How Migrant Workers Find Housing in Beijing: 
The role of individual agency in differential housing access and outcomes

Deland Chan
Program in Urban Studies
Stanford University

Advisor: Professor Karen Seto
Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments 3  
Map of the People’s Republic of China 4  
Introduction 5  

Chapter 1  
  Historical Overview 11  

  Literature Review  
  *Hukou as the Traditional Measurement of Privilege* 14  
  A New Paradigm: Informal Channels and Social Networks 16  
  Towards a Working Hypothesis 20  

Chapter 2  
  Research Design  
  Target Population and Sample Size 22  
  Data Collection and Analysis 23  

  Survey Results 26  
  How do migrant workers find housing? 32  
  What are migrant workers’ living arrangements and housing conditions? 34  
  What are channels for migrant workers to improve their housing conditions? 39  

  Informal Interviews  
  Migrants in the Self-Employed Sector 42  
  Migrants in the Public Sector 49  
  Migrants in the Private Sector 53  
  Summary of Informal Interviews 58  

Chapter 3  
  Discussion 59  
  Conclusion 69  

Reference List 73  

Appendix  
  Survey (English) 79  
  Translated survey (Chinese) 83  
  Glossary of Common Terms 86
Acknowledgments

My honors thesis has been a two-year journey infinitely enriched by the guidance and kindness of others. I am indebted to Professor Karen Seto for her unfaltering support whether at Stanford or abroad, and for encouraging the habit of making productive use of my mornings. Professor Nancy Tuma and Dr. Michael Kahan provided important assistance in the initial stages as I formulated my ideas. Dr. Hilton Obenzinger made the writing process less painful with his indispensable humor, sound advice, and editorial support in the final six months of my thesis. Undergraduate Research Programs provided generous financial support for fieldwork equipment. I am also grateful to Dr. Jason Patent at the Stanford-in-Beijing Center for arranging my directed reading and for making this project possible by introducing me to an outstanding professor. Professor He Canfei of Peking University guided me enormously throughout the fieldwork process. Xie Xuezhen and her boyfriend were patient guides who sacrificed much of their time to accompany me and facilitate my research. Arthur Kaneko kindly allowed me to reproduce his photos. Michael Huang provided emotional support and cooked my meals whenever I lost track of time. I am eternally grateful to my parents for inspiring me at every stage of this project. Your physically and mentally strenuous journey in defiance of the odds will never be forgotten. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Betty Chan on her recent graduation—indeed, you set the bar for research excellence in the family. Lastly, this project would not have been possible without the migrants who shared their honesty, stories, and inspiration with me. Thank you.
The People’s Republic of China

Source: University of Texas Libraries
Introduction

Internal rural-to-urban migration often has a significant role in the rapid urbanization of developing countries and transformation of existing cities. Rural peasants migrate to urban areas in search of job opportunities that do not exist in the village, yet institutional barriers prevent them from settling in the city as permanent residents. Despite providing vital services to the host economy, these rural migrants often occupy the lowest rung of the socio-economic hierarchy. They face institutional constraints and societal discrimination that result in harsh working conditions and substandard housing provision. Access to housing becomes an important factor in understanding two issues: 1) the extent to which migrant workers assimilate culturally and spatially in rapidly developing cities, and 2) the ability for migrant workers to exercise individual agency to improve their standards of living under institutional constraints. Living arrangements and housing conditions are two major outcomes of housing access; not only do they provide insight into the population’s well-being, they also describe how migrant workers settle into host cities, the sustainability of such settlements, and their prospects for social mobility. A closer examination of migrant workers and differential housing access will be of interest to researchers and policy officials concerned with the development of cities in globalizing economies and the social consequences that stem from large-scale migration of rural peasants to urbanized areas.

China is one of many rapidly developing countries that have recently experienced a surge of internal rural-to-urban migration. Patterns of migration are strongly correlated with regional economic development. From the years 1995 to 2000, the majority of migrants were moving from poorer provinces in central and western China to eastern regions, particularly to Beijing, Tianjin, and the Pearl River Delta (Fan, 2005). As of 2005, the National Statistics Bureau estimates that 120 million migrants live in Chinese cities, the majority of whom are not
permanent residents and confront a variety of disadvantages in healthcare, the education system, pension allowance, and the housing distribution process (He, 2005). While the neoclassical economic perspective attributes migration to the economic motives and rationality of migrants (i.e., migrant workers rely on a cost-benefit analysis and travel “blindly” to cities that offer the greatest financial benefits), some migrants may also exhibit a purposeful degree of personal discretion when confronted with a variety of structural opportunities and constraints. Individual characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, education, place of origin, and village-based networks may predict where migrants end up in specific jobs and destinations (Roberts, 2001). Village-based networks also facilitate migration, as villages with a higher number of experienced migrants may act as catalysts for a surge of future migrants from that region (Zhao, 2003).

Despite their palpable existence in Chinese cities, migrant workers have captured a limited aspect of the scholarly agenda. Numerous studies draw the same conclusion that migrant workers live as second-class citizens in their host cities, barred from the same rights available to permanent urban residents. The literature sends an urgent message to policy makers: unless the Chinese government or international stakeholders address this problem, the income-inequality gap will worsen and social unrest could potentially occur. In recent years, thousands of spontaneous protests have erupted from angry, frustrated, and over-worked migrant workers. These protests do not lead to productive gains; on the contrary, it may result in a significant loss of lives and heightened social tensions between migrant workers and permanent local residents. In the long run, it may also lead to economic losses and the retreat of foreign investors who maintain valuable assets in the region. Since the protests are of greatest interest to stakeholders, academic and governmental organizations that conduct research on migrant workers often resort to a scholarly agenda that focuses on human rights or the stability of the Chinese government. As a result, some scholars are mostly interested in legitimizing migrant workers as victims of unfortunate circumstance and perpetuating the notion that they need to be rescued or placated.

Few scholars have addressed the topic of migrant workers on a broader scale, that is, an examination of migration and its consequences that extends beyond China itself. Migrant workers have constructed the spatial and social landscapes of Cairo, Cape Town, Mexico City, and Nairobi in the past, and they continue to shape the futures of Bombay, Delhi, Dubai—to name a few places. Migrant workers are powerful catalysts in the development of their host cities and have considerable agency in their lives. The migration of an inexpensive labor force across domestic and international boundaries has long contributed to rapidly urbanizing cities and their globalizing economies, yet the literature on Chinese migrants does not reflect this.
Perhaps some academic and governmental organizations are uncomfortable with the idea that a traditionally disadvantaged population may not require rescuing or placating at all, which results in a scholarly agenda that deliberately refuses to acknowledge that migrant workers could be empowered to shape their lives and the future of their host cities. Consequently, current research on migrant workers often does not address the potential of individual agency and social mobility.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the following questions: 1) how do migrant workers find housing, 2) what are the living arrangements and housing conditions for different subsets of migrant workers, and 3) what are the available channels in which they can improve their housing conditions? It does not intend to deny or trivialize the institutional constraints that affect the daily lives of migrant workers; neither does it intend to be a historical survey of how cities around the world have relied on the labor of internal migrant workers to yield similar patterns of urban growth. Instead, this study focuses on migrant workers in Beijing without the urban household registration and their differential experiences with housing provision as evidence of individual agency. Residential patterns tend to vary with socio-economic mobility, therefore indicating the extent of migrant assimilation. This study asserts that migrant workers have a considerable degree of agency in their lives and have devised coping strategies to manipulate personal resources to improve their outcomes of housing provision, as opposed to remaining passive recipients of structural discrimination. The first chapter of this thesis will provide a historical overview of institutional barriers that migrant workers encounter in the city, summarize the current literature, and explain the need for further research beyond the urban household registration system. The second chapter will describe the framework of this study and the results. The final chapter will suggest how informal channels such as occupation and social networks may exceed the influence of structural discrimination, in contrast to previous studies.
The main findings rely on data from a survey of 102 migrant workers and supplementary informal interviews that took place from March to June 2006 in Beijing. The results find that in lieu of the urban household registration, migrant workers who have a strong institutional affiliation with the public sector tend to enjoy superior housing conditions as defined by size of dwelling, privacy, and access to public facilities compared to those who do not have a strong institutional affiliation with the public sector. However, this relationship is not linear in that stronger institutional affiliation does not necessarily lead to incremental gains in housing. Contrary to previous literature, this study de-emphasizes the role of the urban household registration as the basic qualification for attaining superior housing. Occupation and informal social networks are increasingly important resources that allow migrant workers to modify their housing conditions, settlement choices, and pathways to social mobility in modern urban China.
Chapter 1: Historical Overview and Literature Review

Ongoing construction in the Forbidden City.
Source: Deland Chan
Historical Overview

The rapid urbanization of developing countries is a tangible occurrence that policy officials can no longer neglect. In 1950, only 86 cities in the world consisted of a population over one million. By 2015, approximately 550 cities will exceed a population of one million (United Nations [UN], 2002). Between 2015 and 2020, the urban population will exceed that of the rural population for the first time in human history (UNESCO, 2003). This rural population will move to urban areas in order to reunite with family members already there and seek job and educational opportunities unavailable back home. This population shift will most likely occur in developing countries, where a stable political environment, modern infrastructure, and welfare provisions are sometimes lacking. Rural-to-urban migration has often led to the unprecedented growth of cities. For example, Brazil experienced 80 percent of its urban growth in favelas from 1940 to 1970 due to widespread migration, resulting in shantytowns that lack basic utilities and infrastructure (Browder & Godfrey, 1997). The growth of cities in developing countries raises serious concerns regarding labor abuses and the welfare of rural-to-urban migrants, and whether these megalopolises are sustainably and ecologically fit to handle an influx of new arrivals.

In China, internal rural-to-urban migration is an acute problem confronting policy officials. From the 1950s to the late 1980s, the household registration system (hukou) served as an effective means of population control and limited rural-to-urban migration. It was the official mark of agricultural or urban residence and a quasi-ration system that linked an individual’s place of birth to daily provisions such as rice, cloth and coal. Therefore, a rural peasant in Shandong province could not receive his grain coupons and eat if he decided to migrate to Shanghai. Since the early 1980s, the country has embraced a socialist market economy and improved international relations under the leadership of Premier Deng Xiaoping. Consequently,
jobs in manufacturing became available with the success of domestic economic reforms and
direct foreign investment. The Individual Household Responsibility System enabled farmers to
contract their land and sell surplus crops for personal profit (Yang & Guo, 1994). Increased
agricultural productivity and a surplus of rural labor then encouraged rural peasants to look for
additional employment in urban areas. In response to these push-pull factors, the motivation for
rural-to-urban migration was very strong. With a stable political climate and rising commodity
market by the late 1980s, this impulse became a reality as rural peasants could purchase these
necessities once they arrived in the city. Some prestigious universities and work units (danwei)
began to grant the urban hukou status to non-native workers and students in order to attract
intellectual human capital. As the gates to Chinese cities slowly opened, thousands of non-native
migrants flooded urban areas, which grew at an unprecedented rate in response. In 1950, the
population of Beijing and Shanghai was 3.9 and 5.3 million respectively. By 2004, Beijing grew
to 10.8 million people, and Shanghai had a population of 13.2 million people (Davis, 2006).

In addition to sheer population growth, the new arrivals encompassed a wide range of
people. A migrant could be a student moving to Beijing to attend college, a rural peasant
seeking employment in the construction industry, or a Hong Kong businessman looking for
investment opportunities in the Mainland. Educated professionals moving between urban places
through formal migration channels found themselves in the same non-native category as peasant
workers, the floating population that drifted from rural to urban areas in search of seasonal
employment, and the temporary population who had to pay an annual fee for the temporary
residence card (Ma & Xiang, 1998). Ironically, the hukou declined in significance in the 1980s
such that it permitted redistribution of the rural and urban population, but it also led to tensions
between permanent and non-native professional residents who possessed the urban hukou and
temporary migrants without it. Essentially, the *hukou* system has faced much criticism in recent years from scholars and policy officials as the perpetrator of social inequity in urban China.

Although *hukou* has become synonymous with social inequality over the years, it is often viewed primarily as an institutional barrier to the neediest migrant. Non-native professional residents often receive the urban *hukou* as part of their employee benefits when they relocate to the city. Alternatively, the introduction of the blue-stamp *hukou* in 1999 enables the truly affluent to purchase a de facto hukou status as permanent residents after making a substantial investment in the city (Chan & Zhang, 1999). For poor migrant workers who cannot afford this type of patronage, attainment of the urban hukou is a distant and unattainable dream. The lack of urban *hukou*, therefore, has the harshest effect on a specific type of migrant otherwise known as the floating population or temporary worker. They are often uneducated, under 26-years old, and willing to endure dangerous, low-paying work (Gu & Shen, 2003; Lu & Song, 2004; Wu, 2002). Such migrant workers are concentrated in the formal work sector (e.g., construction and service industries) or the informal work sector (e.g., domestic work). As menial laborers, they often lack personal resources to send their children to private schools and secure desirable housing units, in which institutional barriers to the urban *hukou* only further deepen their disadvantage.

Much of the scholarly literature focuses on the dichotomy between registered urban residents and unregistered migrants, often using the *hukou* as a measure of inequality and even regarding it as the primary barrier that prevents migrant workers from achieving a similar standard of living. The next section will attempt to summarize this literature and explain why research beyond the *hukou* system is necessary in order to fully understand migration in China.
Literature Review

**Hukou as the Traditional Measurement of Privilege**

A vast portion of the scholarly English-language literature on Chinese migrants focuses on migrant exclusion from formal urban institutions, in which the *hukou* serves as a type of internal passport (Roberts, 2002; Wu, 2004). For many scholars, the urban *hukou* is a standard of measurement and the ultimate line of division between the haves and the have-nots in urban society. Chan and Yang (1999) used survey data to find that individuals with the urban *hukou* are more likely to be urban natives, college-educated, and employed in skilled jobs, while non-*hukou* migrants come from rural areas with low educational attainment and rely on informal job sources. In part, this phenomenon is cyclical because individuals with the urban *hukou* and a university degree tend to have easier access to jobs in the formal sector (Guo & Iredale, 2004).

Numerous scholars have also investigated the *hukou* as a decisive factor in housing provision. As temporary residents, migrant workers cannot access the subsidized public housing reserved for permanent urban residents or obtain home mortgages (Wu, 2003). Because they cannot rent affordable housing, they often have no choice but to resort to employer-supplied housing or rental apartments located on the urban fringe. Migrant workers’ housing conditions are generally inferior to those of local registered residents with the urban *hukou*. In addition, Huang (2003) conducted fieldwork in five Chinese cities and found that migrant workers face greater issues of overcrowding, lack of kitchen and bathroom facilities, and structural instability.

In addition, scholars have noted that the *hukou*’s close relationship with the work unit (*danwei*) may serve as an additional source of disadvantage for migrants. In the mid-1990s, the monetary value of housing benefits differed according to the prestige of an individual’s work unit, with those received by the heads of public organizations almost 44 percent greater than
those of technical workers. As housing benefits account for 60 percent of total welfare benefits available to public employees, migrant workers who do not belong to prestigious work units face greater obstacles to home ownership (Wang, 2003). Despite China’s efforts to create a demand-based housing market in 1994 with the Decision on Deepening the Urban Housing Reform, work units often still subsidize housing units to employees at a below market rate price. Therefore, the relationship between hukou status and the work unit is a possible explanation for the differential gap in housing ownership between registered residents and unregistered residents without the urban hukou (Wang & Murie, 2000). However, these studies fail to explain one crucial question. Is it possible for migrant workers to employ other strategic methods besides obtaining the urban hukou in order to gain membership in prestigious work units and thus achieve better housing?

The Chinese-language literature on internal migration also reveals a disproportionate emphasis on government policies that affect rural out-migration rather than a focus on how peasants deal with institutional constraints once they have arrived in the city. Some scholars discuss the importance of integrating rural and urban labor markets in order to facilitate migration and better coordination between the sending and receiving provinces (Fang, 1997; 1999). Other scholars have argued in favor of rural migration because they understand that it narrows the rural-urban income gap and allows certain provinces to prosper, therefore reducing overall regional disparity (Wei, 2003; Ying, D., 1995; 1997; Shi, 1999; Zhang, 1998;). Similar studies have focused on how China should adopt macro-economic strategies to develop local rural industries and organize institutional efforts to bring rural laborers to urban areas for seasonal and contract work. Ethnographic studies have also documented the disadvantage of migrant workers, such as the low attrition rate of migrant schoolgirls (Fangquan & Huang, 2003). Other scholars have investigated migration patterns, including where migrants stay, how
much they earn, and how long they stay (Wailai Nu Laogong Ketizu, 2002). In general, the Chinese literature focuses on macro-level problems, such as the alleviation of rural poverty and whether the government should privatize agricultural land for large-scale farming. While some scholars do focus on the migrant workers, the literature only confirms the stereotype that rural migrant workers occupy a low-social status in their host cities and are unable to change this.

Although the hukou is a useful tool to describe various inequalities between registered and unregistered residents, few scholars have attempted to dispel the stereotype of migrant workers as victims of institutional discrimination. To do so requires a shift away from regarding the hukou as the traditional line of division between the haves and the have-nots. While research is not necessary to confirm that permanent urban residents have superior housing conditions compared to temporary migrant workers, it is less clear why some migrant workers without the urban hukou have better housing conditions than their counterparts who also lack the hukou. This study focuses on the central question of whether migrant workers living in Beijing without the urban hukou have explored alternative resources in the face of structural opportunities and constraints in order to improve their housing conditions and living arrangements.

A New Paradigm: Informal Channels and Social Networks

Prior studies have briefly explored the idea of whether the individual agency of migrants themselves could prevail over government policies regarding internal migration. In Vietnam, government officials introduced a policy aimed at rural resettlement in order to mitigate population pressures in the cities after the war with the United States (Dang, Goldstein, & McNally, 1997). However, most people left after they arrived in the resettlement areas due to frustration with lack of infrastructure, social services, and low income. Instead, individuals were migrating in response to market opportunities, such that more developed provinces attracted a
greater influx of in-migrants while less developed provinces provided more out-migrants. Essentially, these directional flows contradicted official migration policies, signaling that individual preference is important even under government constraints. Since Vietnam resembles China to some extent in that both countries are grappling with migration as a factor in the transition from a socialist to market economy, scholars interested in extrapolating this experience to China could learn from this study. Dang et al. confirm that migrant workers could potentially exercise individual agency to affect their life outcomes and the development of their host cities.

Although a small portion of the literature does focus on how migrant workers in China have used informal channels rather than the urban *hukou* as the path to social mobility, these studies do not address directly the issue of housing provision and consequences for rapidly growing cities. In recent years, migrant workers have been gradually finding ways to circumvent legal boundaries and establish an adequate standard of living despite lacking the urban *hukou*. Zhang, Zhao, and Tian (2003) have examined the rise of migrant enclaves (*chengzhongcun*) on the urban fringe of Beijing as evidence of how migrants penetrate institutional barriers for financial gains. Since local governments cannot regulate land beyond the city boundaries, native peasants on the urban fringe with the rural *hukou* have converted their collectively owned land to finance private housing for rent to migrants for a profit while increasing their land value. Migrant workers also benefit from this relationship because the housing may be located close to their workplace, and they cannot access affordable housing in the city proper without the *hukou*. The development of “big yard” residential compounds such as Zhejiang Village in Beijing consist of self-sufficient communities operating their own water, electricity, postal, and sewage systems without direct state control. Many of the residents come from the city of *Wenzhou* and have developed strong relationships that permeate their social networks as small business
entrepreneurs. Due to the rapid prosperity and autonomy of these migrant enclaves, the Beijing municipality viewed this unregulated population as threatening and implemented a “cleansing” campaign in 1995 that was largely ineffective, with many migrants returning to their homes shortly after the campaign. However, Zhejiang Village began to flourish after government officials passed the 1987 law to allow the leasing of commercial space in state-owned units. As He (2005) found, these migrants from Wenzhou forged economic partnerships with the local government and state-owned retail establishments. In effect, these entrepreneurs utilized their social networks and the reformed market economy to defy the stereotype that all migrant workers have inferior livelihoods and housing conditions despite lacking the urban hukou. This thesis complements this literature by asserting that migrant workers have devised coping strategies and influence their own life outcomes, as opposed to passively accepting institutional discrimination.

While the hukou and socialist tradition of work unit housing still have a significant role in sorting people into different neighborhoods, this may change with the housing market reform. Beginning with the 1988 Ten Year Reform Strategy, the government began to increase rents and encourage home ownership in order to shift housing provision towards market forces (Wang & Murie, 2000). By 1998, the Chinese government claims to have put an end to all government-subsidized housing through work organizations, and there are now two sources of housing: housing purchased from previously occupied units belonging to work organizations and housing purchased from commercial sources (Wang, 2003). Chinese urban households now have more housing choices, and they can choose the preferred tenure (renting vs. owning) and type of housing (public vs. private). In 1994, the Decision on Deepening the Urban Housing Reform halted the sale of housing at very low prices and traded more ownership rights (including the right to resell on the open market) for higher individual user fees (Wang & Murie, 2000). Even
though the urban *hukou* still favors local residents over non-*hukou* holders in home ownership, migrants who can afford to rent or purchase high-quality housing are free to do so in the housing market. In the case of *Wenzhou* entrepreneurs, their successful businesses in the garment industry have made them so wealthy that the urban *hukou* almost becomes an irrelevant factor in their housing preferences. Other wealthy people have recently expressed an interest to live in townhouse complexes located on the urban fringe that mimic American gated communities (Insider’s Guide, 2005). Essentially, the rise of a reformed free housing market indicates the possibility that socioeconomic factors (e.g., income and demand) will soon pervade over socialist institutions (e.g., *hukou* and the work unit) in determining where people wish to live in Beijing.

In addition, scholars have also noticed that flexibility in the Chinese rule of law allows the possibility of social mobility beyond the traditional *hukou* division. In a study regarding why migrant entrepreneurs in *Zhejiang* Village do not comply with the municipal law to obtain business licenses and instead rent licenses from local residents, He (2005) observes that migrants do not apply for these licenses because they are costly and have no clear standard of protection. The best alternative is legal collusion, which has the most institutional support from local businessmen and police. Migrant entrepreneurs rely on locals to apply for the license, while locals enjoy an alternative income source. Most importantly, police authorities accept collusion because migrant workers are at least making an effort to comply with legal requirements. When migrant entrepreneurs are caught breaking the law, authorities place limits on the fines to collusion from getting out of hand, but they do not suppress their businesses altogether. Since migrant entrepreneurs already have a history of evading the law with the tacit approval of the government, this suggests the opportunity for migrant workers to adapt to life beyond the rigidity of institutional constraints by devising coping strategies that may result in increased social
mobility. In this way, migrant workers could learn from this experience to find similar ways to circumvent institutional boundaries and secure better housing conditions for themselves.

Towards a Working Hypothesis

This thesis contributes to the working hypothesis that some migrant workers could potentially influence their living arrangements by making strategic choices that increase their chances of securing superior housing conditions compared to other migrant workers who also lack the urban hukou. In other words, this study challenges the prior literature that has primarily focused on the hukou system as a measurement of disadvantage and migrant workers as merely passive recipients of institutional discrimination. Individual agency may include the decision to work for the public sector or purposefully engaging one’s social networks to discover a new job opportunity that may result in greater housing benefits. This study also suggests that migrant workers make personal choices that affect the development of their host cities in that their settlement patterns point to the most rapid areas of urban growth and raise questions about the economic viability and sustainability of cities experiencing a high volume of migration flows. The following section will explain the framework of the study and the results in greater detail.
Chapter 2: Research Design and Results

Morning commute in Beijing.
Source: Deland Chan
Research Design

Beijing is the second largest city in China, and a sprawling municipality of 15 million people. As the headquarters of the Communist Party, a strong political presence pervades the city and its historical sites, particularly the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. The city also boasts two of China’s most prestigious universities, Peking (Beida) and Tsinghua University, each with a notable reputation for educating the next generation of cadres. Beijing is the ideal site for this thesis, as cities of descending political order will often refer to China’s capital as the prototype for experimental policies, especially regarding domestic issues such as migration.

Target Population and Sample Size

This study examines the target population of individuals who are employed full-time as wage earners, non-native to Beijing, and have lived in Beijing for less than ten years. These qualifying factors are necessary because non-native migrant workers who have resided in the city for less than ten years face the disadvantage of not yet acclimatizing to a new environment and are more vulnerable to institutional constraints that prevent them from legitimate access to affordable housing. However, they may also have the advantage of living in Beijing long enough to qualify for the urban hukou or adopt alternative strategies to find better housing conditions. By limiting participants to migrants who come from similar backgrounds, this study strikes a balance between people having much to lose or gain from changes to the hukou system.

I conducted fieldwork from March to June 2006 while studying abroad at Peking University. The criteria for the target population was flexible enough so that nearly everyone I approached qualified as a “migrant worker”, including an assistant professor at the university, the security guard whom I passed on my way to an off-campus eatery, the cooks working in the
campus cafeteria, and the housekeepers in the international student dormitory. I recruited most of my respondents during daylight hours while they were visible in the streets and participating in some occupational activity. Due to the public nature of the interaction, some respondents who participated in the study were aware of the fact that other people were watching them as they completed the study. Because some participants felt more comfortable with a friend nearby who could monitor the interviewing process, I did not attempt to isolate them from this support. Although their responses may have differed slightly if they had been able to respond without a non-participant within the listening range, I believe that I was able to collect insightful information regardless. I employed a variety of data collection methods and recruited a total of 102 respondents who represent a range of different occupations and personal characteristics.

Data Collection and Analysis

The two components of my study include a written survey and informal interviews. In designing and distributing a survey, I aimed to collect data regarding respondents’ housing arrangements, conditions of dwelling unit, and perceptions of quality of life (see Appendix). The survey consisted of three parts, in which the first section gathered basic demographic information about the respondent (i.e., age, gender, education), the second section inquired about prior housing and occupational history, and the third section specifically referred to housing conditions (i.e., size of dwelling, private bathroom, kitchen). The major advantage of a survey was the economy of design and ability to identify attributes of a large population from a sample. In conducting informal interviews, I asked respondents about the factors that motivated them to live in a specific neighborhood and the exact circumstances of their occupation. My primary intention in speaking with these respondents was to construct a narrative of their lives and use informal conversation as a way to answer unexpected questions that the survey failed to address.
There are several reasons why I employ a mixed-methods approach. Although the Beijing Statistical Yearbooks provide a baseline for housing conditions throughout the city, my own survey of the temporary migrant population is necessary since the official data may consider individuals with the agricultural *hukou* as permanent residents in the city. While a survey is a systematic way to gather information about this population, qualitative data is necessary to collect greater detail about the lives of individuals otherwise lost in a myriad of checkboxes and statistics. Sociologists often use the triangulation mixed method design to build upon the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research methods for a more comprehensive outlook. In addition, quantitative data consisting of the housing conditions of migrants is insufficient to understand the incentives for migrants to obtain the urban hukou, as I could falsely conclude that disparities in running water and private facilities alone could persuade migrants to strive for better housing. Qualitative data may reveal that migrants have more nuanced incentives for circumventing the *hukou* system, particularly if they found other ways to improve their housing. Because of these anticipated problems, I chose to collect both types of data for the thesis.

In actuality, the distinction between the survey and informal interviews was often blurry. Some respondents preferred to dictate their responses to the survey as I recorded them on paper. In part, this was a time-consuming process that restricted the total number of surveys, but it also eliminated the potential interference of migrant workers’ lack of literacy and led to richer detail with each survey. I would prompt the respondent for further explanation if their answers were not consistent with prior respondents from similar backgrounds and along the way, I uncovered a few patterns of responses that I had not originally accounted for when designing my survey. As the rigidity of my survey became clear, I would ask questions in my informal interviews that steered clear from these limitations and would direct me towards a more productive inquiry.
To analyze my data, I first translated the survey responses from Chinese to English and coded each question on the survey to a corresponding variable in Excel and SPSS. The following table summarizes the most relevant variables in the study and the response rates:

Table 1: Most relevant variables, description of variables, and response rates from the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Description</th>
<th>RR (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>Gender of respondent</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKPLACE</td>
<td>Place of current hukou registration</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKTYPE</td>
<td>Type of hukou registration</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKCHG</td>
<td>Did respondent ever change hukou from agriculture to urban?</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Highest level of educational attainment</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOB</td>
<td>Year of Birth</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEARARR</td>
<td>Year of arrival in Beijing</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVEWITH</td>
<td>Who does the respondent currently live with?</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDRES</td>
<td>How did the respondent find current residence?</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTOR</td>
<td>Which sector is the respondent employed within?</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOB</td>
<td>How did the respondent find his or her current job?</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQMETER</td>
<td>Square meters of respondent's living space</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOMS</td>
<td>Number of rooms in respondent's dwelling unit</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE</td>
<td>Number of people occupying respondent's dwelling unit</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using SPSS, I was able to derive the frequency and summary tables for all of the variables. I also used the software package to perform cross tabulations between discrete variables in order to determine whether there were statistically significant correlations among the variables. All of the correlation coefficients in the study refer to the Pearson Chi-Square test. Since the majority of the survey variables are not continuous, I did not examine the data in scatter plots or linear regressions. In general, a sample size greater than N=102 may have resulted in more conclusive correlation tests, but I believe that my data results are still indicative of general trends.

Since I recorded the responses from the informal interviews using pen and notepaper, I grouped these responses by general themes while retaining the respondent’s unique survey identification number to refer to their survey responses if necessary. This method ensured coordination between the survey and informal interviews throughout the data analysis process.
Survey Results: Who are the migrant workers?

Originally from Sichuan province, Wei Zhang is one of the hundreds of construction workers who arrived in May 2006 to handle the job of expanding Beijing’s subway in preparation for the 2008 Olympics. He works a 12-hour shift most days and lives with his colleagues in a dormitory at the construction site, taking his meals in the canteen, and sleeping on his plywood bed along with eight other males in one room (Figure 2). Despite his hard work and tolerance for these conditions, his employer refuses to pay him until the project is completed. When his job is done, Zhang does not know whether he will stay in Beijing. Like many of his colleagues, he will have to leave his temporary home and find another job to sustain himself.

Figure 2: Construction workers build their temporary dormitories on site.
Zhang’s story is undeniably common, but it is also the first and only impression that many people summon when they think of the migrant worker. Often used as a derogatory term, the “floating” population refers to individuals who lack direction and drift from one city to another in search of petty jobs. In reality, migrant workers encompass a range of occupations and qualities. However, they share one characteristic: they lack the Beijing hukou. They could be construction workers, restaurant cooks, storeowners, street peddlers, and assistant professors at a prestigious university. While many migrant workers are indeed poor and have no choice but to engage in menial labor, some are well-educated individuals and have also become successful entrepreneurs despite lacking the urban hukou. In this way, migrant workers often have differentiated traits from one another. This section will summarize the characteristics of the 102 survey respondents. It is necessary to keep this diversity in mind as the study examines alternative factors beyond the hukou that may affect migrants’ housing access and outcomes.

When considering whether or not to migrate to Beijing, the distance from an individual’s province of origin is a notable factor. The five most common provinces for out-migration are also closest to the city of Beijing (Figure 3). Among the 102 respondents, about one-fifth of them migrated from Henan and Heilongjiang provinces, followed closely by Sichuan, Hebei, and Hubei. As the initial costs of migration are quite high, expense-related setbacks might limit the distance in which a migrant is willing to travel due to the cost of a train ticket or the strength of pre-established social networks. Many respondents also expressed a desire to move to Beijing rather than other major cities or provinces that receive migrants, such as the Pearl River Delta. Typical responses include the desire to earn money and reunite with family members, but some individuals were also attracted to Beijing for its culture, history, and intellectual activity—perhaps alluding to the fact that two of China’s prestigious universities, Beida and Tsinghua, are
located next to each other in the *Haidian* district. While the first reason is most closely aligned with neoclassical theory in that migrant workers move to the location where they anticipate the greatest financial rewards, the second reason seems to suggest that rural-to-urban migrants display a range of motives when moving to a city, including familial reasons and self-betterment.

![Map showing top five provinces for out-migration to Beijing.](image)

Source: Deland Chan

Figure 3: Top Five Provinces for Out-Migration. Note that more saturated areas (in red) indicate a higher percentage of out-migrants to Beijing.

The level of educational attainment is another differentiating characteristic of migrant workers. Most respondents have completed at least middle school or high school (Table 2). In fact, it appears that individuals aggregate towards the middle, neither achieving the highest levels of education nor lacking primary schooling—negating the view that migrant workers lack the basic educational attainment compared to local residents (Table 3). According to the 2006 Beijing Statistical Yearbook, nearly half of registered urban residents achieved high school education or above, which is not too far from the combined percentage of respondents with high
school education or above. However, the 1997 Floating Population Survey in Beijing claims that more than two-thirds of migrant workers fell below the level of high school achievement (Wu, 2002). As the term “floating population” is largely a colloquial term and may consist of ambiguous boundaries, scholars could attribute this discrepancy in educational attainment to conflicting definitions of the floating population. Although this study limits the sample population to individuals without the urban hukou and who have lived in Beijing for less than 5 years, it did not screen the respondents according to occupation or income in order to include the greatest possible range of rural-to-urban migrants without the urban hukou. The 1997 Floating Population Survey may have restricted the data to include migrant workers who fulfill common stereotypes of the poor and disadvantaged urban population, such as a deliberate choice to oversample certain occupational sectors. Although this method is effective to make meaningful comparisons between the migrant population and registered population, it may also exaggerate the differences between the two groups on the basis of urban hukou. Instead, this study intended to examine the range of differences between migrant workers and registered urban residents.

Table 2: Educational attainment of the registered population, floating population, and migrant workers without the urban hukou living in Beijing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Registered Population (%)</th>
<th>Floating Population (%)</th>
<th>Migrant Workers (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source:</strong></td>
<td>Source: 2006 Beijing</td>
<td>Source: 1997 Floating</td>
<td>Source: 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistical Yearbook</td>
<td>Population Survey</td>
<td>respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary School</strong></td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle School</strong></td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School</strong></td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Secondary School</strong></td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associate Degree or Above</strong></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College</strong></td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Highest educational attainment of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some primary school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical secondary school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional high school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-year college</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, there is variation among respondents in their age, the year in which they arrived in Beijing, and the duration of their longest stay in Beijing without leaving. In general, the majority of new arrivals are young, as Figure 4 indicates that the younger the migrant, the more recent the arrival. Survey respondents range from 16 to 55 years old, and the average migrant arrived in Beijing about five years ago. While some migrants report that the longest time that they have stayed in Beijing was 1 month before taking the survey, the average migrant taking the survey has lived in Beijing for a little over 2½ months without departing (Table 4). Since the majority of potential respondents were recruited during daylight hours, all of them are of working age and were most accessible while on the job. On the other hand, this could also suggest that individuals of working age are most likely to migrate from rural provinces to Beijing, which could lead to social consequences. For example, since these individuals are of prime childbearing age, migration patterns could indicate similar patterns of marriage and cohabitation, therefore influencing their preferences for certain housing types. In addition, the data show that the oldest reported age is 55 yet the earliest migrant arrived in 1984, leaving a considerable gap. With the bulk of migrants arriving in 2001, perhaps these years correspond to
fluctuations in the Chinese government’s policies on migration that allowed flexibility in rural-
to-urban migration at some times over others. A potential future research endeavor would be to
examine the social and historic events that this particular generation endured and how this varies
from the experience of the next generation of migrants who are likely to endure fewer obstacles.

Figure 4: The relationship between respondents’ year of arrival and year of birth.

Table 4: Respondent’s year of birth, year of arrival, and duration of longest stay in Beijing
without leaving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of Birth</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Arrival</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longest Stay</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>23 months</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize, there is considerable variation in the personal traits of survey respondents,
contrary to stereotypes of migrant workers as a poor and disadvantaged population drifting from
one city to another. While many migrant workers do belong to the lowest ranks of the socio-
economic hierarchy, possession of the urban hukou alone does not determine social position. In
contrast, migrants without the *hukou* may have similar educational attainment compared to the registered urban population. Many migrant workers intentionally migrate to Beijing to reunite with family or friends, or perhaps even attend school. However, there is also variation among respondents in age, year of arrival in Beijing, and longest stay without leaving. As the most recent arrivals also tend to belong to the youngest cohort, the bulk of migrants are physically able individuals at the prime working age. This suggests that many of rural-to-urban migrants indeed move to Beijing for economic reasons, coinciding with popular views of migrant workers as upwardly mobile individuals. In the following section, it would be useful to refer to these details in order to understand how migrant workers find housing. Many of the pathways in which migrant workers obtain housing depend on their personal characteristics and membership in specific social networks that could aid them in gaining access to housing opportunities.

**How do migrant workers find housing?**

Once a migrant worker arrives in the city, or perhaps even before arrival, the individual has to answer a variety of questions. Where is affordable housing available? Where should I live and with whom? How can I go about obtaining housing in an unfamiliar city? This section will explain the process and outcomes in which 102 migrant workers confronted these questions. Considering that more than half of the respondents (52.9%) indicated that they changed their residence since arriving in Beijing, the acquirement of housing is an ongoing issue. Since all of them lack the Beijing *hukou*, they face obstacles to a variety of options otherwise available to registered residents such as affordable housing and home ownership. However, many of them have managed to secure housing using a combination of personal networks and employer ties.

Most respondents indicate that they found their housing through “Other” means, which refers to channels such as real estate brokers and newspaper advertisements (Table 5).
However, some also rely on their employers to supply them with housing free of charge, although it is less clear whether the employer deducts boarding costs from the worker’s salary. In the case of several cooks who operate a campus eatery at Peking University, they all live in employer-subsidized housing close to campus. Similarly, the job sector of migrant workers could indicate a wealth of information regarding how they acquired their residence. One-third of the survey respondents work in the public sector, which includes Beijing municipal construction and college campuses. Another one-third consider themselves “self-employed”, which means that they do not report to a higher authority and operate a small business by themselves or with other family members. Many street vendors fit into this category. Finally, many migrant workers work in the private sector, which includes the restaurant and retail industry (Table 6).

Since employment has a close relationship with housing, it would be helpful to look at a migrant’s employment history. Half of the survey respondents indicated that they have had more than one job since arriving in Beijing (45.1%). Considering that most respondents arrived less than five years ago, the nature of job searching has a rapid turnover. Most respondents indicated that they found their current job through friends, but many used “Other” means, including job advertisements and informal methods such as the Internet (Table 7).

Table 5: How the respondent heard about his or her current residence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boss</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Village Friends</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City Friends</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Response</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Job sector in which respondent is currently employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: How the respondent heard about his or her current job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Employer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the nature in which a respondent finds housing is likely to determine the housing standard and living conditions for that individual. A security guard who acquires housing through his employer is likely to live with his colleagues in the same security guard station. The following section will address the actual variation that exists among migrant workers’ living arrangements and housing conditions. Although an assistant professor at a prestigious university may live in a superior residence compared to a cafeteria cook who works at the campus eatery, it is less obvious how the residence of a construction worker compares to that of a self-employed fruit vendor. Most importantly, the bulk of this variation in housing conditions does not depend on the *hukou*, but instead fluctuates according to a variety of factors.

What are the living arrangements and housing conditions of migrant workers?

In general, survey respondents indicated a wide range of variation of the types of living arrangements and housing conditions. Table 8 summarizes the trends from the survey. Over two-thirds of survey respondents reported that they live in the building in which they work.
(Figure 5). In many cases, construction workers live in employer-supplied dormitories and security guards both work and live in the guard station along with their colleagues. This also explains why the majority of respondents reside with colleagues (45.1%), although living with relatives is also a popular option (Figure 6). The data not only reveal whether most migrant workers are moving to Beijing as individuals versus family units, but the social networks that they form once they have arrived in an unfamiliar city. Although all of the respondents lack the Beijing *hukou*, they do not uniformly belong to the same social networks. Therefore, a closer examination of these networks could offer significant information about the differences rather than the similarities in social capital — which sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the value of an individual’s social relationships in gaining access to social or economic opportunities.

Table 8: Summary of trends in housing conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Private Kitchen (%)</th>
<th>Private Bathroom (%)</th>
<th>Running Water (%)</th>
<th>Hot Water (%)</th>
<th>Energy Consumption (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who live in the same building as their workplace.
The housing conditions of registered urban residents often differ greatly from that of migrant workers. According to the Beijing Statistical Yearbook’s survey of 2000 households, the average per capita useable area of house for permanent urban residents is 19.45 square meters. The majority of households occupy two rooms (59%), and the rest have three rooms (19.5%), one room (8.3%), or four rooms (2.1%). For public utilities, 92.6% of households have tap water for private use, and 7.4% use public tap water. In addition, 75.2% of households have a bathroom and flush toilet compared to 16.1% who have a bathroom but no flush toilet.

In contrast to registered residents, survey respondents indicated that the size of their dwelling ranged from 10 square meters (10.8%), 20 square meters (11.8%), and 34 square meters (8.8%). These measurements refer to total livable space (i.e., kitchen, bathroom, and living room), which is not always equivalent to square meters occupied per person. Particularly if the respondent specifies the total size of the dormitory, his living quarters could be very small if he shares it with hundreds of colleagues. In addition, most individuals occupy one room (38.2%), with a smaller percentage indicating two rooms (16.7%) and three rooms (14.7%). Although useable space may be quite large, most migrant workers occupy one room, which includes

Figure 6: Respondents’ relationship with the people whom they currently live with.
bathroom and kitchen facilities if they exist. Most respondents did not indicate a private kitchen (37.3%) or bathroom (69.6%). It is possible that migrant workers simply lack these facilities compared to the registered population and often resort to communal facilities (Figure 7). Public restrooms are usually located outside of the housing complex and may require a minimal fee for either shower or flush toilet privileges. However, it is also possible that survey respondents misinterpreted this question and did not consider a “private” bathroom one in which they shared exclusively among family members or colleagues whom they knew intimately and was located in their immediate residence. Cultural and technical definitions of the term “private facility” may have confounded results, and future research endeavors should account for this discrepancy.

![Source: Arthur Kaneko](image)

Figure 7: Communal facilities for hot water distribution located at Peking (Beida) University.

Lastly, many scholarly studies confirm the disparity in housing conditions between migrant workers and permanent residents. In 2004, Fei and Guo conducted a national survey in
five cities, including Beijing, and gathered a sample size of 2,351 migrants and permanent residents. They found that the majority of migrants only have access to outdoor public use toilets (42.7%) while most local residents had indoor toilets for family use (71.4%). Conversely, only 31.1% of migrants have this luxury. Similarly, they found that 78.6% of migrant workers occupy one bedroom compared to 19.9% of local residents. Finally, migrants are likely to live in a single-story house (41.4%) or rented apartment unit (33.8%), while most local residents live in a multi-story building (31.8%) or a privately owned apartment unit (26.8%). Essentially, this nation-wide survey confirms the hypothesis that the housing conditions of rural households and temporary urban residents are vastly inferior to those of urban households and permanent urban residents in terms of the size and type of dwelling, privacy, and access to public utilities.

In contrast, this study examines the differences in housing conditions among migrants who all lack the Beijing hukou. Informal interviews reveal that occupation is a primary indicator of housing conditions. To some extent, age was also a valuable predictor, although it is more likely that certain occupations tend to be self-selective by age and physical ability. In the case of a 50-year-old construction worker who lives in a temporary dormitory with his colleagues who were several years younger, his housing options depends heavily on his ability to fulfill the job requirements rather than his age. Although occupation is a powerful predictor because it represents an individual’s income and consumption power, it also lends insight into the individual’s affiliation with a work unit (danwei). Depending on the prestige and size of the danwei, an individual may enjoy significant benefits such as subsidies for home ownership or rental units. The following section will examine this issue in greater detail in regards to the question of how migrant workers can improve their housing situation through various channels.
What are the channels for migrant workers to improve their housing conditions?

In general, the data reveal that affiliation with a particular job sector or work unit result in tangible differences among migrant workers in their housing conditions. A closer examination of the respondent’s job sector leads to several insights. As there is a significant relationship (p=0.017) between how respondents found their current residence and their job sector, it is likely that some employers offer their housing as part of the job. Informal interviews confirm this, such as the owner of a Sichuan restaurant who provided housing for all his employees. Therefore, migrant workers can improve their housing prospects by adjusting the sector in which they work. Large, prestigious public work units are more likely to have more resources to house their employees, compared to self-employed individuals who forfeit those benefits all together. It is also possible that different types of jobs, regardless of sector, affect housing access. For example, a security guard in the private sector may find his residence in the same way as a security guard employed by Beida because security guards, by default, are conventionally supposed to live where they work due to the on-call nature of the job. However, several cafeteria workers at Beida and restaurant workers in a private restaurant all found their residence through their respective employers. In their situation, the nature of the occupation does not really necessitate that they have to live where they work, especially since most of them live in an apartment complex that is removed from the workplace. This demonstrates that employers tend to supply housing for their workers due to custom and tradition rather than a real functional need.

In addition, there is a correlation between the sector in which people are employed and who they live with (p=0). Empirical evidence also suggests that construction workers tend to live with their colleagues on site. The type of employment sector presents constraints on living arrangements, such that construction workers are unable to live with relatives at the work site.
Conversely, self-employed respondents are more likely to live with their family members instead of colleagues because they have greater flexibility in determining their living arrangements. A clear example is that of a construction worker from Anhui province who lives apart from his wife who is employed as a domestic worker in Haidian district. Their child lives with the mother, and the family has a reunion once a week if they are fortunate. In this way, an individual’s employment in a job sector can have profound consequences for his or her living arrangements.

The majority of survey respondents currently rent their residence, often without employer subsidy. Of the people who own their dwelling unit, few of them received a subsidy to purchase them (Table 9). There is a significant relationship between whether people own or rent their current residence and the sector in which they are employed (p=0.003 and p=0.001 respectively). People who work in prestigious work units are either receiving a higher income that enables them to purchase their own unit or they are more likely to receive substantial aid in obtaining their residence at a subsidized price. Essentially, individuals can improve their chances of owning a house or renting at a subsidized price by choosing to work for a particular job sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changed Residence Since Arriving in Beijing (%)</th>
<th>Currently Rent (%)</th>
<th>Currently Own (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received subsidy (%)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Percentage of respondents who changed their residence and rent or own their residence.

Although it is necessary to understand how job sector affects housing conditions, it is also interesting to see how other factors determine access to certain job sectors. The data reveal a significant relationship between the location where people registered their original hukou and the sector in which they are employed (p=0.018). This corresponds to the idea that people first
hear about jobs from village friends (37.3%) and family members (22.5%), creating a system of job specialization stratified by place of origin. The literature confirms that geographical niches for jobs exist, such that migrants from Anhui province are reputable as domestic housekeepers, Zhejiang migrants as garment sellers, and Hebei migrants as self-employed recyclers. Depending on the nature of job and employment sector, housing conditions are a consequence of a migrant worker’s relationships with work colleagues from the same village. This coincides with the view that social networks become an essential part of survival strategy, and it is quite possible that migrant workers receive more tangible benefits from friendships than the hukou.

If a migrant worker’s job sector determines his or her housing conditions, it is worth investigating whether migrant workers can improve their housing through other channels, such as educational attainment. One of the major criticisms against the hukou is that it prevents the children of migrant workers from equal educational opportunity. Therefore, migrant workers should view the hukou as a path of social mobility for their immediate and future conditions. Educational attainment has a significant relationship with the sector in which people are employed (p=0.004). Additionally, the data indicate that people employed in the public and self-employed sectors tend to obtain higher levels of education. However, there is no significant relationship between educational attainment and how the respondent found his or her current job. Essentially, education is becoming less of a conclusive factor in how migrant workers secure employment, yet there appears to be a correlation between education and employment sector.

Aside from employment sector, a respondent’s social network is also essential. Migrant workers rely heavily on social networks in order to find housing, which also influences access to particular types of housing and their subsequent housing conditions. A correlation between how people found their residence and whom they live with (p=0.002) indicates that social networks
affect the process of housing access for migrant workers. Work colleagues are more likely to live together if they found their housing through their employer. Consequently, migrant workers arriving in Beijing to reunite with family members often live with them, greatly simplifying the process in which they have to look for housing on their own or the amount of rent that they pay.

Informal Interviews

Although the study incorporated written surveys in order to provide an overview of demographic and housing trends, an indispensable part of the study was the informal interviews. These detailed observations helped to generate a narrative of the daily lives of migrant workers in relation to their housing choices. The following section describes migrant workers who are employed in three types of job sector to illuminate the similarities and differences that they encounter in their living arrangements, housing conditions, and prospects for social mobility. These trends serve as a reminder that migrant workers’ affiliation with a particular job sector or work unit may result in tangible differences among subsets of migrant workers in their housing conditions. Consequently, a migrant’s employment in a specific job sector can have profound consequences for his or her living arrangements. Social networks can also affect a person’s favorable access to housing by facilitating the job sector in which he or she finds employment.

Migrants in the Self-Employed Sector

In a sprawling city of six ring roads, there is no shortage of street corners for the independent vendor to conduct business in Beijing. In my short stay, I noticed a remarkable density of commerce that took place on the sidewalk. While the city does not lack shopping malls, street life is particularly vibrant due to the volume of pedestrian traffic occurring at nearly all hours of the day. Consequently, some entrepreneurial migrants have decided to try their luck
at selling food or small goods on the street. From a researcher’s perspective, this segment of migrant workers provides an interesting contrast to those who seek employment in other sectors.

Generally, self-employed migrants have less social and economic capital than other migrant workers, including lower educational attainment. While the educational attainment of all survey respondents is largely dichotomous and split between middle school and high school, migrants in the self-employed sector are more likely to fall within the lower segment. Educational disparity between migrants in the self-employed sector and other sectors suggests that employers tend to recruit individuals with higher education despite the fact that certain jobs in alternative sectors are equally unskilled (e.g., a janitor at Beida compared to a street vendor).

Self-employed migrants often live in substandard units compared to their counterparts, but they have greater flexibility in keeping their families intact by renting a private apartment instead of acquiring employer-supplied housing. As self-employed migrant workers tend to have larger families, these trends indicate that they are also more likely to live in dwelling units with fewer square meters per household member. Through informal interviews, this study finds that self-employed migrants tend to occupy the most vulnerable position in urban society. Often as the most recent arrivals to Beijing, their living situation is tenuous and filled with economic hardship. The following stories of self-employed migrant workers in three common occupations enrich the survey data by providing a detailed view of their daily lives and housing conditions.

Serving the Midnight Mass of Hungry Students

Around 10pm on a cold March evening, I stepped out of my student dormitory for a post-dinner snack. To the left of the road was a group of students huddled around a portable metal stove on wheels with wooden skewers of vermicelli noodles, tofu, fresh vegetables, and different types of meats steaming in an orange-red broth. The students were gathering around a young
couple in their late-twenties that was running the street stand food establishment. The woman would simmer the fresh raw meat in broth, while the man would hand out the cooked skewers. The atmosphere was very amiable, with students standing around the stove and chatting with the owners as they snacked. After a student finished eating, the man would count the number of wooden skewers on the plate and charge 0.50 kuai per stick.\(^1\) This cycle continued until midnight when the couple would hitch the stove on top of their tricycle cart and head back home.

I later learned that this “orange-red” broth was *ma la tang*, consisting of small red peppercorns from Sichuan province. The couple had arrived a month ago from Guiyang, a small city in Guizhou province, to sell their signature spicy food. Prior to this establishment, they had tried to sell *chuan’r*, which consists of roasting heavily spiced meats on wooden skewers over a fire, but they decided it was less profitable due to the fierce competition on campus. The couple both did not complete junior high school and simply explained, “Times were different then.” However, they appeared to be young enough to have been born after the Cultural Revolution and therefore experienced the economic changes of the early and late 1980s. When I asked them how long they intended to stay at Beida, they claimed that they are living not too far from campus and will continue selling until business is unprofitable. About two months later when I departed from Beijing, I was unable to find the same couple and their portable metal stove, even though I thoroughly searched the familiar streets outside my student dormitory. Always in search of better work opportunities, the self-employed couple had to adopt their occupation to shifting market conditions, which more or less resulted in a fleeting lifestyle. This pattern is perhaps indicative of the fact that over 50 percent of survey respondents reported changing their residence upon arriving in Beijing, and it is most likely in response to economic opportunities.

\(^1\) At the time of writing, 1 kuai is equivalent to about .13 USD.
Recycling Brothers

When I first met the brothers from Henan province, they were sitting on two pieces of cardboard underneath a tree on the sidewalk. Their tricycle carts by the street curb were piled high with an assortment of recycling materials, such as newspapers, boxes, and plastic bags. These men were waiting for customers to approach them with a price for the collected recycling materials, and whatever they do not sell at the end of the day, they will transport to the central recycling facility in exchange for cash. Recycling is a profitable and well-accepted occupation in Beijing. Often in the middle of the night, drivers (presumably from large recycling firms) make their rounds to restaurants and shops to collect bulky packages of compressed boxes in their open-air trucks. More independent recyclers, such as the Henan brothers, travel around the neighborhood in their tricycle cart throughout the day to collect recycling material they could sell.

In many aspects, the story of these two migrant workers does not diverge considerably from other respondents. The elder brother first arrived in Beijing in 1995. His highest level of educational attainment is junior high school, similar to his younger brother of three years who arrived in 1998. Both listed money and relatives as two major reasons for migrating to Beijing, but the younger brother claims that he was attracted to the city in particular because of the density of highly educated intellectuals. For these brothers, social networks have shaped their housing choices. Both brothers claim that they live with family members and acquired housing through friends from the same village. When I questioned them further, they revealed that they live with each other and their respective families. While the older brother’s monthly rent is 30% of his monthly income, his younger brother reported that he pays less than 10%. The older brother lives with his wife and child, while the younger brother and his wife bring the total occupants of their 12 square meter apartment to five people, as they both indicated in the survey.
The family does not have running water or hot water in their unit. To cook, they use coal or canned coal gas, which indicates that their apartment is less modern than newer apartments that use natural gas. Since the family does not have a bathroom, they make use of the public bathhouse. Concerning quality of life, the brothers indicated that they are not satisfied with their housing conditions, but they feel relatively safe in the community. The younger brother is willing to live in this residence indefinitely, while the older brother expressed a desire to leave.

The two brothers pointed out that friends introduced them to their current job, which is common since there are a remarkable number of people from Henan who become recycling collectors. This reconfirms that informal occupational segregation exists in the city such that migrants from Anhui are often housemaids or construction workers and those from Zhejiang are garment producers. Prior to their current occupation, the older brother did lathe work, while the younger brother was a security guard and a taxi driver. As the Chinese economy gradually shifts away from heavy manufacturing industries and jobs in the service industries become more competitive, the Henan brothers may have turned towards recycling as a way to gain an edge in the labor market. Since they knew acquaintances in the business, those connections facilitated their success in the recycling business. Nevertheless, the brothers are largely self-employed, which is reflected in their living conditions. If they were working for an employer who provided complimentary housing, they would probably not live in a private rental apartment. The employer, however, may not permit the brothers’ wives and child to live with the other workers, which suggests that the family would eventually encounter the dilemma of how to stay together.

In this way, the Henan brothers represent a type of migrant worker that has received little attention from recent scholars. As brothers, husbands, and fathers, they represent a family in a city of otherwise single migrants who are unmarried or left their spouses and children at home.
They make housing and occupational choices with their families in mind, which means that the size of their dwelling correspond to wage earnings, which is also dependent on accepting jobs that keep the family intact. Therefore, it is not surprising that these strict contingencies force the brothers to accept housing conditions that other self-employed migrants might avoid, but they also benefit from pooling their resources together and an extensive social network of acquaintances and relatives from the same province that allows them to find a self-sustaining job.

*Life of the Street Vendor*

Every weekend on campus, a dozen street vendors transformed the main street of Peking University’s campus into a flea market. Some vendors would peddle office supplies, while others sell clothing and used books, but they were all distinguishable as independent vendors. Most of them would ride their tricycle carts to campus, which then converts into an open-air surface to display their goods (Figure 9). Because these street vendors returned every week, I was able to interview respondents and correspond with them throughout my stay in Beijing.

*Figure 9: Man sitting in traffic with his tricycle cart.*
One particular woman was from Henan province. Having arrived in Beijing in 1995 and received an education beyond high school, she claims that she arrived in Beijing to raise a family because there are simply more work opportunities in China’s capital. She currently lives in a 12 square meter apartment that she rents from Beijing natives with three other colleagues. She found the apartment by asking around rather than using formal channels or relying on her friends. She has access to running water, but no private bathroom or kitchen. Her friend, a shy woman in her early thirties, often stands next to her while she sells Beida memorabilia and souvenirs. I later had the opportunity to interview this second woman, who was also from Henan province and appeared to know the street vendor from the same village. After speaking with her, I realized that she helped her friend to sell various goods as a second job during the weekends.

The second woman arrived in Beijing for the purpose of employment only a month before I interviewed her. She did not complete primary school, which makes it difficult for her to find work. However, she currently has a job as a dishwasher in a Korean restaurant through a friend, presumably the street vendor. Unlike other restaurant employers, her boss does not offer housing, so she rents a 6 square meter room from a landlord that consumes 20% of her monthly income. Since her apartment does not have a kitchen or bathroom, she uses a public bathhouse that charges a user fee. However, she takes lunch and dinner at the restaurant, which negates the need for a kitchen. Perhaps her age and short duration of residence in Beijing are two reasons why she works as a dishwasher, a job with more temporary, inferior status than if she were a full-time waitress or cook. The job separates her from other restaurant employees who enjoy benefits such as housing provision, and she is forced to take an additional job as a street vendor to pay for housing rent and bathhouse user fees. Essentially, this case study demonstrates how an employer can provide informal yet necessary material benefits that supplement a migrant worker’s
otherwise meager earnings. These informal, off-the-book agreements can make the world of difference for migrant workers who feel compelled to seek additional means to make ends meet.

As the stories of these migrant workers reveal, employment outside of the traditional public sector or private sector can result in additional economic hardships. This often means that employment is fleeting and lacks security, as in the case of the couple selling *ma la tang* on a corner of the university main street. The lack of a formal employer also means that the migrant worker does not have access to employer-supplied housing and must use a larger proportion of monthly income to pay for rental housing. Such housing arrangements might be considerably less ideal than those of migrant workers who also lack the urban *hukou*, but are employed in other sectors. However, these self-employed migrants also have greater autonomy in choosing their particular type of dwelling unit, which may facilitate the ease in which the family stays intact. This aspect is especially important, as a growing number of migrant workers are arriving with families or starting a family once they have arrived in the city. Defying the stereotype of the single migrant worker, this subgroup of the migrant population will require more attention from policy officials as they have a higher stake in their children and requests for social services.

**Migrants in the Public Sector**

This section concentrates on the daily lives and housing conditions of migrant workers employed in the public sector. Unlike self-employed migrants, employees in the public sector often receive extensive housing benefits depending on the available resources of their work unit. The majority of respondents whom I interviewed in the public sector were employees of Peking University, one of the most prestigious higher education institutions in China. The campus itself is located in the *Haidian* district, just outside of the fourth ring road. Established in 1898, Peking University has a diverse student body totaling 30,000 and is located on the grounds of a former
imperial garden dating back to the Ming dynasty. It attracts a substantial population of migrant workers whom provide necessary support to operate the university. While the housing conditions of individuals also varied according to the nature of the occupation, respondents were more likely to report that they were satisfied with their housing than employees from other sectors. Aside from guaranteed housing, most shared living quarters with their colleagues from work and therefore developed strong relationships with them. It is important to note that these employees work for one of the most financially endowed public institutions in China, and their experiences are not representative of all employees in the public sector. However, the following stories of three types of public employees validate the survey results in that migrant workers can improve their housing prospects by choosing the sector in which they work. This means that if they seek work in a large, prestigious public institution, they are more likely to enjoy superior housing conditions relative to self-employed migrants who sacrifice these benefits all together.

*Chambermaids*

As a resident in the international student dormitory, I was a familiar face to the chambermaids who lived and worked in the building. The majority of them were residents at the dormitory, occupying one room with electrical appliances that they used to cook their meals and another room that was packed tightly with their simply furnished beds. They shared a bathroom together on the fifth floor of the building. The average age of a chambermaid was 17, and most of them arrived from rural villages only two or three years ago. The majority of them completed junior high school, after which they decided to migrate to Beijing to earn higher wages. Most chambermaids reported that they felt very safe and satisfied with their living arrangements. Two of them mentioned that if they did not find this job, they would have to resort to less desirable housing conditions. For example, self-employed domestic workers in the informal employment
sector do not have the same job security as these chambermaids, and they also have to seek rental housing on their own. As consistent with survey data, these employees in the public sector were able to enjoy superior housing conditions relative to other migrants with the same types of jobs employed in alternative sectors. Their educational attainment was also not necessarily higher, coinciding with survey data indicating that education is not the only pathway to social mobility.

Assistant Professors

Another category of public employees whom I encountered was assistant professors and highly educated individuals. Although their experiences may not represent the experiences of all Beida faculty nor the faculty at other universities, they reveal some interesting trends for the purpose of this study. I was surprised to find that many of these individuals did not have their hukou registration in Beijing, despite possessing a doctorate degree and a prestigious job. Furthermore, some of them indicated that they did not receive a subsidy from their employer to purchase their housing unit, although the majority of them were still successful in doing so. In purchasing a home, they often relied on real estate agents rather than Beida’s internal resources. These results indicate that income may soon exceed the importance of hukou status in obtaining housing. As market demand increasingly influences the housing market, affluent individuals in prestigious jobs may no longer depend on their employers to supply housing units or subsidies. In this way, the survey data confirm that home ownership is still limited to wealthy individuals.

“Hybrid” Workers in the Public Sector

In some cases, Peking University allows independent store vendors to set up businesses that cater to the student population on campus. The campus bike shop is a clear example where a storeowner operates a private enterprise with the permission of the university (Figure 10).
Although it is unclear whether the employees at the bike shop qualify as the public or private sector, they are perhaps “hybrid” migrant workers who could claim affinity to both sectors. The storeowner hires a few male apprentices to run the shop and allows them to share the same apartment with him, which he may have obtained through his affiliation with the university. Of the two apprentices I spoke to, one of them arrived in Beijing only a month before the interview. His colleague is slightly older and migrated two years ago from the same rural village. The younger apprentice found his job and housing largely due to this connection. As the survey data reveals a significant correlation between how people find their residence and whom they currently live with, social networks in this case was useful in facilitating housing access. The apprentices share a room with four colleagues. Although they do not have a kitchen or bathroom in the unit, they take their meals on campus on most days and make use of the communal bathhouse on campus. Essentially, the apprentices may technically belong to the private sector since they work for a small storeowner, but they also benefit from many of the externalities offered to public employees, perhaps as a result of their central location on the Beida campus.

Source: Deland Chan

Figure 10: Campus bike shop located at Peking University.
Migrants in the Private Sector

As a result of China’s gradual shift from a planned to market economy since the 1980s, many entrepreneurs have attempted to start their own businesses. These private enterprises have created a substantial demand for low-wage labor, such that migrant workers have become a seemingly endless supply of restaurant waitresses, sales associates, construction workers—just to name a few. These occupations vary in skills and benefits, but it is worth examining the similarities and differences in housing access that these migrant workers encounter in their lives.

Construction Workers

Figure 11: One of many construction sites surrounding the Peking University campus.

Along the outskirts of Peking University, several large construction sites form a perimeter that surrounds the campus (Figure 11). Construction workers are not exclusive to the private sector. Due to limited time and resources, I restricted respondents to migrant workers
individuals who are employed in the private sector, with the goal to informally inquire whether if they knew of any differences between construction workers in the public versus private sector.

My first attempt to enter a construction site soured after the foreman in charge forbid me from entering the grounds, stating that I needed to have permission from the municipality in order to conduct research. Instead, I walked to the neighboring construction site and asked the guard if I could enter the premises and conduct a few surveys. The guard, after discovering that I was a foreigner, not only allowed me to do so, but he filled out one of my surveys and asked whether I knew how he could report his employer for withholding his wages for the past month. In his case, the informal interview was able to reveal critical information about the relationship between migrant workers and their employers that otherwise would be lost in the surveys.

I toured the construction site in the early evening just as workers were returning from a long day’s work. However, a few workers were just about to leave for their night shift. Wearing simple cotton pants and shirts, some with hard plastic helmets on their heads, they were quite eager to share their stories with me. Many of them felt honored that a foreigner, especially an American, expressed great interest in their lives. Additionally, they took this opportunity to find out whether I had information about how they could protect themselves against labor abuses. The majority of them have not been paid for the work that they have done so far, and they feared that their employer was deliberately withholding wages with the intention of never paying them.

The construction site was primarily a self-sufficient community. The workers live in temporary housing that was built not too long ago by their own hands. One typical room was about 10 square meters large, consisting of six beds arranged on three sides of the room. The beds consisted of thin plywood and simple linens. All of the construction workers’ mere possessions were located at the foot of each bed. The common areas were more spacious,
consisting of a canteen, a convenience store, and an outdoor field with a television. The migrant workers take their meals together, eliminating the need for a private kitchen. This particular construction site had communal washroom facilities within the complex, but many sites offer access to a public restroom outside of the site. After dinner, the workers would gather around to watch television and chat amongst each other before to sleep if they do not have a night shift.

The overwhelmingly majority of individuals in this site were male construction workers, although I did notice two incidents in which a young woman was holding hands with a young male in street clothes. I assumed that the males must have had the day off and that the woman did not live in the work site. The presence of children or women was also clearly absent, and a conversation with some respondents confirmed that they left their families behind in the village or they live separately from other relatives in Beijing. In addition, many of them have a lower level of education than other respondents. The stereotype that construction workers are young males was proven wrong by the existence of several construction workers in their late 40’s. It appears that age and a low level of education may have stifled their ability to explore other career paths. Perhaps younger migrants have had more of a chance to benefit from China’s economic reforms, compared to the older generation who lived through the end of the Cultural Revolution. As schools were suspended from 1966-1968, migrant workers from the older generation may have simply missed the opportunity to receive a continuous education. This handicap of being born in the wrong era undoubtedly leads to several obstacles in their migrant experience compared to that of the migrant workers who were born just a few years earlier. As these migrant workers age, it is possible that younger migrants will replace their jobs in the construction industry — but it also possible that younger migrants will have more education and a greater desire to pursue lucrative and desirable careers in the commercial and retail sector.
Retail Sector

An overwhelmingly number of migrant workers also work in the commercial or retail sectors, especially to fulfill the escalating demand for jobs in the service industry. The area immediately surrounding Peking University is often dubbed the Silicon Valley of China, in which numerous multi-story malls selling electronics from cell phones to computers to peripherals compete with one another. Each mall consists of hundreds of small vendors who set up their individual units and pay a small rental fee to administrators of the shopping complex (Figure 12). Many of the vendors become quite successful and can eventually afford to hire a small team of sales associates. I regard these vendors as self-employed because they do not report to a higher authority or organization. However, I consider the sales associates who work in these shopping malls as employees of the private sector since they receive a wage and housing benefits from a private entrepreneur who derives profit from their labor. However, these boundaries are ambiguous at best due to the nature of China’s evolving economy, and the most crucial aspect for my study is whether migrants receive housing benefits from their employers.

Compared to other occupations, these sales associates work very long hours to match the hours of the shopping mall. Most of the time, their job is to approach potential customers, which provided ample opportunities for me to recruit them as study informants. In many ways, self-employed storeowners who operated their own unit tended to resemble the same characteristics as street vendors in regards to housing conditions and flexibility in living arrangements. Instead of carting their merchandise on a tricycle cart from one street to another, however, they were fortune enough to return to the same storefront every morning. Although many of them live in private rental units and also had the option to live with relatives, their accommodations were often more spacious and modern compared to street vendors. One couple arrived from
Guangzhou province about five years ago and lives in a two-bedroom 30 square meter apartment with their child whom they rent from Beijing locals. However, a sales associate who works just next door in a clothing store unit lives with four of her colleagues in a 15 square meter apartment provided by their employer. Essentially, individuals who work in the commercial or retail sector comprise a wide range of living arrangements. While some of them resemble wealthy independent storeowners who have arrived in Beijing for a longer duration and earn a sustainable income to afford superior accommodations, others are new arrivals to the city who are younger and share housing with colleagues who work in the same store unit. Often, these individuals acquire housing through their employer or relatives, illustrating a trend in the survey data found in other service occupations (i.e., cooks in restaurants) and individuals of the same age cohort.

Figure 12: Typical shopping mall with of hundreds of store units.

Source: Deland Chan
Summary of Informal Interviews

In general, the informal interviews provided an indispensable way to gain insight into the daily lives of migrant workers that would otherwise be difficult to detect in a written survey. A verbal narrative often helped to clarify perplexing questions such as where respondents have access to a kitchen or washroom if their immediate residence lacks one or both of these facilities. Respondents were also more likely to reveal where and how they found their current housing if they do not neither own nor rent their residence— in most cases, relying on relatives or village friends to provide temporary housing for a nominal cost before they find housing on their own. Lastly, many of the respondents were reluctant to write down their responses due to perceptions of the survey as a “permanent” course of action that might somehow get them into trouble later on. Essentially, informal interviews were both necessary to gain the trust of the respondent, as well as to extract valuable information that confirmed and supplemented the survey responses.
Chapter 3: Discussion and Conclusion

A typical street scene in Beijing.
Source: Deland Chan
Discussion

Since the early 1950s, the hukou system has divided the urban and rural population spatially and socially in China. Economic reforms in the 1980s enabled the influx of rural peasants migrating into cities, yet scholars still contest the importance of the hukou in affecting the physical and social integration of migrant workers in urban areas. As temporary residents who lack the urban household registration, migrant workers often have limited access to affordable housing and have little choice but to construct self-sufficient communities on the urban fringe. In addition, many local residents view the migrant population as a scourge, whose presence has contributed to rising crime levels and a rapid decrease in the quality of life in cities. Many scholars and practitioners have proposed that hukou reform will enable migrant workers to finally claim benefits to housing, education, and a pension system — among the many rights that registered local residents currently enjoy — and therefore have the equal opportunity to improve their social status. However, one could also argue that the hukou has evolved into a mere status symbol and its possession does not offer any tangible benefits. As China moves to a complete market economy, it is also possible that the hukou will render itself obsolete compared to other factors such as income. Therefore, the suggestion that hukou reform alone can solve the growing spatial-social inequality between migrant workers and local residents is perhaps simplistic because it ignores other means through which migrants can and have improved their livelihoods.

This study rejects the stereotype of migrant workers as a disadvantaged, disempowered subpopulation and instead acknowledges the strategies that recent migrants to Beijing have already used to exercise agency in their living standards despite lacking the urban hukou. As housing is an important benefit of the hukou, this study relies on living arrangements and housing conditions as two major outcomes of housing access. Surveys and informal interviews
from 102 respondents provide insight into the welfare of migrant workers who lack the *hukou* and how a minority of them has achieved better housing conditions in spite of great odds. These strategies will eventually gain more prominence as the *hukou* system continues to decline in significance as an institution, and they may predict the pathways of social mobility for migrants.

Although the study addresses the housing situation of migrant workers, it is especially valuable due to its contribution to the existing literature on internal migration. Housing access is essential for understanding two problems: 1) the extent to which migrant workers assimilate culturally and spatially in rapidly developing cities, and 2) the ability for migrant workers to exercise individual agency to improve their standards of living under institutional constraints. Housing access may also speak to broader issues regarding how migrant workers settle into host cities, the sustainability of such settlements, and their prospects for social mobility. The following points provide a brief summary of the results’ theoretical and practical implications:

- Employment in the public sector offers migrant workers an advantageous foot in the door in obtaining a higher standard of housing as defined by size of dwelling, privacy, and access to public utilities. However, the migrant’s occupation may eventually have a greater influence in determining actual living arrangements and housing conditions.

- Social networks often lead to helpful advice regarding where to live and work, but only to a certain degree. Migrant workers form relationships with people that often translate into social capital and affect their prospects for social mobility. However, the importance of family and friends may decrease if the individual has strong institutional affiliations, such as employment in a prestigious work unit with a generous distribution of resources.
• In general, migrant workers with strong institutional affiliations tend to enjoy superior housing conditions. Nevertheless, institutional affiliation does not necessarily lead to incremental gains. Some individuals with weaker institutional affiliations may acquire better housing conditions relative to individuals with stronger institutional affiliations.

• A migrant worker’s satisfaction with housing conditions depends on a variety of factors. In general, most people who have a positive relationship with their employer or have extensive social networks in Beijing are more likely to indicate higher satisfaction.

• Many indicators of upward mobility exist beyond mere possession of the urban hukou. Individuals who live in modern facilities and close to urban infrastructure tend to rely on less hazardous energy sources. In this way, occupation and social networks determine the quality of housing for migrant workers, whose actions then result in consequences for the sustainability of migrant settlements and the future development of the host city.

Occasion and Location of Employer’s Job Sector

For many respondents, possession of the urban hukou does not affect living arrangements and housing conditions as much as occupation or employment in a particular sector. Because some employers subsidize or offer housing free of charge to their employees, migrant workers who work in prestigious work units with substantial resources to house their employees are more likely to enjoy better housing provisions. In general, employers in the public sector tend to have more financial resources than an employer offering the same service in an alternative employment sector. For example, a small family-owned restaurant will experience financial difficulties relative to the cafeterias at Peking University if they attempt to offer identical
housing arrangements for their workers. In effect, the location of the employer’s job sector can have a substantial effect on the housing benefits that migrant workers should expect to receive.

Similarly, self-employed street vendors who are unaffiliated with any type of institutionalized sector lack the option of subsidized housing altogether and must seek housing on their own. Often, they resort to renting from Beijing natives or living with relatives who agree to provide shelter for them. They also tend to have poorer housing conditions than other individuals, including overcrowding and less consistent access to public utilities. Therefore, individuals who work for either the public or private sector tend to have an advantageous start in finding superior housing conditions, but they may have to sacrifice personal choice in their living arrangements. Construction workers, for example, are unable to live with their families on site, and most employers only offer housing to the workers but not their immediate relatives. However, one could attribute this to the nature of the occupation rather than the employer’s ability to supply housing. Regardless, self-employed individuals trade off the possibility of living in less desirable housing conditions to keep their families intact. Affiliation with a specific employer means that a migrant worker can be first to receive housing benefits as a function of the employer’s job sector, but it may also result in less flexibility in lifestyle choices.

Even though an employer could potentially provide better housing, this does not always mean that the workers will receive more benefits. Consequently, occupation may play a greater role in determining the actual level of housing consumption among migrant workers. A security guard working for Peking University will not necessarily receive better housing accommodations than a security guard in a private shopping mall, although the former employer may have more resources to offer superior housing conditions. As the results indicate, an assistant professor and a construction worker who work for the same prestigious public employer will have very
different housing conditions due to the varying nature and prestige of the particular occupation. As an individual gains occupational prestige, however, he or she may depend less on the employer’s job sector to provide housing. In this way, a migrant worker who wishes to improve his or her housing conditions is better off finding an employer in the public or private sector, but ultimately, occupational prestige plays a greater role in determining actual housing benefits.

**Social Networks**

As employment in a certain job sector and occupation are important factors in determining housing outcomes, social networks divert individuals into specific occupational niches and therefore influence their housing. Relationships with other people, or social capital, often lead to valuable advice about where to work and live. The results indicate that respondents rely on prior connections to secure a job once they have arrived in Beijing. The majority of respondents also live in close proximity to those who helped them secure employment in the first place. Since job placements are related to housing, a single connection with a friend or relative not only secures a job, but it will most likely provide a conduit for securing housing as well.

Similar to the notion that the location of an employer’s job sector gradually loses importance as the individual’s occupational prestige increases, social networks also matter less as a migrant worker develops greater institutional affiliations. Examples of a strong institutional connection often translate into frequent interactions with the Chinese Communist Party: urban *hukou* registration, prior education in an elite university, or employment in the public sector. Self-employed migrants rely heavily on family and friends to secure employment and housing, but individuals who have strong institutional connections are more likely to find their current job through other means, such as newspaper listings and the Internet. Essentially, individuals with
alternative means beyond relatives and friends will rely on their institutional affiliation with the public sector in order to improve their employment prospects and housing conditions.

*Level of Institutional Affiliation*

A common assumption from prior scholarly literature is that a migrant who has considerable interaction with party institutions, such as possession of the *hukou* or employment in a public sector, are more likely to enjoy superior housing conditions. This relationship is not linear, however, as institutional affiliation may vary and lead to ambiguous outcomes. A self-employed recycler may not possess the urban *hukou* and is unable to receive subsidized housing due to his lack of employer affiliations, but an assistant professor at Peking University who also lacks the urban *hukou* can achieve better housing without an employer subsidy because of a significantly higher income. The recycler has more options if he possesses a strong connection with party institutions, such as the urban *hukou* that will enable him to apply for subsidized affordable housing, but the assistant professor may not necessarily see as much of a dramatic improvement in his living conditions even after he receives the urban *hukou*. In this way, close ties with party institutions do not necessarily lead to incremental benefits in housing conditions.

*Satisfaction with Housing Conditions*

The majority of respondents who indicated that they were satisfied with their current housing conditions are likely to have positive relationships with their employer or expansive social networks in Beijing. In particular, restaurant waitresses who live in employer-subsidized housing and interact with their colleagues report that they feel very safe in their residences compared to individuals who rent housing on their own from private sources. The respondents who live with family members are also likely to report higher satisfaction. The least satisfied
individuals are the independent self-employed street vendors who live by themselves. However, some construction workers who live with their colleagues also reported dissatisfaction because they do not have a good relationship with their employer—most likely as a result of the fact that they suspect misappropriation of their wages. Therefore, a strong relationship with the employer and the ability to live close to family members and colleagues have a positive effect on migrant workers who indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their housing conditions.

*Indicators of Upward Mobility*

Aside from the urban *hukou*, there are many indicators of upward mobility. In general, housing ownership is a sign of prestige, as most respondents who currently own their residence also tend to have high occupational prestige and are employed in the public sector. Respondents who currently rent often expressed a desire to purchase a home when they are able to afford it. Similar to the United States, the notion of home ownership is largely a coveted resource that is reserved for wealthy individuals who have strong institutional affiliations and generous income.

The type of energy consumption can also be an indicator of upward mobility and is relevant in understanding the sustainability of migrant settlements. Individuals who have strong institutional affiliations are more likely to live in modern facilities and rely less on hazardous energy sources. The data indicate that self-employed street vendors often rely on coal (although primarily illegal in the city of Beijing) and propane compared to natural gas. Electricity may or may not indicate upward mobility, as individuals without a kitchen may still use electric appliances, such as a rice cooker. Policy officials who wish to counteract the consequences of environmental degradation should target this subpopulation of poor migrant workers who lack institutional affiliations to ensure that they have consistent access to modern housing facilities.
and sustainable energy sources. This would not only improve living standards for the migrants themselves, but also ensure a higher quality of life for other local residents in the host city.

In addition, proximity to established urban infrastructure may or may not indicate upward mobility, as migrant workers often resort to settling in the urban fringe because they cannot find affordable housing in Beijing. The suburb of Fengtai reflects the squalor and poverty that often characterize these settlements. However, the recent construction of luxury condominiums has also created an influx of wealthy middle-class families to gated communities outside the city. Regardless of which subpopulation is responsible for pushing urban development towards the outskirts, migrant workers have a role in shaping the direction of urban growth in Beijing. Policy officials should be aware that migrant workers are no longer passive recipients of discrimination; instead, they thrive in the face of institutional constraints that often have profound consequences for the host city. Their decision to migrate to specific areas of the city determines the fastest areas of urban growth, creates a greater burden on urban infrastructure, and may lead to social tensions with the potential to threaten the stability of the government. Therefore, scholars and policy officials who are concerned with mitigating sprawl and unfettered development in Chinese cities must focus on how they can channel the flow of migration evenly in order to avoid compromising the economy, sustainability, and social solidarity of the host city.

**Implications of the Study and Future Research**

Although prior literature has focused on the urban *hukou* as the prior demarcation between the haves and have-nots, this study proposes an alternative direction for future research. It is perhaps no longer sufficient to claim that migrant workers living in their host city without the *hukou* are disadvantaged in terms of education, healthcare, housing, and general well-being. As this study demonstrates, some migrant workers are able to employ personal resources and
social capital in order to improve their housing conditions despite lacking the urban hukou. Individuals who have the strongest ties to the Chinese Communist Party are usually the first in line to reap privileges, which some scholars have argued is the consistent pattern since the 1950s. However, empirical evidence reveals that this is not always the case in modern urban China. Some migrant workers without the urban hukou are increasingly finding ways to assert their personal resources and improve their standards of living, in contrast to their counterparts who also lack the urban hukou. While prior research would declare that all migrant workers without the urban household registration have inferior standards of living compared to registered urban individuals, finer nuances may exist in that statement. In effect, the hukou is becoming less important in typecasting the migrant population into an overall disadvantaged position.

As the hukou declines in significance, an important policy recommendation emerges. Even though the Chinese government has recently discussed the possibility of eliminating the hukou altogether as a way to mitigate the growing chasm of social inequality, it becomes clear that hukou reform might not reach its intended goals. This study outlines several coping mechanisms in which migrant workers without the hukou have already improved their housing conditions. Their success only results in further social stratification within the disadvantaged group, as variation in the housing access of individuals without the urban hukou increases. Reforming the hukou system would level out the playing field if it were the only factor that determined social mobility. However, other factors beyond the hukou—such as occupational prestige and social networks—have lead to diverging privileges among the disadvantaged group, which suggests that hukou reform alone will be insufficient to address growing social inequality.

Future research can address whether the hukou is no longer the single indicator of social inequality by improving this study. Scholars wishing to achieve breadth of information should
increase the sample size and also survey from a greater range of neighborhoods in Beijing. It would also be useful to sample migrant workers from other cities, as the fastest areas of urban growth are mid-sized cities where strong economic growth could place migrant workers without the urban *hukou* at an advantage. Therefore, a high employment rate might suggest flexibility for migrants to choose a particular employer and therefore maximize their housing benefits.

Another research endeavor is to modify the population sample to include individuals with the urban *hukou*. If a greater level of social differentiation is occurring among migrants in the disadvantaged group, it could be interesting to see whether intersecting lines of inequality also affect individuals in the privileged group. One could argue that if personal resources and social networks have a greater significance than the *hukou* in affecting social mobility, native residents living in cities will face growing problems in attaining high standards of living without the urban *hukou* distinction. Future research could address the prospects of both upward and downward social mobility if the urban household registration system eventually loses its significance.

**Conclusion**

This thesis examines how migrant workers are able to exercise individual agency in affecting their housing outcomes despite lacking the urban household registration in Beijing. The results discuss how migrant workers obtain housing, the living arrangements and housing conditions of various subgroups of migrant workers, and the available channels in which they could improve their housing conditions. Instead of accepting their role as passive recipients of institutional discrimination, migrant workers are capable of influencing their housing conditions by employing personal resources in their favor, such that they achieve social mobility through occupational pathways and social networks. These findings allow scholars to differentiate and
assess the diverse needs of migrant workers. Although all of them lack the urban *hukou*, some individuals may lack the necessary social capital and have more difficulties in assimilating culturally and spatially in the host city. In effect, the study identifies a subgroup of migrant workers that scholars and policy officials may find of great interest. These individuals are not necessarily homeless, jobless or delinquent. However, due to their inability to apply strategic coping mechanisms to their housing access, they have significantly inferior housing conditions compared to other migrant workers. In addition, this study purposely focuses on respondents who are currently employed. It is possible that unemployed migrant workers lack personal resources, face more constraints in exercising their individual agency, and therefore encounter even greater disadvantages. Future research is necessary to address the needs of this population.

An examination of migrant workers’ housing access offers insight into how these individuals settle into their host cities, the sustainability of such settlements, and their prospects for social mobility. Most importantly, this research allows scholars and policy officials to understand that they are not merely dealing with a disenfranchised population. On the contrary, the same population that often occupies the lowest rungs of the urban hierarchy is wholly capable of influencing the quality and standard of living for other migrants and native residents. This study reinforces the idea that migrant workers have considerable agency in shaping their lives, and they are also potentially powerful catalysts in the development of their host cities.

Although this study focuses on housing provision as evidence of individual agency, the results have broader implications for migration in China and other rapidly urbanizing countries. With cities like Dubai and New Delhi experiencing a massive influx of migrants, the reoccurring trend is that the lives of recent arrivals are inseparable from other residents in the host cities. Migration leads to rapid population growth and incredible strain on the urban infrastructure.
Shenzhen, once a fishing village in the Pearl River Delta, is growing at an annual rate of 28 percent, and provides an example of how inexpensive land, unskilled labor, and lenient environmental restrictions have attracted an influx of foreign direct investment and rural migrants (Figure 13). As migrants account for 58 percent of the city’s total population, internal migration may have generated wealth for the city, but it also contributed to environmental degradation, escalating crime rates, and growing tensions between migrants and local residents (French, 2006). Ultimately, how many Shenzhens should we expect to witness in the future?

Figure 13: The border of Shenzhen and Hong Kong serves as a reminder of Shenzhen’s unprecedented growth in the past twenty-five years.

Particularly in the twentieth-first century, it is conceivable that cities around the world are converging on similar economic and cultural principles (Meyer et al., 1997). Developing countries often face political pressure to adhere to democratic principles and to modify their
economic structures in order to remain competitive in the global market. In effect, migration trends in China mimic the past experiences of other countries and predict future outcomes as a result of isomorphic structures that link nation-states to a common world society. Problems that affect one country may resonate in other countries. Scholars and policy officials hoping to tackle these issues could benefit from taking a step back and observing the broader framework. Although they may believe that such problems exist solely within their country’s boundaries, they could also learn from the lessons and resources available in the international community.
Reference List


Appendix: English and Chinese Translation of the Survey

Subject ID _____ Date of survey: Year _____; Month: ____; Date: ____

I. Basic Information

Please indicate the place of your hukou registration (suozaidi): ______________

Please indicate the type of hukou at this location (leibie): ______________

Please indicate whether you changed your hukou status from agricultural to urban (nongzhuanfei):

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when did you obtain the urban hukou? Year _____; Month: ____; Date: ____

What were your main reasons for applying for the hukou?
(1 = most important to your decision, 3 = least important to your decision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>I applied for the hukou because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Housing Background

1. When did you move to Beijing? Year _____; Month: ____; Date: ____

2. Have you resided continuously in Beijing since then? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Please list and rank your main reasons for migrating to Beijing:
   (1 = most important to your decision, 3 = minimally important to your decision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>I decided to migrate to Beijing because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Have you lived elsewhere in Beijing prior to your current residence?  □ Yes  □ No

If so, please list the other neighborhoods where you have lived. What were your reasons for living in those places, and which ones factored most prominently? (1 = most important to your decision, 3 = minimally important to your decision)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Length of Stay (month/year) to (month/year)</th>
<th>What was your reason for living there?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Do you live at your current work site?
   a. If no, how many kilometers is your home from work? ________________
   b. How do you travel to work? ____________________________

6. Who do you currently live with?
   □ Family/Kin  □ Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Unmarried  □ Work colleagues
   □ Other (please describe their relationship to you): ________________________________

7. How did you find your current housing?
   □ Family/kin  □ Employer  □ Other ________________________________

8. Do you own your apartment?  □ Yes  □ No
   If yes, when did you purchase your apartment? Year _____; Month: ____; Date: ____
   From whom did you purchase your apartment? ________________________________
   What percentage of the house price of your annual income? _________________________
   Did you receive any subsidies to purchase your home: ___________________________
   If yes, from whom? _______________________________________________________

9. Do you rent your apartment?  □ Yes  □ No
   If yes, when did you start renting? Year _____; Month: ____; Date: ____
   What percentage is rent part of your monthly income? ___________________________
Did you receive subsidies to rent your apartment: _______________________________
If yes, from whom: _______________________________________________________

III. Occupational History

1. What is your current occupation? ______________________________

2. Please indicate whether your occupation is: □ Private sector □ Public Sector

3. Who is your current employer? ______________________________

4. How did you find your current occupation?

□ Family/kin □ Friends □ Former employer □ Other ________________________

5. Have you had any other jobs since you arrived in Beijing? □ Yes □ No

If yes, please list those jobs.

1. _________________________________________________________________

2. _________________________________________________________________

3. _________________________________________________________________

IV. Conditions of Dwelling Unit

*Please note that your "dwelling unit" is the shiyongmainji (living room, kitchen, and bathroom)*

1. What is the size of your dwelling unit? ______ square meters

2. How many rooms does your unit dwelling have? ______

3. How many individuals live in your dwelling unit? ______

4. Estimated year of construction of current residence: ______

5. Do you have a private kitchen? □ Yes □ No

   a. If no, how many people share the kitchen you use? ______

   b. Does your kitchen have piped gas? □ Yes □ No

   c. If no, what type of fuel do you use to cook? ________________________
6. Do you have running tap water?  □ Yes  □ No
   a. If yes, do you have hot running water?  □ Yes  □ No

7. Do you have a private bathroom?  □ Yes  □ No
   a. If not, how many people share the bathroom you use?  ______

IV. Quality of Life

1. Do you feel safe and comfortable in your community?
   □ Very safe  □ Safe  □ Not quite safe  □ Not at all safe

2. Do you have a sense of belonging in your community?
   □ Strong sense  □ Somewhat strong  □ Not very strong  □ Not at all

3. What will you do if you smell something burning next door?
   □ No action  □ Call emergency number  □ Knock on the door myself

4. How long do you think you will continue to live in this community?  ______ years
I. 基本资料

1. 请注明您的户籍所在地：

2. 请注明您的户口是城市或者农村：

3. 请在方格里注明您是否在北京完成了农转非手续： ☐ 是 ☐ 否

4. 若您在北京完成了农转非手续，请写下批准日期： 年：_____；月：_____；日：____

5. 您已完成的最高的教育水平是什么？

6. 您是哪年出生的？ 年：_____

II. 住宿资料

1. 您什么时候搬入北京： 年：_____；月：_____；日：____

2. 您住在北京（而没有离开市）最长的一段时间有多长？_________________________

3. 请以重要性排列搬入北京的理由：
   （1：为最大的理由 | 2：为中的理由 | 3：为最小的理由）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>排名</th>
<th>理由</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. 除了现在的住址以外您是否在北京的其他地方住过？ ☐ 是 ☐ 否

若以上回答是，请在下面注名旧址的区名与居住在那的原因：

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>区名</th>
<th>期间（月/年）到（月/年）</th>
<th>原因离开区</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. 您是否居住在自己的工作地点？
   □ 是 □ 否
   a. 若是，您工作地点与住址相离多远？
   b. 您如何抵达工作地点？

6. 您现在与谁居住？
   □ 独自 □ 家人 □ 未婚 □ 同事
   □ 其他：

7. 您如何找到现在的住所？
   □ 家人介绍 □ 雇主介绍 □ 来自同县的朋 □ 友来自同市的朋友
   □ 其他：

8. 您拥有自己的房子吗？
   □ 是 □ 否
   a. 若是，什么时候购买房子？年：____；月：____；日：____
   b. 向谁购买房子？
   c. 您房子的价格占年收入的百分之多少？
   d. 您买房时会有补贴吗？
   e. 如果有，请指明从何处获得补贴？

9. 您现在是租房住吗？
   □ 是 □ 否
   a. 如果是，从何时开始租房？年：____；月：____；日：____
   b. 向谁租房子？
   c. 您月收入占房租的百分之多少？
   d. 您租房时有补贴吗？
   e. 如果有，请指明从何处获得补贴？

III. 工作经

1. 您现在的工作是：

2. 请指明您工作单位的性质
   □ 国有单位 □ 私有企业 □ 自主经营
3. 您现在的雇主是：  

4. 您是如何找到现在这份工作的？
   [ ] 家庭/亲戚介绍  [ ] 朋友  [ ] 以前的雇主  [ ] 其他：________________________

5. 您来北京工作以前曾干过其他工作吗？  [ ] 是  [ ] 否
   如果是，请列出曾经干过的工作：
   - ________________
   - ________________
   - ________________

IV. 住房状况

1. 您住房的使用面积是： ______平方米

2. 您的住房有多少房间（包括厨房、卫生间）？ ______房间

3. 有多少人居住？ ______人

4. 房屋建造的时间？ ______年

5. 您有独立的厨房吗？  [ ] 是  [ ] 否
   a. 如果没有，多少人共用一个厨房？ ______人
   b. 您的厨房使用的燃料是：  [ ] 煤  [ ] 罐装煤气  [ ] 天然气  [ ] 电

6. 您的房间有自来水吗？  [ ] 是  [ ] 否
   a. 如果是，有热水吗？  [ ] 是  [ ] 否

7. 您有独立的浴室吗？  [ ] 是  [ ] 否
   a. 如果不是，多少人共用一个浴室？ ______人

V. 生活质量

1. 您在所居住的小区里是否感到安全？
   [ ] 非常安全  [ ] 安全  [ ] 不太安全  [ ] 不安全

2. 您在所居住的小区是否感觉有归属感？
   [ ] 强烈  [ ] 有些强烈  [ ] 不太强烈  [ ] 没有

3. 如果您发现邻居可能着火了，您会：
   [ ] 不做反应  [ ] 打电话报警  [ ] 去找邻居

4. 您预计还会在现在居住的小区住多少年？ ______年
Glossary of Common Terms

Chengshi (城市): city
Chengzhen (城镇): small town
Nongcun (农村): rural

Dazhuan (大专): three-year college
Zhongzhuan (中专): technical secondary school
Zhigao (職高): professional high school
Benke (本科): undergraduate course in one’s major

Fangdong (房东): landlord, owner of the house one lives in
Fangzhu (房主): house owner
Fangdichanggongsi (房地产公司): real estate company
Daikuanmaifang (贷款买房): loan (mortgage) company

Mi (米): meter = 3.281 feet
Gongli (公里): equivalent to 1 km

Xiaoshou (銷售): to sell things
Jingshang (经商): engage in business/trade
Daogou (导购): female shopping guide; floorwalker in department store
Yingyebujingli (营业部): business office manager
Baoan (保安): security guard
Dianzhu (店主): the boss of a store
Kuaiyi (快由): express delivery
Kuaiyou (快递): express delivery

Shumaikuaiyin (数码快印): Xeroxing facility
Mugong (木工): construction work
Zhongtiechengjian (中铁城建): municipal subway construction
Wuzihuishou (物资回收): recycler
Diandu (电镀): electroplates
Chegong (车工): lathe work
Fuwuye (服务业): service industry
Beijing yongyouyuanjiangongsi (北京用友公司): software company

Jingshui (井水): well water
Yutang (浴室): public bathroom

Beida (北大): Peking University