked at me as if I were teasing her. She said: “My husband raised our family (*yang jia*). He is over there...yeah, a *bangbang*.” She told me after making sure that I was asking her seriously: “Well, you know, he’s got no job. He is a...*bangbang*.” She lowered her voice when she said the last word. “It is not well-reputed (*bu guangcai*) (to be a *bangbang*).” She said carefully, “No one takes *bangbang* seriously” (*bushi zhengjing gongzuo*).

There is much truth to her words. A few male *bangbang* told me that they felt inferior and inadequate. A *bangbang* named Big Wang told me, “You get nothing from this job besides the money for food (*chifan qian*). You do what the boss tells you to do, like what, animals! Sometimes there are just too many *bangbang* (who compete for one job), and the boss doesn’t want you (to do the job). You feel that you are so cheap (*xia liu*). No value.” These words correspond interestingly with what Yan observes about master-servant relationships. “The presupposition of the master-servant relationship [Herrschaftsverhältnis] is the appropriation of an alien will. Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal, may well provide a service, but does not thereby make its owner into a new master” (1973:500-501). Obviously, this *bangbang* did not just feel inferior, but altogether dehumanized, at work because his will had been subdued by the boss. He also felt humiliated when his value was decided by someone alien to him – the boss. Not only does he not have the power in the relationship, but he also does not feel he is a full human being. Rather, he feels more like an “animal,” an alienated being.

Based on what *bangbang* told me about their experiences of discrimination in the city, the occupation of *bangbang*, for privileged classes, means a dreadful future with no hope. Men who do this job are also considered less manly or not manly enough. For example, one urban woman commented, “I often pity *bangbang*’s wives and kids. How do they put up with the fact that the household head is a *bangbang*? If I were them, I would worry very much about the family’s survival. I think only stupid men (*naoke bu lingguang de nanren*) with no capacity become *bangbang*. Otherwise, why doesn’t he look for a real

job?” Similarly, another urban man told me: “I asked a *bangbang* to carry a piece of furniture for me yesterday. ... I told him to watch the corner of the hallway that led to my apartment (to prevent the furniture from being hit by the wall). He said ‘yes, boss.’ But he still hit the furniture on the hallway wall! I was mad... No wonder he is a *bangbang*! (He is) Too stupid to find a real job!”

While some *bangbang* resist urban discrimination by emphasizing their financial independence and capacity to raise a family, others feel shame about their job. When I took pictures of *bangbang*, some purposely dropped the bamboo poles they were holding. “Better to not be seen working in Chongqing as a *bangbang* holding a bamboo pole in my hand,” one of them said. Some had not even told their family what they actually did for a living. They only say that they have found “work” (*huo lu*) in the city.

5.4.2. Bangbang Work is Pure Physical Labor (*chun xia li*)

The social and cultural favoring intellectual over physical work in China contributes to the feelings of devaluation that *bangbang* experience at work. In post-Mao China, this value system is deliberately upheld to reduce the cost of physical labor. In the anecdote that opens this chapter, the female boss said: “This [the work] is pure manual labor (*chun xia li*). No skill involved at all (*meiyou jishu hanliang*) and no brain work needed (*bu dong naozi*).” She used the popular view of *bangbang* work as pure manual labor to reduce the value of Lao Zhang’s labor. In my fieldwork, I have repeatedly heard people tell me that *bangbang*’s work requires no skills. Naturally, then, such people would not be surprised that *bangbang* don’t earn much money. For example, a construction team leader and rural migrant told me: “*Bangbang* can’t do my work. *Bangbang*’s work only needs physical strength (*xia si li*), pure physical labor (*chun tili*). *Bangbang* don’t know how to demolish walls, build up walls, and work high above the ground. I bet that they don’t even know how to use electricity tester (*shi dian bi*)!” In other words, he thought that construction work is superior to *bangbang*’s work because the former requires skill whereas the latter does not. I also met *bangbang* who agreed with this view and worried that the “pure manual labor” they were doing had ruined their ability to think. The *bangbang*, Big Wang, told me: “As

bangbang, we have to do what the boss tells us to do as if we're robots. After a long period of working as *bangbang* – one's brain rusts if it is not being used – I am afraid that my brain doesn't work any more."

As some scholars have argued, to be technically competent is to be masculine (Cockburn 1985; Messerschmidt 1996; Wright 1996). Wright's examination of computer system and relevant calculating culture shows that high technology occupations are highly masculinized. Engineering and computing professionals are considered a "man's job" while women are viewed to be "particularly hurt by the obsession with technology and hands-on activities because the gender socialization experienced by most women yields a distinct lack of experience in 'tinkering' with electronics" (Wright 1996:87). Skills are so gendered that technological proficiency, characterized as masculine, often makes women feel uncomfortable (Wright 1996).

China's modernization, as a project of the state, also greatly advocates science and technology. In 1988, Deng Xiaoping said: "Science and Technology are the primary power for productivity." When China began to focus exclusively on economic development, science and technology were viewed as the foremost productive forces and the engine of economic growth (Song 1997). The Chinese government mobilizes a huge amount of the nation's human and material resources to facilitate scientific and technological research every year. Human labor, supplemented with technological competence, has become the "new favorite" (*xin chong*) of the market economy. As countries enter the high-tech era, professionals such as those working in information technology, bio-technology, electronic engineering and finance have reaped high profits and generated much attention. These professions are closely linked to economic capital and to social status while the manual labor has been largely devalued. While the global workforce in low-end occupations has been feminized, the *bangbang* industry, although dominated by men, is not considered as a prosperous and valuable career option. Rather, *bangbang* are devalued as intellectually incapable, technologically incompetent, and economically lacking.

One *bangbang*'s wife told me that she had pushed her husband to learn brick masonry skills from her relatives. "Having skills, one can earn money everywhere," she said. "*Bangbang* work doesn't involve any skills, but requires a lot of physical strength. What if he gets sick and loses his physical strength?"

She also mentioned that her relatives who worked as masons earn more money than her husband. “She (the mason’s wife) doesn’t need to work. She stays at home, doing whatever she likes. I like to work, but I’d also like to have the flexibility that she has.” But her husband refuses to learn the skills of a mason, saying that such work was not for him. The wife was very disappointed about this.

Some *bangbang* deny the notion that their work does not require any skill. One day, Tan White Hair was planning to carry a whole box of bottled beers for a customer. But since the only tools that he had were plastic ropes and a bamboo pole, he was worried that the bottles would drop out of the box. An experienced *bangbang* man named Old Huang passed by and stopped Tan. Old Huang pointed out that Tan had incorrectly tied the bottles to the box. He showed Tan how to tie the knots in a special way to prevent the bottles from slipping. An onlooker *bangbang* turned to me and said: “Who says *bangbang* have no skill? See that (Old Huang’s knot)?” Old Huang responded: “That’s what the people say to devalue (*wa zhua*) us. I say that *bangbang*’s work requires sophisticated technological skills.” He put on a self-mockery tone. He then demonstrated to me a variety of ways to tie knots, with each knot corresponding to different types of goods. This demonstration was to illustrate *bangbang*’s skills that their work includes.

Bangbang also protested against the stereotypical belief that their work does not require any intelligence. One *bangbang* said, “To do a good job, *bangbang* doesn’t need just physical strength...but also *shuren*³⁹ (to ensure the business opportunities).” Another *bangbang* continued: “He also uses his brain. For example, you need to know the type of goods (you are dealing with) in order to rearrange them (while unloading them).” Fei Xiaotong argues that what is valued as “knowledge” and “skill” varies by context. The production of knowledge is itself a power struggle. Fei laments that urban residents are so inclined to dismiss peasants as illiterate and backward, particularly when they actually lack certain forms of knowledge that peasants possess, such as farming and gardening. The peasants’ children know how to seize grasshoppers in the field while urban children can only do so clumsily (Fei 1992). When certain types of knowledge – for example, science – are advocated as more advanced, especially when that

³⁹ *Shuren* literally means “acquaintances.” Here it means networking.

knowledge is connected to economic productivity and growth, other knowledge systems are subject to devaluation. *Bangbang* have expertise in delivering goods and know how to use tools properly. However, they are unfairly treated as devalued workers. Moreover, as a social group, they are seen as the obverse of productivity and advancement. This, I argue, is a form of systematic violence sanctioned by the state to push the physical laborers to the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and to deny them the respect and reward that they deserve. The division of and inequality between manual and intellectual labors reflects the reorganization of value, knowledge, capital, production, and social relations in the post-Mao era.

5.4.3. “A *bangbang* does his job without asking”

In Chongqing, urban citizens often divide *bangbang* into “ones who do their work without asking/talking/bargaining” and “those who have slick tongues.” The former are considered dependable and trustworthy while the latter disrespectful and despicable. But this bifurcated evaluation, I argue, is yet another form of systematic violence toward *bangbang* that silences their voices. Such a point of view fails to address, much less raise understanding about, the vulnerability of *bangbang* at work. With no labor union to protect them, *bangbang* can only depend on themselves to bargain for their own ends. With no contract and work protection available in the workplace, *bangbang* have to reach an oral agreement with their customers about payment and compensation if any accident occurs. However, the recruiting policy adopted by most employers excludes the workers who know how to defend their own interests and desire only obedient and submissive ones. No wonder those “do their work without asking” are more likely to find customers, even if at the cost of their own benefits.

In the opening anecdote, when old Zhang tried to bargain with the female boss, she said, “You greedy *bangbang*. Do what I ask you to do.” Later, she said, “A *bangbang* bargains with me [the boss]!” Her words demonstrate her belief that a *bangbang* worker should do whatever the boss asks him to do without giving any lip. In other words, *bangbang* need to present a performance of deference to the “boss.” Many *bangbang* experience such deference as humiliation and shame. One man named Brother Xia told me

about this feeling of shame: “This job is not decent (*xia jian*). Why? I felt shamed to do it at first. (I found that) I had to be at someone’s command (*ting bieren de zhihui*) and had to walk behind others’ asses (*genzhe bieren de pigu houmian zou*). And...(I) did not dare to bargain with customers or to refuse their unreasonable requests... I felt like I was clumsy and stupid....”

One day, I walked with Brother Xia on the street. He was suddenly called by a female customer to carry a bag of white rice for her. The female customer walked ahead while Brother Xia followed her carrying the rice. I walked beside Brother Xia. He turned his head and looked at me with a self-mocking smile: “Remember what I’ve told you? ... See what I am doing? Walking behind others’ asses!” His voice was low since he wanted to keep it between us, but his feeling of shame and discomfort was strong enough for me to feel it.

Bangbang’s work often includes care-giving. Their labor is not just a physical one, but also an affective one. For example, some store owner, once having established mutual trust with a *bangbang* man, will ask him to run errands for the businesses and his family free of charge. Such errands include taking care of the store when everyone is absent, buying lunch boxes for the shop workers, and even picking up the store owner’s child from school. Fearing losing their affiliation with the store owners and hoping to secure more work in the future, *bangbang* often find it difficult to refuse the bosses’ requests for this extra works. Some *bangbang* told me that they did these little favors for the bosses with expectations of receiving big favors from them, such as an increase in payment in the future. For some *bangbang*, care-giving for the owners is a strategy for fulfilling their own purposes. But the care-giving role makes other *bangbang* feel inferior. For example, one *bangbang* told me that he and his colleague were asked to clean a customer’s storehouse before securing payment. He sighed: “We are like the *laomazi* (eldly maid).....having to do everything to make the boss happy. Wipe his ass, clean his house...” It is worth noting that he compared his own job to that of maid. He seems to consider the caregiving role of a domestic worker similar to his own. Clearly, he rejects the caregiving role and refuses to be feminized. In other words, he tries to distance himself from a role that he considers more appropriate for women.

5.5. BANGBANG'S GENDER STRATEGIES

In my fieldwork, I observed five gender strategies that *bangbang* adopt to buttress themselves from discrimination and challenges. These strategies include emphasizing the masculine aspects of *bangbang* work, distancing themselves from roles that are stereotypically associated with women, telling bitter stories about themselves, making use of collective memories of Maoist socialism that favors peasants and manual labor, and resisting performing deference to customers, especially those who are female. However, although some strategies shore up a type of masculinity that contests the upper-middle-class ideals of masculinity, other strategies enable *bangbang* to claim superiority over women. Rather than disrupting the conventional gender order, these strategies reproduce the existing gender system that privileges men over women.

5.5.1. Emphasizing physical strength and the advantages of *bangbang*'s work

In the city of Chongqing, *bangbang* were famed for their bodies and their extraordinary strength. People said that *bangbang*'s bodies were solid and that their strength was extraordinary because they performed manual labor every day. This narrative is a source of masculine pride for *bangbang*. Although physical labor is not as valued in the post-Mao era as it had been in the Maoist period, strong and healthy bodies are still desired and valued in post-reform China. From a historical perspective, China's failure in the First Opium War (1840-1842) inaugurated a modern discourse of Chinese masculinity that associates an effeminate and weak body with China's painful history of being penetrated and dominated by Western imperialism. A strong body, by contrast, denotes masculinity and modernity. *Bangbang* neatly appropriate this discourse to divert urban humiliation and marginalization.

Lao Liu, a forty-seven year old *bangbang* with a solid body, has worked in Chongqing for about ten years. He recently helped his oldest son get a job at a Chongqing factory. His wife farms the family's fields in their home village. "I am the one who provides nearly everything for my wife and children," he said proudly. When I reminded him of his wife's contribution to the family income, he laughed, "But

during the busy season of harvesting, I go back to help her. Without me, she can not even harvest the paddy,” he said confidently. When I asked him about how urban people treat him, he said, “... I know some urban people look down upon us *bangbang*. Some *bangbang* are afraid to offend them. I am not. Why should I be? Urban men’s bodies have been ruined by an indulgent (urban) life style, such as prostitution, mahjong playing, and banqueting ... They are easily beaten down, like women. I beat a punk urban kid until he begged me to let him go.”

Lao Liu’s narrative suggests that his extraordinary physical strength not only enables him to shoulder the heavy workload of a busy farming season and thus secure his dominant role at home, but also serves to bolster his claim to masculine domination over the urban male body, which he effeminized, even when he recognizes that “urban people look down upon us *bangbang*.” Although there are *bangbang* who lament their poor education and express their desire for intellectual work, *bangbang* also widely regard physical weakness as a symptom of intellectual work and a shameful state for men. *Bangbang* also adopt the tough guy ideal to justify the value of their manual labor. One day in my fieldwork, I took a photo for a group of *bangbang*. One *bangbang* onlooker yelled to those in front of my camera, “Are you scholars? You look so weak! You should all hold the poles in your hands and show off the masculine vigor of us Chongqing men, like tough guys!” All the *bangbang* in the picture agreed with what he said and posed in the way he suggested. This episode suggests that some *bangbang* regard intellectual workers as physically weak. They are thus also not masculine and not able to represent Chongqing men. For a man to be man, he should be tough. In other words, the appropriate way to be masculine is to do manual work and to have a solid body.

Almost all the *bangbang* I interviewed prefer *bangbang* jobs to other forms of manual work, even if they choose to do other types of manual work on a part-time basis. As analyzed in Chapter Three, the *bangbang* work, as informal day labor, allows workers a certain degree of flexibility. *Bangbang* interpret this flexibility of their work as *ziyou* (freedom). Though this conceptualization of *ziyou* is more of a discursive construction than a fact, having *ziyou* at work is important to these working men. *Bangbang* I met told me one after another that the bodily control required for factory work or on a construction team

was not only unbearable and but also vehemently threatened the decency of “being a man.” In contrast, the casual work of street haulage provided working men an opportunity to reclaim dignity, although at a cost (Zhang 2008).

While many *bangbang* I talked to mentioned that they would prefer an “office job” than their current job, some *bangbang* told me that they would not trade what they were doing for an office job because the latter did not provide *ziyou*. Several *bangbang* criticized urban office workers for their dependence on cadres or bosses. One *bangbang* pointedly mocked, “They (the urban office workers) have to lick their leaders’ boot to get promoted! I wouldn’t do such a girlish thing (*poniang jia zuo de*)!” Instead of treating such a comment as real criticism against office work, I argue that this is a tactical action the *bangbang* man takes to highlight the advantage of doing a casual job and to empower himself..

Furthermore, *bangbang* I met often claimed that their job, compared to their wives’, was more valuable and proper for men. *Bangbang*’s wives who came to the city with them often worked as hourly workers, small factory workers, maids, shoe shiners, restaurant waitresses, janitors, and garbage collectors. Most were employed around the places where their husbands worked. A few *bangbang* I talked to, while appreciative of their wives’ hard work to bring money to the household, thought of the latter’s contribution as secondary to or less important than their own. For example, a couple of *bangbang* told me that the income from *bangbang*’s work was their family’s major income; their wives’ income was only supplementary. They also thought that as men, they would never take their wives’ jobs, which they saw as “women’s jobs.” For example, one *bangbang* named Brother Xia told me that he would not become a shoe shiner like his wife, even if it earned him more money than *bangbang* work. He said, “Women have nimble fingers. Their hands are soft and deft. They also have patience. We men are used to doing heavy work, and our hands are careless.” He laughed. “Also,” he added, “to shine other’s shoes is not decent (*dijian*). You have to sit lower than others (customers) and to take care of their stinky feet! That’s not for me.”

Bangbang often considered their wives’ income as meager and not worth mentioning. When I told Brother Xia that one *bangbang*’s wife earned more than one thousand yuan (about US \$300) per month in

peak season (late fall and winter when many young urban women wear long boots and leather shoes), which was close to the average income of a *bangbang* man, he said: “Well, that’s rare. Thinking of long-term earning and stability, *bangbang* work definitely earns more.” Brother Xia’s wife is a garbage collector, but when we first met, he said that his wife had no job and “stayed at home doing nothing.” Later when I visited them at home, I saw him scolding his wife for being “useless” and “lazy.” He secured his male dominance at home by ignoring his wife’s contribution to the family and by putting down the value of her job.

5.5.2. Telling Bitter Stories

Not all *bangbang* that I met would tell others his bitter life stories. A man who expresses bitter emotions and feelings risks being seen as a coward (*ruanruo*) and less manly. But a few *bangbang*, during my interviews with them, told long and sad stories of their suffering in migration and work. Their purpose, however, was not to reap sympathy or to criticize social inequality, but to show off their courage and wisdom in overcoming the adversities and to explain why they have not been able to attain a better job. For example, a *bangbang* named Brother Jiang called himself “a man with bitter fate” (*kuming ren*). He told me that he was the youngest child in his family. His father divorced his mother when he was six years old and remarried when he was fourteen. He had two siblings and three stepsisters and a stepbrother. When he was thirteen, his older sister and brother divided the family property (*fen jia*). He was too young to protect his entitlement to the property, the majority of which was divvied up by his other siblings. He married when he was just twenty years old and had to pay monetary penalties to the local government three times for his early marriage.⁴⁰ He worked as a stonemason in his village for three or four years before he went to Yunnan Province in Southwest China to work as a brick maker. The work was demanding, and he was not used to the humid Yunnan weather. He suffered a lot during that trip. He had also been to Guizhou, Sichuan, and Fujian (Xiamen city) for different jobs. “I have tried everything to

⁴⁰ The legal marriage age for man in China is twenty-two years old.

survive. ... People like me married too early and lost family support too early. We had to work as manual laborer (*shi xiali de*) because we don't have an educational certificate or an influential family. No money (from my family) for my education and my marriage. My life is surely more difficult than others." He said, "But people like us are able to 'eat bitterness.' We depend on ourselves for everything. Once I left home, I've always depended on myself. One has to be capable. [For example,] generally, the goods [that I choose to carry] are as heavy as four or five hundred *jin* (two or two and half hundred kilogram). I had to be able to lift it (*bu xia tili buxing*) ... I've experienced much bitterness (*wo shi yizhi ku chulai de*), I tell you."

Then he continued to tell me the things that he had achieved against the odds. He focused mostly on his monetary contributions to his family. He said: "My older sister got married, and my father passed away last year. The funeral costs 4,500 yuan (around US \$700). I paid it all by myself." He also felt proud of his newly built house in the countryside: "My house has three floors and more than ten rooms. I borrowed more than 20,000 yuan (around US \$3000) to build my house. I paid all the debts in two years!" He also told me that his wife did not need to work because of his income. He was the one who raised the whole family, including a newborn baby. He said: "I married too early and I don't have good education to get a better job. But you see, I've paid off the fine [for my early marriage], built my house, and have my own kid."

Brother Jiang repeatedly stressed the hardships and suffering that he experienced, but also his successful survival. The great difficulties that he went through make his achievements even more impressive. The hardships and suffering have become proof of his endurance and his capability to "win the game."

5.5.3. Making use of socialist morality

When Mao Zedong was in charge, he favored a large population and valued physical over intellectual labor. In China's socialist period, peasants were the more respectful class and helped educate intellectual

workers. Such admiration of physical labor is difficult to find in the post-Mao era. Yet I met quite a few *bangbang* in their forties and fifties who quoted the political slogans popular during China's highly socialist period (1949-1978) as a method for defending the value of manual labor. One day, during my preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 2004, I found a group of *bangbang* sitting together and talking about their businesses. One *bangbang* named Red Hair, after having a hard time with a customer, joined the group and complained: "That boss is so fucking (*tamade*) tough (to deal with). It is meaningless to do this job (*ne ge gongzuo mei yisi*)."⁴¹ A *bangbang* sat beside Red Hair said: "You are angry for what? *Bangbang* work is not supposed to be a decent job (*bangbang shi xiajian*). You can't blame others." Another *bangbang* named Specialized Household⁴¹ disagreed: "Who says *bangbang* work is not decent? We don't steal, rob, or cheat. We work to get our food (*pin laodong chifan*). The boss's labor is labor; our labor is labor too. (*laoban de laodong shi laodong, women de laodong ye shi laodong*)."⁴¹ A *bangbang* mocked Specialized Household: "Yeah, yeah. Labor! How much is labor worth?" Specialized Household said in response, "Labor is honorable (*laodong guangrong*)! Chairman Mao said so." Red Hair questioned back sarcastically, "How honorable is labor? Honor can't be eaten and worn and can't bring money (*guangrong you buneng chi, chuan, ye meide qian*)!" "Well," Specialized Household responded, "even though that's true, labor is still honorable. The great man (Chairman Mao)'s words..."

During my year-long dissertation fieldwork, I encountered similar scenes in which socialist political slogans and morality were used by these working men to support their arguments or beliefs. One day when I worked with a group of *bangbang* in their workplace, a few of them were called by a customer to deliver a whole truck of goods. Since that businessman had a reputation of delaying payment, few *bangbang* responded. Finally, four *bangbang* went because the businessman promised to give them 50 - 60 yuan each. I went with them. It was a cold winter afternoon. The unloading took about three hours. When the work was done, it was almost dinner time. During the work, the four *bangbang* were excitedly talking about the 50 yuan that the businessman promised to give them. However, at the end, each of them

⁴¹ He was a peasant who specialized in raising ducks and his family was used to being in a "specialized household" (*zhuanyehu*). But he went bankrupt in late 1990s and had to work as a *bangbang* since then.

only got 20 yuan. All four were raged. They got together and talked about a collective protest. When two of them were hesitant in arguing against the businessman, Lao Gao, who had been treated unfairly before by that businessman, said: “Don’t be scared. He (the businessman) owns us money; we have every reason to talk to him and get back *our* money. He has done such things to us a long time ago. I’ve had enough....Where there is repression, there is resistance (*nali you yapo, nali jiu you fankang*).” Another *bangbang* Xiao Peng responded: “Right! To rebel is right (*zaofan you li*).” “Where there is repression, there is resistance” and “it is reasonable to rebel” are both revolutionary slogans that were popular during the Maoist period. Here, they were used as justification of the workers’ resistance to unfair treatment in the workplace.

In moments like this, the past socialist period, which had advocated egalitarianism and equalitarianism and which had favored manual labor and the masses’ resistance to violence and oppression, becomes a resource for *bangbang* trying to claim their power and pride. These scenes are what Anagnost calls “moments when vestiges of the socialist past rise up like ghosts to confront the present, evoking in quick succession the conflicting emotions of both intense nostalgic desire and scornful contempt” (Anagnost *Sences*:2). Although the socialist past and its ethics have largely evaporated with the collapse of socialist state, they still haunt Chinese people’s everyday lives like a ghost. It is when people like *bangbang* draw on the past to protest discrimination and inequality that the past rises up to remind us of its lingering existence. Such moments also show the transformation of value over the last five decades. What was valued in the recent past has lost its worth. The value of the socialist period has been spectralized and evacuated. In the era of commercialization and consumption, market rationalities have penetrate every aspect of social life, and “our conception of the good life is increasingly narrowed around incitements to consume” (Anagnost forthcoming: 24). In the above anecdote, I documented Red Hair asking, “How honorable is labor? Honor can’t be eaten and worn and can’t bring money (*guangrong you buneng chi, chuan, ye meide qian*).” His words point to the dominance of market calculation in forming people’s view of value. They also point out a shift in value from the socialist past. Honor becomes useless when it loses

its capacity to bring material benefits such as food, clothes and money. The labor that brings few material rewards is not valuable to manual laborers anymore.

When *bangbang* draw on political slogans and socialist ethics to defend their pride and honor, they face the risk of associating themselves with the dismantled past and thus of subjecting themselves to further discrimination. When I told a relative of mine, an urban man in his fifties, that some *bangbang* thought “labor is honorable,” he said, “How backward! Those *bangbang* are out of tune with the time (*gen bus hang shidai*)...How can they still believe in that political crap?...No wonder our nation cannot advance, and no wonder our country is not powerful. (China has) so many foolish peasants (*sha nong hua*).” In his opinion, *bangbang*’s strategic use of the socialist morality proves their “backwardness.” He also seems to believe that the great quantities of “backward” peasants or rural migrants like *bangbang* contribute to China’s inferior position in the global community. He blames the peasants and rural migrants for being obstacles to the state’s modernization and economic development.

At the same time, *bangbang*’s nostalgia for the socialist past cannot be dismissed as mere exaggeration and romanticization. In fact, many *bangbang* are aware of the socialist state’s violent and rigid control over rural labor and of the devastating consequences of the state’s intrusion into private lives. Moreover, fresh on their minds is the disaster of starvation and horror caused by radical political movements such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Some *bangbang* I met thanked Deng Xiaoping for the economic reform that had raised the living standard for peasants and allowed them to pursue better working opportunities in the cities.

5.5.4. Resisting performing deference to customers

Normally, male *bangbang* avoid confronting their customers in order to keep them and to get better payment; they show friendliness and obedience and try to satisfy the customers. However, if a customer challenges a *bangbang*’s pride to the extent of intolerance, the *bangbang* may refuse to keep performing deference. One big challenge is serving female customers, especially young urban women. Female

customers play bifurcated roles in *bangbang*'s stories. On the one hand, some female customers gain the respect and sympathy of male *bangbang*. Brother Chen once told me that he knew a female customer (a store owner) who ran her business alone. The woman worked hard and supported her family while her husband had extramarital affairs. She decided to close down her business and move back to her hometown. After telling me the story, Brother Chen sighed: "She is a good person, having been responsible (for her family) and living a hard life here. It is not easy for a woman to do businesses all by herself with these men around. (Life has) not (been) easy for her. I had sympathy for her, and helped her by moving goods. She gave me money (for the service), but I didn't take it. In the end, she gave me some furniture (to express her gratitude)." In this case, female boss becomes the subject of sympathy and compassion.

On the other hand, the female customers who were arrogant and dominating could be challenging to some *bangbang*. It is not just due to the interaction of gender and power, but also has to do with other forms of regionally- and socially-generated hostilities. One *bangbang* told me: "I don't like to work for those female bosses, especially those from other provinces (*wai di de*). They asked you to do this and that ... paying less (than male bosses)." "It is true. Woman is stingier than man (*nǚ de bǐ nán de xiǎoqī*)." Another *bangbang* agreed and said: "It takes a long time to bargain with them (female bosses). Male bosses are not so troublesome." However, in reality, the female bosses that the *bangbang* dislike might not be stingier than male ones. *Bangbang*'s opinion about female bosses are likely informed by the gender-specific stereotypes that cast women as stingier than men. Actually *bangbang* also complained about male bosses for their stinginess. For example, one *bangbang* Xiao Bao said: "Boss Hu is not generous at all. (He) bargains with us for just five jiao (about 0.071 US dollars)." Another *bangbang* responded: "Like the female bosses (*gen nǚ laoban you yībīng le*)." This conversation shows clearly that the stingy female boss is more stereotype than fact.

Bangbang resolved their conflicts with male and female customers in different ways. In the anecdote above, when the female boss kept bargaining with Old Zhang, the other *bangbang* turned the bargaining into an opportunity for teasing. Little Peng even said: "'Hey boss! You are too 'smart.' Thinking too

much damages your health. Calculate less and you will become young and beautiful. Your husband will love you more.” Here, the female boss loses her value as a full human being. Instead, under her husband’s figurative gaze, she is turned into the object of male desire. The teasing itself is also very much gendered, showing the male dominance of *bangbang* as a collective over the female boss as an individual. When a single *bangbang* meets a female boss, he is powerless because of the huge disparity in their respective economic and social statuses. However, when the *bangbang* unite together and collectively bargain with the female boss, they regain back the masculine dominance and power.

In some cases, *bangbang* refused to perform deference to customers who they could not tolerate, even though they risked losing a business opportunity. Brother Xia told me that he once confronted a young urban girl. “She hailed me when I was looking for business near the food market. She asked me to carry some vegetable for her. I didn’t want to do it because I know some customers stroll very slowly in the food market and spend a long time being picky about the goods (while *bangbang* have to accompany them and wait for them). It is not worth it. But the girl told me that she would buy the goods quickly and leave soon. I believed her and followed her. But she kept strolling and shopping. I knew I was being cheated, so I told her that I needed to go. She wasn’t nice to me and... She said, ‘You are funny! I have your word (that you will wait for me until I am done with shopping). You can’t just leave.’ ‘Yes I can.’ I said. But she still didn’t leave. Finally, I became angry. I said, ‘You buy my service (*ni maide shi wo de fuwu*), not me! I quit (*wo bugan le*)!’” Then I threw all her goods on to the ground. I intentionally threw them into dirty water on the ground...” Brother Xia laughed. “What did she do?” “What do you think she could do?” Brother Xia said. He obviously felt proud and satisfied with the “revenge.” “She cursed me and had to bring back the vegetables herself.” He said. I asked, “Did you ask her for payment?” “Yes. But she didn’t give it to me. I thought, OK, at least I’ve gotten my revenge. Such a yellow-hair-girl (*huangmao yatou*),⁴² how can she be so arrogant! I was teaching her a lesson.” Brother Xia answered.

In general, *bangbang* try to be friendly and obedient to the male bosses, too. When the male bosses become tough though, *bangbang* often poke fun at themselves to reduce the rising tension between them.

⁴² In Chinese, yellow-hair-kid means “young child” or “little child.”

They also use foot-dragging, ignorance, and mild confrontation as forms of protest. But in rare cases, the conflicts between the *bangbang* and the boss elevate into verbal and even physical violence. In such cases, that *bangbang* can no longer work for that boss for an extended period of time. His reputation is damaged, and his business opportunities can shrink as other bosses become informed of his “lack of friendliness.” In extreme cases, he also has to leave the workplace and find a new place to work. However, *bangbang* do not tease male bosses the way that they do the female bosses. I have also never seen any *bangbang* make jokes about the male bosses’ wives or family members in front of them.

5.6. CONCLUSION

Working in the city as rural migrant men, male *bangbang* frequently encountered marginalization and discrimination that challenged their sense of masculine pride. The strategies they used to negotiate and resist the urban form of domination suggest an alternative type of masculinity that challenges the dominant gender order and the hegemonic ideal of masculinity that it promotes. However, their emphasis on man’s physical strength and solid body, the flexibility of *bangbang* work in giving them more control, and the priority of *bangbang* work over other female-dominated work have validated their masculine pride but at the expense of putting women in an inferior and less valuable position. When Lao Liu proudly bragged, “Without me, she cannot even harvest the paddy” and when Brother Xia criticized his wife for “doing nothing at home,” they showed their privilege over women but also reproduced a gendered social order that views women as inferior to men. When *bangbang* tell the sad stories of their suffering and hardship, they often emphasize their capacity for endurance and their ability to raise their families against adversity. *Bangbang* like Brother Jiang also pointed out that he was the breadwinner of the family, not his wife. And when *bangbang* refuse to pay deference to female customers, they often make use of the negative stereotype of woman, especially young urban woman, to justify their actions.

When they deal with the female boss, their teasing way of negotiation and contestation reinforces the conventional gender order that enables them to initiate the teasing as men.

Bangbang depart from the urban version of the male ideal yet simultaneously reproduce the conventional gendered norms. The socialist past becomes a resource for their self-empowerment; however, *bangbang*'s use of socialist morals to defend themselves and justify their resistance unfortunately incurs further discrimination and marginalization in urban settings. In other words, *bangbang* respond in a gender-specific manner to class oppression and to urban-rural disparities and inequalities, which in turn locks them into the same structured constraints they attempt to overcome. Their practice becomes a form of social action that ultimately results in the reproduction of the gender division of labor and reconfirmation of the present dominant gender order.

6.0 RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, I examine what rural migrant men in Chongqing say about their relationships with the people closest to them. Migrant men's relationships deeply inform their motivations for migrating and heavily influence how migration is experienced by individual migrants. Life in the city, in turn, can have a profound effect on migrants' social relations. These relationships are shaped by powerful gender discourses and the social resources available to individuals. An examination of the relations between migrant men and their close kin, friends, and employers, shows how gender and power are intertwined in shaping migratory experiences. The fact that these relationships have a major impact on migratory decisions and experiences helps us to understand migration as a continuing process. Such a process is motivated not merely by economic calculations and desires but also by the migrants' changing social relations.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first focuses on how rural migrant men's relationships with close family members determine their decisions to migrate. The second discusses their relationships with wives who either stay in the countryside or work in the city. The third explores their relationship with *laoxiang*,⁴³ friends, and urbanities. Throughout this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how migrant men's relationships with others shape their desires to migrate and their experiences of migration. I also further explore the impact of migration on these rural men's relationships, especially those with close family members and friends.

⁴³ Laoxiang is a Chinese word which refers to people who come from the same place. The place can refer to the same village, but also include the same county, city, province, and even region.

6.1. THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

In the 1990s, many scholars of Chinese domestic labor migration tended to use a “household strategy” approach to understand the motivations, decision making, and migration process behind the movement of millions of rural laborers (e.g., Zhao 1999; Cook 1999). This approach mainly follows classic economic theory in that it views individual peasants as autonomous, calculating actors but replaces the rational individual with the household. According to the “household strategy” theoretical framework, labor migration is determined by rational calculation of the household’s gains and costs in the interest of maximizing economic returns. This approach, however, has incurred criticism from feminists for downplaying the significance of other social forces that shape the decision-making processes – for example, “conflicts between the desires, expectations, and understandings of different household members, gendered differentials in power and control over resources in the household, and intra-household divisions of labor, all of which are shaped by society-level discourses relating to gender” (Chant and Radcliffe 1992: 23; Wolf 1992: 20-23; cited in Jacka 2006:165-166). At the same time, scholars such as Willis and Yeoh (2000) argue for a revision of the “household strategy” approach and suggest looking at more diverse, kin-based decision-making processes. Such approaches refrain from assuming that economic concerns and family needs naturally outweigh intra-household relationships, gender differentials, and the wider social and economic process. As Curran and Saguy argue, “there are complex negotiations (either implicit or explicit) between family members where the outcomes are dependent upon both cultural expectations of each gender as well as the relative resources (power) available to each family member” (Curran and Saguy 2001). I agree with Willis and Yeoh as well as with Curran and Saguy’s respective viewpoints. My research reveals that although decisions of out-migration may be made by each migrant individual, the decision-making process involves not just the migrants, but also their close kin. Their relations reflect highly gendered social expectations and power structures within their households. This section explores the complicated negotiations between family members in

relation to how decisions to migrate are influenced by wider social and economic forces as well as by gendered expectations.

As researchers such as Jacka (2006) and Sun (2009) point out, rural young women in China who want to migrate are likely to encounter objection from family members, especially their parents. Married women, too, are normally not encouraged to migrate alone or migrate ahead of their husbands. In my interviews, I was repeatedly told by male *bangbang* that almost all the adult men in their villages were in the cities, seeking job opportunities and hoping to improve the quality of their lives while women, children, and the aged stayed in the countryside. Within a family, men are often the first to go to the cities to work. As the conventional view would have it, men are the breadwinners, and they act according to the economic rationalities that calculate the costs and benefits of migration. However, my research finds that economic advancement, while being one important reason for men's out-migration, cannot fully explain the varied experience of men, especially those for whom economic benefits are not primary. The non-economic factors and social forces, such as familial relationships, that shape the decision-making process of rural men have been largely ignored. While economic concerns may also be at the center of the decision-making, I believe that a purely economic perspective can only provide an over-simplified explanation of why rural men choose to migrate.

Xiao Geng's story illustrates this point. Geng is a 31-year-old man who had been working as a *bangbang* for about five years. Tall, skinny, and with a pale face, he looked more like a store clerk than manual laborer. His father was a rural elementary school teacher and his mother a farmer. His family, due to his father's stable salary, was relatively wealthy in the village. His family belonged to a big clan and was well respected by the fellow villagers. Geng was well-off compared to his peers. He told me that he did not want to leave home to work as a migrant five years ago because he liked the quiet and leisurely rural life. But when the majority of adult rural men migrated to cities to earn money, and especially after some families became better-off than his because of the remittances the men sent back home, his ex-wife began to push him to do the same. She became jealous of the families that could afford to buy fancy household appliances, such as big color TV sets and VCD players. In Geng's case, economic stress was

not the major reason for his wife's dissatisfaction; instead, their differing conceptualizations of what constitutes an ideal life caused familial conflicts. When Xiao Geng refused to leave home, she blamed him for being useless and hopeless. Their relationship quickly turned bitter. After a big fight, she ran away with another man from their village and disappeared. Her elopement not only humiliated Xiao Geng but also enraged his parents, siblings, and relatives. Geng's parents felt that his wife had made their family lose face. His close kin pushed him to look for his wife and divorce her, especially after they heard that she was seen by a villager in Chongqing city. Xiao Geng wanted to take time to deal with this issue, but the pressure from his family was enormous. He had no choice but to go to Chongqing. Because of the shame, he decided not to contact any of his relatives in Chongqing but to rely on himself. His travel funds were used up before he could find his wife. He began to do part-time jobs to support himself. He ended up working as a *bangbang* because this occupation allowed him the time and flexibility to search for his wife. He found his wife after about two years of migrant life and divorced her. He did not return to his village afterwards but continued to work as a *bangbang*, mostly because he was in a relationship with a young woman he met in *Chongqing*. They had a baby girl, about whom he had not told his parents. He told me that he was still hurt by how his parents and relatives treated him when his wife deserted him. He was not confident telling them about his new relationship and the newborn baby.

Xiao Geng's story shows that rural migrant men do not simply want to migrate, but in some cases, are made to. Their migration is not always a free choice but sometimes a pressured one. When migration becomes an important strategy not only for rural families seeking to better their material conditions but also for individual rural men hoping to establish superiority at home and in their home villages, men like Xiao Geng who refuse migration put their masculine pride at risk. In Xiao Geng's case, he was criticized by both his wife and his close kin for being unwilling to leave home, although for different reasons. A man's value and reputation are to certain level determined by his willingness to migrate. In my fieldwork, I met male *bangbang* who viewed rural men who did not want to leave their home village to work in the city as "old-fashioned. Meanwhile, migration has also become the strategy adopted by rural men, like Xiao Geng, to escape humiliation and parental control over his personal issues.

China has a long history as a patriarchal society. Traditionally, men enjoy higher social and familial status than women, but they also carry more familial responsibilities and expectations. They are the breadwinners for their wife and children, and they are also expected to support their elderly parents. As the popular saying has it, “bring up sons for one’s old age” (*yang er fang lao*). In the urban region of post-Mao China, men and women are, in most cases, equally expected to support their parents, but in the countryside, men instead of women are still considered to be the primary caretakers for elderly parents. Additionally, social security for the elderly in rural regions is absent in contemporary China. Elderly peasants can rely only on their children for survival, especially after they lose the ability to work. Young unmarried daughters are expected to send remittances to their parents; but after they marry, they are expected to focus on their husband’s family. However, this is not the case for sons, especially the oldest son of a family. Adult sons are expected to send money to their parents both before and after marriage. In a family that has more than one son, elderly parents often choose to live with the oldest son, but each adult son is expected to give monetary aid to his parents every month (Meijer 1971; Yang 1959).

Many male *bangbang* have told me that supporting their parents is one major reason for their decision to migrate. One of them described his rationale to me as follows:

“My two sisters are both married. My younger brother is still in high school. My father’s blood pressure is high, and he can’t work too hard in the fields. My mother’s health is poor. Even so, they still farm some land and work very hard. I am the oldest one of my family. It is apparent that my parents would rely on me. I thought to myself, what would I do if my parents were sick when they were not able to farm their lands? The medical treatment is so expensive and we can hardly afford it. Now I am out here, and they don’t need to worry about their old age any more. As long as I have this job, they can ‘catch their breath’ (*song kou qi*).”

Fulfilling filial obligations is also important in evaluating what it means “to be a man.” I have met many *bangbang* who chose out-migration to pay their parents’ debts and medical bills and to provide regular remittances to parents. Brother Chen, a thirty-eight-year-old *bangbang*, decided to leave his hometown in Yunnan Province and worked in Chongqing in order to save money for his mother’s eye surgery. Although his wife and teenage son were not happy with his decision to leave, he insisted on doing so. He recalled during our interview that his mother had saved his life when he was a little child. He was seriously sick and in a coma. His father had given up on him, but his mother refused to do so. She carried

him on her back and traveled on foot for days to get him to a hospital. He was treated in the hospital and survived. He said, “If I don’t do anything for my mother, how can I call myself a man? My son doesn’t understand this right now, but I want him to learn it. If I am not filial to my own mother, how can I expect my child to be filial to me?” Shiming Jian (2000) also reports that a newlywed male *bangbang* in his early twenties left his wife to work alone in Chongqing city in order to pay his father’s medical bill. When asked whether he was willing to be apart from his wife, the *bangbang* answered: “My old father’s days can be counted. I work in the city (to pay his medical bill and) to fulfill my obligation of filial piety. My wife is still young; she and I have a whole life to be together.”

However, my research also finds that rural parents who I talked to had largely lowered their expectation for adult sons in terms of financial support. One old father said that his adult son who worked in the city as a migrant was “like a clay Buddha fording the river – hardly able to save himself.” He meant that his son had lived a hard life as a migrant and could not be expected to take care of his father any more. To reduce the younger generation’s burden, capable men from older generation also go to the city to work. Old Zhang is such an example. He was in his late fifties when he migrated for the first time from his home village in Lidu County to Chongqing city. Before that, he had been a regular farmer in the countryside for almost his whole life. In the village, he led a respectable life, raising two sons and a daughter to adulthood. His older son passed away in mid-1990s because of a chronic disease. Old Zhang had lived with Little Zhang, his younger son, after the death of his older son and had given the whole family property, including his house, to Little Zhang. In 1999, Little Zhang was jailed after his fight with a neighbor. Even with the aid of a lawyer who requested 3000 yuan for his service, Little Zhang was still sentenced to five years in prison. As soon as Old Zhang knew that paying a 10,000-yuan penalty could get his son out of prison in one and a half years, he began trying to raise the money. He managed to borrow the money from fellow villagers and relatives. Little Zhang was released on bail and went to Chongqing to work in order to pay the debt. But after about one year and before the debt was paid off, Little Zhang’s second child was born. With two children and an unemployed wife, Little Zhang could barely make ends meet, let alone pay off a debt. He turned to his father for help. He urged Old Zhang to work in Chongqing

with him in order to pay the debt. Old Zhang initially refused to leave the countryside because he liked farming and rural life. But he could not resist Little Zhang's repeated requests. Most importantly, Old Zhang expected to rely on Little Zhang in his old age. "He said if I take care of him this time, he will take care of me when I am too old to work," Old Zhang told me. He worked side by side with Little Zhang for about two years in Chongqing as *bangbang* until Little Zhang was driven out of the workplace for repeatedly fighting with his colleagues. Little Zhang went back to their home village and worked on-and-off as a motorcycle driver, but he never had a stable income. He was addicted to gambling and lost most of his earning on cards and mahjong. Old Zhang stayed in Chongqing and continued to send remittances back to his son's family.

Unlike Old Zhang, some elderly rural men who work in the city do not expect any reward from their children. They work only to share their children's economic burdens and to save some money in anticipation of old age. I met a few male *bangbang* who were in their fifties and sixties. None of them expected to depend on their children for a living. Just like their parents, the children were often migrant workers who engaged in low-end work that involved low pay and long hours. Many had difficulty making ends meet, let alone supporting their parents. But even if their children are well established in the city, the old men would not stop working. Old Wan was one of them. He was in his sixties when I met him. His son and daughter had both found jobs in Chongqing city and were both willing to take care of him. However, he chose to live alone and continued to work as a *bangbang*. He said: "I would prefer to go back to the countryside if I am too old to work. It is better to live alone than to depend on my children. They have their own lives; I will only be their burden." Citing his great-aunt as an example, he said that even someone in his or her eighties and nineties could still be independent.

The male *bangbang* who have children have another motivation to choose migration: to save money for their children's education. It is an economic issue, but it is also about fatherhood. For these rural men, to be a good father means providing as much income as possible so that their children can get a good education. One such male *bangbang* said: "I would eat poorly and wear cheap clothes if my children could have good lives. Nearly all my savings are spent on their education. If they want to go to college, I

will support them without any hesitation, as long as they can pass the entrance examination.” Another male *bangbang*, when talking about his two children’s future jobs, said firmly, “They (my children) will not be *bangbang*! They will go to college and work in offices.” When his son decided to drop out of school and go to a vocational school to save the family money, he persuaded his son to go to senior high school. He did not agree with most of his family members who thought that it was a waste of money for a rural child. In his opinion, the knowledge that his son learned in high school, such as mathematics and English, would help him become a “skilled worker” instead of a “purely manual worker.”

The irony is, to be a “good father,” these rural men had to leave their homes and were absent in their sons and daughters’ lives. Some male *bangbang* had not been able to develop a close relationship with their children. One male *bangbang*, Brother Wang, recalled his recent experience of visiting his family in Dazu County near Chongqing city. “My two sons did not talk to me; they behaved as if I was air. They are afraid of me. But what’s there for them to be afraid of?...I asked about their studies. They only gave me very short answers. It is either ‘Yes Dad,’ or ‘No Dad.’ ...” Another *bangbang* told me, “When I played with my boss’s son (in the city), I thought of my own (who lived in the country). He is eleven-years-old, but we barely spent time together. He is closer to his mother...He wasn’t happy that I was not there for him; but he was not unhappy either. His mother told me that he barely asked about me. I guess he was used to my absence.” In order to compensate for their absence, male *bangbang* send back gifts and money for their children. “They need to understand,” one *bangbang* said. “Their father was not there for them because he had to provide for them. They should not live their father’s life. They should study hard and go to college so that they could have a good job and live with their children.” However, a *bangbang*’s wife told me that the money and gifts sent back home only “spoil” the children. “They think money is easy,” this mother said, “They ask for it when they don’t have money. They don’t want to study hard. They say, ‘why go to college? Look at Dad. He didn’t go to college, but he sends us these fabulous clothes and toys!’”

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas’ research on Phillippina migrants’ families found that in transnational families where the fathers migrated for work and mothers stayed at home, the fathers were eager to

establish authoritarian measures of discipline over their children (2005). However, the practice of authoritarian discipline often aggravated the tension between fathers and their children at home. I found similar cases in my fieldwork. In many rural families, fathers were often responsible for supervising their children's school work, helping them with homework, and communicating with their children's teachers. This was not because mothers could not handle such tasks, but because it was widely believed that fathers had the authority to carry out such roles. For example, I heard several *bangbang*'s wives complained that their children did not perform well at school because the childrens' fathers were absent from home. One of them said, "My son is afraid of no one except his father. No matter how many times I yell at him and urge him to stop watching TV and start doing his homework, he just ignores me. He knew that I would never beat him. My heart is too gentle and soft. But his father is different. He doesn't speak to him (their son). He beats him. So each time my husband comes home, my son behaves himself very well." But the more eager the father was to establish his authority at home after a long absence, the more intense the relationship between him and his children. As Brother Wang said, when he asked his children about their studies, they just gave him very short answers. The tension between the father and children was hard to ease. In Brother Wang's case, he realized that his children's indifference toward him was related to his absence, but he could not afford to remain at home.

Migrant men tried to compensate for their absence when they returned home. When I accompanied one *bangbang* to visit his rural home, I observed him spending a lot of time with his adult children, visiting their families, having long conversations with them, and making plans with them. He spent a lot of time playing with his grandchildren, taking care of them, bathing them, and carrying the youngest grandchild on his back when he went out to visit his friends. His return was like a holiday for his whole family.

The above examples do not suggest that migration is the only way for male migrants to fulfill familial obligations or that meeting the family's financial needs attenuates the rural men's personal desire to fulfill parental or familial expectations. In many cases, rural men migrate to "learn new skills," "take a look of the outside world," "live my life in the way that I like," or "change my fate." These are some of the

answers I received when I asked male *bangbang* about their reasons for migrating. They came to the city of Chongqing with a variety of dreams and hopes. Self-development and self-advancement were topics that repeatedly came up in my conversations with them.

6.2. MIGRANT MARITAL RELATIONS

As argued above, migration is a process that should not be understood as merely a “household strategy” that aims to improve the economic conditions of the migrant families either. Male migrants, just like female ones, choose out-migration out of consideration of many non-economic factors. Once they leave home and work in the city, migration does not just impact the lives of the migrants. It is a continuing changing process that brings long-lasting changes to the migrants’ relationships with family members and their local communities. Marital relations, among other relationships, are deeply impacted by migration.

Whereas Western scholars have examined how the migrant experiences of women impact their marital relations, scant attention has been paid to the impact of migration on the marriage life when men are the ones who migrate. Women attract more academic attention because the conventional gender norm considers migration not “natural” and proper for women. A migrant woman can be viewed as an irresponsible mother to her child and disloyal wife to her husband. Whereas migration is considered to be problematic for women, it is all “natural” for men, since men are expected to work and be the breadwinners for their families. However, such expectations obscure the changes that male migration brings to marital relations. How does the absence of a husband within the household change a wife’s daily activities? How do married couples cope with the emotional and psychological consequences of migration? Does migration bring more harmony or more conflicts to marital relationships? Scholars such as Margold (1995), Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2005), Michele Ruth Gamburd (2002), and Lena Na’re (2010) have paid attention to male migrants’ experiences and to how migration shapes migrant men’s perceptions of manhood and familial relations. Following these scholars, I explore the impact of migration on migrant

men's families in the context of post-Mao China by examining the relationships between *bangbang* and their spouses. This examination includes cases in which the husband migrates alone and those in which the husband and the wife migrate together, in some cases with pre-school-aged children.

6.2.1. Husbands Migrate and Wives Plow

About two thirds of the *bangbang* that I met migrated with their wives and, in some cases, also with their children. However, about one third of them migrated alone. These men chose to migrate alone not because they preferred to do so, but because they could not afford to raise their families in the city. For those who had school-aged children, the husband's absence also meant that the wife had to stay in the village to take care of their children because the children were not allowed in urban public schools. Jacka argues, there is nothing "rational" or "natural" in this "man migrate woman plow" pattern; if thinking "rationally," male peasants should stay in the country while allowing their wives to migrate because farming is heavy manual labor and would therefore traditionally constitute a "man's job." But the changing nature of gendered divisions of labor helps make sense of the ongoing movement of a huge number of men away from the agrarian economy. The "man's job" is then turned into the "woman's job."

What Jacka does not mention is that although many migrant families have "naturally" accepted this new gendered division of labor, the old way of thinking that casts farming as a "man's job" does not easily go away. Some *bangbang* I met expressed discomfort in having their wives taking care of the land in their absence. One *bangbang* said: "I asked my wife to stop farming most of our land. One of my relatives is farming it right now. A woman can't do the tough job (*xinku huolu*) as well as a man." Many *bangbang* also returned to their home villages at the peak farming season to help spread seeds in the rice paddles and reap the ripe rice crops. Helping with the farm work is an important way that male rural migrants reassert their masculine pride.

Male *bangbang* who I talked to carefully maintained regular communication with their wives and children in the countryside. Many had cell phones but, to save money, made phone calls only when

needed. When fellow villagers also working in Chongqing city went back home, *bangbang* often asked them to bring messages and gifts to their family members. Continuous communication with their families became a source of emotional support for these rural men in the city. Normally, *bangbang* would not admit to outsiders their emotional attachment to their wives, choosing instead to keep such emotions to themselves or to boast how little they care. One *bangbang* said, “Without my wife around, I am free all the time. No one yells at me when I smoke and drink.” However, when talking to me in private, some of them expressed deep feelings for their spouses. A thirty-two-year-old man nicknamed Three Three talked about his wife, “I owe her a lot. She is hard-working and treats me and our children very well. I feel secure as long as she is in charge of the house.” Another *bangbang*, on a different occasion, said, “I feel the happiest when I call my wife. We talk often. ... She is a good helper to me and to the family. Because of her, I can work full-heartedly without worrying about my family in the countryside.”

Many male *bangbang* who lived alone in the city experience enormous loneliness. Most of them rent apartments with coworkers, friends, or fellow villagers. Normally, more than three people share a room. There is barely any privacy in the rented apartments. Many of them have a rotating schedule with their roommates for cooking simple dinners. Rarely do they dine out. When they do, they only go to street food vendors or to inexpensive restaurants. They spend their leisure time playing cards, drinking, watching TV or DVDs, listening to free music in public parks, and visiting fellow villagers or friends. They rarely participate in the same activities as most urban adults – for example, surfing the internet, going to pubs, playing computer games, or attending evening classes. These activities are too costly for them. There is very limited emotional support for these migrants who leave their families in the countryside. According to a 2005 survey conducted by the journal *Watching The East Weekly*, loneliness is the top emotional problem for adult rural migrants. However, I never heard a *bangbang* confess his loneliness in public or in front of his coworkers. Their conversations generally consisted of news concerning their home villages, children, and neighbors. Asked directly, some men admitted that “it is not interesting to be alone” (*yige ren buhao shua*) but would not elaborate more. But when they were with their close male friends and in a very relaxed environment, sometimes a few of them would indicate loneliness. When I had a hot pot with

Brother Liu's *bangbang* friends during their leisure time, these men mentioned the joy with which they returned home for the Spring Festival the previous year. They complained that migrant life, compared to rural life, was lonely and isolated. One of them said: "My wife joked that I am living a 'good' life while she is eating bitterness in the country. I told her that I envy her 'bitterness.' For me, the life back home is sweet. Bitterness is life *here*."

Male migrants' sex lives were also altered by the long-term separation from their spouses. A survey commissioned by the Guangdong Sexology Association in 2009 found that up to 36 percent of married migrant men in Dongguan of Guangdong Province are bothered by sexual repression. About 30 percent of rural married migrant men said that they had sex with sex workers. Another 30 percent of them said that they had had more than one sexual partner. In the case of *bangbang*, they sometimes expressed their desires and complaints by making jokes in front of their colleagues. Those who could not meet their wives on a regular basis sometimes became the subject of such jokes, especially right after visiting their families in the countryside.

For example, White Kid, a thirty-four-year-old male *bangbang* was teased by his male colleagues after he came back from a short visit to his wife and children. White Kid's *bangbang* colleague Fat Kid Yan said, "You look great, White Kid! What did your wife cook for you?" Another colleague followed, "It is probably not the food that counts; it is the quality of sleep (*shuimian zhiliang*)!" White Kid looked awkward and uncomfortable. But he just tolerated such jokes with an awkward smile on his face. In two other interviews, two married male *bangbang* each admitted that they had had sex with sex workers. They considered their behavior to be that of a normal man. One of them said that sex workers were also migrants in the service sector. "They need to make a living, just like me. I bought their service. That's all," One of them said. Some married *bangbang* criticized those who had sex with sex workers. Xiao Jiang, a *bangbang* who had been married for ten years said that enduring sexual repression was part of being a "real man." He said: "Before my wife joined me here, I was all alone (in the city). It was very hard, but I swore to myself that I would be loyal to her no matter what. She was also lonely at home and life wasn't easy for her either. ... I told myself to be strong and to resist temptations for my family ... I

am a man. If I can't endure the suffering, how can my wife endure it?" But other married *bangbang* were less critical. Tan White Hair said: "it may not be an ideal situation, but it is understandable. It is not easy for everyone (who works) out here." Brother Chen also mentioned that several of his *bangbang* colleagues had a history of sleeping with sex workers. "They were out of options." Chen told me, "As men, they had the need. I understand, though I prefer to not do it myself."

The absence of a husband causes changes in the day-to-day operations of the household. Rural men, although normally not involved in many domestic errands, do play an important role in maintaining the household. They do chores such as repairing the house, carrying heavy materials, supervising children's homework, chopping fire wood, and farming the land (especially plowing the land). When they are absent, the wives and other family members often have to rearrange their schedules or ask others to take on the husband's workload. Yunfang, a *bangbang's* wife, said that she had to give up farming her rice paddy after her husband went to Chongqing because she had such a hard time handling both the farming work and domestic chores. Some wives had to ask for help from their parents, parents-in-law, or other relatives. But in some cases, as a last resort, they had to seek help from their male neighbors or fellow villagers, which at times triggered familial discord. Xiao Hong, a *bangbang's* wife, told me that rumors about her having an affair with her male neighbor cropped up after he had helped her with some home repairs. She decided to leave the village and join her husband in Chongqing city to avoid hurting her own and her family's reputation and to avoid bringing further trouble to her male neighbor.

The wives of *bangbang* also say that they feel insecure after their husbands leave. "If a burglar breaks in (my house), I am the only one who can fight with him. My child is too small, and my parents-in-law are too old," said Xiao Hu, one *bangbang's* wife. She told me that she put a kitchen knife under her pillow every night in case she ever has to fight off burglars. She only stopped doing this when her husband came home. Another concern among the wives of *bangbang* were the rumors and the talk among the wives themselves about their husband's loyalty. One *bangbang's* wife told me that she had heard about many cases in which a husband's extra-marital affairs with women in the city led to broken marriages and divorces. She said, "I was worried after hearing so many sad stories from my friends. I

can't imagine what it would be like if he did that to me. He is the backbone of my family and father of my child. ... So I call him frequently and ask my father (who was also working in Chongqing) to visit him often. ... No, not because I don't trust him, but because he and I were not together..." Most of the wives I talked to, however, expressed confidence in their husbands' integrity and loyalty to marriage. Sexual harassment is another reason for left-behind wives' sense of insecurity. Huifang Wu and Jingzhong Ye's research on left-behind wives in five provinces of China provides a vivid example in which the wife of an absent migrant worker was sexually harassed by her male neighbor (Wu and Ye 2009). The neighbor often peed in front of the woman's house and intentionally exposed himself to her. When the woman confronted her neighbor, he verbally assaulted her.

The sex life of the wife also changes in the absence of her husband. According to *People's Daily*, a study by Chinese Agriculture University reveals that China has 47,000,000 "left-behind women," about 54.2 percent of the total "left-behind" population. These women, due to the absence of their husbands, face many problems, including the lack of a regular sexual relations. The patriarchal social structure in rural China exerts more rigid control over women's sex than men's. Women who have extra-marital relationships are often subject to more severe punishment and more intense social criticism than their male counterparts. Newspapers often carry stories in which left-behind wives committ suicide – for example, by drinking pesticide – after her husband discovered that she had partaken in an extra-marital relationship. The *bangbangs'* wives that I talked to had varied opinions on this issue. Some thought that extra-marital relationships were not a correct way to solve marital problems but that it was also wrong to only punish the wife. "If the man is really capable, he should not leave the wife behind and let her make mistakes," said Sister Liu, a *bangbang's* wife. Some thought that a woman's quality (*suzhi*) determined whether or not she would be able to keep her chastity (*shou jie*) for her husband. Some blamed the strong temptation that left-behind women faced in the countryside and criticized the third party for being evil and selfish. One *bangbang's* wife told me that years ago, when her husband was in Fujian Province, she was attracted to her ex-boyfriend in her parents' village. They expressed their feelings to each other, but they stopped the relationship before it got serious. She said that she understood women who had extra-

marital relationship because of loneliness, but she would not divorce her husband for another man because she loved her children very much and wanted to give them a complete family.

6.2.2. Marital Relations in the City

Previous research on the marital relationships of rural migrant couples who both work in the urban regions has produced two contradictory perspectives. One is that migration empowers rural women because they actively participate in paid employment and in other activities in the public sphere (Murphy 2004; Willis and Yeoh 2000). The other is that migration causes great stress on husband-wife relations. From the second viewpoint, women are often vulnerable in family conflicts and subject to domestic violence at the hands of their husbands (Jacka 2006). I argue that to ask questions of whether migration empowers or weakens migrant men/women is too simplistic and less productive than examining who is empowered or weakened by migration and how such outcomes are determined in particular circumstances. Migration should be considered as multiple and as a continuing process, as Piper and Roces argue (2005). Opportunities and stress, family discord and harmony, empowerment and disempowerment co-exist in migrant experiences. The social locations, or “power geometry” (Mahler and Pessar 2001), of individuals help determine to what extent they are agents or victims and how they respond to what they encounter. Mahler and Pessar’s conceptual model—gendered geographies of power (GGP)—focuses on analyzing people’s social agency and social positions within multiple hierarchies of power. Pessar and Mahler suggest that gender should be conceptualized as a process, as one of several ways that humans create and perpetuate social differences (Mahler and Pessar 2001). In the following section, I discuss relationships between married *bangbang* and their wives in Chongqing in terms of how migration changes the marital relations and influences the choices that they make. My overarching argument is that male *bangbang*’s masculine pride is under assault when their wives actively engage in paid employment and gain more independence. However, the gender hierarchies in the work place and in the households that keep men in

the privileged positions remain powerful. Migrants' connections with their home villages also prevent wives from dominating their husbands in marital relations.

6.2.2.1. Bangbang and Unemployed Wives The wives of *bangbang* whom I met normally tried to bring income to their households. Among the 37 wives I met in the city of Chongqing, about 20% (7 persons) did not have paid jobs, whether because of sickness, maternity leave, or difficulties in finding a job. Two of the seven women were full-time mothers taking care of newborn babies, and the remaining five did part-time work. Two of the unemployed wives earned a monthly income of 300-400 yuan by cooking for their relatives who had no time to cook. Another one had a gynecological disease and did not have any formal paid job, though she did make rice dumplings for local food supermarket and sewed clothing parts for small local factories. The husbands of these women were *bangbang* who had been doing their work for over five years; their incomes were relatively more stable than those of the newcomers and that of *bangbang* in their sixties and seventies. The wives did not plan to work permanently as housewives or as full-time mothers. Most of them were looking for work opportunities in the city or planned to do so when their children were old enough to go to the kindergarten.

Women's unemployment could be used as an excuse by men to commit domestic violence toward their wives. Two housewives I met in Chongqing, Third Sister and Fourth Sister (the two of them were sisters) told me that they felt extremely insecure without a stable monthly income. Their husbands were both *bangbang*. The sisters spent most of their time taking care of their households but also went out picking garbage, selling the discarded materials for cash almost every day. Third Sister also sold snacks along the street where her husband worked. However, their husbands did not consider such activities actual work and devalued their contribution to their households. Fourth Sister's husband, Brother Xia, thought that she was "useless" and "has nothing to do but play around every day." He expected her to find a "serious" job (*zhengjing gongzuo*) and earn a stable income. I heard similar comments from Sister

Third's husband, Brother Zhai. Later, I found out that Brother Xia has an unhappy marital relationship with Fourth Sister while Brother Zhai has a bad relationship with his parents-in-law. Brother Xia beat Fourth Sister a couple of times. The wives' unemployment was an excuse for the unhappily married men to express their dissatisfaction towards marriage.

In some families, the husband is under pressure to mediate the relationship between his unemployed wife and his parents, who expect his wife to work. Brother Tian's wife did not have a paid job for almost eight years. She worked in several factories before getting married and didn't want to go back to factory work. She also had health problems. Brother Tian supported his wife's decision to take a leave, but his parents were unhappy with her unemployment. They thought that their daughter-in-law was too selfish in making their son the breadwinner of the family. The relationship between the parents-in-law and daughter-in-law had been tense.

6.2.2.2. Bangbang With Working Wives Several male married *bangbang* complained about their wives' growing bargaining power. Wood Zhao was one of them, "She used to be more docile (*tinghua*), but the job that she has changed her bit by bit. Once she began to work for the clothing factory, she became more opinionated (*shuohua yingqi*). She wants to make decisions about everything. Sometimes she would rather listen to those people (his wife's coworkers) than to me." Sister Hu, the wife of Wood Zhao, admitted that she was more outspoken after she found that job. "I guess women who earn money like men have right to speak at home. Every once in a while you can't put up with any more and you must speak out." But she also said that she always listened to her husband for "big decisions" because "he is more experienced and knowledgeable." In-sook Lim (1997:38) finds that migrant couples often have different senses about the extent to which a wife has changed. My research confirms Lim's conclusion. I found that husbands tended to think that their wives had changed radically after migration while wives did not think that they had changed that much. While Sister Hu said that she only talked back to

her husband when she “couldn’t put up with” him, her husband, Wood Zhao thought that she had developed a “stronger opinion” and a desire to “make decisions about everything.” Although Sister Hu thinks that she consults her husband for important decisions, he felt that his authority was challenged. Their statements show that even a little change in the wife can be perceived on a grander scale by the husband.

Male *bangbang* often expressed gratitude toward their working wives for sharing their financial burden. However, some men that I talked to also feared that their wives would become too powerful and challenge their authority at home. Three factors contribute to the husbands’ fears. First, the wives’ earning power often gave them more bargaining power in their marital relationship. Second, urban life could “corrupt” the wives with the temptation of consumption and modern ideas. Third, when the wife found a job more easily than her husband, the husband often felt threatened and experienced a loss of masculine pride.

Working wives often had opportunities to make decisions on how to spend money. One *bangbang*’s wife, Sister Huang, said: “My husband is stingy and wouldn’t buy anything except very basic stuff. I had to persuade him to buy me a bath soap. Now I earn my own money and don’t bother to ask his approval any more. I buy whatever I like ... ” A few working wives I met told me that their status was raised at home after they had paid jobs. “I barely had a say on how to spend our money because I didn’t have a paid job,” one of the wives told me. “I felt that my husband was not happy each time I asked him to give money to my parents. Now I earn money too, and I can give my parents money without having to see my husband’s unhappy expression.” However, I heard their husbands complaining that the wives spent money on “useless” commodities. One *bangbang* man told me that his wife insisted on buying a particular brand of shampoo instead of the cheapest one. “I don’t understand why she has to buy the more expensive one,” he complained. “I would prefer that she save that money for big things ... such as a DVD player.” He also told me that his wife liked to go shopping with her women colleagues, which had barely

happened before she found a job in a clothing factory. The worried look on his face clearly indicated his concern with the change in his wife's consumption habits.

Another threat that working wives posed to rural migrant men was that the highly gendered recruitment of rural laborers made some job opportunities more accessible to women than to men. For example, nine working wives I met worked in clothing factories as trimmers or seamstresses; thirteen wives worked as shoe shiners; five wives were waitresses in restaurants. Most of these wives also engaged in part-time domestic work for urban residents to earn extra money. These jobs, according to the wives, prefer women because of their "nimble fingers," "flexibility," and "carefulness." By contrast, male rural migrants, even though they would like to do these jobs, are not normally recruited. One male *bangbang* said: "(Women) can easily get recruited and work in the factories (*jin chang*), as maids (*bang ren*), or as shoe shiners. None of these jobs are for men. Even if I would like to work in those factories, they (the employers) wouldn't employ me because men are not preferred. They say that it is more expensive to hire a man, and it is harder for them to manage men than to manage women." Another male *bangbang* said: "My wife found her first factory job in about one week. The factories are shorthanded in peak season...I couldn't find any factory job and began to work as a *bangbang*. But the first half year, I was a newcomer and had few customers. Sometimes (I) waited for a whole day but earned little money. The two of us depended on her earnings to survive. It was a stressful time for me. I didn't want others to laugh at me, so I went back home (to the village) for two months just to save face."

In my fieldwork, I found that rural migrant women who work alongside their *bangbang* husbands in the city have relatively less bargaining power at home and defer to their husbands' authority more compared to women who have different occupations than their husbands. I met two *bangbang* groups, each consisting of at least five married couples. The group members lay claim to certain territory in a commercial zone and stayed together during work and off work. These migrants were mostly relatives or people from the same home village and knew each other quite well. In the workplace, they shared the workload and risks. They negotiated payment and working conditions with the "bosses" collectively. They also chose the same place to live in the city, sharing the rent and living expenses, cooking and

cleaning together. Once their earnings reached 100 yuan, they distributed it equally among the couples. In other words, the working wives in these groups worked as many hours as their husbands and earned as much as their husbands. Because of this specific labor organizational scheme, these migrant couple groups called themselves “Primary Communism” or “People’s Communes,” indicating a rule of egalitarianism. However, the division of labor and the status of the group members was not egalitarian at all. There was a strong gender hierarchy within the groups. For example, male members always took the lead in decision-making related to the business. Female group members often chose not to “talk business” in the work place, especially with strangers, but waited for their husbands to come or let their husbands make the decisions.

Furthermore, men, not women, were in charge of the important tasks within the groups. Take one group as an example— one man, Xiao Qin, the leader of the group, was in charge of business connections, payment negotiations, daily work assignments and arrangements; Lao Chen, Xiao Qin’s brother-in-law, kept the account book, which recorded each service and its payment; Xiao Hu, Xiao Qin’s other brother-in-law, was responsible for keeping the second account book, which recorded collective expenses, such as food daily expense, monthly electronic bill, and so on; Fat Huang, Lao Chen’s cousin, made purchases of food for the whole group; Xiao Qin, Lao Chen, and Xiao Hu, all three male members, comprised the head of the group and distributed the daily earnings to each family. None of the female group members took these positions.

Moreover, while women worked as many hours as men, they also did most of the domestic work after “work.” The typical off-work dynamics within Xiao Qin’s group are as follows. The women return to the rented room first, taking turns washing clothes, cleaning rooms, boiling water, and preparing the dinner. When the men got home with groceries, the women were busy cooking. The men gathered around the dining table, smoking, drinking, chatting, playing cards, and calculating the daily earnings. When the food was ready, the women served the men. The men ate together, just as the women did, but the men and women ate at different tables. The women sat around a lower and smaller table next to the men’s big and better table. When the men needed more rice, they never got up to refill their bowls. They simply asked

their wives to do it. After the dinner, it was the wives who, again, took turns cleaning the dishes and boiling bath water for the men.

The husbands in this group tried to limit their wives' mobility, especially in the workplace. Xiao Qin's group serves as an example. In 2004, both men and women in this group worked on the street or in the open market place. The wives loaded and unloaded goods along with their husbands by the side of the road. Sometimes, they attracted the inquisitive look of pedestrians. In 2006, this group was hired by a market warehouse for loading goods. All the women were sent to the warehouse to work while the men worked in the open air or in public, moving between streets, stores, and markets. Xiao Chen's wife, Sister Wei, told me that this arrangement was deliberate because the husbands decided it would be better for their wives to work inside where they could work without being in the public eye. "Showing the face in public (*pao tou lu mian*) is not good for a woman, especially when she is working with a group of (adult) men." Sister Chen said, "A woman like that gets nothing but rumors. This arrangement benefits us." The other women nodded their heads in agreement.

These observations show that while the working wives felt safer working inside the home than working alone in factories or on the street, they did not necessarily have a higher status at home. What's more, frequent familial conflicts sometimes arose from husbands and wives working side by side. For example, in the workplace, Xiao Hu sometimes yelled at his wife when he thought that she was being slow and inefficient. Xiao Qin's wife, San Mei (Third Sister) told me that Xiao Qin had been quarrelling more often with her since they started working together. Their relationship had been more peaceful when she worked as a waitress in a relative's noodle restaurant in another subdistrict of Chongqing. She quit that job only because Xiao Qin no longer wanted a long distance relationship. In our conversation, she said she missed her former colleagues and wanted to go back.

In public, many married male *bangbang* rarely admit that they share household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes, after migrating to the city. They often boast in public how willingly their wives take on all the domestic work and shower them with warmth and love. However, in private, some of them admit to helping with chores. Xiao Guan works in the construction material market,

which closes at six every day. After closing time, he would spend another half an hour wandering around to see if there were business owners who were closing business late and would hire extra hands. If not, he would go to the nearby food market, buy vegetables and meat,⁴⁴ and go home to prepare dinner. When I asked him whether he felt upset because he cooked food for his wife who worked in a clothing factory, he laughed and said that cooking did not bother him because his wife had to work over ten hours a day and did not have time to cook. “Sometimes she comes back home at ten o’clock in the evening and has to get up at seven to go to work. I can’t wait for her to cook for me. I would starve” he said. Working wives, such as Sister Du, agree that their husbands do more housework in the city than they had in the countryside. Sister Du said, “Somehow we don’t have any other choice (but to have more equal division of housework). I have to go to work, and the factory (where I work) has strict work schedule. In the peak season, staying up all night is common. Compared with me, my husband has a more flexible schedule. So he has to cook, clean, and take care of the house whenever possible.”

However, my interviews with both male *bangbang* and their wives show that rural migrant men’s increasing involvement in housework does not necessarily mean more equal gender relations within the households. Male *bangbang* helped their wives with cooking and cleaning not necessarily because of the latter’s earning power. Wives also did not think that their husbands should do the housework to compensate for their inability to be sole breadwinners. A husband would choose to increase his participation in housework mostly because he understood the importance of collaboration in his family’s survival. Therefore, as wives work outside the home to share the burden of providing financial resources for their family, husbands were expected to accommodate their wives’ rigorous schedules by doing some housework.

Although working wives tried to resist their husbands’ dominance at home, they did not challenge the social system that produces gender inequality; if they do challenge their husbands’ authority, it is often strategic. Besides the reasons mentioned above, three important factors sustained male dominance and

⁴⁴ The places *bangbang* families rent in the city do not have a refrigerator, so normally *bangbang* choose to live close to big food market and to buy food to cook every day.

gender inequality between *bangbang* and their wives: the gendered discourses that value male *bangbang*' work more than their spouses' work, the wives' belief in their husbands' authority, and the migrants' connection to their home villages. Chapter Five described how gender hierarchies create asymmetric values attached to work for male *bangbang* and their spouses. This chapter briefly examines the other two factors.

A few working wives naturalized the unequal division of labor in their households. For them, the husband represents the backbone of the family and is worthy of respect from the wife. This can be clearly seen in the case of Sister Yang. She worked as a shoe shiner and a part-time domestic worker. Meanwhile, she did most of the household chores and took care of both her husband and her two children. When asked if this division of labor was because her husband earned more than she did, she said no. She told me that in peak season (winter), she often earned roughly 1000 yuan a month. Sometimes she earned more than her husband. She said, "As long as he works hard to support this family, I am happy to do the housework. After all, the man is the 'pillar' (*dǐng liang zhǔ*) of a family. Without the pillar, the house can't stand by itself." Similarly, another working wife, nicknamed "Captain," said, "A man is to be depended upon in terms of raising a family (*yáng jiā kǎo nán rén*). A woman's role is to supplement the man. A woman can help her husband more if she earns money. But she is not helping him if she henpecks her husband. Not good for the family." It is obvious that the working wives, while enjoying the freedom and autonomy that paid employment brings them, are willing to maintain the conventional gender hierarchy in the households to some extent. Actually, the working wives I met in the field greatly valued the survival of the family in addition to valuing individual freedom and pleasure of independence. They considered their participation in paid work more as a family responsibility than as a way to struggle for equal marital relations. Captain said: "How much pleasure can you have when your husband is laughed of by his friends? Your husband loses face; you lose yours too."

Some wives did not challenge husbands' dominance at home due to their fear of public opinion within the *bangbang* community. A henpecked husband was not respected back in the countryside, so a couple's domestic relations in the city also influenced the family's reputation in the home villages. Shufen, a forty-

two-year-old migrant woman, decided not to challenge her husband's authority at home for exactly this reason. Shufen's family and her sister-in-law's family shared the same apartment in Chongqing. Shufen said that she was very careful not to "boss around" her husband in front of his sister's family. "His sister might tell her mother, who will surely get angry with me," Shufen said. "After all, we are going back (to the home village) in the future. I want to keep a good relationship with my husband's family. This is important for a woman like me who is marrying from the outside (of my husband's village)," she said. She also told me that her female friends who were in similar situation tried to use "soft" methods to talk their husbands into doing things, such as lowering their voices, appealing to their husbands, or using jokes. They were careful to avoid a "hard" and dominating attitude.

Working wives who did not respect their husbands put their reputation at risk in the local community. Xiao Yan, a thirty-five-year-old working wife, was mentioned by several others as a "bad example," although she was the breadwinner of her family. When her husband, a former *bangbang*, became seriously sick because of his diabetes, Xiao Yan became a shoe shiner in order to provide for him and for their teenager son. However, her colleagues gossiped that she did not respect his husband and bossed him around in public. Captain said that Xiao Yan's husband did not have any pocket money and had to ask for it time after time. "It is a shame for a man to ask for money from his wife. I pity Xiao Yan's husband." Another *bangbang's* wife told me that Xiao Yan's parents-in-law refused to live with them because they thought Xiao Yan "henpecked" her husband. Xiao Yan was not willing to go back to the home village because her mother-in-law told relatives how "domineering" she was to her husband. Xiao Yan also rarely visited her husband's relatives in Chongqing. When I interviewed Xiao Yan, she said that her fate was "bitter" (*ming ku*) because of her husband's sickness. "I am doing the thing that men are responsible for. People talk all kinds of things because they are not in my shoes. If my husband took charge, he would spend every penny on food. He is hungry. He wants food. But his sickness would never be under control." She was worried about her relation with her husband's parents. But she insisted that she had every reason to "be in charge" because her husband was not capable of doing so. In contrast to Xiao Yan, most wives I met tried not to confront their husbands directly conflicts arose but used more indirect methods.

6.3. RELATIONSHIP WITH *LAOXIANG*, FRIENDS, AND URBANITIES

6.3.1. *Laoxiang* and Friends

Informal networks between relatives and people from the same community are one of the most important resources for migrants who look for jobs and adapt to the urban settings (Zhao 2003; Solinger 1999; Zhang 2001; Ma and Xiang 1998). However, Jacka argues that local ties prove to be less trustworthy and less relied upon by rural migrant women than previous scholarship implies (Jacka 2006: 193). My research confirms Jacka's conclusion that while local networks still play an important role for male *bangbang*, close kin and friends provide more reliable assistance.

Why are *laoxiang* ties among *bangbang* not as important as scholars like Ma and Xiang (1998), or Li Zhang (2001) suggest? In Li Zhang's research on *Zhejiangcun* (Zhejiang Village) in Beijing suburb, local networks are crucial for organizing the community, mobilizing support and providing assistance to migrant workers and their families. Solinger's studies on *Zhejiangcun* find that within the settlement, migrant leaders built large housing compounds, restaurants, medical clinics, schools, and recreational facilities (Solinger 1999). The mutual support and trust of *laoxiang* in *Zhejiangcun* are a major resource for most of the migrants. However, the *bangbang* community is quite different from *Zhejiangcun*. *Bangbang* workers in Chongqing do not form such residential communities based on place of origin. Many *bangbang*'s settlements in Chongqing have a highly mixed population, poorly organized community lives, and barely developed leadership. Although some *bangbang* residential compounds were formed by people from the same county or home village, the majority of migrant settlements consist of people from different counties, regions, areas of Chongqing municipality as well as from other provinces. Unlike *Zhejiangcun* which is located at the suburb of Beijing city, the migrant compounds in Chongqing are located within the city of Chongqing, sometimes right next to the urbanities' communities. In a few cases, several *bangbang* families rent an apartment and share the rent. In such cases, there was a mix of Chongqing urbanites and rural migrants in one community. Furthermore, renovation of some urban

regions and demolition of old city buildings force rural migrants to be constantly on the move, which also makes it difficult for them to form their own communities.

My research suggests that “*laoxiang*” is a very useful medium for *bangbang* to forge connections with others, especially when they first meet each other. For male *bangbang*, *laoxiang* can refer to people from the same village, but can also mean people from the same county, city, and even larger areas. The exact meaning of *laoxiang* depends on the context. Sometimes when a *bangbang* does not want to clarify his relationship with another person, he would say that that person was his “*laoxiang*.” However, given the broad meaning of *laoxiang*, this category includes a range of relationships, some of which are not close relationships for the migrants. Old Jiang, when recalling how regretful he was in introducing some *laoxiang* into his crew to work in an electronic equipment market, said: “I don’t trust *laoxiang* easily any more. *Laoxiang*, so what? The two *laoxiang* I brought into our crew smoked my cigarettes like they were free, stole my bamboo pole when I was not there, and did not treat me with respect...If he’s not honest and hard-working, there is no way that a *laoxiang* will be better than a stranger.” However, in a different occasion, when Old Jiang wanted to talk to a male *bangbang* who recently joined their crew, he openly inquired about the latter’s hometown. When he found out that the latter came from the same county, he immediately introduced himself to the new comer as “*laoxiang*” and they quickly started a conversation.

Relatives, especially close relatives, and good friends are not only important in helping new migrants settle down in the city, but they are also a main resource of help and support to those who have “found their feet” in the city. Many male *bangbang* share rented rooms with close kin and friends, not just to save money, but also to protect their own safety. In the job market, kinship and friendship bring *bangbang* together more easily than other social connections. In one electronic equipment market, over sixty *bangbang* automatically grouped themselves into seven crews and competed with each other for customers. One such group had eleven *bangbang*, eight of whom were relatives. The other three were either former coworkers or good friends of the group leader. Although they can find *laoxiang* in this workplace, they never joined them for work or shared housing with them. The mutual trust and good collaboration cultivated among them was more dependable than local ties. However, sometimes close kin

were not that supportive and friendly to each other either. Brother Wang and his elder brother, both of whom work as *bangbang*, present such an example. The two brothers did not get along. Brother Wang complained to me that his elder brother was extremely selfish and inconsiderate. He recalled that his elder brother once recruited a few colleagues (including Brother Wang) to work for a “boss” but then pocketed part of the payment without even telling Brother Wang about it. Brother Wang now avoids working with his elder brother and chooses to socialize with his friends and coworkers.

6.3.2. *Bangbang* and Urbanites

Scholars have argued that very few rural migrants have made friends with urban people; it is especially difficult for rural migrant women to have friendly interactions with urbanites (e.g., Jacka 2006). The only exception, as previous literature implies, might be domestic workers. Being “outsiders within” (Gaetano 2004), they sometimes develop intimate relations with their employers. Some scholars point out that members of the older generation of male urbanites often have negative attitudes toward rural migrants, but urbanities with higher-income and higher-education have much less negative attitudes, especially if they have migrant friends (Neilson et al. 2006). My research finds, however, rural migrants and urban residents may become friends if they have similar class backgrounds or migration experiences. Brother Xia and Xiao Fang are one such example. Brother Xia is a forty-five-year-old male *bangbang* who has worked in Chongqing for nine years. Xiao Fang is an urban resident and laid-off state-owned factory worker who has mild mental problems. Since being laid off from Chongqing’s biggest military factory in 1992, Xiao Fang had been working as a full-time street cleaner for the local subdistrict office. His monthly income is 500 yuan RMB, consisting of a 300-yuan salary and a 200-yuan basic living allowance provided by the local government for his adolescent son. Xiao Fang’s wife divorced him and married a Hong Kong businessman a few years ago. She also took their son away. Since then, Xiao Fang has lived alone and has been in contact with very few relatives. For the purposes of earning more money and of making contact with other people, he began to work as a *bangbang* about four years ago, and became

friends with Brother Xia. Xiao Fang could only do *bangbang* work after dinner. Brother Xia often met him near the workplace, telling him where to find that day's business opportunities. Brother Xia also invites Xiao Fang to his home to have dinner now and then. Xiao Fang, on the other hand, tells Brother Xia about things in the city and sends gifts to Brother Xia's wife and children. Brother Xia has sympathy for Xiao Fang's loneliness and isolation. He said, "Xiao Fang and I both have bitter fates. He is an urban resident, but the city doesn't give him anything good. What's the difference of urban and rural (resident)?" These two often help each other and provide emotional comfort to one another. When Xiao Fang's mental problems got serious, Brother Xia sent his wife to wash clothes and to cook food for Xiao Fang. When Brother Xia quarreled with his wife or children, Xiao Fang would invite him for a drink and a long talk. The similar class background and social positions became the foundation for their friendship and mutual support.

I also observed that *bangbang* had friendly relationships with vendors, food/newspaper stand owners, sellers in the food markets, as well as other members of the urban poor. One newspaper/food stand owner, a laid-off state-owned factory worker, is a friend of Brother Zhai. He would often ask Brother Zhai to watch his stand when he went to bathroom or errands. Brother Zhai is so familiar with him that he knows where he put what. If Brother Xia runs out of newspapers while he is watching the stand, he puts the money under a batch of newspaper, the place where the owner always keeps the money. Meanwhile, Brother Zhai also gets help from the stand owner. When he goes out carrying goods for customers, he often put his belongings, such as his water bottle, jacket, and extra ropes, under the newspaper/food stand so that he does not need to bring them with him. Sometimes the owner gives bottled water to Brother Zhai for free and tells him about the latest business information. Brother Zhai sometimes helps the owner to carry heavy loads for free in exchange for the latter's help. They have been collaborating like this for years.

6.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have examined rural migrant men's relationships with the people close to them and how these relations shape the decisions and experiences of their migration. These relations often powerfully impact the pattern and destination of migration, occupations migrants take up, and their everyday experiences in the city. Rural migrants' experiences, in turn, shape or change their relations with close family members, friends, employers, and urbanities.

The migration of both men and women can pose great challenges to rural migrant families. Although men are normally not constrained by the moralities that often prevent women from migrating, they face other difficulties and problems in deciding to migrate. While people assume – and in some sense it is true – that men migrate primarily to provide economic resources for families and to fulfill the breadwinner role, this chapter argues that non-economic factors and social forces also play important roles in shaping the migratory decision-making process and results. Such factors include gender ideologies that value migrant men more than men having no migration experience, the conventional morality that enjoins sons to provide financial security to aged parents, and the patriarchal structure of rural society in which the father actively contributes to an adult son's familial survival.

Bangbang often migrate ahead of their wives and children; this migration pattern bespeaks the need for economic affordability in some cases, but it should not be seen as a natural pattern of migration. Jacka argues that “notions of what is rational are shaped by dominant discourses relating to gender and the power relations they embody” (Jacka 2006: 204). The “men migrate, women plow” pattern of migration becomes possible precisely because of changes in the gendered division of labor that favors men working “outside” and women working “inside” (in the rural home village). Farming the land becomes part of the “domestic” support that wives provide to their husbands. Furthermore, this pattern is one of a few that applies to the cases of the *bangbang* that I met. I heard about several other migration patterns. In one case, a married woman migrated alone and before her husband because the latter was sick and could not afford travel. In another case, husbands and wives migrated together and left their young child with the

grandparents. In fact, some couples took different patterns of migration in different life stages. Many factors such as the age of family members, health conditions, financial needs, and individual desires and willingness all play a role in shaping migratory experiences.

Migration may improve the material conditions of the male *bangbang*'s families, but it also brings enormous stress to both male *bangbang* and their spouses. Loneliness and distress resulting from long-distance relationships can bring devastating consequences to a family. Sometimes migration contributes to familial tragedies. According to the *Journal of China Reform*, migration is the reason behind more than 50 percent of divorces of rural married couples. While divorce among *bangbang* was rarely discussed during my fieldwork, male *bangbang* who lived alone in the city experienced enormous loneliness and lacked emotional support. These men also became the subject of jokes that challenged their masculine pride.

The respective social positions of men and women help determine how much willpower they have and to what extent they will be empowered or disempowered. My research finds that although working wives made significant financial contributions to their families, they had limited agency in resisting the authority of their husbands in the households. The jobs of working wives are often considered as complementary to their husbands' while the value of their work are also viewed as secondary to that of their husbands' work. Some wives' deep-seated belief in their husbands' authority in the households also helps maintain male dominance at home. Due to their intimate connection with their home villages and with fellow villagers in the city, most migrant women choose not to challenge their husbands for the sake of their own reputation. Even wives who work side by side with their husbands as *bangbang* may not enjoy greater gender equality. Compared with their husbands, these wives are in inferior positions. Their earnings are often counted as part of the husbands' earnings. Although there are wives such as Xian Yan who struggle for a leading position in their households, most wives would not go this far. But it does not mean that these wives are passive or simply victims of patriarchal domination. They avoid direct confrontation, but try to solve problems in "soft" ways.

My research also finds that *laoxiang* (people from the same native place) is a flexible concept and does not necessarily refer to people from the same village. Male *bangbang* widely use the concept of *laoxiang* to make connections to each other and to obtain support. Yet, they sometimes trust friends and close relatives more than people that they merely identify as “*laoxiang*.” Furthermore, *bangbang*’s interaction with urbanites varies. Some of them are antagonistic and indifferent, yet others are friendly and mutually supportive. Rural migrants and the urban poor may become friends because of shared class statuses and similar backgrounds. In some cases, male *bangbang* also make friends with small business owners who have migration experiences and who understand the hardship of migrant life. Rural migrant men’s relationships with urbanites and with the “bosses” are more complicated than people normally would imagine.

In brief, rural to urban migration is a process that is embedded in social relations and cultural expectations. The economic benefit to the family is one important dimension of how decisions of migration are made. But individual dreams, desires, and hopes; relations with close kin; available resources; and social positions also determine the “rationality” of migration. The experience of migration, in turn, influences and transforms the social relations of migrants. Under any circumstances, rural migrants make their decisions with full consideration and firmly control their own lives. They are not “blind flow” (*mangliu*) of labor who simply follow others. They are the masters of their own lives.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the gender and labor inequalities that Chinese migrant men experience when they participate in post-socialist China's economic development and modernization. I have traced the linkage between the political economy of development, the rationality of urbanization, and the logic of the post-socialist state and asked how this linkage informs the desire, agency, and subject formation of migrant workers. In particular, my research has examined the social and cultural forces behind rural men's decisions to migrate, the cultural politics of exclusion that pushes migrant men to the bottom of the society, the discursive conditions and contradictions embedded in the migrant men's struggles for survival, the strategies they adopt to defend their decency and dignity, and the social relations that change and are changed by rural men's experiences of migration.

My research on *bangbang* has argued that in Chongqing, rural men's migrations are not just an important attempt to pursue economic advancement, but also part of their quest for decency and masculine pride. Out-migration and working in the informal economy have unique meanings for Chinese rural migrant men – they constitute valuable approaches for the men not only to pursue economic success and social upward mobility but also to elevate their reputation as responsible and capable men. Here, the money earned through working in the city is significant in elevating rural men's reputation. But what is equally important is the experience of migration; the migrants' experiences evidence their possession of wider social connections, updated knowledge and information about the market, and a better mastery of survival skills. However, my research has demonstrated that the majority of poor rural men experience systematic violence during migration which forces them to remain exploited and socially marginalized in

the urban region. In many cases, labor migration does not alleviate rural poverty and reduce social inequalities, but leads to a greater divide between the haves and have-nots.

Furthermore, my research found that *bangbang* in Chongqing exemplify the large proportion of rural migrant workers who end up working in the informal service sector. These migrants work on a casual and temporary basis, being hired and fired based on the needs of their employers. They are less visible in academic writings and less represented in public than migrant workers in off-shore factories or workers laid off from state-owned enterprises. I have argued that the informality of their employment – that is, the capacity of this large reserve army of labor to be itinerant – is the result of China’s labor market deregulation and economic restructuring. Workers like *bangbang* have to keep looking for job opportunities between different economic sectors and various employment modalities in order to survive. The social differentiations between haves and have-nots, the politics of exclusion that accompany economic development, and the intersection of gender and class inequality all contribute to the exploitation and marginalization of rural migrants who work in the informal sector. The structure of social inequality is organized not only along the lines of class, gender, age, and place of origin (rural/urban), but also in terms of labor divisions (physical/intellectual labor, skilled/unskilled labor, informal/formal employment, and so on).

I have also analyzed how the rhetoric of “freedom” (free choice, free movement of labor) functions as a pro-growth strategy that reorganizes the flow of knowledge, capital, labor, social relations, and the formation of worker subjectivities. China’s economic reform since 1978 and its deregulation of the transportation labor market have made *bangbang* work an “always available” occupational option for poor unskilled rural migrant men. This phenomenon can be described as the “disguised informalization of work” (Bremner 2001; 2010). In promoting a neoliberal ethos of “freedom” – which, in the case of *bangbang*, basically means flexible employment, unpredictable working time and workload, high mobility, little/no work protection, and no social benefits – the state actively shifts the economic risks and costs of labor reproduction to individual male porters. In other words, the rural villagers silently absorb the hidden costs of producing the cheap, flexible workforce that capitalist accumulation requires. The

porters, on the other hand, (re)interpret, negotiate, and challenge these risks; their actions reshape these discourses to their own ends.

Moreover, I have argued that the experience of male porters is largely shaped by the changing discourse of masculinity in post-Mao China. The masculine heroes in the socialist period who exhibited exaggerated physical strength and martial vigor, rejected bourgeois lifestyles, and expressed a devotion to communist ideals have largely been deemed as outdated and irrelevant in the post-reform era. In the current era of commodification and consumption, individual social positioning no longer depends on one's *chushen* (class of origin), but rather on one's personal wealth. Rural men have thus needed to re-evaluate what it means to "be a man" and to reposition themselves as they travel between the urban and rural regions, particularly since deep-rooted differences between rural and urban regions create vastly different – yet overlapping – standards for what makes a man a man. Rural men in Chongqing embrace *bangbang* work, as it provides flexible work schedules, a casual work atmosphere and immediate cash (all of which are quite important for their sense of dignity). At the same time, they must negotiate the global economic forces that bind them to irregular employment and low-end service work. When society still primarily defines a man's value in terms of his job (or, more specifically, when permanent employment, full-time job, stable income, and success in market economy are the socially privileged features of a man), the informal, low-income, and servitude-alike nature of *bangbang* work challenge *bangbang*'s sense of manly pride. Although *bangbang* do use gender strategies to offset the negative effect of informal employment on them and protect their masculine pride, these strategies have the potential of reinforcing and perpetuating the existing dominant gender norms that devalue women's labor and push women to vulnerable social positions.

Lastly, this research has found that the participation of *bangbang* in collective resistance against the government is rare. Why? The state repression of strikes is one major reason; the Household responsibility System that guarantees the rural migrant a piece of land to which they can return is another reason (Lee 2008). I have argued that the fragmentation of employment also makes it difficult to organize large-scale collective protests. Since *bangbang* work can only provide an unstable income, many

bangbang have to change jobs frequently or do multiple jobs at the same time in order to make ends meet. This changing of jobs and of workplaces results in a fragmented workforce, which is dispersed over numerous small businesses. It is not surprising that class consciousness is so elusive for these casual workers. Though they might share similar working experiences for a short period of time, their working relationships rarely last long. Resistance is mostly on an individual basis, such as foot-dragging, avoidance, obstruction, inertia, and so on. *Bangbang*, when appearing in groups, have more power than acting alone. But even their group resistance is usually limited in duration and in range.

Since my fieldwork ended in 2007, there have been many changes in the world of rural migrant workers, especially after the global economic downturn in 2008. The most noticeable change, a change that occurred even before the global financial crisis, was the massive shortage of migrant labor in the economic engines of China, for example, the export-oriented industrial regions of southern China and the Pearl River Delta. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that in 2010, even with a salary increase of more than 30 percent, few factories in the Yangtze and Pearl River deltas successfully attracted enough migrant workers to sign work contracts (Hong 2010). The following four factors have been said to contribute to the labor shortage. First, since the agricultural reform in 2006, rural incomes have increased to the extent that in some places, farming is becoming more rewarding than doing low-end physical work in the coastal area. Second, the rapid development of second-tier cities such as Chongqing, Nanchang and Wuhan has provided new working opportunities to rural laborers. Many migrant workers prefer these regions because they are closer to home. The salaries migrant workers receive in these second-tier cities are in some cases almost on par with those offered in the more developed coastal areas. Third, with the rapid pace of urbanization, China is creating a burgeoning group of idle farmers who can afford to live off of their rental income. For them, labor migration is not a favorable option. Lastly, it is said that the new generation of rural laborers, unlike their parents' generation, has relatively better living conditions at home and refuse to put up with the hardships of migration. In particular, media reports stress that the new generation of Chinese migrant workers are better educated and do not want to work for jobs with low salaries or with poor working conditions (Callick 2004; Barboza 2006).

Contrary to such optimistic narratives, Chan's research provides more pessimistic picture of the "labor shortage" problem after the 2008 economic crisis. Chan reports that the economic crisis struck the export-oriented factories heavily and Western demand for China's exports dropped dramatically. Twenty three million rural migrant workers lost their jobs and were forced to go home (Chan 2010a). He found that massive unemployment combined with non-payment of wage triggered some unusual labor protests. From Chan's perspective, the future for returnee migrants in the countryside is not promising. The majority of migrant workers, especially "second generation" migrants, did not have experiences or skills in farming because most of them left the countryside right after they finished middle or elementary school. Even worse, a large proportion of returnees did not have access to farmland because they had left their land to others for many years (Chan 2010b). Chan documented the unemployed rural migrant workers' words describing their feelings of displacement: "There is no future as a labourer; returning to the village has no meaning."

According to the Xinhua News reports, Chongqing provides around 7,000,000 rural laborers every year to other regions of China, and about 3,000,000 rural migrants go to the coastal areas for work. However, after the 2008 financial crisis, Chongqing saw a massive return of migrant workers who lost their jobs and went home to take up local employment opportunities. Kaixian, one of Chongqing's counties, is an example. Kaixian exported 485,000 laborers to other regions of China every year since 1997. However, at the end of 2008, about 50,000 had returned. The total of returnees in Kaixian County in 2008 doubled the number of returnees from the previous year (CCTV 2009). One major measure that the local government took to deal with the impact of the returnees on the local economy was to expand vocational training and retraining. However, Chan's research found that the government programs which were set up to help jobless migrants get new jobs were often turned into "yet another 'embezzlement project' (*liancai gongcheng*) for local governments and officials in some locales" (Chan 2010b).

Even worse, for a developing county such as Kaixian, there were not many working opportunities available for returnee migrants. Participation in farming and agricultural production was not an option for some returnees with limited access to land. One wonders where the returning rural migrants can go if they

cannot find work opportunities in the coastal areas or if working in the developed areas no longer pays off due to the wage cuts after the financial crisis. The quick development of inland urban economies may absorb a fraction of the returning workforce, but does it have the capacity to accommodate all the migrant workers and provide them with work opportunities? Furthermore, China's economic rise was built on cheap labor, how will the labor shortage in southern China impact the country's patterns of economic development and labor politics? How will the changes in China's labor supply influence global economic dynamics and labor conditions in other parts of the world? These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, I have no doubt that thorough ethnographic research on these questions will greatly benefit not only the understanding of China's model of development, but also the labor conditions and the regime of capital on a global scale.

The return home of millions of rural migrants has provided plenty of cheap labor supply to inland second-tier cities' development. However, the flood of returning migrant workers into Chongqing means fiercer competition in the labor market and higher living costs, such as a rising monthly rent. The rapid urbanization and economic restructuring in Chongqing has also led to significant structural changes. In August 2010, the Chongqing government officially began the *hukou* reform⁴⁵ to acquire farmland from peasants for urban development, with the goal of converting around ten million peasants into urbanites by 2020. Peasants, including rural migrants such as *bangbang*, are being forced to give up their land in exchange for urban resident status. In official statements, seizing land and the proletarianization of the rural workforce have been framed as a "privilege" that liberates peasants from the constraints of the *hukou* system. However, this "privilege" does not grant rural residents real entitlement to any social benefits. Meanwhile, as part of this urbanization process, Chongqing's roads and public transportation

⁴⁵ China's *hukou* policy has been widely criticized for its unfair treatment of rural residents and the social injustice it has caused. Ironically, however, due to this unjust system, Chinese peasants are supposed to be guaranteed access to farmland in their village of residence, even if they leave to work in the city for many years. Since Chinese peasants have barely had access to social welfare and benefits after the reform, the access to land has become the only security available to them. Changing the *hukou* system would presumably remove the only security from the peasants and push them to become urban proletarians trapped permanently in poverty at the bottom of society.

systems have quickly developed. More people rely on cars and public transportation, leaving less work for *bangbang*. Media reports frequently circulate sad stories about how *bangbang* are disappearing with the improvement of transportation.

Based on my dissertation research findings, I hypothesize that the *hukou* reform and Chongqing's urban economic restructuring will produce a growing population of urban poor proletarians and a surge of urban slums while generating more informal economic patterns and greater flexibility of employment. The work competition among *bangbang* will become even fiercer, and a large proportion of them will engage in more complex and diverse income-generating activities and experience a drastic deterioration in their livelihood. How will *bangbang* counter such challenges that threaten their survival and masculine pride? What new knowledge about urbanization, poverty, rurality, work, and individual freedom will be produced and circulated in the *hukou* reform? What politics of representation are adopted in creating new images of migrants when *bangbang*'s residential status shifts from rural to urban? Do new forms of inequalities and social stratification emerge when rural migrants become city residents? These questions are worth exploring through future ethnographic research.

Another big change in terms of the labor conditions in China is the recent growth in the intensity and frequency of labor unrest among rural migrant workers. In the summer of 2010, Guangdong Province in southern China witnessed at least thirty six strikes in forty eight days (The Economist 2010). The most well-known ones included those at Honda Motor Co., electronics giant Foxconn and a parts supplier for Toyota Motor Corp. The labor unrest at Honda Motor Co. attracted hundreds of young rural migrants. The workers protested against low wages, long working hours, and used cell phone text messages and the Internet to organize the strike. They also demanded the right to abandon the current trade union controlled by the government and to form their own (the latter is illegal in contemporary China). Factory workers at Honda and Foxconn appear to have won wage increases. According to some sources, the labor shortage and the declining population of working-age Chinese have provided the lever for rural migrant workers to bargain with the employers and to take collective actions (Pierson 2010). However, given the enormously diverse economic practices and patterns of economic development in China, one wonders if it is possible

for Chinese migrant workers to form trans-local collective actions against exploitation and repression. While factory workers are relatively easy to organize for collective action, casual workers in the informal sector who work on a temporary basis and are frequently hired and fired are much harder to mobilize.

As my dissertation found, the accessibility to land and the possession of a piece of land have become the last resort for rural migrants. If they fail to keep a job or if they do not do well in the cities, they can return to the countryside and live off the land. Since the current *hukou* reform in China will take away the last social security (land) from the peasants, I hypothesize that this change will intensify the conflicts between capital and labor and may push landless laborers into collective resistance against the state if the rural laborers fail to do well in the cities. In the case of *bangbang*, although their job is contingent and casual, they do have their own forms of labor organizing, which might serve as the foundation for more intensive and more formal collective actions against repression and exploitation. But what still remains a question is what new forms of sociality and new common ground will emerge among *bangbang* with the growth of fragmentation of employment in Chongqing and in other places in China.

The development and modernization of China are just one ongoing process of global economic development. In this dissertation concerning a group of Chinese rural migrant men, I have turned a highly critical eye to the assumptions that underlie the development project in China. My research has revealed that economic development cannot be understood merely as an economic process and cannot be fully explained using economic terms. Labor markets, production processes, and development logics are socially and culturally constructed and are deeply embedded in local institutions and practices. My dissertation has documented such processes in the transportation industry in Chongqing through *bangbang's* participation in China's economic development and modernization. It has explored the connections among rural to urban migration, casual and informal employment, and masculinity.

This dissertation has significant implications for the anthropological studies of development, labor, migration, and masculinity. By focusing on casual workers in China, I have questioned the strongly-held notion that departure from rural regions is, for the rural poor, a significant step towards a better life and economic advancement. My research has shown that the economic restructuring of China since the reform

in late 1970s has not merely resulted in a mass exodus from the agricultural sector to the manufacturing industry, but has also produced a huge nomadic workforce whose members remain outside the formal economy. Recruited on a temporary and casual basis, they are at the lowest rung of the employment hierarchy and are experiencing severe exploitation and marginalization. Socially deprived contingents, such as *bangbang*, consist of a large itinerant workforce that, due to a lack of public and academic representation, has been invisible to most researchers. The fragmentation and invisibility of this workforce is a consequence of neo-liberal form of governance that governs with the rhetoric of “freedom.”

While western scholarship on gender and development has focused on female migrant workers’ experiences, it has become increasingly clear that a “woman-only” approach is insufficient for understanding the complex gender hierarchies and patriarchal structures embedded in development projects. My research contributes to the growing literature on masculinity and labor migration by documenting the intimate connections between migration, labor politics, and migrant men’s understanding of what it means “to be a man.” It documents changes in gender roles and in how people understand gender in post-reform China. My research argues that labor exploitation and social marginalization are highly gendered. While rural men can be recruited to do dangerous and physically demanding work because of their “manly features” (endurance of hardship, capacity for demanding physical work, revolutionary spirit of “eating bitterness,” and so on), they can also be subject to the high standards set by urban citizens. As a result, they can be denied the privilege of “being a man” because of their poverty, the informality of their job, and their low social status. When rural men such as *bangbang* try to defend their masculine pride by using the gender norms around them, they often reinforce the gender norms that devalue men and women in vulnerable class positions. My research thus contributes to gender studies in general and to masculinity studies in particular by improving our understanding of Chinese working-class masculinity in post-Mao China.

My research also contributes to global studies, especially with respect to how globalization is made possible through the exploitation of labor in developing countries. There have been wonderful scholarly

analyses of how globalization accelerates the growth of contingent labor in off-shore factories, domestic work, and high technological businesses, among others. Yet very little ethnographic research has been done on the changing nature of work in the transportation industry, despite this sector's significant role in the circulation of goods and materials in local, national, and global economies. My dissertation has aimed to bridge this gap in the literature by providing an ethnographic account of the relations between the informalization of work in the transportation industry and the livelihood of individual day laborers (porters).

A comparative perspective that compares the development process in China and other developing countries in Asia can shed new light on my research. In an anthology of recent scholarly essays, Jan Breman (2010) offers a valuable comparison between rural-urban labor migration in Xiamen city in southern China and the labor circulation in India. He finds that in China, casual work is the exception rather than the rule; China's reform "has succeeded in industrializing at a rapid speed but without the emergence of large slums or informal settlements" (2010: 244). In Xiamen, he found a "striking absence of vagrants" (2010: 254) and came across only few people who depended on casual work for a living. Though Breman's observations are valid, one must consider two things: first, due to enormous differences in regional development in China, the degree of informality in urban economies varies greatly; second, it remains to be seen how successful the Chinese government will be in their efforts to bloc the creation of urban slums after the recent *hukou* reform and the changes of land policy. My research reveals that the informalization of the workforce has been intimately tied to China's economic reform and recent rural-urban migration. Further research will disclose the magnitude and internal dynamics of China's informal economy. A comparative perspective that compares China's expansion of the informal economy with that of India and Latin America will be especially useful. This is one of the directions of my future research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Anagnost, Ann. 1995. A surfeit of Bodies: Population and Rationality of State In Post-Mao China. *Conceiving the New World Order: Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. by Faye D Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp. Pp. 21-44. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [2] ----1997. *National Past-time: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- [3] ----2004a. The Corporal Politics of Quality (Suzhi). *Public Culture* 16(2): 189-208.
- [4] ----2004b. Scenes from An Emergent Middle Class. Conference paper presented at the *Asian Nationalisms Project. Workshop Two*, Oct. 1-3.
- [5] ----2006. "Strange Circulations: The Blood Economy in Rural China." *Economy and Society* 35 (4):509-529.
- [6] ----In Press. Imagining *Global Future in China: The Child as a Sign of Value*.
- [7] Ashworth, G. J. and Voogd, H. (1994) 'marketing and place promotion', in Gold, J. R. and Ward, S. V. (eds) *'Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions'*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, UK.
- [8] Barboza, David.2006. Labor Shortage in China May Lead to Trade Shift. *New York Times*. April 13th.
- [9] Becker, Brian E. and Yang Gao, "The Chinese Urban Labor System: Prospects for Reform," *Journal of Labor Research* 4 (1989): 411-28.
- [10] Benería, Lourdes. 2001. Shifting the Risk: New Employment Patterns, Informalization, and Women's Work. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. 15(1): 27-53.
- [11] Benería, Lourdes and Martha Roldán. 1987. *The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [12] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. "The Essence of Neoliberalism: Utopia of Endless Exploitation." *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), December.
- [13] Breman, Jan. 2010. *Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- [14] Boxiang Ji and Qingzhi Yang, 2006. Migrant Economy and the Development of Chongqing Countryside. In *The Journal of Chongqing Science and Technology College*. Pp. 43-46.

- [15] Burchell, Graham; Colin Gordon and Peter Miller. 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two lectures by and An Interview with Michel Foucault*. University of Chicago Press.
- [16] Callick, Rowan. 2004. China's Labor Shortage? *TCS Daily*. August 31st.
- [17] Cao, Dequan. 2005. The Legend of the "Army of Bangbang" in Chongqing. In *Reportage (baogao wenxue)*. Vol. 3.
- [18] Carrigan, Tim, Bob Connell and John Lee. 1985. Toward a new sociology of masculinity. *Theory and Society*. Volume 14, Number 5, 551-604,
- [19] CCTV 2002. (documentary) *One Man and A City (yige ren yu yizuo chengshi)*. October 2nd.
- [20] CCTV (documentary) 2004. *Bangbang is Great (bangbang zhen bang)*. Agricultural Channel. October 28.
- [21] CCTV (documentary) 2009. Chongqing has millions of returnee migrants; rural migrants went directly to the labor market right after they got off the train (chongqing chuxian mingongchao; mingong xia huoche hou zhiben laowu shichang). *Half an Hour of Economy*. Jan. 10th.
- [22] Chan, Anita and Zhu Xiaoyang. 2003. *Critical Asian Studies*. 35 (4): 559-584.
- [23] Chan, Kam Wing and Li Zhang, 1999. "The *Hukou* System and Rural-urban Migration: Processes and Changes," *The China Quarterly*, Volume 160, Issue 1, pp. 818-855.
- [24] Chan, Kam Wing, 2010a. "The Chinese Household Registration System and Migrant Labor in China: Notes on a Debate," *Population and Development Review*, 36(2), pp.357-364.v
- [25] ---- Chan, Kam Wing, 2010b. "The Global Financial Crisis and Migrant Workers in China: There is No Future as a Labourer; Returning to the Village has No Meaning," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34(3), pp.659-77.
- [26] Cheng, S.A. 1999. Labor Migration and International Sexual Division of Labor: A Feminist Perspective. In *Gender and Immigration*, ed. GA Kelson and DL DeLaet, pp. 38-58. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press.
- [27] Cheng, Biao. 2004. Two Other Reasons for the Shortage of Migrants. *China Youth*. August 12nd.
- [28] Cheng, Cliff. 1996. *Masculinities in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: sage.
- [29] Cockburn, Cynthia. 1985. *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men, and Technical Know-how*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- [30] Connell, R.W. 1987. *Gender and Power*. CA: Stanford University Press.
- [31] ---- 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [32] Constable, Nicole. 1997. *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- [33] Cook, Sarah. 1999. Surplus labor and productivity in Chinese agriculture: evidence from household survey data. *Journal of Development Studies*, 35: 16 – 44.

- [34] Cornwall, Andrea; Nancy Lindisfarne. 1994. *Dislocating Masculinity. Comparative Ethnographies*. London, New York: Routledge.
- [35] Curran, Sara R. and Abigail C. Saguy. 2001. "Migration and Cultural Change: A Role for Gender and Social Networks?" *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Vol. 2 (3).
- [36] Davin, Delia. 1999. *Internal Migration in Contemporary China*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- [37] Dirlik, Arif. 1996. "Critical Reflection on Chinese Capitalism as a Paradigm." In *Chinese Business Enterprise: Critical Perspective on Business and Management*. Volume I. Edited by R. Ampalavanar Brown. London: Routledge.
- [38] Dohse, Knuth, Ulrich Jurgens, Thomas Malsch. 1985. "From "Fordism" to "Toyotism"?: The Social Organization of the Labor Process in the Japanese Automobile Industry." *Politics and Society* 14:115-146.
- [39] Du Haiyan. 1995. "Interim Report on Research Project Entitled 'The Question of Staff and Workers in Reforming State-Owned Enterprises,'" *Jingji Yanjiu*, January 20, (1983): 58-65, cited in Pat and Roger Howard, "The Campaign to Eliminate Job Security in China," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 25(3): 348.
- [40] Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild, editors, ed. 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books
- [41] Erwin, Kathleen. 1999. "White Women, Male Desires: A Televisual Fantasy of the Transnational Chinese Family." In *Spaces of Their Own*, ed. Mayfair Yang, pp. 232-60. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- [42] Fan, Cindy. 2008. The household as security: strategies of rural-urban migrants in China. In *Migration and social protection in China*, (eds.) Ingrid Nielsen, Russell Smyth. World Scientific.
- [43] ---- 2004. "The State, the Migrant Labor Regime, and Maiden Workers in China," *Political Geography* 23: 283-305
- [44] French, Howard W. 2007. "Big, Gritty Chongqing, City of 12 Million, Is China's Model for Future," *New York Times*, June 1.
- [45] Fushun Government Main Page. <http://www.fszw.cn/tese/liuxiaoxiao.htm>
- [46] Gaetano, Arianne M. 2004. "Migrant Domestic Workers in Post-Mao Beijing." In *On the move: women and rural-to-urban migration in contemporary China*, ed. by Arianne M Gaetano and Tamara Jacka (ed). New York: Columbia University Press.
- [47] Gamburd, Michele Ruth. 2000. *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- [48] Gao, Yu. 2004. "Selection, Borrowing, and Transformation: On the Formation of the Discourse of Freedom in Modern China," *Journal of Nanjing Social Academy* Vol.8.
- [49] George, Sheba. 2000. "'Dirty Nurses' and 'Men Who Play': Gender and Class in Transnational Migration." In M. Burawoy, et al, eds., *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Post Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- [50] Gerard Greenfield and Apo Leong. 1997. "China's Communist Capitalism: The Real World of Market Socialism," *Socialist Register* 33.
- [51] Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- [52] Gordon, Colin. "Government Rationality: An Introduction." *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [53] Goldring L. 2001. The gender and geography of citizenship in Mexico-U.S. transnational spaces. *Identities* 7:501–37.
- [54] Gordon, Colin. 1991. Governmental Rationality: An introduction. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [55] Guldin, Gregory, ed. 1992. *Urbanizing China*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- [56] ----1997. (with Walter Eliyu Goldschmidt) *Farewell to Peasant China: Rural Urbanization and Social Change in the Late Twentieth Century*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- [57] Guo, Li. 2004. "Chongqing Speeds Up in Transferring the Rural Labor Force," *The People's Daily*, April 4.
- [58] Näre, Lena. Sri Lankan Men Working as Cleaners and Carers: Negotiating Masculinity in Naples *Men and Masculinities*. 13 (1): 65-86.
- [59] Harrell, Steve.2001."The anthropology of reform and the reform of anthropology: anthropological narratives of recovery and progress in China" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30:144.
- [60] Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Post-modernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Culture Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- [61] He, Shuming and Bai Qun 2007, "The current situation of the human labor resources in rural Chongqing and corresponding exploiting policy" (chongqing nongcun renliziyuan xianzhuang ji kaifa duice), In *Journal of Anhui Agriculture* 35(27): 8745-8746.
- [62] Henson, Kevin D. and Jackie Krasas Rogers. 2007. "Why Marcia You've Changed!": Male Clerical Temporary Workers Doing Masculinity in a Feminized Occupation. In *Men's Lives*, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner. Seventh Edition. Boston, New York, and San Francisco: Pearson.
- [63] Hinton, William. 1983. *Shenfan*. New York : Random House
- [64] Hochschild, Arlie R. 1989. *The Second Shift*. New York: Avon.
- [65] Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. [2001] 2007. *Domestica: Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [66] Hong, Shen. 2010. The Mystery of China's Labor Shortage. *The Wall Street Journal*. Feb. 22nd.

- [67] Lisa Hoffman. 2006. "Autonomous Choices and Patriotic Professionalism: On Governmentality in Late-Socialist China," *Economy and Society* 35: 550-70.
- [68] Howard W. French, "Big, Gritty Chongqing, City of 12 Million, Is China's Model for Future," *New York Times*, June 1, 2007.
- [69] Hu, Dongqiang. The New Concept of Deputy Director Wang: Cultivated Chongqing. *Chongqing Evening*. March 4th, 2003.
- [70] Jacka, Tamara. 2006. *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration, and Social Change*. Armonk, New York, London, England: M.E. Sharpe.
- [71] Jankowiak, William. 2002. "Proper Men and Proper Women: Parental Affection in the Chinese Family." In *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities*, ed. by S. Brownell and J.N. Wasserstrom, pp. 361-80. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [72] Jian, Shiming. 2000. *The Army of Bangbang in the Mountainous City: the Research on the Social Lives of Rural Migrants*. Chongqing Press.
- [73] Kavaratzis, Michalis. 2004. From City Marketing to City Branding: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Developing City Brands. *Place Branding* Vol (1): 58-73.
- [74] Kimmel, Michael S. 1994. Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity. In *Theorizing Masculinities*, edited by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [75] Kipnis, Andrew. "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach." *The China Quarterly* 186 (2006): 295-313
- [76] Kahn, Joseph. 2004. China's 'Haves' Stir the 'Have Nots' to Violence. *New York Times*. December 31th.
- [77] Kondo, D. K. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [78] Lague, David. 2007. "China: Growth Creates Migrant 'Underclass,'" *New York Times*, March 3.
- [79] Larson, Christina. 2010. "Chicago on the Yangtze: Welcome to Chongqing, the biggest city you've never heard of." *Foreign Policy Magazine*. September/October.
- [80] Lammie, David. Critical Eye on Chongqing Pillar of the WestA leader in China's western development faces tough challenges In *China business review online*
- [81] <http://www.chinabusinessreview.com/public/0901/criticaleye.html>
- [82] Lee, Ching Kwan. 1998. *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [83] ---- 2007. *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [84] Lemke, Thomas. 1999. "The Birth of Bio-politics: The Critique of the Political Economy of Organization as a Genealogy of Power", in: *International Journal of Political Economy*, 29:53-75.

- [85] ---- 2000. "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," paper presented at the Rethinking Marxism Conference, University of Amherst (MA).
- [86] Levitt, Peggy. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [87] Li Guo, "Chongqing Speeds Up in Transferring the Rural Labor Force," *The People's Daily*, April 4, 2004.
- [88] Li Guojun 2008. The Analysis of Peasant Problems and Innovation in Policy. *Chongqing Social Sciences* (4): 23
- [89] Lim, In-sook. 1997. "Korean Immigrant Women's Challenge to Gender Inequality at Home: The Interplay of Economic Resources, Gender, and Family." *Gender and Society*. Pp. 31-51.
- [90] Liu, Kai. 2009. Why Can't Bangbang Represent Chongqing. *Chongqing Evening Newspaper*. June 10th.
- [91] Liu, Lanquan. 2008. The Policy Research on Chongqing's City-Rural Integration Development. *District Economy*. Volumn 10. p.106.
- [92] Li, Wei, Yang Cao, Changqin He, and Yanan Liu. 2004. The Designer Masters Meeting in Chongqing. *Chongqing Evening*. Feb. 17th.
- [93] Li, Yan and Xincheng Li. 2007. Xu Jialu: the Bangbang Spirit is the Light Spot of Bayu Culture. *Chongqing Evening*. Oct. 17.
- [94] Liu, Juangang, Wangjun Li. 2005. Focus on the Millions of Rural Labor Transition; Consolidation of the Supporting Funds Still Has Difficulties. *Time Economic Journal*. Janury 6th.
- [95] Liu, Xiaoxiao. 1994. I Am Bangbang (wo shi bangbang). *Chongqing Evening Newspaper*, April 26th.
- [96] ---- 1995. A Bangbang's Notes. *Chongqing Youth* (Chongqing Qingnian Bao). Date unavailable.
- [97] ---- 1996a. The Story of Playboy (Huahua Yaoge). *Yuzhong TV Newspaper*. Date unavailable.
- [98] ---- 1996b. Dark Heart (Hei Xin Hei Zi). *Yuzhong TV Newspaper*. Date unavailable.
- [99] ---- 1996c. Mountain Wind (shan feng). *Yuzhong TV Newspaper*. Date unavailable.
- [100] ---- 2005. A short biography. The Writer Dream of the Grass-Root Literature. *Chongqing Evening*. July 24th.
- [101] Louie, Kam. 2002. *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- [102] Lu, Xing. 1999. An Ideological/Cultural Analysis of Political Slogans in Communist. China. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 487-508.
- [103] Luo, Jiao. 2009. Where is Chongqing's Supporting Funds? In *21 Century Economic Reports Newspaper*. July 18th.

- [104] Ma, Laurence J.C. and Xiang, Biao. 1998. "Native Place, Migration and the Emergence of Peasant Enclaves in Beijing." *China Quarterly* 155: 546-81.
- [105] Mahler, Sarah J. and Patricia R. Pessar. 2001. Gendered Geographies of Power: Analyzing Gender across Transnational Spaces. *Identities* 7: 441-59.
- [106] Margold, Jane A. 1995. "Narratives of Masculinity and Transnational Migration: Filipino Workers in the Middle East". In A. Ong and M. G. Peletz, eds., *Bewitching women, Pious Men: gender and body politics in Southeast Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [107] Maume, David. J. Jr. 1999. Glass Ceilings and Glass Escalators: Occupational Segregation and Race and Sex Differences in Managerial Promotions. *Work & Occupations* 26: 483 – 509.
- [108] McDowell L. 2000. "Learning to Serve? Employment aspirations and attitudes of young working-class men in an era of labour market restructuring." *Gender, Place, and Culture* 7:389–417.
- [109] Meijer, Marinus Johan. 1971. *Marriage Law and Policy in the Chinese People's Republic*. Hong kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- [110] Meng, Xianfan. 1995. *Gaige Dachao Zhong de Zhongguo Nuxing (Chinese Women in the Wave of Reform)*. Beijing: Chinese Women's Press.
- [111] Messerschmidt, James W. 1996. "Managing to Kill: Masculinities and the Space Shuttle Challenger Explosion." In *Masculinities in Organizations*, edited by C. Cheng. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [112] Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner. 2007. *Men's Lives*. Seventh Edition. Boston, New York, and San Francisco: Pearson.
- [113] Mills, Mary Beth. 2003. *Thai Women in the Global Labor Force: Consuming Desires, Contested Selves*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.
- [114] Moore, Henrietta. 1988. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge Polity Press.
- [115] Murphy, Rachel. 2002. *How Migration Labor is Changing Rural China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [116] ---- 2004. "Turning Peasants into Modern Chinese Citizens: "Population Quality" Discourse, Demographic Transition and Primary Education." *The China Quarterly*, 177: 1-20
- [117] Neilson, Ingrid, et al. 2006. "Effects of Intergroup Contact on Attitudes of Chinese Urban Residents to Migrant Workers." *Urban Studies*. vol. 43(3): 475-490.
- [118] Newman, Katherine S. 1988. *Falling From Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [119] Ong, Aihwa. 1991. The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 20:279-309.
- [120] ----1987. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- [121] ----2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* Durham NC and London: Duke University Press.

- [122] Barry, Andrew; Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (ed.).1997. *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [123] Osella, Filippo and Caroline Osella. 2000. "Migration, Money and Masculinity in Kerala." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (1): 117–33.
- [124] Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. 2000. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- [125] --- 2005. *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- [126] Perez-Sainz, Juan Pablo. 2000. *Labor Market Transformation in Latin America in 90s: Some Analytical Remarks*. Costa Rica: FLACSO.
- [127] Pierce, Jennifer. 1995. *Gender Trials: Emotional Lives in Contemporary Law Firms*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [128] Pierson, David. 2010. China's Labor Unrest May Help US manufacturers. *Los Angeles Times*. Jun. 19th.
- [129] Piper, Nicola and Mina Roces, ed. 2005. *Wife or Worker? Asian Women and Migration*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers INC
- [130] Pringle, Rosemary. 1993. Male Secretaries: In *Doing "Women's Work": Men in Nontraditional Occupations*, edited by C.L. Williams. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- [131] Pun Ngai. 1999. Becoming Dagongmei (Working Girls): The Politics of Identity and Difference in Reform China. *The China Journal*. No. 42. July.
- [132] ---- 2005. *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. Duke University Press.
- [133] Qin, Baoqi. 2005. *China's Underground Society*. Beijing: Xueyuan Publishing House.
- [134] Qiu, Zhu and Lin He. 2007. Bangbang Became the Boss of the Moving Company. *Chongqing Business Daily*. March 14th.
- [135] Rofel, Lisa. 1999. *Other Modernities. Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- [136] Rose, Nikolas. 1993. "Governmentm authority and expertise in advanced liberalism," *Economy and Society* 22:283-299.
- [137] Salaff, Janet W. 1981. *Working Daughter of Hong Kong: Filial Piety or Power in the Family?* Cambridge : New York : Cambridge University Press.
- [138] Schein, Louisa. 1999. Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine In *China' s Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- [139] ---- 2001. Urbanity, Cosmpolitanism, and Consumption. In *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture*, ed. Nancy N. Chen, Suzanne Z. Gottschang, and Lyn Jeffery. Durham: Duke UP.

- [140] ---- 2002. Gender and Internal Orientalism In China. In *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, ed. Susan Wasserstrom and Jeffery N. Wasserstrom. Berkeley: University of California Press
- [141] ---- 2005. "Marrying out of Place: Hmong/Miao Women Across and Beyond China." In *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*, ed. N Constable, pp. 53-79. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
- [142] Sigley, Gary. 'Liberal despotism: Population planning, subjectivity, and government in contemporary China', *Alternatives* 29(5): 557-575, 2004.
- [143] Solinger, Dorothy J. 1999. *Contesting citizenship in urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [144] Song, Geng. 2004. *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. Hong Kong: HKU Press.
- [145] ---- 2010. Consumption, Class Formation and Sexuality: Reading Men's Lifestyle Magazines in China. *The China Journal*, 64: 159-177
- [146] Song, Jian. 1997. Science and Technology in China: The Engine of Rapid Economic Development. *Technology in Society*, 19: 281-294.
- [147] Sun, Wanning. 2009. *Maid in China: Media, Mobility, and a New Semiotic of Power*. Londo and New York: Routledge.
- [148] Taylor, Jeffrey.1988. "Rural Employment Trends and the Legacy of Surplus Labor," *The China Quarterly* 16: 726-66;
- [149] *The Economist*. "China's Chigago," July 26, 2007.
- [150] ----"China's Labor Market: The Next China." June 29th, 2010.
- [151] Ventura, Reynald B. 1992. *Underground in Japan*. London: J. Cape.
- [152] Wang, Yiyan. 2003. "Mr butterfly in Defunct Capital:'soft'masculinity and (mis)engendering China". In *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, eds. Kam Louie and Morris Low. London and New York: Routledge Curzon.
- [153] Watts, Jonathan. 2006. Invisible city. *The Guardian*. March 15th.
- [154] West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Dong Gender." *Gender & Society* 1:125-151.
- [155] West, Candace and Sarah Fenstermaker. 1995. "Doing Difference." *Gender & Society* 1:8-37.
- [156] Williams, Chstine L. 1989. *Gender Differences at Work: Women and Men in Nontraditional Occupations*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- [157] ---- 1992. The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the "Female" Professions. *Social Problem* 39: 253-267.
- [158] ----. 1995. *Still A Man's World: Men Who Do Women's Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- [159] Willis, Katie D and Brenda S. A. Yeoh. 2000. "Gender and Transnational Household Strategies: Singaporean Migration to China." *Regional Studies*. Volume 34 (3): 253-264.
- [160] White, Gordon. "Politics of Economic Reform in Chinese Industry: The Introduction of the Labour Contract System" *The China Quarterly*, (September 1987):365-389.
- [161] Wolf, DL. 1992. *Factory Daughters: Gender, Household Dynamics, and Rural Industrialization in Java*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press
- [162] Wright, Rosemary. 1996. The Occupational Masculinity of Computing. In *Masculinities in Organizations*, edited by C. Cheng. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [163] Wu, Yemiao. 2007. The Peasants' Habits and the Refashioning of Peasants to Urban Residents: An Example of the Construction of Kunshanese in kunshan City. *Guihai Luncong*. 23(6).
- [164] Wu, Huifang and Jingzhong Ye. 2009. The Impact of Out-migration of Husband to the Marital Relationship of Left-behind Wife. *Zhongzhou Academic Journal*. Vol. 3.
- [165] Xiao, Kuo. 2004. *Bangbang is Great!* (Bangbang Hen Bang). CCTV, Agriculture Channel. Oct. 29, 2004.
- [166] Yan, Hairong. 2003. Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism: Organizing Suzhi/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment. *Cultural Anthropology*. 18 (4): 493-523.
- [167] ---- 2006. "Refusing Success, Refusing "Voice": The Other Story of Accumulation." In *Narratives of the Chinese Economic Reform: Individual Pathways from Plan to Market*, ed. by Dorothy J. Solinger. Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen.
- [168] ---- 2008. *New Masters, New Servants: Migration, Development, and Women Workers in China*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- [169] Yang, C.K.1959. *The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution*. Shanghai. China: Harvard university Press.
- [170] Yang, Shunxiang. 2009. Create a New Rural Land Transit System that applies to general Undeveloped Areas. *The Journal of Socialist New Countryside Building Theory*. Volume (4): 168-171.
- [171] Yi, Fan (edit). 2009. "Zhoubo: The City Residents Have the Say on" Representative Spokesman of the City Image." *Longhua News Net*. July 5th.
- [172] Yu, Jiajia. 2005. Focus on the Transfer of Millions of Rural Labor, Financial Aid is Not Ready Yet. *Time and Trues Newspaper (Shidai Xinbao)*. January 7th.
- [173] Yuan, Sainan, Guo Xiaoming, Lu Hongjuan, Zhang Yejiang, Shu Shenghua, Zeng Xiya. 2009. *Chongqing: Leading the Road of City and Countryside Integration Through Trials*. City and Countryside Integration Development Research Group. The Central Party School. Study Time Newspaper Office.
- [174] Zhang, Everette Yuehong. 2001. "Goudui and the State: Constructing Entrepreneurial Masculinity in Two Cosmopolitan Areas of Post-Socialist China." In *Gendered Modernities*, ed. D. Hodgson. New York: Palgrave.
- [175] ---- 2003. *Impotence in the making: An illness of Chinese modernity*. Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley.

- [176] Zhang Li. 2001. *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China's Floating Population*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press
- [177] Zhang, Tao. 2005. Wang Hongju Proposed Changing the Appellation of “Bangbang.” *Chongqing Morning Newspaper*. September 16th.
- [178] Zhang, Weiwei. 2007. From “Bangbang” to the Boss of “bangbang.” *Chongqing Daily*. March 17th.
- [179] Zhang, Xuewei. 2007. What Can I Call You, My Brother. *People's Daily*. April. 30th.
- [180] Zhao, Yaohui. 2003. “The Role of Network in Labor Migration: The Case of China.” *Contemporary Economic Policy* 21(4): 500-511.
- [181] ---- 1999. “Leaving the countryside: rural-to-urban migration decisions in China.” *The American Economic Review* 89 (2): 281-286.
- [182] Zhou, Yixing. 2006. Why is The Bangbang Army Not Seen in the Chongqing Business Cards? www.cui.org.cn
- [183] Zhou Yong. 2002. *The History of Chongqing*. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House.
- [184] Zhao, Yuezhi. 2002. “The Rich, the Laid-off, and the Criminal in Tabloid Tales: Read All about It!” In *Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society*. Pp. 111-137