Understanding Rural Women Factory Workers' Migration and Employment Experiences: A Study in Shandong Province, China

by

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Abstract

The migration of Chinese rural workers to urban centers represents one of the largest movements of peoples globally in the past century. While previous studies have focused on rural migrants as a whole, research on rural migrant women has not yet been fully developed. This thesis addresses the question of how rural women workers in China have experienced their migration and paid employment in factories, using official public statistics, policy documents, and, especially 86 in-depth interviews with rural women workers and on-site observations. Two rounds of fieldwork were conducted in three factories -- one textile factory and two garment factories -- in Shandong province between August and November 2013 and between January and April 2015. The thesis examines different layers of structures that impact rural women's employment, including the broader socio-economic and political contexts, regional backgrounds, household composition, and personal factors. The thesis finds that the rural migrant population is one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in contemporary China, but also that rural migrant women experience distinctly gendered forms of disadvantage. For women, the intersection of their rural *hukou* status, low income and inferior economic status, precarious employment status, and traditional gender roles has compounded their experiences of marginalization.

In China, the Women in Development (WID) thinking is still prevalent among economic and development planners. The WID approach assumes that through participation in paid employment, women can lift themselves and their families out of poverty. This thesis concludes that WID thinking does not go far enough, neglecting many complicated challenges that employed women experience, including income poverty, abusive and unhealthy working conditions, precarious employment, informal employment arrangements, traditional gender

identities, gender division of labor, and chains of care among women within the family. Due to the commodification of rural society and the deficit of care in rural areas, women are expected to be both wage earners and caregivers. Many women, moreover, are sandwiched between caring for their children and aging parents. These work-life conflicts are exacerbated by long working hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and lack of flexible hours. This study, therefore, offers recommendations for multiple actors, including economic and development planners, local governments, industries, and women workers themselves. It also pushes us to rethink the complicated meaning of employment for women in periods of dramatic economic transition.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Yongjie Wang. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "An Intersectional Approach for Understanding Women's Empowerment", No. Pro00041996, on October 28, 2013. A paper based on a pilot study of this thesis project titled "Impacts of Employment Growth in China's Interior Areas on Local Rural Women" has been published in *Democratic Renewal Versus Neoliberalism: Towards Empowerment and Inclusion*, Bueno Aires: CLACSO, December 2014, 49-62. This paper focused on growing labour shortages in China and included some initial observations about the meaning of employment for migrant women workers. The content of this published paper is not reproduced in this thesis.

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List of Abbreviations

ACWF All-China Women's Federation

CASS Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

CPC Communist Party of China

EPZs Export Processing Zones

NBS National Bureau of Statistics

PRC People's Republic of China

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

GAD Gender and Development

HIODS Heavy-Industry-Oriented Development Strategy

ILO International Labour Organization

SOEs State-Owned Enterprises

TVEs Township and Village Enterprises

WAD Women and Development

WID Women in Development

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

The migration of Chinese rural workers to urban centers represents one of the largest movements of peoples globally in the past century. While previous studies have mainly focused on rural migrants as a whole, research on women migrants has not yet been fully developed. This dissertation explores the experiences of Chinese rural women workers within the workplace, and with respect to education, migration, and employment. The purpose of conducting this study is to uncover sources of oppression of this population in their daily contexts. This study uses official public statistics, policy documents, and especially 86 in-depth interviews with rural women workers and on-site observations in three factories in Shandong province. This study may be of interest to several actors, including international development practitioners, economic and development planners, local governments, and industries. This chapter will introduce this study, providing the research context, research questions, relevant literature review, theoretical approach, methodology, and organization of the thesis.

1.1 The Research Context

1.1.1 Rural Migrant Workers in China

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the term rural migrant workers refers to laborers who are rural residents and have rural *hukou* (the household registration), and who have been engaging in non-agricultural paid employment or self-employment in urban areas for more than six months (NBS 2014; Li and Li 2007, 1-3). The rural *hukou* and non-agricultural employment status are the two major characteristics of this population.

China's *hukou* system was set up in urban areas in 1951, and was extended to rural regions in 1955 (Chan and Zhang 1999, 819; Chan 1996, 135). According to the 1958 *Hukou* Registration Regulation, all Chinese citizens were required to register their regular residence and were permitted to have only one registered regular residence[1]. Under this system, the *hukou* status of Chinese nationals is categorized into rural (agricultural) and urban (non-agricultural) *hukou*, depending on both the registered regular residence and the employment status. Under the rural-urban-dichotomy-based *hukou* system, "rural migrant workers" becomes a third social group and identity in China (Y. Chen 2005). Previous studies found that the rural migrant population is one of the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups in China (Knight and Song 1999; Wong, Li, and Song 2007; Mou, Cheng, et al. 2011). Due to the rural *hukou* status, rural migrants usually regard themselves as and are conceived of as outsiders, strangers, the second class, non-citizens, or invisible residents in the city (Jacka 2006; L. Zhang 2001; S. Li 2008; D. J. Solinger 1999; K. Roberts 2002). In China's urban areas, a new social stratification has been formed, "within which permanent migrants, who obtain the urban and local *hukou* status and who are employed in professional or skilled job sectors in the city, are the most privileged, followed by nonmigrant natives, and finally by rural migrants at the bottom of the hierarchy" (C. Fan 2002, 103). They form "the elites," "the natives," and "the outsiders" in the city respectively (C. Fan 2002, 103).

Rural migrant workers' inferior status in the city is in particular manifested through their employment status. It is found that "while urban residents are spread across different jobs and are more likely to work in high-paid sectors, rural migrants are mainly employed in those sectors with no or low entry barriers, including the urban informal employment sector and blue-collar

[1] See the *hukou* registration regulations of the PRC, 1958 http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2000-12/10/content_5004332.htm

labor markets of the formal sector" (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 193; Wang, Maruyama, and Kikuchi 2000, 102). In terms of the industrial sectors, rural migrant men mainly work in construction (26.2 percent) and manufacturing (22.5 percent), while women are mostly employed in manufacturing (30.6 percent) and the hotel and catering industry (12.4 percent) (Zhang and Deng 2013, 191). Jacka found that the majority of migrant jobs are "temporary, offering no security and very few welfare benefits, of low status, physically exhausting, and carried out in poor working conditions," and are "largely shunned by urbanites" (2006, 6). Rural migrant workers generally experience long working hours, poor working conditions, employment insecurity, informal employment arrangements, and have limited access to social protection through their employment (Wong, Li, and Song 2007, 34-37; UNDP and China Development Research Foundation 2005, 2-3; W. Gao 2006).

1.1.2 The Status of Women Workers

Rural migrant women experience both the same sources of disadvantages as rural migrant men and the gendered forms of disadvantage. Due to the commodification of rural society and the deficit of care in rural areas, women are expected to be both wage earners and main caregivers for the family. Employed women usually experience more work-life conflicts. Especially for factory workers, these conflicts are exacerbated due to inappropriate work schedules. Rural migrant women generally have informal employment and work under precarious and abusive conditions. According to the investigation on Chinese women's social status that was conducted by All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), women are generally employed in those low income, low barrier of entry, and low degree of social security industrial sectors (Jiang and Yang 2013). More than 90 percent of rural women work in agriculture,

manufacturing, and the wholesale industries (Jiang and Yang 2013, 178). Though through participating in non-agricultural paid employment, many rural workers lift their families out of extreme poverty, numerous rural households still experience income poverty and financial pressures of meeting the need of themselves and their families.

Previous studies mainly focused on rural-to-urban migration; the economic, employment, education, health, and social protection status of migrant workers; and, the livelihoods of those who remain in the countryside. The social, economic, and employment status of migrant workers has drawn much scholarly and social attention. However, research on women has not been fully developed. As Ngai noted, existing studies seldom look into the lives of women (2005, 55). Zheng also observed that previous studies focus mainly on men (2007). For women, the intersection of their rural *hukou* status, inferior employment status, and gender has compounded their experiences of marginalization. This thesis is one of the studies on women's experiences. It focuses on rural migrant women workers' lived experiences, and examines multiple aspects of their lives. The thesis aims to uncover sources of inequality and oppression that these women workers experience in their daily lives. Drawing upon the data obtained during my fieldwork, this thesis also discusses women's views and feelings of their experiences, and exposes those taken-for-granted norms or values that have constrained their life choices.

1.2 The Research Question

The major research question raised in this study is *how have rural migrant women workers in China experienced their migration and paid employment in factories?* The overall objective of exploring this research question is to find out the sources of oppression for women factory workers and the ways in which these elements have disadvantaged women and

constrained their life choices. I seek to address this research question by examining different layers of structures, including the broader socio-economic and political contexts of the country, regional backgrounds, household characteristics and composition, and personal factors. It is important to explore women's experiences with respect to education, migration, and employment, because these experiences are interconnected. For many young rural residents, going to school and participating in migrant employment are the two primary alternative life options available to them.

A series of sub-research questions are raised: 1) What are the trends of rural-to-urban migration and employment of rural residents in China since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, and how have the broader socio-economic and political contexts of China shaped these trends? 2) How have rural women experienced their education? 3) What are the factors that behind rural women's out-migration? How do they interpret their migration statuses, decisions, and experiences? 4) How have women experienced and interpreted their experiences within their workplace? What are the meanings and implications of paid employment for women? What are the general employment status and experiences of women? These questions also inform the structure of this thesis, with different chapters addressing each of these sub-questions.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Demographic Characteristics and Migration of the Rural Migrant Population in China

According to the national rural migrant survey report released by the NBS, in 2014 there were in total 273.95 million rural migrants in China (NBS 2015). While men accounted for 67 percent of the rural migrant population, women accounted for only 33 percent (NBS 2015). Zhang and Deng found that in each age group the proportion of men was higher than that of

women, but for the lower age group the gap decreased, with a larger difference within the higher age group (2013, 188). As Table 1 shows, in 2012, in the 16-to-20-year-old group, the proportion of rural migrant men was only around ten percent higher than that of women, whereas in the 50-to-60-year-old group, the proportion of men was around 50 percent higher than that of women (Zhang and Deng 2013, 188). Overall, changes in the Chinese economy towards increased manufacturing have concomitantly increased demand for rural migrant laborers, and in particular, women. At the household level, the cost of living has increased pressure for greater income and multiple wage earners, and thus both men and women participate in paid employment. However, at the personal level, with the increase of age, women tend to return to their home areas after getting married. Therefore, the difference in male/female proportion in the rural migrant population widens with aging (see Table 1).

Table 1 The Composition of Rural Migrant Workers in China, 2012: Based on Sex and Age (%)

Age group	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	50-60
Male	55.3	61.4	65.7	67.8	74.9
Female	44.7	38.6	34.3	32.2	25.1
Total	4.9	31.9	22.5	25.6	15.1

Source: Zhang and Deng (2013, 188).

In terms of age composition, in 2012 more than 50 percent of rural migrant workers were 40 years of age or younger. Specifically, as Table 1 shows, around five percent of rural migrant workers were in the 16-to-20-year-old group, 31.9 percent of rural migrants were in the 21-to-30-year-old group, 22.5 percent were in the 31-to-40-year-old group, 25.6 percent were in the 41-to-50-year-old group, and 15.1 percent were 50 years of age or older (NBS 2013). In both rural and

urban China, there is an overall aging tendency, but it is more intense in rural areas because of the massive migration of young and middle-aged rural workers from the countryside to cities. From 2008 to 2012, the percentage of rural migrant workers who were 40 years of age or younger dropped from 70 percent to 59.3 percent, and the average age of rural migrant workers grew from 34 years of age to 37.3 (NBS 2013). In 2014 the average years of age grew to 38.3 (NBS 2015).

As for the pattern of migration, there is an overall trend of migration from the inland West and Central China to East China[2]. While rural workers from East China tend to migrate to intra-provincial cities, or cities in other East provinces, migrants from West and Central China generally move to East China[3]. In 2013, the majority of inter-provincial rural migrant workers (85.3 percent) migrated to China's East coast provinces, and the rest moved to the Western and Central areas (NBS 2014).

Overall, the widening income gap between rural and urban areas is one major driving force behind rural-to-urban migration (Zhu 2002; Wang and Zuo 1999, 276; Wang, Maruyama, and Kikuchi 2000). Previous studies found that the demand side of the urban labor market (Hare 1999, 67; Zhang and Song 2003, 392), the rapid growth in surplus rural laborers (Chan 1996; D. J. Solinger 1993; Wang and Zuo 1999; Brandt, Hsieh, and Zhu 2008, 706), the development of small towns and rural industries (S. Li 2008; Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008), the development of private sectors (Iredale, et al. 2001), and the role of local policies of poorer provinces in

[2] China's East areas include Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei province, Liaoning province, Shanghai, Jiangsu province, Zhejiang province, Fujian province, Shandong province, Guangdong province, and Hainan province. The Central areas include Shanxi province, Jilin province, Heilongjiang province, Anhui province, Jiangxi province, Henan province, Hubei province and Hunan province. Western areas include the Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan province, Guizhou province, Yunnan province, Xizang (Tibet), Shaanxi province, Gansu province, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang. See National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC (2014).

[3] According to the NBS's rural migrant workers survey report, among all inter-provincial rural migrant workers, only 8.82 million (11.4 percent) were from East China, among which 72.6 percent migrated to other East provinces, whereas 40.17 million (51.9 percent) inter-provincial rural migrant workers were from central China, among which 89.9 percent moved to East China, and 28.4 million (36.7 percent) were from Western inland areas, among which 82.7 percent moved to China's East provinces (NBS 2014, NBS 2013).

encouraging and supporting out-migration of laborers (Iredale, et al. 2001) also promote the migration of laborers from rural to urban areas in China. Mid-range studies draw attention to personal, household, and community factors to explain the complexity of migration, such as why some rural households and individuals migrate while others stay, or why migrants move to one area instead of another and for how long. Both household and individual characteristics influence "whether or not a household has an incentive to send out a migrant, which household member it will send out, whether an individual has an incentive to migrate, and whether the household, or the individual, has an opportunity to migrate" (Knight and Song 1999, 254). Zhao Y. noted that the number of laborers in a household has positive impacts on migration decisions, whereas landholding has a negative impact (1999 b, 283-284). She also noted that "the number of pre-school children within a household usually has a negative effect on migration, while the number of children at school has a positive impact" (Y. Zhao 1999 b, 284). In addition, migrant networks[4] and the native-place ties are important for rural residents to start migration, find jobs, and expand business in the city, which reduce costs and risks of movement (Ma and Xiang 1998; Y. Zhao 2003; L. Zhang 2001; C. Fan 2004; Knight and Song 1999; Massey et al. 1993, 449). In Zhang and Deng's investigation, in 2012 around 57.3 percent of rural migrant workers found jobs through their relatives or fellow villagers, who provided information and made necessary connections (2013, 195-196). Zhao Y. noted that with these networks the migration is "no longer blind" and becomes a "self-sustaining and self-enforcing process" (2003, 510). As a result, rural migrants from the same place of origin are more likely to be in the same "specific destinations" and "specific types of jobs" (Ma and Xiang 1998, 560; C. Fan 2004, 191; K. D. Roberts 2001, 19). Comparing men and women, some scholars found that women migrants are more reliant on

[4] According to Massey et al., migrant networks are "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin" (1993, 448).

information provided by their acquaintances (C. Fan 2004). It was found that women not only rely on migrant networks but also tend to forge gendered networks, which "facilitates the migration of other rural women and directs them to specific gender-segregated urban work" (C. Fan 2004, 189).

Personal characteristics, such as one's age, gender, and marital status also influence one's migration decisions (Y. Zhao 1999 a; Knight, Song, and Jia 1999). For example, Zhao Y. found that age negatively affects migration decisions, women are less likely to migrate than men, and marriage tends to reduce the probability of migration (1999 a). Knight, Song, and Jia found that young women are less concerned about income, and are more concerned about life experience (1999, 87). Poverty-driven migration is prevalent among middle-aged and older rural migrant women. According to a survey involving different generations of rural migrant workers in China, 76.2 percent of rural migrants who were born in the 1960s maintained that "to earn money" was the main reason for their movement, while the proportion of those who decided to migrate for the purpose of "earning money" was 34.9 percent and 18.2 percent among those who were born in the 1970s and the 1980s, respectively (All China Federation of Trade Unions 2010, 10). Among the new generation of rural migrants in China (which refers to those who were born after 1980), rural-to-urban migration is more self-motivated, rather than poverty-driven. The purpose of experiencing life and opportunities is a primary motivation for migration among the younger generation (All China Federation of Trade Unions 2010, 10-11; Alsop and Heinsohn 2005). Gender is also an important dimension of the migration decision. There are some women indicating that they migrate to escape oppression, abuse, family conflict, unwanted engagement or failed marriage (Lou, et al. 2004, 217-219; Jacka 2006, 6); or to escape the narrowness of rural life, the hardships of rural women's work, and early marriage or childbirth (Beynon 2004,

147). Migration also provides a way for women to gain a sense of value, independence, autonomy, and space (Beynon 2004, 140); to see the world; and, to look for a better future (Jacka 2006, 6; Lou, et al. 2004, 217-219).

1.3.2 Experiences of Women

There are some studies examining the migration and employment experiences of women, focusing on their working and living conditions, migration experiences, daily life on the assembly line, and struggles over these experiences (L. Zhang 2001; Gaetano and Jacka 2004; Jacka 2006; Ngai 2005; Chang 2008; Harney 2008). The intersection of gender with rural migrant status constitutes vectors of inequality that these women are exposed to in the city. Some studies found that rural migrant women perceive their status as "rural migrants in cities" rather than their gender status as more important in their experiences of inequality. For example, Chang found that some rural migrant women workers think the rural-urban divide is the only factor that matters: "once they cross that line, they could change their fate" (2008, 57-58). Other studies found that for women, their plight of being rural migrants is compounded by their gender disadvantage (L. Zhang 2001; Ngai 2005; Jacka 1997; Jacka 2006). Chen L. pointed out that although inequalities exist between rural migrant workers and local urban residents, there is, more importantly, gender inequality experienced by women, arising from influences of traditional cultural values which encourage rural women to be submissive (2009, 194). Some scholars found that in factories migrant women workers are exposed to the "sexual segregation of jobs," "with males being dominant on the management level, and with women being predominant on the assembly line" (Ngai 2005, 145-149). Also, it was found that rural migrant women mainly work in sectors in which they earn not just less than urbanites but also less than

migrant men (Jacka 2006, 115). The wage of rural migrant men is significantly higher (35.1 percent) than that of women (Zhang and Deng 2013, 195). Furthermore, women are also subject to "invasive regulation and surveillance of their reproductive activities, and sexual harassment and violence" (Jacka 2006, 115).

There are other studies drawing attention to multiple and intersectional power relations that are experienced by rural migrant women, and examining how these structural forces affect women's everyday lives (L. Zhang 2001; Ngai 2005; Jacka 2006). It was found that women's experiences are shaped by power relations based on gender, class, and intersections of both (Ngai 2005; Jacka 2006). Overall, these studies found that rural-to-urban migration reinforces rural migrant women's disadvantage and vulnerablity. Zhang L. argued that these power relations, within and among migrant communities, tend to limit women's exercise of agency (2001). Ngai found that women migrant workers are sometimes exposed to abuses in the workplace (2005). She argued that women are not "passive objects of the Chinese patriarchal family, sent out by their households based on pure economic factors and deliberate family calculations" (Ngai 2005, 55). Instead, rural women's migration is a complicated life experience, which involves "individual participation and struggles between work and family, women's negotiations over when, where, and with whom to migrate and for how long" (Ngai 2005, 55). In addition, the poor working and living conditions, and their social isolation status in cities also "compound their sense of marginalization, and reinforce their vulnerability to physical and sexual violence and other forms of abuses in the workplace and migrant communities" (Jacka 2006, 103-105; L. Zhang 2001, 126-131). Overall, these studies provide insights into rural migrant women's personal experiences in cities and the structural constraints that women workers experience in their life.

Despite the inferior socio-economic status, there are some rural migrant women emphasizing non-economic values associated with their migration and employment, and the positive impacts of these experiences on their lives. For example, Beynon found that many young women do not migrate "in the expectation of gaining a real economic and social value through a good job," rather, their migration decision is more related to the symbolic value of migration and paid work, "including gaining the status as a wage earner, seeing the world, and having more experiences and some degree of independence" (2004, 137-138). Beynon noted that for some rural migrant women, "the advantages of gaining a sense of value, independence, autonomy, and space outweigh the actual economic and social conditions of their life in the city" (2004, 140). Murphy drew attention to the well-being and agency of rural women (2004). She found that rural women at all stages of the life are affected by the migratory process - migrants, returned migrants, or non-migrants, such as girls and elderly women who remain in the countryside (Murphy 2004, 243). It was argued that women's participation in migration and employment represents their "expressions of agency" (A. Gaetano 2004). Women are "active players in their own experiences," from engaging in migration, finding employment to bargaining with bosses to participating in worker strikes (Lou, et al. 2004, 240). Their expression of agency, however, is still limited and constrained by socio-economic and cultural constraints, primarily socio-cultural traditions, marriage, women's subordinate position in the family in rural China, and their guest status in both her parents' home and in her husband's village under the patrilocal marriage system (Murphy 2004, 244; C. Fan 2004).

Studies discussed above provide valuable insights for understanding the migration and employment experiences of rural women workers. Women's lived experiences are normally neglected in the mainstream scholarship on the rural migrant population. Zheng pointed out that

previous studies mainly study rural migrants as a whole, and the focus has been mostly on men (2007). The studies focusing on rural migrant women mainly examine experiences of those who are in the city, in migrant communities or in home villages, while few studies focus on women in factories and enterprises (Zheng 2007). Rural migrant women factory workers deserve more attention, because compared to men, they experience greater marginality and complex and intersectional disadvantages, which are associated with their rural migrant and gender status, and their precarious employment experiences (Jacka 2006). This thesis examines women's experiences within the workplace and uses a gender analysis, regarding multiple aspects of women's lives, to uncover sources of oppression for women in their daily contexts. It critically examines factors that enable or constrain their life choices pertaining to their education, migration, and employment. Today, either forced by financial pressures or by personal choices, many young and middle-aged women in the countryside have engaged in paid employment. Women are also expected to be the main caregivers for the family, who should undertake caring and housework; raise, educate, and supervise their children; and, care for other family members. While men are expected to be breadwinners for the family, women have both financial pressures to earn money and gendered pressures of housekeeping and childcare. This thesis finds that migrant women are expected to return home after getting married. Due to the lack of public care services in the countryside, most rural households rely on family members for childcare and housework. Some women workers struggle to maintain work-life balance by working close to home and shifting care and housework to older women such as their mothers or mothers-in-law. But generally work-life conflicts are not solved by these private solutions. Quite often, women workers are sandwiched between caring for their children and aging parents.

Women of different ages and stages in their life cycle have different pressures and tasks. This thesis also studies the status of older rural women. It is taken for granted that grandparents provide continued care and financial support to their adult children, mainly sons, who are employed full-time. This study finds that older women often do housework, look after their grandchildren, and take care of the farm. Today it is also becoming popular among older women to engage in part-time or temporary employment due to both the lack of pension and demand for greater income in the current industrial-consumer society, combined with the growing demands for labor from the labor market. Older women are expected to look after grandchildren, provide logistical support for their adult children, and care for their own parents. This thesis critically assesses the meaning of paid employment for rural women, and emphasizes the significance of the nature of the employment, and the pressures that women experience based on both financial necessity and traditional gender roles.

1.4 Gender Analysis: A Theoretical Approach

1.4.1 WID, WAD, and GAD

Peterson reviewed the state of debate regarding the importance of gender analysis in the international political economy literature (2005). She noted that the range of feminist research constitutes a continuum of overlapping positions that reflect varying positivist and constructivist orientations (Peterson 2005, 499-500). While positivist approaches to gendered political economy assume the dichotomy of men and women and discuss how men and women are differently affected by and influence economic development, constructivist approaches uncover power relations between men and women, as well as among women in different class positions (Peterson 2005, 501-502). The trend in the debate, as Peterson noted, is a move from treating

gender empirically to treating it analytically, and from decontextualized assumptions to historical, constructivist, and cultural specificity (2005). There are three developments or approaches to gendered political economy: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD).

The WID approach emerged in the early 1970s, evolving from modernization theory and liberal feminist approach. WID seeks to add and integrate women into development by making more resources available to them and promoting women's participation in employment (Reeves and Baden 2000, 33; Rathgeber 1990, 491-492; Singhal 2003; Peterson 2005, 502). The WID approach focuses on women's productive roles, and emphasizes improving women's status by alleviating poverty, reducing income inequality, and increasing women's income-generating opportunities. The WAD approach emerged in the second half of the 1970s. Its theoretical base drew from dependency theory and class analysis (Rathgeber 1990, 495-6). It focuses on "the relationship between women and development" and believes that development has complicated impacts on women, rather than merely focusing on the integration of women into development (Rathgeber 1990, 492). WAD regards the structure of international inequalities and socio-economic inequalities to examine sources of subordination and oppression of women. WAD assumes that women's position would improve if and when international structures become more equitable (Rathgeber 1990, 493). Both WID and WAD are primarily concerned with the productive sector at the expense of the reproductive side of women's work and lives. In practice, WID/WAD intervention strategies mainly focus on the development of income-generating activities without taking into account "the time burdens that such strategies place on women" (Rathgeber 1990, 493). In addition, both approaches suggest accepting and making the existing

structure more equitable instead of challenging the development initiatives and the existing structure (Rathgeber 1990, 497).

The GAD approach emerged in the 1980s from the socialist feminist framework, focusing on the social construction of gender and stressing the need to empower women and men in a way that fundamentally re-examines and transforms the social structure (Reeves and Baden 2000, 33; Singhal 2003, 173-4; Rathgeber 1990, 498-500). GAD has a more constructivist, critical, and structural orientation (Peterson 2005, 502). Compared to WID and WAD, the GAD framework provides a more radical approach to development that examines and transforms the totality of the existing social structure. GAD explores why women systematically are assigned to inferior and secondary roles in society (Rathgeber 1990, 494). It examines the role of both "gender" and "development" in determining women's social status. GAD is concerned with the social construction of gender and gender relations, and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and to men, rather than with women *per se* (Rathgeber 1990, 494). Instead of just adding or integrating women into development, the GAD approach asks questions, with a gender focus, regarding the nature, process, and impacts of development on people, and uncovers the structural sources of oppression of women. The GAD approach problematizes the conventional male/female dichotomy, and draws attention to the internal division and hierarchy among women, based on multiple and intersectional power relations built upon gender, class, and race/ethnicity. It also highlights how international structures and the international division of labor creates sources of inequalities and oppression for (low-income) women in the Third World. The GAD approach transforms the way we define development, regarding individuals' wellbeing, agency, and the systemic impacts of gender on development.

In China the WID thinking is still prevalent among economic and development planners and among women themselves. Underlying the WID approach, it is assumed that through work, women could get out of poverty. This development thinking does not go far enough though. It neglects the complicated challenges that employed women experience, including traditional gender identities, gender division of labor, the precarious nature of their employment, informal employment, chains of care among women within the family, and work-life conflicts experienced by women. This thesis uses a gender and intersectional perspective to analyze women's migration and employment experiences, instead of merely focusing on women's participation in paid employment. A gender perspective helps to uncover power relations and marginalization associated with gender, and the intersection of gender with one's socio-economic status, employment status, *hukou* status, regional and household backgrounds, and local growth and the practice of development. Being different from the concept of "sex" which is mainly biologically based, "gender" is a social construct. Gender represents how a person's biology is "culturally valued and interpreted into locally accepted ideas of what it is to be a woman or man" (Reeves and Baden 2000, 30). According to Peterson and Runyan, gender refers to "socially learned behaviors, repeated performances, and idealized expectations that are associated with and distinguish between the proscribed gender roles of masculinity and femininity" (2010, 2). Gender roles are learned and internalized by people through multiple sources of socialization, including families, school, religious institutions, and media (Peterson and Runyan 2010, 40-41; 65-67). Gender roles, characteristics, behaviors, and relations vary significantly across cultures, races/ethnicities, classes, and age groups (Reeves and Baden 2000, 18; Singhal 2003, 174; Peterson and Runyan 2010, 60). Also, societal expectations for women

and men are influenced by both global and local economic and cultural trends, and are subject to changes over time and contexts (Singhal 2003, 174).

Gender analysis calls into question dualistic assumptions based on gendered dichotomies. Conventional categories and dichotomies are not taken for granted but are problematized (Peterson 2005, 502). Gender analysis recognizes that "there are multiple genders, as well as sexes, because race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other cultural variations shape gender identities and performances" (Peterson and Runyan 2010, 3). If we focus merely on gender, we may miss the "complexity of unjust social orders" (Peterson and Runyan 2010, 26). Peterson and Runyan argued that women and men have multiple identities simultaneously, "describing themselves or being described not only by gender but also by race, class, sexual, and national markers" (2010, 24). Gender inequalities are crosscut by these factors. An intersectional analysis recognizes intersections of multiple identities that define one's interests and structural relations. The complexity and intersections of different factors determine individuals' different social positions, benefits, constraints, and experiences. Among multiple social factors, some "may confer privilege," whereas others may confer disadvantage, and although "all femininities are subordinated to all masculinities, it is also the case that some femininities are subordinated more than or differently from others" (Peterson and Runyan 2010, 7).

In addition to the intersectional perspective, it is important to understand the division of labor based on gender, because gendered roles tend to lock women into unpaid domestic and care work regardless of their employment status. While men are usually associated with productive roles, "such as wage labor, market production, intellectual achievements, and political agency," women are assigned with social reproduction and care, "including childbearing, child rearing, care-taking, preparation of food, and responsibility for the maintenance of the household"

(Peterson and Runyan 2010, 12; Reeves and Baden 2000, 8). Since women's reproductive and domestic work are unpaid, "these activities have been taken as irrelevant to economic activity, and are less valued" (Moser 1989, 1801). Nevertheless, women's reproductive and caring services represent "a significant category of economic activity," which is important for "sustaining the labor force and the economy" (Heintz 2014, 4). The gender division of labor is also contradicted by two realities today: "many women wish to work outside of the home, whilst for many other women, economic realities (and consumerist ideologies) compel them to seek formal employment" (Peterson 2005, 511). Due to gendered roles and the time that women devote to reproductive and caring activities, women usually have fewer employment choices, and are more likely to be engaged in informal, flexible, or part-time employment.

This study also draws attention to the sustainable development goals that were proposed in the resolution by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) on 25 September 2015 titled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." This study draws attention to several sustainable development goals proposed in the resolution: Goal Three "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," Goal Five "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," and Goal Eight "Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." Among these goals, achieving gender equality and empowering women is particularly important. The UNDP defined these two goals as lying at the heart of "development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals."[5] There are many different ways of defining "women's empowerment," among them, enabling women to make effective choices and act upon these choices is most important. Kabeer maintained that the ability to make strategic life choices can be thought of in terms of three dimensions or moments: "'resources' as part of the preconditions

[5] See http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/projects_and_initiatives/index/

of empowerment, 'agency' as people's capacity to define their own life choices and to pursue their own goals, and 'achievement' as a measure of outcomes" (1999 b, 2). This thesis looks into structural factors that enable or constrain women's choices with respect to education, migration, and employment. It also studies the impacts of employment on women's lives, health, and wellbeing by examining the nature of employment, employment arrangements, and working conditions. By discussing what is a good job and what are expected through employment from women's perspectives, this thesis provides recommendations for promoting gender equality and decent employment. These discussions may help promote the achievement of sustainable development goals in China and address the concerns of rural migrant women workers.

1.4.2 A Broad Picture of Global Women Factory Workers

Those labor-intensive industries such as garment, food processing, and textile factories, prefer to employ women workers. Ghosh found that in India, women are concentrated in these industries primarily because of "the inferior conditions of work and lower pay that women are usually willing to accept" (2002, 18). She found that women are "more willing to accept longer hours and unpleasant and often unhealthy or hazardous factory conditions, typically do not unionize or engage in other forms of collective bargaining to improve conditions and do not ask for permanent contracts" (Ghosh 2002, 18). In Mexico, maquiladoras[6] primarily employ local young women because of the cheap labor price and "women's manual dexterity and their ability to tolerate tedious and repetitive work" (Livingston 2004, 61). In China, rural women workers offer many advantages for the management, including the cheap labor and their rural residency status that makes long tenure for employment difficult. As a result, "factories can recruit and fire

[6] In maquiladoras, factories import materials and equipment on a duty-free basis, assembly or manufacture products and then export products to the raw materials' country of origin.

their workers at will, which enables factories to reduce labor costs when operating at less than capacity" (Gao 1994, 93).

Paid employment has complicated implications for women. There are some studies arguing that paid employment is an important dimension of building economic power for women. According to the Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2010, "paid work opens doors; and, is important to women for income and because it can help them cultivate new capabilities, develop a greater sense of autonomy, bring women into contact with new people and ideas, and break restrictive social conventions" (UNDP, Regional Centre for Asia Pacific 2010, 57-66). Zohir found that in Bangladesh employment in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) empowers women, increases their socio-economic mobility, and expands their individual choices (2001, 66). Livingston noted that through economic contributions to their household, "women have more say over budget and domestic decisions, and women's participation in the public sphere makes them more visible, whether going to work, to the store or to bars" (2004, 70).

Other evidence frequently does not support, or at least qualifies the assumption that paid employment empowers women and advances sustainable development. A broad survey of the literature on global women factory workers reveals that women factory workers are often exposed to multiple and intersectional problems, such as the gendered segregation of job opportunities, employment insecurity, poor working/living conditions, and exposure to different forms of violence or abuse, be they physical, sexual or verbal. Women workers are frequently confined to "low-paying jobs, often in informal sector, without protection, security or hope of mobility" (Safa 2002, 11). A report of the Asian Monitor Resource Center, as cited in Pyle's work, suggested that the general working conditions women experience in EPZs in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Taiwan, are very poor (2001). The report found that

> Women workers often lack benefits or bonuses; they often have to work over time; they suffer from habitual underpayment of wages; they are often exposed to unsafe physical working conditions, due to speed of production and/or exposure to excessive heat, noise, or hazardous materials and equipment; and their opinions are often suppressed due to strict monitoring, surveillance, repression by guards and police forces (Pyle 2001, 63).

Usually women workers are offered poor living conditions in factories. In Sri Lankan Free Trade Zones, women workers are forced to live on-site in crowded dormitories that house ten to 12 women in 10' by 12' rooms that lack electricity or running water (Marcus 1998). In addition, the employment of women does not change or challenge the division of labor within the domestic sphere. Zohir found that in Bangladesh while men and women spend a similar amount of time on work, women spend more time on cooking and household chores (2001, 50). Working in the EPZ "has increased hours of paid work for women without reducing their time spent in cooking and household chores," and has reduced the leisure time of female workers (Zohir 2001, 50). Paid work gives women a measure of economic independence and challenges the traditional patriarchal structure of women's economic dependence on men within the household. Such challenges to traditional gendered structures of power, may, at times, generate violence against women. For example, a study of women workers in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic found that "the myth of 'the male breadwinner model,' where the man was considered to be the principal provider in the household and women were at best supplementary wage earners, was eroded with economic restructuring resulting from globalization, and women were gaining greater economic independence" (Safa 1995). Some studies found that violence might occur as a result of women's growing economic independence and "crisis of masculine identity"

(Safa 1995). For example, Livingston studied the murders- "the most extreme form of a general violence against women workers in the global assembly factories" in Juarez, a city on the US-Mexico border known for its maquiladoras (2004). Livingston found that the sexualized murder reflects "male anger about the increasing economic and sexual independence of young women in the city" (2004, 71). Zohir similarly found that in Bangladesh women workers might become victims of violence in the workplace, on the street during commuting to work, or in place of residence (2001, 55).

The literature discussed above opens important windows on the plight of women workers on the global assembly line and on the meaning of employment for women factory workers in developing countries. Many of these analyses have been based on quantitative research that involves a large number of research participants. The quantitative data provides empirical evidence and general impressions of conditions of women factory workers. Few studies, however, provide in-depth analysis of the experiences of these women and the meanings that they attach to their experiences as women workers in the global economy. This thesis addresses this research gap by conducting a qualitative study of the experiences of women factory workers in the context of China, and by deploying in-depth analysis of these women workers' interpretations of their experiences.

1.4.3 How Gender Analysis Applies to Rural Migrant Women in China

Although women's economic and social status has improved significantly in China in the past three decades, there is still significant gap in terms of the level of educational attainment, incomes, and the employment, economic and social protection status between men and women, as well as between urban women and rural women (Jiang and Yang 2013). The investigation

conducted by All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) on Chinese women's social status found that rural women generally have lower levels of educational attainment and limited employment choices compared with their male counterparts and their urban women counterparts (Jiang and Yang 2013). Especially in low-income rural families, women are more likely to withdraw from school and participate in factory employment at a young age to save costs and earn money for their families. Young rural women are more willing to sacrifice their own educational future for their brothers.

In rural families, it is primarily women who undertake farming, care, and household tasks. According to the ACWF's investigation, in almost 75.8 percent of rural households it was the wife who undertook household tasks (Yang and Zheng 2013, 364). Specifically, the proportion of rural women who completely undertook tasks of cooking (41.5 percent), washing dishes (43.9 percent), cleaning (45.7 percent), and grocery shopping (25.9 percent), is higher, compared to 6.4 percent, 6.4 percent, 6.9 percent, and 9.2 percent for rural men respectively (Yang and Zheng 2013, 365). Comparing the data of rural and urban areas, around 76.5 percent of rural women who do not engage in any employment stayed at home, engaged in the housework and cared for families, which was 61.5 percent higher than rural men, and 7.3 percent higher than urban women (Yang and Zheng 2013, 334).

Rural migrant women workers describe themselves not only by gender, but also by their socio-economic status, rural migrant status, and inferior employment and education status. However, even among rural migrant women factory workers, they have varied experiences, due to differences in terms of the income and financial status of the household, household composition, domestic need of labor, and also their marital and childbirth status. Their experiences vary significantly across age groups. Workers have concerns with their financial

status and family, and are sandwiched between caring for children and aging parents. Their voices and experiences have become an important element within this thesis.

1.5 Methodology

Experience refers to "people's engagement with the world, including apprehension and interpretation, thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Jacka 2006, 10). It is important to explore the way in which the experience is interpreted and the meanings and significance that one attaches to their experiences (Jacka 2006, 10). I used qualitative methodology, primarily ethnography, as the strategy of inquiry. The primary goal of conducting ethnography is to uncover the rules and cultural values that people take for granted, so that the behaviors, interactions, and experiences of a particular group can be understood.

I conducted two rounds of fieldwork in three factories: one textile factory and two garment factories, all within the Shandong province between the months of August and November 2013 and between January and April 2015. I did the research in these factories to gain firsthand information and experience with respondents in their daily contexts. I did on-site observations, interviews, and documentary study to collect data. There were in total 86 rural women worker respondents participating in this thesis research. During the first round of my fieldwork, I mainly conducted semi-structured interviews with women workers. Through these interviews, I collected the basic demographic information of respondents, and recorded respondents' past experiences, and the subjective aspects of their experiences, including their feelings, views, and interpretations. During the second round of my fieldwork, I lived in the factory dormitory and did on-site observation as a participant observer in the factory. My role as a student researcher was known. To obtain the general socio-economic and demographic data,

and to study the policy background and reforms at the national level, I also conducted documentary studies. Documents studied in this thesis included statistics released by the NBS of China, the Department of Population and Employment Statistics, and relevant policy and regulations from the official website of the State Council of the PRC, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. These data sets inform Chapter Two which discusses the historical and current trends of rural-to-urban migration in China.

Overall, the data that informs this thesis are drawn from the following sources: 1) official statistics, yearbooks, and survey reports on Chinese rural migrant workers; 2) government policy documentation either from published hard copies or online materials from official websites of relevant government branches; 3) semi-structured interviews with rural migrant women workers in factories; 4) field notes; 5) interviews with experts and officials in China regarding the current socio-economic reforms and demographic transition in China; and, 6) interviews with the management of these three factories.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter One, the current chapter, discusses the research context, questions, literature review, theoretical approach and methods. Chapter Two, which is titled The Historical and Contemporary Context: Understanding Trends of Rural-to-Urban Migration in China, discusses the general trends of rural-to-urban migration within China since 1949 and those broader socio-economic and political contexts that shape these trends. It includes a discussion of three waves of changes: strict control of rural-to-urban migration (from 1949 to 1977), relaxed migration controls (from 1978 to 2001), and planning and facilitating migration in

the new millennium. It also discusses recent changes in the urban labor market and debates on labor shortages. Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, describes strategies and procedures of entering the field, selecting respondents, collecting and analyzing data. Chapter Four to Six discuss empirical findings of the research. The data section focuses on three major themes: women's experiences with respect to education, migration, and employment. Chapter Four, which is titled Women's Education Status and School Experience, discusses respondents' education status and school experiences. Chapter Five, Women's Out-migration and Return Experiences, discusses respondents' migration experiences, with particular focus on their start of migration, their experiences as rural migrant workers in the city, and their decisions of withdrawing from migration and returning to their home areas. Chapter Six, titled Rural Women Workers' Employment Status and Experiences, examines women's employment status and experiences in factories, including women's participation in paid employment, the daily settings in which they work and live, their different employment status and arrangements, and their views on their employment. The concluding chapter summarizes this thesis and discusses policy implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2 The Historical and Contemporary Context: Understanding Trends of Rural-to-Urban Migration in China

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the historical trends of rural-to-urban migration in China, and the broader socio-economic and political contexts of these trends. A discussion of these contexts is important, because migration cannot be understood merely as individual choices and behaviors. Rural women's choices with migration and participation in paid employment are shaped by the socio-economic and political contexts. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, China has gone through several major waves of socio-economic transformation. The first wave, which occurred in the 1950s, implemented a heavy-industry-oriented development strategy (HIODS) and collectivization of farming. Between the 1950s and 70s, the Great Starvation which was partially caused by the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution campaigns, set back the progress and development of China until the late 1970s. The second wave, which began in 1978, reformed collective farming and the command economy, and opened up the Chinese economy to the world market. In the 2000s, a third wave focusing on social policy reforms was put in motion. In these three periods, the national government's attitude towards rural-to-urban migration varies, corresponding to waves of socio-economic transformation and changes in national development goals. The Chinese government's migration policy has shifted from strict controls (between 1949 and 1977) to more relaxed controls (between 1978 and 2001), and finally to planning and facilitation of migration (2001 to present). Beginning in the 2000s, the Chinese government has further relaxed controls over rural-to-urban migration, deepened reform to the *hukou* system, and committed itself to "guaranteeing fair and

free migration" within China, although it has not yet been fully implemented (Cai and Gao 2013, 44-45). There also have been changes in the urban labor market, impacting the migration of rural laborers. This chapter discusses the historical and current trends of rural-to-urban migration in China since 1949, the debates on labor shortages, and the impact of these trends on rural-to-urban migration. The last section of this chapter also discusses China's development and women's participation in both reproductive and productive activities throughout these different historical periods.

2.1 Wave One: Strict Control of Migration (From 1949 to 1977)

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the first major socio-economic transformation in China occurred in the early 1950s, when the Chinese government launched a heavy-industry-oriented development strategy (HIODS). The Chinese government adopted the HIODS strategy mainly as a result of the leadership's assessment of the then international security environment[7]. As some scholars pointed out, in the 1950s the Chinese new leadership realized that China "had to be prepared for war at any time" and "had to rapidly improve its national defense and set up a rather comprehensive and self-contained industrial structure," with heavy industries at its core (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 21-22). However, the Chinese economy inherited by the government in 1949 was an agrarian and "war-torn economy," in which "89.4 percent of the population lived in rural areas and industry accounted for only 12.6 percent of national income" (Y. Lin 1990, 1230). The heavy industry sector accounted for an even lower percentage (around eight percent) of the total output value (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 21). To support the industrialization plan, the Chinese central government set up several accompanying

[7] The outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), the Taiwan issue, and Cold War, constituted a potentially threatening international environment for the newly founded PRC.

policies and mechanisms, such as a low-wage policy, low prices for raw materials, and low prices for agricultural products and daily necessities. Urban workers were paid only "a subsistence wage," which was made possible by setting up "low food prices and the direct provision of non-wage benefits, such as housing, health care, child care, and pensions to urban workers and their families" (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 169). In the 1950s, China's economic system featured three mechanisms: macro-policy environment (low interest-rates, low exchange-rates, low input-prices, low wage-rates, and low subsistence); a planned allocation system; and, micro-management of state and economic institutions (such as state-controlled enterprises and a collective farming system) (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 127). In the late 1950s, the new leadership also launched the Great Leap Forward campaign (1958-1961), aimed at rapidly transforming the country from an agrarian economy into a modern socialist society through rapid industrialization and collectivization, during which many resources were procured from rural areas to urban and industrial sectors for industrial growth.

As a result of the implementation of the HIODS, the urban-industrial sub-system was given priority, whereas the rural-agricultural sub-system served as the provider of grain and cheap resources for the state and industrial sector (Chan 1996; Naughton 1992; Chan and Zhang 1999, 381). Under the dual economy favoring urban-industrial sectors, the industrial sector gained much greater state support, whereas the agricultural sector was more self-reliant (Chan and Zhang 1999). Even though urban residents similarly earned low incomes, rural laborers still had impetus to leave the countryside due to substantial rural-urban disparities in income, living standards, and access to state welfare provisions. In order to support the priority urban-industrial sector and to maintain such an artificial imbalance between rural and urban sectors, the state established a mechanism to "block free flows of resources and labor between industry and

agriculture and between cities and the countryside" (Chan and Zhang 1999, 821). The implementation of the HIODS also led to slow growth in employment, which in particular influenced women's participation in employment. During the First Five-Year Plan era (1953-1957), the percentage of female nonagricultural labor force experienced very slight growth from 11.7 to 13.4 percent, while total nonagricultural employment rose by more than 34 percent (Andors 1983, 36). In this period, women were concentrated in the same industries that they worked before the First Five-Year Plan, such as "textiles, food processing, handcrafts, and the lower levels of education and government administration" (Andors 1983, 36).

In addition to the HIODS, the Chinese government also launched farming collectivization to promote the simultaneous growth of agriculture and industry (Y. Lin 1990, 1230). By 1958, a nationwide collective farming system was instituted[8]. There is a school of thought believing that the primary intent of controlling rural-to-urban migration in the 1950s was to increase farm productivity and "prevent the diversion of labor from collective agriculture" to other sectors of the economy (Lardy 1983, as cited in Brandt, Hsieh, and Zhu 2008, 701; Wu 1994; Brandt, Hsieh, and Zhu 2008, 701). In this period the production, distribution, and consumption of food was centrally planned and controlled by the government (Meng, Qian, and Yared 2015, 6). Due to the negative impacts of the Great Leap Forward and the collective farming campaign and "inflexible and high government procurement from rural areas," a Great Famine occurred in

[8] As early as in the 1940s, the communist party of China launched the land reform in areas under its control. As Lin noted, under the land reform program, "land was confiscated from landlords without compensation and was distributed to tenants" (1990, 1231). The land reform continued after the PRC was established and was completed in China in 1952. As Lin noted, there were three major forms of cooperatives up to 1955: "the 'mutual aid team,' in which four or five neighboring households pooled their labor, farm tools and draft animals for peak seasons on a temporary or permanent basis;" "the 'elementary cooperative,' in which 20-30 neighboring households combined their assets in a unified scheme;" and "the collective farm or 'advanced cooperative,' which initially consisted of around 30 households and later evolved to consist of all the households, from 150 to 200, in a village" (1990, 1231). In the "mutual-aid team" and the "elementary cooperative," means of production were still owned by individual households, whereas under the third form of collective farming, the resource ownership and production decisions were collectivized. Initially peasants were encouraged to voluntarily join any form of the cooperatives, however, after the proponents of collectivization won the debate within the party in 1955, the "advanced collectives" became the main form of production. Until the winter of 1957, 753,000 advanced cooperatives with 119 million member households were established (Luo 1985, as cited in Lin Y. , 1990, 1231-1232).

China from 1958 to 1961, during which "16.5 to 45 million individuals perished in rural areas" (Meng , Qian, and Yared 2015, 1). Because of the Great Famine, rural residents had begun to "flee their homes in search of food" and in some areas rebellion erupted (Becker 1996, 52).

In this period, rural-to-urban migration was referred to as "blind flows" in the official discourse,[9] given that there was limited labor demand in cities under the heavy industrialization plan, and having peasants move to cities on a large scale would add to urban unemployment, and would have a negative impact on agriculture production in the countryside. However, in the early 1950s migration restrictions did not prevent all migration to cities. Solinger found that between 1949 and 1957, more than 20 million rural migrants entered cities (1993, 94). According to the population yearbook compiled by the Department of Population and Employment Statistics and the NBS, the urban proportion of the total population grew from 10.64 percent in 1949 to 19.75 percent in 1960, whereas the rural population decreased from 89.36 percent to 80.25 percent in the same period (see Table 2). Starting from the late 1950s, the government imposed strict control over rural-to-urban migration. In December 1956, the State Council of the PRC promulgated a policy directive on "Averting the Blind Outflows of Rural Population." Until the end of 1957, the State Council, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Home Affairs promulgated eight supplementary documents on impeding and preventing rural-to-urban migration[10]. The *hukou* system served as one major tool of migration control, which acted like "a

[9] For example, in the 1950s, the state council of the PRC referred rural-to-urban migration as the "blind out-flows" of rural population in its policy documents, including "The Supplementary Directive on Preventing the Blind Out-Flows of Rural Population" (The State Council, March 2nd 1957), "Report on the Blind Out-Flows of Peasants from Disaster-Affected Areas and the Solutions" (The Department of Civil Affairs, April 30, 1957), and "Approval of the Department of Civil Affairs' Report on the Blind Out-Flows of Peasants from Disaster-Affected Areas and the Solutions" (The State Council, May 13, 1957),

[10] These documents included: "The Supplementary Directive on Preventing the Blind Out-Flows of Rural Population" (The State Council, March 2nd 1957), "Report on the Blind Out-Flows of Peasants from Disaster-Affected Areas and the Solutions" (The Department of Civil Affairs, April 30, 1957), "Approval of the Department of Civil Affairs' Report on the Blind Out-Flows of Peasants from Disaster-Affected Areas and the Solutions" (The State Council, May 13, 1957), "Report on the Implementation of Impeding Peasants' Blind Flows into Cities, and the Problems Associated with Unemployment Challenges for Urban Populations and the Solutions" (The Ministry of Public Security, May 27, 1957), "The Approval of the Ministry of Public Security's Report on the Implementation of Impeding Peasants' Blind Flows into Cities, and the Problems Associated with Unemployment Challenges for Urban Populations and the Solutions" (The State Council, July 29, 1957), "The Notice on Preventing Peasants'

domestic passport system" (Chan and Zhang 1999, 830). In 1958, the Chinese government started to implement the *Hukou* Registration Regulation, according to which all Chinese citizens were required to register their regular residence, and all citizens were permitted to have only one registered regular residence[11]. This regulation required that citizens who stayed outside of their registered regular residence for more than three months had to report to the destination household registration authority and obtain the official approval. Otherwise, they would be returned to their places of origin. Those who moved from rural areas to cities had to register with their urban household registration authorities, which required that they had to obtain at least one of the following documents: relevant employment certificates, an admission letter from a school, or the official approval document from the urban household registration authority. Through the *hukou* system the government "allocated housing and jobs, and rationed food and other necessities," and "these linkages made it almost impossible for people without local *hukou* to live in urban areas" (Z. Zhao 2005, 287). As a result of the implementation of the *hukou* system, the state gained strict control over individuals' migration, in particular people's move from rural to urban areas. It is worth noting that while rural-to-urban migration was strictly controlled, the migration in the opposite direction was generally allowed[12]. Other tools to control migration include collective farming; employment control mechanisms; control of allocation of grains, products, and daily necessities; and local community policing mechanisms. For instance, through the People's Commune System, "the earnings of farmers depended on their daily participation in

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Blind Flows into Cities" (The State Council, September 14, 1957), "Provisional Regulations on Recruiting Temporary Workers from the Countryside" (The State Council, December 13, 1957), and "The Directive on Curbing the Blind Outflows of Peasants from the Countryside" (The State Council, December 13, 1957). Also, see (Cheng , 2012), in Note 1.

[11] The *hukou* registration regulations of the PRC, 1958
http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2000-12/10/content_5004332.htm

[12] As Chan and Zhang noted "the migration regulations throughout the 1960s and 1970s intensified the government's control of formal migration from the countryside to cities, from towns to cities, or from small cities to big cities, but the flows in the opposite direction were generally not controlled, provided there were 'proper' reasons" (1999, 828).

collective farm, and the opportunity cost of migration was very high"[13] (Z. Zhao 2005, 287). Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the state almost completely controlled rural-to-urban migration in China. As a result, there was "low mobility of people across regions" (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 170). According to the 2013 official population and employment yearbook, between 1965 and 1978 the proportion of the population who lived in the city and the countryside stayed steady, around 17 percent and 82 percent, respectively, indicating a very limited spatial mobility of people between rural and urban areas (see Table 2).

[13] The employment control system was another constraint on laborers' spatial mobility. As Lin, Cai, and Li pointed out, all urban workers were matched to jobs and employers by the Bureau of Labor and Personnel between the 1950s and the 1970s (1996, 169). As a result of the state allocation of laborers in urban areas and farming collectivization in the countryside, there was low mobility of laborers across different areas. To monitor migration, as noted by Solinger, the Department of Civil Affairs created *shourongsuo* (detention centers) to gather up the "interlopers" before sending them back home (1993, 95). Local policing mechanisms, including neighborhood watch groups also assisted with the implementation of migration control regulations (Chan 1996, 136).

Table 2 Populations by Urban and Rural Residence, 1949-2010

Different Historical Period	Year	Total population (10 000 persons)	Urban		Rural	
			Population	Proportion (%)	Population	Proportion (%)
Wave One	1949	54167	5765	10.64	48402	89.36
	1955	61465	8285	13.48	53180	86.52
	1960	66207	13073	19.75	53134	80.25
	1965	72538	13045	17.98	59493	82.02
	1970	82992	14424	17.38	68568	82.62
	1975	92420	16030	17.34	76390	82.66
Average		71631	11770	16.09	59861	83.90
Wave Two	1978	96259	17245	17.92	79014	82.08
	1980	98705	19140	19.39	79565	80.61
	1985	105851	25094	23.71	80757	76.29
	1990	114333	30195	26.41	84138	73.59
	1995	121121	35174	29.04	85947	70.96
Average		107254	25370	23.29	81884	76.71
Wave Three	2000	126743	45906	36.22	80837	63.78

	2005	130756	56212	42.99	74544	57.01
	2010	134091	66978	49.95	67113	50.05
Average		130530	56365	43.05	74165	56.95

Source: 2012 Yearbook (Department of Population and Employment Statistics; National Bureau of Statistics of China 2013, 6).

2.2 Wave Two: Relaxed Migration Controls (From 1978 to 2001)

Due to the implementation of the HIODS and the Great Leap Forward campaign, China underwent rapid industrialization and slow growth in other sectors of the economy. From 1951 to 1980, the annual industrial growth rate was 11 percent (and 15.3 percent for heavy industry), compared to agriculture and commerce at 3.2 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 62-63). The industrial sector's share of the national income increased from 12.6 percent in 1949 to 46.8 percent in 1978, whereas the agriculture's share of the national income decreased from 68.4 percent to 35.4 percent in the same period (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 60). This structural imbalance led to several problems, such as slow growth in urban employment, food-shortages, the underdevelopment of services, and the lack of products and daily necessities. Other economic problems associated with the industrialization strategy and the collectivization of farming included inefficient resource allocation, persistent shortages of products, the Great Famine[14], low labor productivity, and the lack of incentives for working hard (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996; Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 169-170; Brandt and Rawski 2008, 6). The Cultural Revolution, which featured violent class struggles, took place between 1966 and 1976 to preserve "the true communist

[14] As Brandt and Rawski noted, the Great Famine between 1959 and 1961 killed 30-40 million Chinese, and "the persistent shortage of food led to inadequate food supplies and low nutrition standards for Chinese peasants until the reform" (2008, 5).

ideology" and Mao Zedong's leadership. The revolution set back the progress and development of China until the late 1970s. Under these contexts, reforms and changes became imperative.

In the 1978 Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee decided to launch economic reforms to deal with the structural imbalance in the national economy and accelerate agricultural growth[15]. In the policy directive on "Further enhancing and improving the agricultural production responsibility system" (1980), the Central Committee of the CPC required that the management of agricultural production should be more flexible, allowing co-existence of diverse forms of production and remuneration. This policy directive endorsed "the contract production responsibility system" as a key tool to accelerate agricultural growth and promote rural laborers' incentives for production (The Central Committee of the CPC 1980). From 1980 to 1983, a nationwide household responsibility farming system was established in China. It promoted labor productivity by "reinstating the links between effort and reward" and "making households the residual claimants of profits" (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 170; Brandt and Rawski 2008, 9). The new farming system led to rapid growth in agriculture. From 1978 to 1984, the agriculture's total output grew by 42.23 percent (Lin, Cai, and Li 1996, 134). Also, with the growth in labor productivity, there was rapid growth in surplus rural laborers[16] (Chan 1996, 137; D. J. Solinger 1993, 95; Wang and Zuo 1999, 276). According to one estimate, there were about 150-200 million surplus rural laborers in China in the 1980s, which accounted for around 30 percent of the total rural labor force (Taylor, 1988; Wang and Ding, as cited in Li S. 2008). The baby boom of the 1950s and the 1960s also led to an "increasing labor surplus in rural areas" in the 1980s (S. Li 2008, 3).

[15] See the summary of the main decisions that the CPC Central Committee made in this Session, from the website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (in Chinese), http://www.gov.cn/test/2009-10/13/content_1437675.htm
[16] As a matter of fact, as noted by some scholars, for example, Knight, Deng, and Li, surplus labor was also present in the communes in the collective farming era, but it was often camouflaged by the work point system (2011, 587).

With the growth in rural laborer's autonomy under the household responsibility farming system, and "high returns in non-agricultural sectors" (Cook 1999, as cited in Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 170), rural laborers had a strong incentive to leave agriculture.

In these new contexts, the Chinese government started to relax controls on hiring farmers and reform migration control regulations in the 1980s. The government allowed surplus rural laborers to be transferred from farming to other sectors of the economy. As discussed below, there were generally two types of transfer for surplus rural laborers to non-agricultural sectors: "*Li tu bu li xiang*," i.e., leaving the farmland without leaving the village; and "*Li tu you li xiang,*" i.e., leaving both the farmland and the home village.

2.2.1 "Li Tu Bu Li Xiang": Leaving the Farmland without Leaving the Village

Beginning in the early 1980s, the Chinese government allowed surplus rural laborers to be transferred from agriculture to other rural industries, and allowed farmers to process and sell agricultural and sideline products in their nearby rural areas. In Document No. 1 (1983), also called "Several Issues of Current Rural Economy Policy," the CPC Central Committee required local governments to take measures to encourage the development of multiple sectors of agriculture: farming, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, and any household sideline (The Central Committee of the CPC 1983). It also required local governments and relevant agencies to develop industries and commerce in rural areas. Under this directive, peasants were allowed to engage in the processing, sales, and long distance transport of agricultural and household sideline products (The Central Committee of the CPC 1983).

In 1984, the government allowed farmers to be employed in nearby towns in collectively owned township and village enterprises (TVEs) (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 170). Throughout the

1980s, quite a large number of surplus rural laborers were absorbed in local rural industries. According to a survey by NBS, by the end of the 1980s, TVEs employed about 95 million rural workers (NBS as cited in Li S. , 2008, 3). Nevertheless the majority of TVEs were located in China's coastal areas, such as Guangdong province, Fujian province, Zhejiang province, Jiangsu province, and Shandong province. For other vast rural areas, a large number of surplus rural laborers remained unemployed (C. Wang 2011). In the meantime, the growth of TVEs and foreign-invested factories in South China and China's coastal areas created greater demands for the cheap labor force from rural areas in China's inland regions (C. Wang 2011, 8-9). Regional disparities in economic openness and development made "out-migration" possible and necessary.

2.2.2 "Li Tu You Li Xiang": Leaving Both the Farmland and the Home Village

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the Chinese government progressively relaxed its migration control regulations and allowed rural laborers to move across different regions. In 1985 the government implemented a "Temporary Resident Certificate" system. Within this system, rural residents who moved to urban areas were allowed to obtain legal residence status in cities by applying for temporary resident certificates (Chan 1996, 137). Under this program, spontaneous labor migration from rural to urban areas was permitted (Chan and Zhang 1999, 832). With the start of the reform, rural laborers started to move to cities on a large scale. In 1992, at the 14th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC Central Community set up the target of establishing a socialist market economy regime[17], formally starting the market economy reform in China (The Central Committee of the CPC 1993). Li S. noted that the early 1990s saw "the most rapid growth in rural migrant workers," whose numbers jumped from around 30 million in 1989 to 62 million in 1993 (2008, 1). He argues that there were two driving forces behind the rapid growth

[17] The socialist market economy is based on the dominance of the state-owned sector and an open-market economy.

in this period: the increasing openness of the Chinese economy to world markets and the growth of private sectors and self-employment in urban areas (S. Li 2008, 4).

Although migration from the countryside to cities had generally been allowed since the 1980s, local urban governments still strictly monitored the out-migration and employment of rural migrants. For example, in the late 1990s, there were some cities starting to limit rural-to-urban migration and restrict the hiring of rural migrant workers, due to urban unemployment problems associated with the reform and restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) under China's marketization reforms[18]. As Li S. noted, beginning in the mid-1990s some city governments began taking "more restrictive steps to curb the rising number of rural migrant workers and reduce the unemployment of urban residents" (2008, 5). Usually local urban governments regulated the flow of migrants by requiring a temporary resident permit and an employment certificate, which were issued by the labor bureau of migration destination areas, as well as an employment card issued by the labor bureau in rural workers' home locations (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 173). Urban governments controlled rural-to-urban migration by setting quotas for these certificates (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 173). At the same time, as Li noted, "city governments increased migrant workers' moving costs by charging fees to both migrant workers and their employers" (2008, 5).

Throughout the reform era, the Chinese government had generally relaxed its controls over rural-to-urban migration. However, until the 2000s, the relaxation of migration controls was gradual and fluctuated with urban employment trends. As Cai and Gao noted, the changes of migration control policies in the reform era could be divided into the following periods:

[18] In 1994, the government started the privatization reforms of SOEs, under which some SOEs started to lay off workers. Between 1997 and 2000, the "xia gang" program was initiated to resolve the problem of inefficiency in SOEs. In the late 1990s, urban unemployment associated with SOEs reforms became the major challenge for most cities in China. With the SOEs reforms, some cities started to constrain migration of labor from rural areas.

controlling migration (between 1979 and 1983), allowing migration (between 1984 and 1988), controlling blind flows[19] (between 1989 and 1991), and finally planning and normalizing migration (between 1992 and 2000) (2013, 44-45).

2.3 Wave Three: Planning and Facilitating Migration in the New Millennium

Beginning in the 2000s, the Chinese government further relaxed controls over rural-to-urban migration and deepened reform to the *hukou* system. Today, the government is committed to "guaranteeing fair and free migration" in China (Cai and Gao 2013, 44-45). In a series of new regulations promulgated by the State Council of the PRC[20], the Chinese government has endorsed rural-to-urban migration and the employment of rural workers in the city as a key vehicle to increase rural workers' income and promote urbanization in China. The national government has highlighted the positive role of rural-to-urban migration in promoting China's industrialization, modernization, and integration into the global economy. It also required local governments to encourage, facilitate, and promote surplus rural laborers to make a smooth and orderly transfer to non-agricultural sectors. In 2003, the Central Committee of the CPC promulgated a new regulation on "Further Promoting China's Socialist Market Economy Regime." It required local governments to promote the development of the rural and county economy and the reform to TVEs, and to create more employment opportunities for surplus rural

[19] In the 1980s, the use of the term "blind flows" was revived (K. D. Roberts 2001, 17). According to Roberts, in the 1980s rural migrants were perceived as "blind" in two ways, "the first was that they moved away in response to rural conditions, without properly assessing the alternatives; and the second was that they came to the city without jobs or contacts and, if they found jobs, were indiscriminately sorted among occupations and sectors" (2001, 17).

[20] These new regulations included Document No. 5 (2006), "On solving the problems that rural migrant workers are confronted with"; Document No. 130 (2008), "The notice of the General Office of the State Council on effectively solving the problems and challenges for rural migrant workers "; Document No. 1 (2010) on "Promoting rural-urban development and enhancing the development of agriculture and the countryside"; and Document No. 25 (2014) "On further promoting the reform of the *hukou* regimes."

laborers in rural areas. Also, it required local urban governments to abolish restrictive regulations on migration, and to promote equal employment of urban and rural migrant workers (The Central Committee of the CPC 2003). According to the 2003 regulation, rural *hukou* holders, who have a job and residence in their migration destinations can apply to register with local household registration authorities, obtain the same rights, and assume the same obligations as local residents (The Central Committee of the CPC 2003).

In the 2000s, the Chinese government promulgated a series of regulations to improve rural migrants' socio-economic status in urban China. In the 2006 Document No. 5 of the State Council, the Chinese government listed several major problems that rural migrants often experience in the city, including: low wages; income insecurity; long working hours; poor safety conditions in the workplace; lack of social welfare and protection; work-related injuries and accidents; lack of professional training opportunities; educational challenges for their children; poor living conditions; and inadequate economic, political, and social rights. According to the Document No. 5 (2006), solving these problems is important to maintain social security in China (The State Council of the PRC 2006). This document required local governments to encourage, support, and facilitate the transfer of surplus rural laborers to non-agricultural sectors and to provide services, training, and information for prospective migrant workers. According to this new regulation, employers are required to sign employment contracts with rural migrant employees, fulfill all obligations in the contract, as well as protect rural migrant laborers' safety and health in the workplace and the rights of women and under-age rural migrant workers. Child labor under 16 years of age is strictly prohibited.

In addition, the Chinese government has launched gradual reforms to the *hukou* system. In the 2014 Document No. 25 of the State Council "On Promoting the Reform to the *Hukou*

System," the agricultural/non-agricultural dichotomy-based registration system is to be gradually replaced with a nationwide residence-based household registration system. Under the new registration system, Chinese citizens who have left their registered regular residence and settled in a new area for more than six months are eligible to apply for "local resident permits," and obtain access to basic public services, including employment, education, medical and health care, and licensing services. Generally, rural residents in towns, counties, and small cities can obtain local residence status if they have legal and regular residences in their migration destinations. Temporary residents in medium-sized cities, those with a population between 500 thousand and one million people, are permitted to obtain local residence status if they have legal and stable occupations and residences and have participated in local social insurance for several years in these cities. The government still imposes strict control over population growth in large cities, especially in megacities (those with a population over five million). The new regulation granted governments of large cities to set their own requirements for temporary residents to obtain regular residence status. Local governments are required to reform the welfare provision system based on the residence-based household registration system.

These new reforms abolish legal and institutional barriers to the migration and employment of rural migrant workers in cities. The reforms also contribute to improve the socio-economic status of this population. However, the implementation of these policies has been "slow and uneven" (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 175). One's *hukou* status still matters. As Fan C. noted, the *hukou* location continues to "define a person's life chances and access to resources" (2008, 69). The reform has different meanings for temporary residents in the city who have different employment, residence, and health care participation status. Generally, to be eligible to apply for local resident permits, temporary residents in cities should have legal and stable

employment and residence. Large cities have greater restrictions and may set up their own criteria. The impacts of these reforms are minimal for rural migrant workers who live in dormitories and who are employed in factories, and the construction, domestic and service sectors. The impact of these reforms for women workers is even less because many women have temporary and unstable employment status and many women live in factory dormitories, which are not taken as stable and regular residence in cities according to the new regulation. For rural migrant workers, especially for those in large cities, the *hukou* is still "a primary gatekeeper" (C. Fan 2008, 68).

As discussed above, since the 1980s, the rural migrant population has grown significantly in China. According to the Development Research Center of the State Council of the PRC, there were around two million rural laborers in towns and cities in 1983, and the number grew to 30 million in 1989 (Cai and Gao 2013, 45). By 1993, the rural out-migration laborers had reached 62 million, which grew to 75.5 million in 2000 and 153 million in 2010 (The Ministry of Agriculture, as cited in Cai and Gao 2013, 45). In 2013 the rural migrant population grew to 268.94 million (NBS 2014). With the major increase in rural-to-urban migration in China throughout the reform era, China experienced rapid urbanization. According to the official statistics, the proportion of the total population residing in urban areas grew from 17.92 percent in 1978 to 49.95 percent in 2010, whereas the proportion of the population residing in rural areas dropped from 82.08 percent in 1978 to 50.05 percent in 2010 (see Table 2). In addition to the massive rural-to-urban migration, rapid urbanization in China is also related to the "reclassification of some rural areas as urban" (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 189). As a consequence of rural reforms and the massive rural-to-urban migration of labor since 1978, China's employment structure has changed dramatically. Agriculture's share of total

employment decreased from 69.3 percent in 1978 to 31.8 percent in 2004 (Brandt, Hsieh, and Zhu 2008, 704-705). Even in rural areas, there was a significant decline of the agricultural labor share in rural areas from 91 percent in 1979 to 61 percent in 2003 (Cai, Park, and Zhao 2008, 189).

2.4 Recent Changes in the Urban Labor Market: Labor Shortages and the Debate

This section discusses changes in contemporary urban labor market in China, including shortages in rural migrant workers in urban coastal areas and the impacts of labor shortages on labor migration. In the 2000s, China went through a gradual transition from having an unlimited labor supply to a labor shortage. As some scholars pointed out, labor shortages first appeared in South China and China's coastal cities, gradually expanding throughout the country[21] (Golley and Meng 2011; Zhan and Huang 2013; Zhang , Yang, and Wang 2011; Inagaki 2006). The Ministry of Labor and Social Security of the PRC conducted a survey of enterprises' labor demand in the spring of 2007. The survey involved 2655 enterprises from 25 provinces. In the survey, only 31.7 percent of enterprises reported that they successfully achieved their worker recruitment plans, and had met their labor demand[22] (The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, of PRC 2007). Over 40 percent of enterprises found it difficult to recruit workers because "the number of rural migrant workers looking for jobs decreased, and choices for enterprises became less" (The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, of PRC 2007). According to the data for

[21] For example, in Guangdong province alone, according to an official study report, there was a shortage of at least 2,000, 000 migrant laborers in 2004, and coastal regions taken together could employ 10 percent more migrant laborers (cited in Zhan and Huang 2013, 84). Zhan and Huang also noted that after the 2008 worldwide economic crisis, the shortage of migrant labor returned as early as the summer of 2009, and by 2010 "Chinese media were flooded with reports of labor shortages from all over the country" (2013, 84).

[22] In this investigation, 32.2 percent of enterprises reported that they recruited 75 percent of workers of its demand, 20.9 percent only recruited 50-70 percent of workers of their demand, and another 15.1 percent had less than half of their labor demand been met (The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, of PRC 2007).

Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces, in 2004-2005 several job sectors showed a concentrated shortage in workers, including cutting/sewing workers, manual laborers, restaurant workers/cooks, electronic parts makers, textile makers and dye workers, shop clerks/cashiers, shoemakers and hat-makers, and child care/domestic service providers (Guangdong Bureau of Labor and Social Security 2005; Labor and Employment Center of Fujian Province 2004, as cited in Inagaki 2006, 8-10). Insurance service workers, sales staff/display sales staff, artisans and craftsmen, hotel service workers, guest room workers, and plastic product processors also are in short supply (Guangdong Bureau of Labor and Social Security 2005; Labor and Employment Center of Fujian Province 2004, as cited in Inagaki 2006, 8-10). Most of these job sectors are rural migrant intensive.

Economists have discussed whether or not China has reached the "Lewis turning point," a point when "the expansion of labor demand exceeds that of labor supply and, as a result, the wage rate of ordinary workers starts to rise" (Cai 2008; Inagaki 2006; Wang D. 2008; Minami and Ma 2010; Wang M. 2010; Yao and Zhang 2010; Golley and Meng 2011; Knight, Deng , and Li 2011; Zhang, Yang, and Wang 2011; Cai and Du 2011, 601). There are some economists arguing that China has reached the "Lewis turning point," based on their observations of the constant and steady wage growth that has occurred since 2003 (Cai, Du, and Zhao 2007; Cai 2008; Wang D. 2008; Wang M. 2010; Cai and Du 2011; Zhang, Yang, and Wang 2011). There are some studies arguing that based on increasing wages and the trend of wage convergence between local urban workers and migrant workers, an unlimited labor supply in China has disappeared and China has entered a new era of labor shortages (Cai and Du 2011, 601-604; Zhang, Yang, and Wang 2011, 553). As for the causes of labor shortages, Cai and Du argued that demographic and economic trends have together changed the labor supply and demand in China

(2011). They noted that China has been experiencing radical demographic transitions, a decline in population growth, and slow or even decreased growth in China's working age population, all of which suggests a decline in labor supply (Cai and Du 2011, 603; Cai 2014). At the same time rapid economic growth has created a strong demand for laborers (Cai and Du 2011, 603; Cai 2014). Cai argued that China used to have "demographic dividends," an abundant and high proportion of working-age population, and a low dependency ratio of dependent groups on the working-age population, but such dividends disappeared in the 2010s (2014). He maintained that the disappearance of demographic dividends implies the end of unlimited labor supply in China (Cai 2014). Zhang and Deng argued that the imbalance in the structure of the rural migrant labor force, rather than the quantity of rural surplus laborers, has led to a "labor shortage" in urban areas (2013). They explained that enterprises tend to hire young and educated workers, while on the supply side surplus rural laborers tend to be old and poorly educated (Zhang and Deng 2013, 198-199).

Other scholars argued that workers' wage growth does not necessarily suggest the arrival of a labor shortage era in China (Minami and Ma 2010; Golley and Meng 2011; Knight, Deng, and Li 2011). Golley and Meng noted that China's tightening supply of labor is not because of the shortage of laborers, but rather due to "the discriminatory and segmented labor market, and low rural-urban migration rates that associated with institutional barriers to labor migration in China" (2011, 55). According to Golley and Meng, China still has an abundant and under-employed labor force in the rural sector (2011). However, due to institutional barriers to migration and migrants' limited access to urban social welfare provisions, many surplus rural laborers stay in the countryside. Knight et al. drew upon data on Chinese household income for

2003 and 2008, and identified three major reasons for non-migration decisions: "being too old, being unable to find a job outside, and needing to care for old people or children" (2011, 595).

There are some studies noting that the shortage of laborers mainly mean the shortage of young rural women workers, and is mostly concentrated in manufacturing and service sectors, such as apparel, textile, and electronic manufacturing sectors, and hotel, restaurant, and domestic service workers (Inagaki 2006). Inagaki pointed out that low wages, poor working conditions, the decline of the young female population, increasing competition for workers among manufacturers, the shift of workers toward service sectors, and the rising popularity of agriculture as a job opportunity lead to the tightening of the labor market (2006, 1-2). In terms of geography, compared to those urban coastal areas, there are still relatively abundant laborers in interior areas. As a strategy to deal with labor shortages and increasing labor costs, some enterprises have moved their production bases from coastal to interior areas, or established new factories in interior areas to lower labor costs. Compared with the early reform era, when workers moved for jobs, in recent years there is a general tendency that factories move for workers. There is also some flexibility in the urban labor market. As Zhang, Yang, and Wang found, there would be more migrant workers in cities and fewer barriers to rural-urban migration if there are further growth in wages, social policy reforms, farmland rental market development, increases in the use of agricultural machinery, and changes in the one-child policy (2011, 554).

2.5 China's Development and Women's Participation in Both Reproductive and Productive Activities

China's development and rapid industrialization relies on the full participation of women in both productive and reproductive activities. Women are expected to be main caregivers in the

domestic sphere. Women's role in mothering and caring has compensated for the lack of public care services in both rural and urban areas. There are some contemporary reforms reinforcing the significance of women's reproductive roles, in particular the role of women as "reproducers of men" (Robinson 1985, 32). For example, as Robinson noted, as of the late 1970s due to the implementation of the household responsibility farming system rural residents had stronger desires for sons, prospective male laborers, however, the family planning policy, a population control policy that was introduced between 1978 and 1980, "has apparently increased the rate of abortions, female infanticide, and maltreatment of women who give birth to daughters" (1985, 32). Due to the implementation of the family planning policy, women spent more time taking care of and educating children. Having one child "places new demands on mothers and families to ensure the health, happiness, security, and future of their only progeny, and thus the preciousness of the one-child may prompt more housework and motherhood, not less" (Robinson 1985, 55). Therefore, parents devoted more attention to the art of childrearing, and "having only one chance, they did not want to err in their methods" (Honig and Hershatter 1988, 180). In addition to feeding and clothing children, "a good mother is expected to assume the responsibility of educating her children and guiding their intellectual development" (Honig and Hershatter 1988, 180). Compared to the 1980s and the 90s, in recent years, with the reform of the family planning policy, the relaxation of birth controls, and the promotion of gender equality, there has been significant improvement in rural women's status and less pressure on women to give birth to sons. Nevertheless, even today boys are still preferred in rural society due to both labor demands and the traditional perspective of "*yangerfanglao*" (relying on sons for financial and care support when parents get old). In addition, the traditional view that relying on the son to "carry on the family name and continue the family line" is another reason that rural families

prefer to have a son. In the past whether or not a rural woman gives birth to a son was an important factor that influenced the woman's status in the family, and sometimes, having a son might be a necessary guarantee for a secure and stable marriage. The national government recognized the preference for boys as a rural reality or context. As a response, during the era of one-child policy, the government regulated that if the first child of a rural couple was female, the couple was allowed to have a second child, while the state still implemented strict one-child policy in the city. In 2015, China abandoned one-child policy and all couples are allowed to have two children.

In the past poor rural society women spent a significant portion of each day "obtaining and cooking food, sewing and washing clothes by hand, and transporting water and fuel to the household" (Robinson 1985, 42-43). In contemporary rural society, due to the lack of public care support and inaccessibility to high-priced domestic workers in the countryside, it is still primarily women who care for children and the elderly, farm, cook, and do most household chores in the family. According to an investigation by the ACWF, in three quarters of households in the countryside, it was the wife who undertook housework tasks, in nearly nine percent of rural families it was the husband who undertook most housework tasks, and in 15.4 percent of rural families, the husband and the wife did housework together (Yang and Zheng 2013, 364).

As for women's productive roles, after the PRC was established in 1949, the government encouraged women to participate in field labor, because of "the need for agricultural labor," and "as an effort to improve women's economic and political status" (X. Gao 1994, 81). In recent decades, there has been a general trend of feminization of agriculture. Generally men are the first to leave agriculture, and agriculture has increasingly become the responsibility of women, especially married women (Jacka 1997, 128). During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) male

laborers were largely drawn to industrial production and construction projects, creating "a shortage of labor in agriculture and other industries" (X. Gao 1994, 83). The Great Leap Forward "witnessed a massive increase in women's participation in agriculture" (Bailey 2012, 118; Becker 1996). Gao noted that in 1950, in China's newly liberated areas, only 20 to 40 percent of female labor force engaged in farming, but during the Great Leap Forward period, 70 percent of adult rural women participated in farming, and in 1958-1959, 90 percent of women engaged in farm work (1994, 81-83). Gao further pointed out that this was the first time in China's history that rural women participated in all aspects of social production (1994, 83).

Women provide a reserve labour army for China's growth and rapid industrialization. Their participation in paid employment has been influenced by the general development and employment pattern of the country. As Jacka noted, since 1949, "there has been a rough pattern in which state policies related to women's work have swung from an emphasis on women's participation in non-domestic labor in one period, to a de-emphasis on their non-domestic labor and greater emphasis on their domestic labor in the next" (1997, 31). The years 1949-1952, 1957-1960, and 1966-1978 were periods in which "strong efforts were made to increase the number of women in non-domestic production," while the years 1953-1957, 1961-1965, and years following reforms in 1978, were periods in which "women's participation in non-domestic production was de-emphasized" (Jacka 1997, 31). As Jacka noted, "when the strategy for economic development required large amounts of labor, for example, during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the policy of increasing women's participation in paid labor was stressed," while at other times "when unemployment was perceived to be a serious problem, for example, during the First Five-Year plan (1953-1957), and again during the years just following the Great Leap Forward, the notion that women's emancipation could only be

achieved through women's participation in non-domestic labor was much downplayed" (1990, 12).

In the reform era (post 1978), women were more subject to cutbacks during employment crises, received lower wages than men, and were more likely to be employed in collective and generally poorer enterprises (Robinson 1985, 36). According to the published data from China's NBS, in 1982 women constituted around 31 percent of employees in state-owned enterprises, while they comprised more than 50 percent of workers in community and collective enterprises in towns and cities (Robinson 1985, 32). Generally, community and collective enterprises have lower wages and provide fewer social services, and since women are more concentrated in collective employment, they are more subject to inequality in pay and employment benefits (Robinson 1985, 40). In the 1990s while a large number of women lost their jobs in the state sector, there were more women gaining jobs in the collective and private sector (Jacka 1990, 14-15). In the recent two to three decades, in tandem with China's economic reforms, opening up of the Chinese economy to the world market, and the relaxation of migration and employment controls of rural residents, a large number of rural women have participated in factory employment. Numerous industiral and export-processing zones have been established in South China, initially in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, and later expanding to many urban coastal areas in China. Rural migrant women are preferred employees in factories due to both the cheap labor price and rural women workers' temporary status in the city (X. Gao 1994, 93).

This chapter discussed the historical trends of rural-to-urban migration and employment of rural migrant workers in China since 1949. Rural laborers' migration and participation in paid employment cannot be understood merely as individual choices and behaviors. Migration

choices and experiences are impacted by broader socio-economic and political contexts of the country and state policies. As discussed above, since 1949, the Chinese government's attitudes and policies towards rural-to-urban migration have shifted from strict control to relaxed controls, and finally, to the planning and facilitation of migration. This chapter provided the historical and contemporary socio-economic and political contexts of rural-to-urban migration. In addition, dynamics at the household and workplace levels have also led to the complexity of rural-to-urban migration in China. Personal characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, and personal experiences also impact their migration and employment opportunities and choices. In the following chapters, I discuss my study findings obtained from the fieldwork, and examine how these structural factors, intersecting with gender, affect the migration and employment choices and experiences in the city.

CHAPTER 3 Methodology

This chapter discusses the logic and stages of using qualitative methodology and ethnography in this study. There are six sections in this chapter. First, I discuss the rationale for selecting qualitative methodology and ethnography as the strategy of inquiry. Second, I explain the selection of factories and the steps of entering the field. Third, I describe the selection of respondents and the basic characteristics of respondents. Fourth, I discuss methods that I used to collect data, including interviews, on-site observations, and documentary studies. Fifth, I describe the strategies that I used to increase the validity and credibility of the data. Finally, I discuss the data analysis.

3.1 The Rationale for Selecting Qualitative Methodology and Ethnography

This study focuses on the experiences of rural women workers within the workplace, and with respect to education, migration, and employment. It is important to study women's experiences in their daily contexts and "make the invisible visible," because "the routine aspects of everyday life help sustain gender inequality"(Tickner 2006, 25). By studying women's experiences we can better understand the oppressive and exploitative conditions and circumstances of their everyday life. Experience refers to not only facts or events that the subjects of the study encounter and undergo, but also "the way in which the experience is interpreted" (Merriam 2009, 9). Merriam notes that "there is no 'objective' experience that stands outside its interpretation" (2009, 9). Thus, this study uses interviews to explore women's views, feelings, and interpretations of their experience. Therefore the women interviewed should

be taken as "both the subject matter and creators of knowledge" (Tickner 2006, 25). My own experience within the factory and with people in the factory is also a source of data of this study that constructs knowledge on the lives of rural women workers.

This thesis uses qualitative methodology to explore respondents' interpretation of their own experiences and their understanding of their daily settings and/or routines. Usually, a qualitative study uses strategies of inquiry such as "narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies or case studies," and collects open-ended and emerging data (Creswell 2003, 18). This study uses ethnography as the strategy of inquiry, which is particularly well-suited for "studying workers' lived experiences and the social world of the factory" (Shehata 2006 , 244). An ethnographic study is a process of "making explicit, or visible, the patterns that we tend to take for granted as second-nature common sense" (Pader 2006, 174). A primary goal of conducting ethnography is to understand and uncover the cultural values that people have taken-for-granted, so that the behaviors, interactions, and experiences of a particular group can be better understood. Here, culture refers to "the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior pattern of a specific group of people" (Merriam 2009, 27).

3.2 Entering the Field and Description of the Sites

3.2.1 The Selection of Fieldwork Sites

I conducted two rounds of fieldwork in Shandong province over eight months, between August and November 2013, and between January and April 2015. I chose Shandong province as the site of my fieldwork for several reasons. First, Shandong is one of the most prosperous provinces and a popular migration destination in China. It is located in the northeast of China and includes areas both on the coast and inland, with 17 city districts and 140 counties (see the

map of the province in Figure 1). Similar to other provinces, there is significant internal diversity and regional disparity in terms of economic development, economic openness, average income, as well as labor supply and demand in this province. I selected three factories located in Qingdao, Jining, and Wenshang for in-depth studies. These factories represented different levels of development and patterns of migration (see details in the following paragraph). Second, I decided to do my fieldwork in Shandong province, because most contacts and links that I have are in that province. Also, since I was born and raised in Shandong province, I am familiar with the local contexts and dialects. Compared to other provinces in China, it was easier for me to get access to the field and communicate with respondents more effectively. Throughout the fieldwork, I did interviews, transcribed the data, and translated the data by myself. There was no language barrier to this study. Furthermore, previous studies of rural migrant workers in China mainly focus on the rural migrant population in South China. North China, such as Shandong province has not received sufficient attention. This thesis provides a better understanding of the rural migrant population and their livelihood in North China.

Figure 1 The Map of Shandong Province

Before formally starting my fieldwork, I visited several cities in Shandong: Yantai, Qingdao, Jining, Wenshang, and Zhangqiu[23]. Finally, I selected three factories that are located in Qingdao, Jining, and Wenshang as the major sites of my study. Factory A, one of the largest production bases for jeans wear in Shandong province, mainly produces jeans for export to Japan. The factory is located in Qingdao, a major seaport in Shandong province. Qingdao also is among the first coastal cities to be opened to the world in China, and is a popular out-migration destination in the province. I chose this factory, because it is an example of factories that are located in China's urban coastal areas and that have been experiencing labor shortages and increasing labor costs. The factory has around 780 workers, having both local rural workers and

[23] I also visited one food-processing factory in Yantai and three factories in Zhangqiu. The food-processing factory was owned by a Taiwan company. It produced moon-cake fillings. I did five interviews in this factory, but most workers in this factory were male workers. During the visit to the factory, I interviewed several women who worked as facility cleaners, or who did the laundry work. I also visited three factories in Zhangqiu with the recommendation of an official from the local government. I visited the factories and relevant management. Based on the availability of workers and these factories' schedule, I did not get the chance to talk to workers in person. Instead, the factories allowed me to conduct survey research. I distributed 30 copies of the interview scripts to each factory. Generally, the responses that I received were rather simple. Although I did not include these data in my study, these efforts in the early stage of the study helped me better understand the field and the research topic.

rural workers who come from other provinces, such as Henan, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Guizhou, and Harbin.

Factory B was set up in 2012 in Wenshang County, an inland and less developed area in Shandong province. Factory B is affiliated with the same enterprise as Factory A, the M Group (a pseudonym). M Group has eight factories in Shandong province, seven of which are located in Qingdao. In recent years, M Group has experienced labor shortages and increasing labor costs. The company has considered moving its production bases to West China, or to other countries, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia or Vietnam. In 2012, M Group set up Factory B in Wenshang County, formally starting its strategy of "moving to the inland" to lower the labor cost and address labor shortages. I chose Factory B, because it is an example of factories that were just established in previous labor exporting areas. In Factory B, the majority of workers are from nearby villages. Many workers are returned migrant workers, who have out-migration experiences and have recently returned to their home areas for employment.

The third location, Factory C, is a textile factory, a joint venture of a local textile company and a company from Hong Kong. It is one of the largest compact spinning and cotton-spinning bases in China, producing compact spinning yarn and cotton fabric. Factory C employs around two thousand workers. The factory is located in Jining, a Southwest area of Shandong province. Most workers in Factory C are local rural women.

I chose these factories as the major sites of my fieldwork. First, most workers in these three factories are women. Second, these three areas are located in different parts of Shandong province, including both the coastal and interior areas, which represent different levels of development in the province. These cities and factories are also examples of different types of rural-to-urban migration. Respondents from Factory A include both out-migration workers and

local rural workers. Factories B and C are examples of factories in interior areas. In these two factories, the majority of workers are local rural women who come from nearby villages and towns. In Factory B, most respondents were returned rural migrant workers, who withdrew from out-migration and returned home for local employment. Since women workers in these three factories have rich and varied migration experiences, these three factories provide good sites for examining women's varied migration experiences.

3.2.2 Entering the Field

I sent my research proposal and fieldwork plan to my master thesis supervisor Dr. Xueyu Wang, a professor at Shandong University. Dr. Wang recommended me to Mr. Zhang, a senior official at the Department of Commerce of Shandong Province, who has more social networks in Shandong province. The access to the field turned out to be much easier with the help of a local official. With the recommendation of Mr. Zhang, I went to Qingdao and met the general manager of Factory A. After introducing my fieldwork plans, the general manager was interested in my research and welcomed my visit to the factory. Also, he advised that I should do the research in another factory of their company (Factory B), which they have recently set up. The manager noted that there are many differences between workers from the two factories which may be related to their different migration experiences. For example, in Factory A there are workers coming from both nearby rural areas and other provinces, while in Factory B, most workers are returned migrant workers. Also, the management noted that there is a high rate of divorce among workers in Factory B, which the management assumes might be related to workers' out-migration experiences. With the support of the manager, I got access to Factory B. For Factory C I got access to the field with the support of one human resource manager of the factory, whom I

got to know through the introduction of an official from the High Tech Zone Management Committee of Jining government.

All three factories are located in local economic and development zones, which are usually situated in the suburbs of the city. During the first round of my fieldwork, I lived in hotels in the city, and took a taxi and sometimes took a bus to the factory. Since the areas in which I conducted my fieldwork were medium-sized or small cities in China, the cost of accommodation was not very high. During the second round of my fieldwork in Factory A, the factory management offered me free accommodation in the staff dormitory.

In Factory A, there are two five-story dormitory buildings. The factory closed one dormitory building two years ago, because in recent years many out-migration workers have left and many workers in the factory are from nearby villages and live at their own places. By the time I did my fieldwork in Factory A, all employees, both workers and administrative staff, both men and women, lived in the same dormitory building. Workers were assigned rooms from the ground to the fourth floor, while administrative staff lived on the fifth floor. Bedrooms were of the same size in the whole building. The difference was eight workers shared one room whilst two administrative staff shared one room. The factory offered me one room on the fifth floor. I lived in the room by myself. There was a private washroom, two single beds, and an old television that did not work. It was February. It was still very cold during night and morning, and the heating system was poor. I put pillows at the window to keep warm. Safety was one concern in the dormitory. There was no security staff, no key or card required to enter the building. Only one middle-aged woman worked in the dormitory, who had multiple tasks, including cleaning, doing registration of visiting guests to the building, opening doors for those who forgot their keys, and was responsible for mending things. Stealing sometimes happened. I noticed one note

attached to the wall near the floor written by someone who lost something, saying "If I find out who are you, I will put your name on the wall. You will have no face to stay here. I will call the police and you will be arrested." Although the living conditions in the factory were not as nice as hotels in the city, it at least gave me privacy and convenience. I did not need to get up early in the morning to catch a bus or take a taxi to the factory. Also, it reduced my expenses in the field. More importantly, it allowed me to fully immerse in the field and engage in more activities in the factory. My own experience within the factory and the dormitory is also an important source of data that informs this study. I kept a diary in the field, writing down the daily routines and my experiences in the field. The diary and field notes provide a critical data source for this thesis, which critically reflects what I saw, experienced, and felt in the field.

3.2.3 Characteristics of The Field

Factories A and B were quite alike in terms of physical setup, work schedules (around nine hours per day, from Monday to Saturday), the management structure, and wages and bonus systems. In both factories, there were four areas: one administrative building, workshop areas, a canteen, and dormitories. Workshop directors and team leaders sometimes went to the administrative building for signatures, approval, or any work-related issues, but workers seldom visited the administrative building. There were four workshops in each factory. Each workshop had around 200-300 workers, divided into five to ten teams. Each team had around 30 workers. Usually in the workshop, there was a room or a booth, in which the workshop director and team leaders had meetings. There was a shelf for workers to put their water bottles and lunch boxes, and close to the shelf, was the washroom. In Factory A, there was a mail box in each workshop, which was called "General Manager's Mail Box" (*zongjingli xin xiang*) for workers to send their

letters to the manager, if they had any complaint or suggestion[24]. The canteen was separated into two areas: one for the management and visitors to the factory, and the other for administrative staff and workers. While the canteen for the management looked like a restaurant, the canteen for workers was very simply equipped. In Factory A, there were around 30 dinning tables in the canteen. Each table could accommodate eight workers for dining. Due to the limited capacity and the large number of workers, there was a strict control for the dining time, in particular during the lunch time. There were lunch shift arrangements among different workshops. Generally, the administrative staff got off from work to have lunch earlier than workers. For example, in Factory A, the administrative staff had lunch at around 11 am while workers started to have lunch at 11:30 am. The dining time for workers in the sewing workshop was between 11:30 and 11:50 am, for the quality control workshop was between 11:50 am and 12:10 pm, and for the cutting workshop was between 12:10 pm and 12:30 pm. There also was strict work discipline in the factory. For example, workers were not allowed to talk, eat, or drink in the workshop, or use their cell phones or stay in the washroom too long.

In Factory C, machines never shut down and workers worked on shift for 24 hours. One respondent from Factory C described her working shifts as follows: for the first nine days of each month, she worked the day shift (from 8 am to 4 pm), and then for the rest of the month, three days of night shift (from 12 am to 8 am), and three days of afternoon shift (from 4 pm to 12 am) alternately. In Factory C, there were several canteens. Administrative staff and machine-maintenance workers, mainly male, ate in one canteen, while workers had dinner at another canteen. However, since machines did not shut down, during the lunch time, the canteen staff brought meals to the workshop and sold food there. The majority of workers had lunch in their

[24] The general manager said that he used to check regularly the mail box until recently. Workers revealed that they seldom used the mailbox. Workers thought even if they wrote letters, letters would not be read.

workshops, or did not have lunch during work. Due to the intensive work, poor working environment, and the shift arrangements, many respondents from Factory C revealed that they had irregular working hours and suffered from lung and stomach diseases. Some respondents had insomnia problems, and sometimes felt anxiety. In Factory C, the dormitory buildings were built outside of the factory, about a ten minutes of walk from the dormitory to the gate of the factory. Some respondents revealed that although no accidents occurred on their way from the factory to dormitory, when they worked in the night, and in cases when they were early or late, they experienced fears on the road to workshops.

3.3 The Selection of Respondents and Characteristics of Respondents

I started my fieldwork in Factory A. The assistant of the general manager arranged interviews for me. The assistant asked workshop directors in the factory to select eight to ten workers from each workshop as prospective respondents, and workshop directors asked team leaders to choose and recommend candidates. A worker might be selected to take part in the interviews as long as she met the basic criteria of "being female," "being a worker," and "having rural *hukou*." Generally, a respondent was selected because she reflected the average situation or experience with migration and employment. Also, respondents were selected based on their availability. Team leaders played an important role in selecting research participants. The advantage of this strategy of selecting respondents was that it was more likely to produce information- or experience-rich respondents, because team leaders knew their workers better and recommended people who they thought as knowledgeable and thoughtful, and more suitable or accessible for interviews. The weakness was that the selection of respondents was impacted by the choices and views of team leaders and workshop directors. Team leaders were more likely to

recommend workers who they got along well with. At the beginning, I had the concern that interview data would be more positive but once interviewees were in a private room for person-to-person interviews, they became very critical. In the interviews, many respondents had concerns about their employment and working conditions, but have positive impression of their team leaders and the management. For example, in the interviews, some workers noted that, they thought of quiting the job due to low wages or poor working conditions, however, given that their team leaders were nice to them, they felt embarrassed to quit the job.

In addition to interviewing respondents who were recommended by workshop directors and team leaders, I also selected respondents on site based on their availability. I did interviews after chatting with respondents who I thought as having rich migration experiences, for example, those who had more than ten years of migrant employment experiences in south China. In Factories B and C, I talked to people and recruited respondents on site and did interviews in their residence area. Also, during the second round of my fieldwork, I did on-site observations and communicated with workers in the workshop as a participant observer. In Factory C, at the beginning, I selected respondents based on the same criteria as in Factory A and did five interviews in the workshop meeting room. One respondent invited me to visit her dormitory. After visiting the dormitory and talking with the manager assistant and the manager of the dormitory, I started to select respondents on the spot and did interviews in the dormitory area. I did 12 interviews in the meeting room of the dormitory area.

During the first round of my fieldwork, almost all workers that I interviewed were regular full-time workers, but in the second round of my fieldwork I mainly interviewed temporary and part-time workers, who were older, disabled, or young mothers with little children to raise. Usually, full-time workers have employment contracts with their employer, and work regular

hours. They also have employment benefits. For example, in Factory A, regular full-time workers receive package gifts such as a soap, shampoo, or towels each month, and have a bonus cash gift during festival times. Also, these workers have the right to participate in insurance schemes, which include a pension, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, employment injury insurance, and maternity insurance. The employer and workers generally pay insurance premiums jointly. In contrast, the employment status of temporary and part-time workers is much informal. Usually, they do not have any employment contract with the employer, are paid by day, hour, or piece, and have no bonuses or social insurance provided through their employment.

In total 86 respondents were interviewed. During the first round of my fieldwork, I interviewed 74 respondents, including 27 respondents from Factory A (using the code from A1 to A27), 30 respondents from Factory B (B1 to B30), and 17 respondents from Factory C (C1 to C17). During the second round of my fieldwork, I interviewed 12 temporary workers from Factory A (using the code from TW1 to TW12). As shown in Appendix A (Basic Characteristics of Respondents), respondents were aged between 17 and 65. Regular worker respondents were aged between 17 and 38, and temporary workers who participated in this study were aged between 36 and 65. In terms of percentage, among regular full-time worker respondents, 15.4 percent of respondents were aged between 17 and 20, 17.9 percent were aged between 21 and 25, 37.2 percent were aged between 26 and 30, 19.2 percent were aged between 31 and 35, and 10.3 percent were aged between 36 and 38. The average age of workers in Factory A (29.4 years of age) was slightly higher than in Factory B (26.9 years) and Factory C (24.1 years) that were located in the interior. In terms of respondents' marital status, 24 respondents (27.9 percent) were unmarried, 61 respondents (70.9 percent) were married, and one respondent (1.2 percent)

was divorced. Among the 86 respondents, 85 respondents had rural *hukou* and one respondent had urban *hukou*. As for the migration status, eight respondents (9.3 percent) were out-migration workers who migrated from other provinces, one respondent (1.2 percent) was urban worker who came from the city, and 77 (89.5 percent) were local rural workers. Among local rural workers, 26 respondents (33.8 percent) were returned migrant workers who had out-migration experiences and had recently returned to the home areas for employment. In Factory B, for example, 70 percent of respondents were returned migrant workers. As for the employment status, most respondents (88.4 percent) were regular workers, and 11.6 percent were temporary workers. Also, respondents varied in terms of positions at work. Among 86 respondents, 58 were employed as workers, 12 were employed as quality inspectors, nine workers were employed as workshop team leaders, three were housekeepers in the dormitory, and two were lab assistants and facility cleaners.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

This study is based on a combination of three methods for data collection, including interviews, on-site observations, and documentary studies. The observation and interviews are central to my investigation. I chose the method of on-site observation, because it entails "the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifiacts (objects) in the social setting" (Marshall and Rossman 2011, 139). To examine rural migrant women workers' experiences within the workplace, it is important to be in the field and engage in their daily activities and contexts. Through on-site observations, I gained firsthand information and experience with respondents and their daily contexts. The observation and immersion in the site helps uncover workers' daily routines, working and living conditions, interactions among individuals within the

workplace, the nature of their employment, and the general status of workers. There are also aspects that cannot be observed, such as individual experiences, views, and feelings. Interviews allow us to "enter into the other person's perspective" (M. Q. Patton 2002, 341). In interviews, immediate follow-ups and clarifications are possible (Marshall and Rossman 2011, 145). In my research, I did 86 in-depth interviews with women workers. I also interviewed the factory management and experts. Most interviews with women workers were recorded and transcribed after the interview. As for those informal and open-ended interviews that I conducted with workers on the site, I documented interviews by making notes during and after interviews. The interview data compensates for what I cannot observe on the site, including workers' past experiences, their feelings, and views of their experiences. Therefore, a mixture of research methods provides different types of data to understand different aspects of women's experiences.

3.4.1 Interviews

3.4.1.1 Interviewing Workers

During the first round of my fieldwork, I mainly did formal, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews with women workers. "In-depth interview," refers to "'semi-structured or unstructured' formats that provide freedom for probes and follow-up questions" (Soss 2006 , 135). The in-depth interviews are more "conversational" (Soss 2006 , 135). Generally, these interviews were scheduled ahead of time, and took place in those meeting rooms in the administrative building, the workshop, or dormitories. At the outset of the study, the general manager offered one meeting room in the administrative building for me to do interviews. There was a large wood conference table and some leather chairs in the room. After conducting several interviews, I realized that there were several respondents feeling uncomfortable with such a

luxurious and alien interviewing environment. There were some respondents mentioning that it was the first time that they visited the administrative building. Realizing that workers might feel uncomfortable in that environment, I interviewed workers in the meeting room in the workshop area, where they felt more familiar and relaxed and were more open to talk about their employment experiences. To create a pleasant and relaxing interview atmosphere, I had warm-up chats[25] with respondents before interviews began. I prepared water, candies, and fruits in the interviewing room. At the beginning of my fieldwork, the general manager of Factory A asked one of his assistants to accompany me during the research process to "learn and make notes" of what their employees said. I explained the principle of protecting respondents' privacy to the manager and refused this offer. The interviews were conducted privately, and without any third party being present. Most interviews took 30 to 90 minutes. The average interview lasted around one hour.

The interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical approval granted by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta. Before conducting interviews, I introduced myself, the research project, the purpose of this study, as well as the ethics of the research. I sought free and informed consent from respondents, and asked each respondent to sign two copies of a consent letter before conducting the interview. The consent letter has information about the research project, what respondents are expected to do in the research, a guarantee of privacy, the principle of free and voluntary participation, respondents' right to refuse to participate in the study, and their right to terminate the interview and ask for deleting the record at any time during the interview (see Appendix B Information Letter and Consent Form). To protect respondents' privacy, I did not use the real name of respondents during both the data

[25] Before interviews started, I introduced myself, and asked respondents about their hometown, the weather or how was their day.

collection process and throughout the writing of this dissertation. I use the code to refer to respondents. For example, I use the code A1 to refer to the first respondent from Factory A.

The interview design was generally semi-structured. There were six types of interview questions, asking for "experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory, or demographic data" (Merriam 2009, 114). At the beginning of each interview, I asked questions about their age, marital status, length of employment experiences, education experiences, the household composition, their understanding of the term rural migrant workers, and their feelings of being or being identified as migrant workers in the city (see Appendix D Interview Questions). I asked these questions to collect demographic data and explore women workers' understandings of the term rural migrant workers. Then I asked respondents to briefly describe their current and past employment experiences. I also asked respondents to estimate to what extent (for instance, by giving percentage) their participation in migration and employment owed to their personal choices. Then I asked more open-ended interview questions concerning their feelings, views, and interpretations of their experiences, for instance, whether or not they are happy and satisfied with their migration and employment, what does paid employment mean to them, and the impact of these experiences on their lives, followed up with probing questions for clarification, elaboration or examples. The research design and implementation were emergent and evolving, rather than highly structured and standardized. Before going to the field, I designed an interview question list, focusing on "women's employment and empowerment," with a purpose of examining the impact of women's participation in paid employment on women's agency and empowerment. After translating these words into operational terms, I used the terms such as impacts, changes, autonomy, choice-making, opportunity, and constraints. However, few women were interested in the agenda of empowerment. Respondents rarely used the term empowerment. There are some

respondents arguing that "empowerment" is not relevant to their life. Instead they wish to talk about their education, migration, and employment experiences, as well as their livelihood status.

During the second round of my fieldwork, I mainly did on-site observations and informal and open-ended interviews. Key informants included 12 temporary workers (see characteristics of these respondents, from TW 1 to TW 12 in Appendix A). These respondents were generally older, disabled, or young women who had small children to look after. I selected these respondents because they had rich migration experiences, had both formal and informal employment experiences, and had some disadvantage in the labor market due to aging, disability, or childcare.

3.4.1.2 Interviewing Factory Management and Experts

I interviewed the factory management to assess workers' daily working conditions, and the opportunities and challenges that factories have been experiencing in China. I also interviewed local officials in Shandong province, for example, officials in the Department of Commerce in the province, and officials in the government of Jining to learn local development and labor markets. During the second round of my fieldwork, the Institute of Population and Labor Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) accommodated me. I interviewed several experts in the institute and learned the general labor migration trends, demographic transitions, and social reforms in China. I also interviewed experts on social development, social protection, women's development, and characteristics of contemporary Chinese families from research institutes in Beijing, such as the Institute of Sociology of CASS, the Institute of Political Science of CASS, All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), and China's Agricultural University. Through these study visits, I discovered several official public statistics

and documents that were reliable for studying Chinese women's employment status. Primarily among these were *China's Rural Migrant Workers Survey Reports* that were conducted by the NBS, and the *Investigation of Chinese Women's Social Status in the New Era* that was conducted by the ACWF.

3.4.2 On-site Observation

To examine rural women workers' experiences with respect to employment, it is important to be immersed in the field and engage as much as possible in their daily activities and contexts. As Shaffir pointed out, social life can be studied when the researcher is "immersed in the social organization and situations of those being studied" (2001, 226-228). Through on-site observation and full immersion in the field I learned workers' daily routines, working and living conditions, and the nature of their employment. I participated in most activities in the workshop, such as their daily mandatory meetings, work, dining, and grocery shopping. I was also invited by one worker to have dinner at her place. The activities that I participated in during the fieldwork include:

January 28 2015: Visiting Factory A and having meetings with the general manager and his assistant

January 29 2015: Settling down at the dormitory, visiting the Quality Control Workshop, going through all the procedures of production and quality check in the workshop, and starting to work in the workshop in the afternoon

January 30 2015: Working on the line in Quality Control Workshop, having lunch with the workers

January 31 2015: Joining temporary workers, interviewing the workshop director, and having chats with temporary workers

February 2 2015: Participating in the production in the Sewing Workshop (ironing clothes)

February 5 2015: Participating in the meetings of the workshop director and team leaders, having lunch with workers, and going out for shopping with workers for the Spring Festival

February 6 2015: Observing production processes in the Sewing Workshop

February 9 2015: Participating in the production in the Sewing Workshop and interviewing team leaders and temporary workers in the workshop

February 11 2015: Being invited by one respondent to visit her village and have dinner with her family at her house

February 12 2015: Interviewing the general manager and preparing to leave the field

Overall, my observations focused on workers' daily routines, their status at work, the working conditions and environment, interactions among workers, and the factory settings. I took field notes, approximately 100 pages of notes in total. I took both descriptive and reflective field notes of what I observed. The field notes and my diary critically reflects what I observed and experienced in the field. The notes included descriptions of the physical setting and infrastructure of factories, characteristics of respondents, and workers' daily activities in the factory. Reflective field notes included my comments, impressions, feelings, and thoughts throughout the research process (see examples below).

An Example of Descriptive Fieldnote:

Workers' Routines and the Workshop Banners

February 5 2015

Most workers arrived at the workshop at 7 am. It was still dark in the winter morning. At 7:20 am, team leaders held a ten-minute routine meeting with workers, in which the team leader called the roll and emphasized the work discipline and production tasks of the day. Then workers started to work…The lunch time was between 11:30 am and 11:50 am. While most workers had lunch at the canteen, some workers brought food from home and ate secretely (as it was not allowed to eat) in the workshop. Usually, workers finished their lunch very quickly and got back to work immediately, because of the piece rate wage system. Workers got off from work at around 6 pm. Some workers had to work overtime to accomplish their production tasks. There were strict work disciplines. Workers were not allowed to talk, laugh, use their phone, or stay in the toilet too long during work. In the workshop, there were some banners calling for workers to stay focused and be careful at work. There were banners saying that, "Get distracted, get accident," and "Be aware of safety and prohibition, and promote security development." There were also some banners reminding workers the significance of their employment, such as "If you cannot guarantee your employment today, you cannot guarantee your livelihood tomorrow," and "If you do not work hard today, you will work hard tomorrow to find a job."

An Example of Reflective Fieldnotes: Senior Workers' Participation in Employment

January 31 2015

Most temporary workers in Factory A were senior who were 50 years of age or older. These workers were generally paid by day or by month, without any welfare or employment benefit. In my chat with respondent TW3, a 65-years old worker, she said that she decided to work because she had no income. Women's employment experiences were more likely to be

disrupted or terminated, because both rural communities and women themselves thought that it was their task to cultivate the farmland, care for the whole family, cook for the family, and raise grandchildren. On the one hand, senior women workers could not find formal or better-paid jobs due to their age. On the other hand, a temporary job was often taken as a more suitable employment arrangement, because these women were also expected to undertake farming and caring tasks. Overall, it gave me an impression that it was taken for granted that the elderly, mainly women, should raise grandchildren and undertake most housework tasks. They rarely challenged why it was their responsibility to do this work.

3.4.3 Documentary Studies

To gain the general socio-economic and demographic data, and to learn more about the policy background and reforms at the national level, I also conducted documentary studies. The advantage of studying documents, as Merriam noted, is that documents are "easily accessible, free, and contain information that would take an investigator enormous time and effort to gather otherwise" (2009, 155). Official documents that are studied in this thesis include the statistics released by the NBS, the Department of Population and Employment Statistics, and the website of China's State Council, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. This documentary data provide background information on historical and current trends of rural-to-urban migration in China, the size of the rural migrant population, demographic characteristics of Chinese rural migrant workers, and their employment and socio-economic status.

3.5 Strategies to Increase the Credibility of the Data

First, to increase the credibility of the data, I used the research strategy of triangulation for data collection. According to Denzin, there are basically four types of triangulation, including the use of multiple methods, multiple data sources, multiple investigators, and multiple theories to confirm emerging findings (as cited in Merriam 2009, 215). I used three methods to collect data (on-site observations, interview, and documentary studies) and multiple sources of data to triangulate different data sources (field notes, the interview data, and documents). As shown in Appendix A, respondents in this thesis had varied personal characteristics, different levels of education, and various migration and employment experiences. Second, to increase the validity and credibility of the data, I did my fieldwork in three different factories which are located in different areas of Shandong province. These cases are examples of factories in coastal and interior areas, and cities with different levels of economic development. Also, I visited Factory A twice, at different points of time. During the second round of my field work, I visited the factory prior to the Spring Festival Holiday, which is one of the most important festivals in China and also during which factories usually have many deadlines to meet. Workers experience more onerous workloads and pressures. Third, I used rich and thick descriptions to present my study findings, because "this may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (Creswell 2003, 196). Here thick description refers to "a highly descriptive, detailed presentation" of the settings, research participants of the study, and the study findings "with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from field notes, the interview data, and documents" (Merriam 2009, 227). When readers are present with "detailed descriptions" of the study context and findings, readers are "able to compare the 'fit' with their situations" (Merriam 2009, 226). So, the external validity of a qualitative study lies in a rich and thick description of context, research participants, and study findings.

3.6 Data Analysis

I conducted 74 semi-structured interviews, 12 open-ended interviews, and 18 days of on-site observations (from January 26 to February 12 2015). With the consent of respondents, I recorded most interviews, and transcribed interviews by myself after accomplishing my fieldwork. There are 260 pages of transcripts of the interview data, having 171,749 Chinese words in total. During the second round of my field research, I took field notes and wrote down key points of the interviews and the findings gained through observations.

I transcribed the interview record into text and entered the basic information, characteristics, and answers of respondents into an excel database. An example of part of the data of one respondent is shown in Table 3. As I read through the interview data texts, I listed key factors that one respondent mentioned in answering an interview question, calculated the number and rates of respondents who emphasized same factors (see examples in Table 4 and Table 5), and finally sorted the responses to different categories. As the data analysis proceeded, some categories cut across most of the data. This process is similar to what Merriam described, through data analysis, the researcher develop "categories, themes or other taxonomic classes that interpret the meaning of the data," and the categories become the findings of the study (2009, 193). For example, while respondents emphasized various factors that affected their migration decisions and experiences, several factors emerged as common factors that cut across most responses, including one's age, health conditions, marital status, childbirth status, the domestic division of labor, one's view on farming and rural lifestyle, peer influences, and the economic and employment opportunities in one's home areas. In the writing of the thesis, these categories

become sub-sections in Chapter Five in the section of *Understanding Women's Migration Decisions*.

Table 3 An Example of Respondents Database

Code	**Age**	**Marital Status**	**Childbirth Status**	***Hukou* Status**	**Migration Status**
A1	18	Unmarried	No Child	Rural	Local Rural Worker
Explaining Education Experience	**Employment Experience**	**Participation in Employment**	**Satisfication with Employment**	**Explain**	**Meaning of Employment**
Feel Tired of School	1st Job	Less Than 20 percent of Personal Choice; Parents Play an Important Role	Not Satisfied	Large Working Task, Limited Rest Time, the Piece Rate Wage System	Earning Income, Sustaining the Livelihood, Gaining More Experiences, Meeting More People, Learning

Table 4 An Example of Respondents' Satisfaction with Employment (Respondents to this Question N=73)

Satisfied With Work	**Yes, Very Satisfied**	**Not Satisfied**	**Ok, But Not Very Satisfied**
A Factory (Respondents N=27)	19	3	5
B Factory (Respondents N=29)	22	5	2
C Factory (Respondents N=17)	2	8	7
Total (N=73)	43	16	14
Percentage (%)	58.9	21.9	19.2

Table 5 Reasons for Respondents' Satisfaction with Employment

Popular Reasons (Multiple)	Percentage
Happy With Colleagues	24.4
Appropriate Working Time Arrangement	20.5
Geography: Close to Home	14.1
Familiarity with the Work and Working Environment	13
Being Able to Maintain a Balance Between Work and Family	11.5

Getting Connected and Socializing	9
No Pressure, Just Simply Work	9
The Wage is Fine	9
Earn Income and Economic Independence,	7.7

Table 6 Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Employment

Reasons	Percentage
The Large Workload Task, and the Nature of the Work (Boring, Repetitive, and Exhausting)	19.2
The Income is Low	15.4
Inappropriate Working Time Arrangements	15.4

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology, the research strategy, the procedures of entering the field, the process of selecting respondents, and the data collection and analysis for this thesis. Based on the interview data, three major themes - rural migrant women workers' experiences with respect to education, migration, and employment- are identified as central to understand Chinese rural women workers' lives, which are discussed in Chapter Four, Five, and Six.

CHAPTER 4 Women's Education Status and School Experiences

4.0 Introduction

This study finds that one's education status and school experiences influence one's decisions and experiences with respect to migration and employment. Usually, the withdrawal from school and the start of migration are connected with each other. In the interviews, many respondents noted that they participated in out-migration immediately after accomplishing their study or withdrawing from school. For many respondents, leaving the countryside and going to work in the city becomes a common choice. As Ye, Pan, and He noted, for those young, single, and unmarried rural women, in addition to going to school, going to work in the city is almost the only reasonable choice or possible way of survival (2014, 25). For some respondents, engaging in migration and non-agricultural employment is why they decide to withdraw from school. This chapter discusses respondents' education status and school experiences, and factors that shape their education experiences. In the first section, I review the findings of the investigation on Chinese women's social status that was conducted by All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), and discuss the general education status of Chinese rural women. Drawing upon the official statistics and interview data, this study finds that the educational status of rural women is the lowest, compared to urban men, urban women, and rural men, in terms of both average years of schooling and the level of educational attainment. Generally, constraints on women's access to further education are not only economic but also gendered. This chapter discusses the five major variables that respondents identified as determining their education experiences, including the financial status of rural families, household compositions and

characteristics, parents' awareness of the significance of education, personal choices, and the influence of peers.

4.1 Chinese Rural Women's Education Status

This section mainly reviews the findings of the third national investigation on the status of Chinese women starting on December 1, 2010 that was conducted by the ACWF[26] and NBS. In ACWF's investigation, women's social status includes women's rights, available resources, and responsibilities compared to men, as well as the role of women in society. The investigation focused on the overall status of Chinese women on nine dimensions (health, education, economic status, social protection, political rights, marital status, lifestyle, legal rights, and gender perceptions) and especially the status of five specific groups of women (including children, the elderly, graduate students, the rural migrant population, and professional women workers). There were in total 105573 respondents who participated in ACWF's investigation: 51.6 percent of research participants were women, and 48.4 percent were men; 52.4 percent lived in urban areas, and 47.6 percent lived in rural areas. The data was compiled into a report called *The Investigation on Chinese Women's Social Status in the New Era*.

The ACWF's investigation found that in 2010 the average years of schooling for rural women aged between 18 and 64 was 5.9 years, compared to 10.5 years for urban men, 9.8 years for urban women, and 7.3 years for rural men in the same age group (Liu and Shi 2013, 98). Most rural women (87.9 percent) had only minimal educational achievement (the junior high school level, the elementary school level, and the illiteracy level) (Liu and Shi 2013, 105). As

[26] The federation was founded in April 1949. It is a national, government- and party supervised organization in China, which aims to promote women's liberation and development in the country. The basic function of the federation is to represent and protect women's rights and interests and promote equality between men and women.

Table 7 shows, 36.4 percent of rural women were at the junior high school level, 34.5 percent were at the elementary school level, and 17 percent were at the illiteracy level (Liu and Shi 2013, 105). Only a small proportion (12.0 percent) of rural women were at the senior high school or higher levels, compared to 61.9 percent for urban men, 54.7 percent for urban women, and 18.7 percent for rural men (Liu and Shi 2013, 105). The ACWF's investigation found that one's educational achievement impacts the possibility of out-migration. Those who receive more years of schooling are more likely to engage in out-migration and non-agricultural employment. According to the statistics, the average years of school for rural migrant women workers was eight years, which was more than returned migrant women workers (seven years) and those who never migrated (six years) (Liu and Shi 2013, 102). While the level of educational attainment of both rural men and women are markedly lower than their urban counterparts, the ACWF found that two family factors lead to rural women's even lower levels of educational achievement: first, money – 58.5 percent of respondents said that "there was no money to attend school;" and second, attitudes – 11.4 percent indicated that "parents think going to school was useless" (Yang and Zheng 2013, 332).

In the past three decades, the level of educational attainment of both urban and rural women has improved, but trends differ between them. Among urban women, the proportion of those who have minimal educational achievement, for example, those at the primary school, declined significantly from 30.6 percent in 1990 to 13.8 percent in 2010 (Table 8). While the proportion of urban women in junior high school and senior high school slightly decreased, the ratio of those in college or university increased substantially from 6.6 percent in 1990, to 12.4 percent in 2000, and to 25.8 percent in 2010 (Table 8). As Table 8 shows, the illiteracy rate and the proportion of rural women in primary school decreased from 70.8 percent in 1990, to 58.8

percent in 2000, and to 51.8 percent in 2010, while the percentage of rural women in junior high school grew significantly from 22.6 percent in 1990, to 32.8 percent in 2000, and to 36.4 percent in 2010. The proportion of rural women in senior high school and professional high school grew slightly from 6.5 percent in 1990, to 7.9 percent in 2000, and to 9.9 percent in 2010. The rate of rural women who engaged in higher-level education, such as college or university studies or graduate studies, was still very low, but grew slightly, from 0.2 percent in 1990, to 0.8 percent in 2000, and to 2.1 percent in 2010 (Table 8). There also were marked improvements in rural women's average years of schooling over time, from 4.0 years in 1990 to 5.3 years in 2000, and to 5.9 in 2010 (Liu and Shi 2013, 99). However, most rural women (87.9 percent) were at junior high school, elementary school, and illiterate levels, and only a small proportion (12.0 percent) of rural women were at the senior high school and university levels (Liu and Shi 2013, 105).

Table 7 The Level of Educational Achievement: Based on Rural-Urban Divide and Gender Difference (%)

		Illiterate	Elementary School	Junior High School	Senior High School/Professional High School[27]	College and Above
Urban Areas	Male	0.7	7.6	29.8	32.1	29.8
	Female	2.8	11.0	31.5	28.9	25.8
Rural Areas	Male	4.6	31.4	45.3	15.7	3.0
	Female	17.0	34.5	36.4	9.9	2.1

Source: Liu and Shi (2013, 105).

[27] Professional high schools are special high schools that train students the skills and technics so that students can find jobs easily.

Table 8 Women's Educational Achievement: From 1990 to 2010 (%)

		Primary School and Below	Junior High School	Senior High School, Professional High School	Teritary Education
Rural Areas	1990	70.8	22.6	6.5	0.2
	2000	58.8	32.8	7.9	0.8
	2010	51.5	36.4	9.9	2.1
Urban Areas	1990	30.6	33.4	29.5	6.6
	2000	20.8	34.7	32.0	12.4
	2010	13.8	31.5	28.9	25.8

Source: Liu and Shi (2013, 106).

4.2 Understanding Rural Women's Education Experiences

In my investigation, respondents' education experiences were diverse, but generally, their level of educational attainment was low. The majority of respondents (93 percent) had attended high school. Around 43 percent of respondents accomplished junior high school, 20 percent withdrew from school during junior high school, and 30 percent withdrew from school during senior high school. Most respondents started their first paid job at a relatively young age, ranging from 15 to 23 years of age, with the average age of just above 18. Usually, they undertook their first paid job immediately after withdrawing from school. The interview data revealed that one's educational opportunities are affected by multiple factors, including the income and financial status of the family, household composition and characteristics, local education and

transportation facilities, parents' awareness of the significance of education, personal experiences with studying, and influence from peers.

4.2.1 Financial Status of the Household

The ACWF's investigation found that compared to urban women, rural women are more likely to withdraw from school for family reasons. Factors such as income poverty, "the traditional concept of gender discrimination and gender-biased views on women's education," and "the household demand of labor" lead to women's lower educational achievement in rural areas (Liu and Shi 2013, 110). The view that "the secondary curriculum was of little benefit or little relevance to rural life" also contributes to rural women's high rate of withdrawal from school at the secondary school level (Jacka 1997, 77-78). The main reasons for women's early withdrawal from school vary among women in different age groups. For example, the proportion of women who withdraw from school due to poverty varies significantly among women of different age groups, which is consistent with the overall socio-economic transformation of the country in different historical periods. The ACWF's investigation found that for older women aged between 40 and 64, income poverty was the foremost reason for their withdrawal from school, whereas the rate of respondents who withdrew from school due to poverty was much lower among younger women aged between 18 and 39. As the ACWF's data shows, the proportion of women who withdrew from school due to poverty was 30.6 percent among the 18-to-29-year-old group, 38.3 percent among the 30-to-39-year-old group, 50.9 percent among the 40-to-49-year-old group, 63.1 percent among the 50-to-59-year-old group, and 71.8 percent among the 60-to-64-year-old group (Liu and Shi 2013, 112). The macro economic factors -

economic development and the reduction of poverty has progressive impact on women's education status.

In spite of these improvements, low incomes still continue to depress women's educational achievements in China. Respondents interviewed for the ACWF's investigation indicated that one's school experiences are mainly impacted by the income of the family. The school participation rate of women from low-income rural households is much lower than those from non-low-income rural households (He 2013, 757). Young women who are under 17 years of age from low-income rural households are more likely to withdraw from school because of poverty (27.8 percent) or because they need to work to sustain their family (11.1 percent) (He 2013, 757).

In my investigation, there is plenty of evidence showing that income poverty is one primary cause leading to respondents' inferior education status and early withdrawal from school, in particular among rural women who were born in the 1980s and earlier. For example, respondent B14, a 31-year old respondent from Factory B, left her home village and started to work in the city after she accomplished her junior high school. She decided not to continue to go to school because of the financial difficulties that her family had. Also, the respondent mentioned that, due to poverty, her parents expected her to earn money for the family, rather than going to school.

> I went to work after I graduated from junior high school. There were many reasons. One most important reason was that we were so poor. More than ten years ago, most people in the countryside were poor. The poor financial situation did not allow me to continue to go to school. We could not afford the tuition and school costs. Another reason was my

parents, their awareness. They emphasized earning money. If I were a parent, I certainly would not let my child go out to work so early.

There are some respondents arguing that they decide to withdraw from school due to both poverty and personal reasons, such as the lack of confidence in school achievement. Respondent B1, a 20-year old worker, noted that,

> I did not continue with study, because I did not do very well at school. There were family reasons as well. We were so poor in those years. While my mother stayed at home, taking care of my grandparents, my father was the only one who earned money. In addition, I did not do very well at school, so I thought I should go to work and earn some money for my family.

Reasons for women's withdrawal from school are not only economic, but also are gendered. In poor families, young women tend to sacrifice their own educational future for their brothers, and earn money for their family. In the areas where I did my fieldwork, women have been taught to be filial since they were little. Women often think of their parents' financial burdens and feel obligated to earn money for their family. For example, respondent A4, a 24-year old respondent from Factory A, withdrew from school during the second year of junior high school. She has an older sister and a younger brother. Respondent A4 noted that she decided to withdraw from school because she felt that her parents had large financial pressures and she wanted to share her parents' economic burdens. Also she sacrificed so that her brother could succeed, showing that she accepted a cultural gender bias that boys are more important than girls.

> I decided to withdraw from school because we were so poor at that time. My elder sister, my younger brother, and me were all at school. My older sister was only two years older than me, and I was only two years older than my younger brother. To sustain three of us at school at the same time was not easy for my parents. Later on my older sister and I decided to drop out of school, although our parents advised that we should continue with studying. I felt that my parents had a large economic burden, so I decided to withdraw school and they could save a little bit. Also, personally, I want to be independent. My younger brother did well at school. We were proud of him. He now studies at a university in our home province. Sometimes he tells me that he wants to withdraw from school, because he does not like his major. I often tell him how difficult and exhausting the work in the factory is. We hope that he can finish his undergraduate studies. He is the hope and the future of our family. It is true. If one studies well, the whole family is proud of him.

However, poverty alone does not necessarily lead to women's withdrawal from school. In other cases, respondents who have modest backgrounds are still able to accomplish their study at the high school level, and some respondents continue with vocational high school or higher levels of education. For example, one 30-year-old respondent from a food-processing factory in Yantai, who was able to finish her study at a senior high school and a professional high school, noted that:

> The financial burden on my parents was very heavy. You could imagine. I was in a vocational high school, and both my younger brother and younger sister were in high school. Those years were difficult for my family, but my parents supported all of us to go

to school. None of us dropped out of school because of poverty. This also happened to my friends.

4.2.2 The Household Composition

The household composition, interacting with poverty and gender, also impacts one's school experiences. This study finds that respondents are more likely to withdraw from school if they are female and particularly the oldest child in their family. For example, respondent B8, a 37-year old worker, decided to withdraw from school and go to work in the city because she often felt obligated to sacrifice for her young siblings.

> I withdrew from school and went to Guangzhou to work in 1994. At that time, I did not feel like going to school. There are three children in our family. I have a younger brother and a younger sister. I want to help my parents reduce their financial burdens. My father is the only male child in his family. In addition to taking care of us, he also has to take care of my grandparents, and the mother of my grandmother. My parents work very hard to support the family. I want to earn some money for them.

Respondent B13 left home and went to work in the city at the age of 17, after finishing junior high school. She decided to work for similar reasons.

> Since I am the oldest child at home, I often feel that I should work and earn money for my family, so that my younger brother and sister can study at school for several more years. My brother finished his study at the senior high school. My sister finished her junior high school.

Female children are expected to provide labor support for farming, cooking, caring for young siblings and their grandparents, and household chores, as well as emotional support. Women are assumed to be "filial" and "considerate" for their family. In particular in low-income rural families, it is usual that female children withdraw from school and start to work at a young age. In my interviews, most respondents give their wage or send remittances to their parents before getting married. Unmarried daughters are important wage earners for their family. It is taken for granted that young women work for their families to help support their parents.

Parents tend to privilege boys, and give priority to boy's educational future. On the one hand, it is related to the traditional view of "yang er fang lao" (relying on sons for both financial and care support when parents get old). On the other hand, it is related to the implementation of the one-child policy in China until 2015. Boys are much more valued than girls, and this has been reinforced by the national population policy. In many rural areas, it was regulated that if the first child of a rural couple was disabled or female, the couple were allowed to have a second child. This regulation was designed to reduce abortion and the abandoning of baby girls. It was also assumed that rural areas need more male labors for cultivation. However it reinforced the view that boys are more important than girls. Therefore, it makes sense for low-income families to invest their limited income and resources to the education and growth of male children. Despite changes in the one-child policy and the new regulation that all couples are allowed to have two children, it has become a tradition that boys are more privileged than girls, which often impacts women's educational opportunities.

4.2.3 Poor Infrastructure

The poor infrastructure of those remote and impoverished rural areas, including poor education and transportation, also contributes to rural women's inferior education status. In the countryside usually several villages share one elementary school that is built in one large village or the nearby town. Junior high schools are often built in towns, and students from nearby villages walk or ride to school or live in school dormitories. The lack of public transportation has negative impacts on women, due to potential safety concerns for females. For example, respondent A5, a 30-year old worker, came from a small village in Liaoning, the northeast China. She did not finish her junior high school because of the poor transportation facilities in her home village and the difficulities that she had simply getting to school. She noted that,

> My school was located in another village. It was eight *li* (one *li* is equal to 0.5 km) from my home. I need to walk to school in the early morning everyday. It was quite inconvenient. At that time, there were no roads connecting different villages. I had to walk through the farmland. Particularly during summer, since corn plants were very tall, it was not safe for a girl to walk alone. My parents had to walk me to school. My junior high school was a small one, and there was no dormitory. So I could not live at school. It was so inconvenient that I decided to withdraw from school. Sometimes I regretted not continuing with studying. My parents also tried to persuade me to finish study at school. But thinking of the inconvenience and safety concerns, I decided to quit. After withdrawing from school, I went to Shenyang (the capital city of Liaoning province) to work.

As revealed by respondents in Factory B, in some impoverished or remote villages, students could only study for the first three years of primary school in their villages, and have to

go to the school in nearby towns for the fourth and senior years of elementary school and high school. Although in recent years road construction and transportation have improved significantly in the countryside, in the past decades, the poor infrastructure had in particular negative impacts on women's participation in school due to safety concerns.

4.2.4 Parents' View on the Significance of Education

Among respondents in this study, there is a firm belief in intergenerational upward mobility. Many respondents believed that "knowledge can change one's fate," and that by going to university one can find a good job and improve the social and economic status of themselves and their families. Usually one's level of educational attainment impacts one's income, employment opportunities, and social status. Also, it is believed that one's education status is closely associated with the reputation, future, and the social and economic status of the family. As many respondents pointed out in the interviews, "a good education can bring one fortune (B 5)," "a good education can bring the family fame (A 8, B 15)," and "through high-level education, one can find a good job in the city (B 2, B 10, C 11)." One respondent from Factory A pointed out that "usually workers just earn a subsistence wage, while those who make a lot of money do professional work (A 8)." Generally, one's view on education is related to her employment experiences. As some respondents in this dissertation noted, they do not want their children to follow in their footsteps, having the same type of job and the same lifestyle as they have. Among respondents, it is believed that if their children could get admitted to a college or university, the experience would help change and improve the social status of their family. There are many respondents emphasizing the significance of education and being willing to create a

good educational environment for their children. During the lunch break, children's school performance is one of the most popular topics among workers.

Some respondents see their migration and participation in factory work as a sacrifice to improve the life chances of their next generation. For example, during the second round of my fieldwork in Factory A, one woman worker noted that, "We mainly work for the child. I hope that he can get education in a university and find a good job in the future." In the interviews, many respondents noted that they work very hard to earn income for the family and for better educational opportunities for the next generation. For example, respondent B 2, a 37-year old worker, said that,

> My son studies at one of the best junior high schools in the town. I would like to spend more money on training and educating him. For children, the only thing they need to do is study. Through studying, they will have a good future. My child is my future. We bought a house near the school. I try to create a good studying environment and a quiet place for him. When we get back home in the evening, we try to be silent and not to disturb him, so that he can focus on his homework.

This respondent thought that her view on education is related to her own study and work experience. She attributed her limited employment choices to her inferior education status.

> I withdrew from school during junior high school. I read few books. You could see that those who have not received good education, those who are unknowledgeable can only rely on selling their labor to make money. Their jobs are very exhausting. If one has knowledge, she can get a much better job.

Respondent B 2 noted that some of her co-workers withdrew from their employment and accompanied their children for study. Also, in some cases, families cooperated to provide a good educational environment for their children. While some family members earned money and financially supported the child, other family members, primarily women or their parents-in-law took care of and supervised the child. As respondent B 2 noted,

> Today many people realize the significance of the education of their children. Some people quit their jobs, and stay at home to accompany the child. They accompany their children throughout the high school period until their children pass the national college entrance exams and get admitted to a university. My mother cooks for my son. I give my mom some money each month and she helps take care of my son. This is a good way of cooperation. My mother does not work. She can only look after my child, and I give her some money as a subsidy.

These sentiments were echoed in respondent B 29's comments.

> Education is very important. In my generation, when we were young, parents did not recognize the significance of education. I started to work after finishing my junior high school. Because I was still quite young at that time, I felt that it would be nice if I could leave the countryside and earn some money for my family... After working in the factory for so many years, I feel very tired. I often tell my husband that if our child wants to study, we, as parents, should support him. I want my child to develop his own study and career interests. Otherwise, when he grows up, he will complain that we have not tried our best to raise him and educate him… I hope that my child will receive a good

education. We left school and started to work too early. I do not want my child to follow in our footsteps.

Due to the growing awareness of the significance of education among rural parents, as well as the widely accepted view that "knowledge could change one's fate," many rural parents expressed their commitment to invest in their children's education. The emphasis on education contributes to the improvement of the education status in rural areas but presumably these children with education would leave rural areas too.

4.2.5 Personal Choices

The interview data showed a lack of self-confidence in women. Many respondents thought they were not good enough or lacked confidence. Comparing women of different ages, Liu and Shi found that older women usually withdraw from school due to income poverty, while younger women are more likely to withdraw from school due to lack of confidence or personal choices (2013, 112). Among women under 30 years of age, 34.6 percent of them indicated that they withdrew from school due to their poor performance at school or failure in high school or college entrance exams, while the percentage for women who were aged between 60 and 64 and who emphasized the same reason was only around two percent (Liu and Shi 2013, 112).

In the interviews, many respondents noted that they withdrew from school because they "did not like studying (C 8)," "were not good at study" (A 19), "experienced large pressure at school (A 17)," "experienced failure in school entrance examination (B 11)," "worried that they would be unable to pass senior high school or college entrance exams" (C 4), and "because of the view that study was useless (A 9)." There is plenty of evidence showing the lack of self-

confidence in women, which impacts women's educational opportunities. For example, respondent B 9 withdrew from school at the age of 16, mainly because of her poor performance at school.

> I withdrew from school during the second year of junior high school. Then I went to Zhejiang to work. It was mainly because I did not like study. I often had low grades. I did not perform well at school. My parents and my older brother persuaded me to continue with studying. But I felt that I did not have the brain. I stayed at home for several weeks and later on, I moved to Zhejiang with my friends.

Respondent B 22, who was 19 years old, withdrew from school during the first year of senior high school. She noted that "being not good at studying" and peer pressure factored into her decision of withdrawing from school.

> My classmates asked me to leave home and go to work in the city with them. So I withdrew from school. My parents and grandparents advised me to continue with studying, but at that time I felt that going to school was not the only choice for me, so I decided to withdraw from school. Most of my classmates withdrew from school because they did not do very well at school. They told me that working outside was fun, so I went outside to work as well.

Similarly, respondent C 8, a 24 years old worker, revealed that,

> I started to work in factories after finishing my junior high school. At that time, my father worked outside. My mother was at home. She persuaded me to continue to finish my school. After withdrawing from school, I got back to school for a short period of time.

> But I still felt tired with study and exams. There was too much homework. I had to stay up late every day. I often worked until 11 pm or 12. In particular during the last year of junior high school, there was a lot of homework. I felt very tired of school, so I quit.

4.2.6 The Influence from Peers and Fellow Villagers

The influence from peers and fellow villagers is another factor that impacts one's school experiences. Respondent B28, a 28-year old worker, withdrew from school during the third year of junior high school. She noted that:

> Many people in our village left home and went to work in the city. I also wanted to go out to work. I just did not feel like studying. It is better to go to the city and experience something different. So I went to Qingdao, and stayed there for almost eight years.

Respondent B7 started to work at the age of 17 after finishing junior high school. The influence of peers and fellow villagers was the main reason that she decided to withdrew from school. She noted that,

> After graduating from junior high school, I left my home village and started to work in a factory in the South. When I was at school, I saw some classmates left home and went to work outside. When they came back they talked about the outside world. Out of curiosity, I also wanted to work in the city, so I withdrew from school. My parents got angry with me. They even forcibly pulled me back to school, but at that time, I had decided to leave home and go to work in the city.

4.3 Summary

This chapter discussed rural women's education status and school experiences. It built on the ACWF's investigation of Chinese women's social status, which found that rural women's educational status lag behind rural men and more significantly urban men and women. This chapter delved more deeply into the reasons why rural women withdraw from school and participate in migrant employment at a young age. Respondents' education status and school experiences are more than a matter of personal choice. Income poverty is one important factor that leads to the low educational status of rural women, in particular among those who were born in the 1980s and earlier. The interview data revealed that reasons for women's low educational attainment are not only economic but also are gendered, and sometimes intersecting with one's household composition, domestic distribution of resources, domestic demand of labor, personal reasons, and poor infrastructure as well as cultural biases toward boys. The research finds that, being confronted with financial pressures, women are more willing to or feel more obligated to sacrifice their educational opportunities for their families and for their brothers. In addition to these economic or household factors, some respondents decided to withdraw from school due to personal reasons, such as not wanting to study, feeling not good enough at study, or having pressures of failing the exams, all of which shows lack of self-confidence among women in educational achievement. Also, parents and schools have not provided the encouragement or support women need to succeed. One's school experiences and education status impacts one's migration and employment. For most respondents, leaving the countryside and going to work in the city has become a common choice and practice once respondents withdraw from school.

CHAPTER 5 Women's Out-migration and Return Experiences

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss rural women's migration experiences, including their decisions to leave home, their out-migration experiences, and decisions to return to their home areas. I also discuss the respondents' understanding of the term of rural migrant workers. Depending on the migration destination, there are generally two types of rural-to-urban migration: local migration and out-migration. Rural migrant workers could be categorized into local rural migrants and out-migration rural migrants. Local rural migrants refer to rural workers who engage in non-agricultural employment in nearby towns, counties, or cities, whilst out-migration rural migrants refer to those who work outside their own municipal area (NBS 2014). According to the NBS, in 2013, 102.8 million rural migrants engaged in local migration, accounting for 38.2 percent of the total rural migrant population, and 166.1 million migrants were out-migration migrants, accounting for 61.8 percent of rural migrants (NBS 2014). Among out-migration rural migrants, 53.4 percent of them migrated to cities within their home province (intra-provincial migration), and the other 46.6 percent migrated across provinces (inter-provincial out-migration) (NBS 2014). The majority of inter-provincial out-migration workers (85.3 percent) migrated to China's east coast provinces, and the rest moved to western and central inland areas (NBS 2014).

Based on the migration status and experiences, I categorize respondents in this study into three sub-groups: out-migration rural migrants, local rural migrants, and returned migrant workers. Among the 86 respondents who participated in this thesis research, eight respondents (9.3 percent) were out-migration workers who migrated from other provinces, one respondent (1.2 percent) was an urban worker who came from the city, and the remaining 77 respondents

(89.5 percent) were local rural workers. Among local rural workers, 26 respondents (33.8 percent) were returned migrant workers who had out-migration experiences and had recently returned to their home areas for employment. In Factory B, 70 percent of respondents were returned migrant workers. Most of them used to work in garment, textile or electronic factories in South China or coastal areas in their home province. The option to work closer to home has improved in recent years because, driven by labor shortages, some enterprises have started to establish new factories in those emigrant rural areas. In effect, enterprises have begun to bring work to some interior rural areas where the recruitment of workers is easier than relying on workers coming to urban coastal areas to find work. In Factory B and C that are located in interior areas, most respondents revealed that in the past "leaving home" and "going to work in South China" were common choices for local young laborers due to poverty and the lack of economic and employment opportunities in their home areas. Usually they leave their home villages and start to work in the South or coastal areas at the age of from 15 to 23. Most respondents indicated that they returned to their home areas in the early or mid-20s to find a partner and get married. As many respondents noted, usually after getting married, and having the child, they return to their home areas.

5.1 Respondents' Perception of "Rural Migrant Workers"

In the eyes of rural women respondents, a general picture of a rural migrant worker is a male construction worker, who comes from the poor countryside, wears dirty clothes, and lives on the site of work. Overall, respondents associated rural migrant workers with the rural background, precarious employment, inferior economic and social status, and the lack of social protection in the city. In the interviews, some respondents were reluctant to identify themselves

as rural migrant workers. As some respondents noted, rural migrants refer to construction workers not factory workers. The association with construction workers suggests that women workers see rural migrant workers as mainly male too. In terms of geography, many respondents thought that rural migrants are those workers who live and work far away from home, and those who work in nearby factories should not be taken as rural migrants. For example, respondent A2, a 34-year old local rural worker in Factory A, noted that,

> Rural migrants are those who live and work very far away from home. Usually they are construction workers. Maybe they only come back home once a year. Those who work in nearby factories do not belong to the category. Most rural migrants live a tough life in the city.

While some respondents defined rural migrants as construction workers who work far away from home, other respondents noted that rural migrants are employed in different industrial and job sectors. As some respondents noted, as long as one has the rural *hukou* and works in non-agricultural employment sectors, she should be taken as a rural migrant worker. For example, respondent B5, a 27-year old local rural worker, noted that,

> Previously, I thought that rural migrant workers mainly refer to those who work on construction sites, who are less educated and have little knowledge. I think the meaning of rural migrants has changed today. It should refer to a larger group of people. Factory workers are considered as rural migrant workers as well. Migrant workers have varied educational backgrounds. While some rural migrants graduate from senior high school or professional high school, others graduate from junior high school or elementary school.

Respondents viewed rural migrants as referring to some kind of inferiority. Generally they perceive rural migrants' work as precarious, and see migration as a necessary life choice for subsistence farmers who have lost their farmland. It is believed that the working and living conditions for rural migrant workers are poor and abusive. In contrast to the claims of the WID approach to employment that does not discriminate between different kinds of work, respondents in this thesis research perceived migrant work as sometimes reinforcing their inferiority. For example, respondent B15, a returned migrant worker in Factory B, discussed her understanding of the term rural migrant workers as follows,

> Usually rural migrant workers are temporary workers. Unlike workers who are employed under formal contracts or have a pension after retirement, rural migrant workers do not receive a pension after retirement. I often feel that my employment is not guaranteed. When I worked in Jinan, the capital city of Shandong province, my employer did not pay for the insurance and the pension. I was just paid by hour. There was no binding employment contract as well. The employment was very flexible. For example, at the end of the year, if you still want to work in the factory, you can go to the factory to work after the Spring Festival, or you can simply leave the factory.

There are some respondents defining the rural migrant experience as an unpleasant and bitter life experience. For these respondents, migration means an unpleasant past, the experiences of being discriminated against in both the labor market and in the city, the economic hardship, and feelings of loneliness, helplessness, and being incapable. For example, respondent B6, a 27-year old woman worker, who used to work in Changzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, and

later returned home, discussed her impression of rural migrants and her own out-migration experiences as follows.

> My first impression is that they (rural migrants) live a very tough life, and their work is very exhausting. Usually, they have bitter life experiences. They live far away from their homes, being far away from their families and relatives. I had that feeling before. When I worked outside, I often felt that I was an outsider in the city. At work, I sometimes felt being bullied. In the city, I often felt myself to be so small. I feel that I am shorter than local workers. Now I do not want to leave my hometown.

Similarly, respondent B3, a 30-year old returned migrant worker in Factory B, thought that:

> My first impression is that rural migrants are often looked down upon by urban residents. They work very hard but are still very poor. I do not think there are any big difference between urban workers and rural migrant workers. Sometimes, rural migrants could earn more money than urban workers. There should not be any discrimination against rural migrants. Rural migrants and urban workers just work in different sectors.

In recent years, due to rapid industrialization, appropriation of farmland for industrial or commercial uses, and the commodification of rural society, there is demand for greater income and multiple wage earners for rural families. As a result, rural residents have largely engaged in non-agricultural paid employment. Many respondents take out-migration and integration into factory work as almost their only possible livelihood choice. For example, talking about the

meaning of rural-to-urban migration, respondent B10 emphasized the significance of migration in lifting people out of poverty.

> Migration is primarily a way of earning money. Most rural migrant workers leave home and go out to work for the purpose of earning money and improving their material living conditions. Rural people earn little income through farming. If they go out to work, they can earn a much higher income. Once they come back, their economic conditions are much better than before.

5.2 The Start of Migration

In this study, most respondents are motivated to participate in or withdraw from out-migration for more than one reason. Generally, economic difficulties, the lack of employment opportunities in emigrant areas, low local wages, and rural-urban and regional income disparities are the main driving forces behind rural-to-urban migration. Also, "the wish to see the world," "to earn money," "curiosity about migration and employment," and the peer influence are the main personal reasons that women decide to participate in out-migration. In addition, many respondents reveal that the connections that they have with their relatives, fellow villagers, and classmates who have already migrated and found jobs in the city also facilitate their out-migration.

Respondents emphasized the following reasons for their out-migration decisions, including social networks (41 percent), few employment opportunities in their home areas (39 percent), to earn money (22 percent), influence from peers or fellow villagers (22 percent), personal wishes to see the outside world (22 percent), school recruitment or intern (19 percent), having no idea about the future (11 percent), poverty (seven percent), and low local wages

(seven percent). Similar to the migration decisions, women have multiple reasons of withdrawing from out-migration and returning to their home areas. The major reasons include engagement or marriage (61.5 percent), the growth of local employment opportunities (31 percent), childbirth (15.4 percent), and personal wishes to stay at home (15.4 percent).

5.2.1 Economic and Employment Opportunities in One's Home Area

Financial pressures, marginal farming income, the lack of economic and employment opportunities in one's home area, and rural-urban and regional disparities in terms of employment opportunities are the major push factors behind rural-to-urban migration. Conversely, in areas in which there are many employment opportunities, people from nearby rural areas are more likely to engage in local migration. The interview data from factories A and B indicates that respondents from rural coastal areas usually engage in local migration, while those from interior areas are more likely to engage in out-migration for paid employment due to the lack of job opportunities in their home area. For example, respondent A7 a 31-year old worker started to work in factories close to her home village at the age of 19. She noted that many young laborers from her village work in nearby factories after they finish or withdraw from school, and few people go outside to work, because there are more employment opportunities in their home area. She explained that,

> It is easy to find a job, as there are many factories close to our hometown. In our village, there are few people migrating to other areas to work. Most of us stay here and find a job in nearby factories.

In Factory B, that is located in an interior county in Shandong province, 70 percent of respondents are returned migrant workers. My research with respondents from Factory B finds that leaving home and going to work in South China used to be a common practice for local residents. Approximately 40 percent of respondents who used to engage in out-migration, noted that the lack of employment opportunities in their home areas was the major reason that they decided to leave their home village and move to more developed urban coastal areas to work. For example, respondent B13, a 28-year old worker, came from a small village in Wenshang county. She went to Zhejiang province to work after finishing her junior high school at the age of 17. The main reason that she decided to leave her hometown was the lack of job opportunities in her home areas. In recent years an increasing number of migrant workers from her home areas have returned home for employment because of local growth and growing employment opportunities in their home areas.

> In the past, many young people left our home village and went outside to work due to the lack of employment opportunities in our village. I went to Zhejiang province with my fellow villagers. There are many factories in Zhejiang. The wage there is higher than that in our hometown. Only in these recent three to four years people have started to look for jobs in our town, rather than going outside. With the establishment of the economic and development zone, some enterprises build factories in our hometown. There are many factories near home now. Obviously, there are fewer people migrating, much less than before.

There is plenty of evidence that women's migration experience is more likely to be interrupted by marriage and childbirth. Women are often expected to return to their home areas

after getting married and having children. Working close to home provides a solution for women workers to maintain work-life balance. Therefore, the growth of employment opportunities in nearby areas has a more positive impact on women. Due to labor shortages in the urban coastal areas, there are some enterprises starting to establish new factories in those previous emigrant rural areas. Factories assume that through building factories close to rural migrants' home villages, they can easily recruit workers. For example, in the Wenshang County in which Factory B is located, with the establishment of the local economic and development zone, there are more factories and growing employment opportunities in the county. Most factories in the county are garment and textile factories. As a result, many respondents who used to work in the South have returned to their home areas for employment. Respondent B24, a 26-year old worker, left her home village at the age of 17 and has recently returned her hometown for employment. She said that,

> In the past, it was common for young laborers to go outside to work, because there was no such factory in our county. Now it is different. There are some factories near home. Many young women choose to stay at home, instead of going outside. I like my work in this factory. It is close to my home, and the wage is not low. More importantly, I can take care of my family. Staying far away from home, I cannot take care of my family.

As discussed above, the economic development zones in rural areas stemming tide of out-migration potentially lower conflicts for women workers because these workers could work and also attend to family and balance between double roles as both wage earners and caregivers.

5.2.2 Growing Demand for Money and Respondents' Varied Economic Situations

For most respondents, migration and employment is primarily a survival strategy, through which they earn regular income and sustain their livelihood. This section digs deeper into what respondents feel as most important pressures to earn income. Overall, due to the commodification of rural society, there is growing demand for cash and wage earners. Also, as discussed above, due to industrialization and the appropriation of farmland, many rural residents integrate into factory work and rely more on purchased food and goods. Depending on one's age, marital status, childbirth status, household composition, and the age and the gender of the child, respondents have different sources of financial pressures.

Drawing upon the interview data, this study finds that young and unmarried women have fewer financial burdens compared to those married women respondents. For young and unmarried respondents, their major expenses are on their own living costs. While some of them are able to save money, other respondents found it hard to save money due to low earnings and high costs. For example, respondent B27, a 17-year old worker, noted that, "Basically, I cannot save money. I often party and get together with my friends. I use almost all my money on hanging out."

Married women respondents generally have larger economic pressures than unmarried respondents. Specifically, for those who have young children, providing a good living and educational environment for children is the main family expenditure. Due to the family planning policy, many rural households have only one or two children. In the places where I conducted my fieldwork, it was regulated that if the first child was female, the couple were allowed to have a second child, but if the first child was male, the couple were only allowed to have one child. As one respondent revealed, "Because most families have only one child, as parents, we want to give them the best." Some respondents who have small children spend more money on

purchasing expensive or imported food for their children due to food security concerns. For example, respondent TW8, a 38-year old temporary worker from Factory A, earned around 3000 Yuan per month (approximately CAD 626). She spent around 40 percent of her wage on purchasing imported milk powder for her one-year-old son. She also bought different types of eggs and biscuits for adults and the child. As she explained, "We bought regular eggs for my husband and me, and organic eggs for my son. The regular eggs were 16 Yuan/kg, and organic ones were 48 Yuan/kg." Also, respondents who have small children often have the pressure of saving money for future expenses for their children. Respondent TW8 said that,

> The kindergarten cost is too expensive. In the city, the kindergarten cost has already exceeded 1000 Yuan per month. In our village it costs 300 to 400 Yuan per month. Many people complain that they cannot afford the kindergarten cost. It is more expensive than the elementary school. But if you want to go to some popular elementary schools in the city students who do not have local *hukou* must pay a large amount of temporary schooling fee. Because of the large living and school costs, we need to save money.

Middle-aged and older women respondents, in particular those who have male children, revealed that they provide continued financial support to their adult children for university costs, engagement or wedding expenses, and building or purchasing a house for their son. In China it is taken for granted that parents in particular those with male children should purchase a new house, give engagement cash gift and buy gold gifts (including gold necklace, rings, and earrings) for their daughter-in-law. A wedding is taken as one of the most important family activities, which reflects the family's financial capability and is related to the reputation and social standing of the family. Wedding-related cost and purchasing property is one of the most

important expensive outlays for some rural households. Some respondents revealed that, due to these customs, they often feel squeezed economically. In the interviews, there are some older respondents who said that they started to work outside to pay the debt that they owned after buying a house and paying for the wedding of their children. For example, respondent TW11 a 55-year old temporary worker in Factory A started to work in the factory two years ago. She and her husband started to work to pay for the debt that accrued after they repaired their old house for their son and paid the wedding for him.

In many rural areas in China, on occasions such as children going to university, joining the army, getting engaged, getting married, giving birth to child, family relocation, opening a business, and death, people give cash as a way to congratulate, celebrate, or mourn. In recent years, expectations about the amount of a cash gift have increased. The costs of maintaining human relations in rural communities have become another significant expense for many rural families. Since rural communities are relatively small, the interactions among family members, relatives, neighbors, and fellow villagers are closer and more frequent. Respondent TW7, a 45-year old temporary worker, noted that,

> Usually the cash gift for relatives is the highest. We give our relatives 1000 Yuan (around CAD 209), 800 Yuan or 600 Yuan. If it is neighbors, we give 100 Yuan or 200 Yuan. In the past, the cash gift was much less. It was 30 Yuan or 50 Yuan. Now nobody gives that amount, because people would laugh at you. We spend several thousand Yuan per month as cash gifts.

For some families, cash gift has become one of the most important household expenditure. For respondent TW10, a 49-year old temporary worker in Factory A,

> The cash gift has become our largest expense. In just one year we might spend more than 1000 Yuan on cash gifts. If one gets married, we need to get ready to give out three cash gifts, for the wedding, childbirth, and celebration of the one-hundred-day of birth of the baby. Nowadays, nobody wants gifts. People prefer to receive cash. Usually, the amount of a cash gift is 600 Yuan, 800 Yuan, or 1000 Yuan. That means if one relative gets married, I need to spend 2000 Yuan to 4000 Yuan in total for their wedding and childbirth. I feel that we care too much about these things, even more than urban people. People often say that the poorer one is, the keener one is on face-saving. If one does not prepare enough cash gift, as a guest, he or she would feel embarrassed and upset. Actually, most people feel very tired about these things. It is such a headache.

Another respondent TW6 expressed similar views, "I will not bring a small cash gift, because people would laugh at me," and "it is all about 'face', no one wants to lose the face." Respondent TW4 pointed out that, "Most people felt very tired about it, and being unable to stand it. Still you have to follow the rule; otherwise, you will be excluded in your networks." Some respondents noted that to avoid or minimize the cash gift expenses, they decided to leave home and go to other areas to work. For example, respondent TW2, a temporary worker in Factory A, left her home and moved to Qingdao with her husband after getting married. She explained that,

> The wage in our hometown is very low. I could only earn 30 to 40 Yuan per day. The expenses at home are higher. We have many relatives and neighbors. At home, we spend a lot of money on cash gifts. You need to prepare cash gifts if people get married, give birth to child, do surgery, or die. Since we are not at home, they generally do not inform

> us. If we have to send out a cash gift, I would ask my parents to prepare a small red packet containing 100 Yuan. But if we were at home, things would be different. When neighbors and friends give birth to a child, we should not only give cash, but also buy gifts. Anything decent would cost several dozens of Yuan. These things cost a lot of money. Being outside is better. As we are not at home, we try to avoid these expenses as much as possible. Except for our relatives and very close friends, neighbors generally do not inform us, because they know that we are not at home.

Even for out-migration rural migrant workers, they still could not completely get rid of preparing cash gifts, because many of them would still come back to their village in the end, and they could not cut all the connections with their home village. As respondent TW2 further explained,

> We will still move back home in the future. As our child grows, we will move back so that the child can go to the elementary school in our hometown. Here we have to pay a large amount of money to the school as the temporary schooling fee, because we do not have the local *hukou*… We are going to go back, so we cannot really cut the connections back at home. When my close friends and relatives get married or give birth to a child, I still need to go back, or I should at least send a cash gift or ask my parents to give them the money. We never really cut off the connections with them, even if we are not at home.

In the interviews, many women workers expressed their concerns about low earnings. Women factory workers earn a subsistence wage that is inadequate to sustain the financial needs of themselves and their families. The commodification of rural society, the increasing education

and marriage-related cost, property purchase, and cash gift has intensified income poverty and the need to work. Respondent TW8, a 38-year old temporary worker from Factory A, talked about her living conditions as follows.

> Today many families have white flour (the raw material for staple food in north China). The difference (in the living standard) is mainly reflected on the dishes. Some families eat well. They eat nice and expensive food. Those whose living conditions are not very good generally eat what they cultivate in their vegetable garden, such as the cabbage and potatoes. My wage is around 3000 Yuan per month. It is almost the lowest wage level in the city. My husband's income is very low as well. Our income is not enough to sustain expenses. Usually we need to think about the budget before doing any purchase. We also have to think about the cost on the food. We cannot always eat nicely; unless we feel that life is so boring that we would buy something nice to eat.

For many respondents, due to multiple and high household expenditures, they have large economic burdens and financial pressures to earn money. Because income from farming is very low, rural-to-urban migration and participation in paid employment has become the main livelihood strategy for rural residents to earn money. The interview data revealed that some rural women leave home for wages but usually their wages are low and not enough to meet the financial needs. Also, despite participation in paid employment, women do not escape the burden of family and community obligations. Therefore, participating in out-migration and paid work is a complicated and temporary solution.

5.2.3 Rural-to-urban Migration--Becoming a Common Practice

In those impoverished rural areas, out-migration has become a primary choice for rural residents to earn income and meet the need for survival (Ye, Pan, and He 2014, 182). Ye, Pan, and He noted that for the younger generation in rural areas, unless going to school, going to work in the city is almost their only choice and way of survival (2014, 25). They further noted that going to work in the city has become normalized and ritualized, and become a rural community expectation that "one should or must leave home and go out to work," while staying at home has been increasingly viewed as being "abnormal, idle, and worthless" (Ye, Pan, and He 2014, 25).

Many respondents in this study similarly noted that out-migration and integration into factory work is a common choice and practice among rural residents. As women's participation in rural-to-urban migration and non-agricultural employment becomes normalized, staying at home often makes one feel uncomfortable or upset. It also becomes a fashion for young people living in rural areas to leave home and work in the city. For example, respondent B7, a 32-year old woman worker, indicated that,

> Many people in my home village had left home to earn money. It has become a trend or fashion for young people to leave home and go to work in the city.

Respondent B27 never migrated to a city. But she observed that,

> In our village, there are a lot of young people going out to work. Most of them have gone to South China. Although there are many factories in our hometown, young people still prefer to go outside to work. Some rural people feel curious about the outside world. For many people, going out to work is better than going to school. I want to go outside to work as well, but my family does not allow me to leave home.

5.2.4 The Role of Social Networks in Promoting One's Migration

Fan C. found that most rural migrants are willing to be "purveyors of information" for their fellow villagers, and they have "a sense of obligation to their neighbors" (2004, 191). In my study, many respondents similarly revealed that they benefited from the social network that they had with their relatives, friends, villagers, or acquaintances who worked in the city or had the experience of working in the city during their migration and job-seeking process. Similar to Fan C.'s study, this study found that the social networks and connections that one have not only facilitate one's migration, but also lead people in the same village to "specific types of jobs" and "specific destinations" (2004, 191).

Respondents from the same rural areas tend to be concentrated in same urban areas and employment sectors. For example, the 23 respondents from Factory B who had out-migration experiences generally went to the same cities: Qingdao (56.5 percent), Zhejiang province (30.4 percent), and Shanghai (17.4 percent). On the one hand, it is because in these cities there are more and relatively higher-paid jobs. On the other hand, it is because respondents rely on the employment information that they obtain from those who have already migrated, and thus, respondents in the same rural areas tend to be concentrated in same migration destinations. In terms of the employment sector, most respondents among those who had out-migration experiences (65.2 percent) were employed in garment factories and textile factories. Some respondents noted that they were able to migrate and find a job in the city because of the help and the information provided by their fellow villagers and peers. Respondent B13 left home at the age of 17 and worked in Zhejiang province with her fellow villagers and stayed there for seven years.

> I went to Pinghu, a city in Zhejiang province, with my fellow villagers. They introduced me to the city and helped me find a job there. I also introduced other people in my village to the city. In the past, almost all unmarried young women went outside to work. Some went to Qingdao. Some went to Weihai and Zhejiang. Usually people went outside in an organized way. One person played the leading role, organizing and leading other people to move to a new place to work. We rented several big trucks. Sometimes eight or nine trucks left the village together. One large truck could accommodate 40 persons. In those years, many people went outside to work. In recent years, with the growth of employment opportunities, there are fewer people going outside than before.

It is common for rural women workers to go to work in the city with their relatives, fellow villagers, or peers. Around 44 percent of respondents who had out-migration experiences migrated with their relatives or fellow villagers – someone that they trusted or they knew well. For example, respondent B26 recalled her out-migration experiences as follows.

> I went to Qingdao when I was 24 years old. I chose Qingdao because my sister was there. I went there with her. At that time, I had no idea or plan for the future. So I went outside with my sister.

Some respondents revealed that based on other rural migrant workers' description of their experiences of working in the city, they tended to glorify migrant work and life in the city, and expected to leave rural home and engage in rural-to-urban migration. Respondent B27, who was 17 years old, decided to withdraw from school during the third year of junior high school, mainly because she looked forward to leaving home and working in the city.

> At that time, some of my classmates withdrew from school. Most of them left home and worked outside after getting out of school. It is related to the overall trend and atmosphere. They came back every year. They had nice clothes. Usually, they looked very beautiful. Some of them described their migrant employment experiences to us when they came back to the village. I felt curious about the outside world. I also wanted that kind of lifestyle. I felt that it would be better working outside than going to school.

Some respondents revealed that their fellow villagers who migrated earlier set up role models for them. Respondent B7 explained that,

> At that time, I had no idea about the future. Some fellow villagers went to work in the city. When they returned home during the Spring Festival time, they told me about the outside world. Out of curiosity, I decided to withdraw from school, and join them to work in the city. Usually, if one went outside to work, other people in the village would follow that person. Many people went outside, and this has become a common practice.

5.2.5 Respondents' Views on Farming and Rural Lifestyle

One's view and impression of farming and the rural lifestyle also impacts migration decisions. The interview data revealed that respondents who have a negative view of farming and rural life are more likely to leave the countryside and participate in non-agricultural employment, while those who have a positive view of farming and rural life are reluctant to leave the countryside. For example, respondent A5, who came from a small village in North China, migrated to Qingdao with her husband several years ago, because she disliked farming and rural life. She noted that,

> I just do not like staying in the countryside. There are very few opportunities in the countryside. The only thing that I can do in the countryside is farming. It is boring. I like working and living in the city, because I have more choices in the city. No matter what kind of job I can find in the city, it is better than staying in the countryside. In the countryside, I have more freedom and flexible hours, because farming is seasonal. In my hometown, a farmer mainly works on the farm during the summer time, and is relatively free during the rest of the year. In the city I need to go to work everyday. I know that working on the farmland is more relaxing, but I still prefer to have a routine job and earn regular income. So I moved here with my husband.

Respondent B3, a 30-year old worker, also noted that she decided to leave the countryside because she disliked farming and rural lifestyle. She noted that,

> If I stay at home, my daily life would be just cooking, farming, and looking after the child. Through migration, I can earn regular income. Also, I am able to learn more information and get connected with more people. I can better educate my child. Otherwise, I would feel that I have lagged behind. Working in the city makes my life more meaningful.

There are some respondents recalling how excited they were when they left the countryside and started to work in the city. Migrant employment means a departure from traditional rural lifestyle. For example, respondent B8 who came from a small village in Wenshang County, recalled that,

> I left home and went to Guangzhou in 1994 when I was 18 years old.

> At that time, I lived in the factory dormitory, which could accommodate eight persons. The living conditions were really nice. It was very clean and bright inside the room. It was the first time that I lived in a high-rise building. There was a washroom in the dormitory. It sounded funny, but I never saw a washroom before…

Other respondents indicated that they were effectively forced off the land because their farmland was appropriated for commercial or industrial use and they could no longer live on farming. Respondent B2 talked about the development of the economic and development zone in her home area and the differential impacts of the process on local rural people.

> In the past, many young rural laborers left home and went to work in the city. The elderly, women, and children were left behind in the village and lived on farming. As it became urbanized, some people lost their farmland. They received some subsidies, but most people still had to look for jobs and earn money. While many people found jobs in factories, others in particular the elderly had difficulties to get employed due to aging… One advantage of the development of industrial zones is that it is beneficial to children. Children can go to school just near the village now. As it gets urbanized, several schools, hospitals, and supermarkets have been built in the district. Now it is quite like in the city. It has become very convenient. This area has changed a lot and life is much more convenient than before. Two years ago, it was just a village, and now it is like the city. Also, as many rural people lose their farmland, it is easier for factories to recruit workers. Local laborers are more abundant than before.

While negative impacts of land exploitation on young people are relatively minimal, its influence on the senior or the disabled is more intense and negative. As respondent B2 noted,

> It is ok for young people. Most young people do not like farming, so losing the farmland is not a big deal for young people. They can easily get employed. But for those middle-aged and older people, it is usually difficult for them to get employed… Since it is difficult for older people to get employed, they sometimes feel like not making any contribution to their family. Also, they sometimes feel like they are losing their social value since they are unable to earn money. Most of the middle-aged and the elderly, in particular those who are 60 years of age or older, are unemployed.

The above stories revealed that people of different ages and health conditions have different attitudes and views on farming and the exploitation of their farmland. According to the Land Administration Law of the PRC, in China there is a socialist public ownership of land, i.e., an ownership by the whole people and ownerships by collectives. Individuals have land use rights, but the state and local governments may make requisition on land according to law for public interests, and shall give compensations to people who are entitled land use rights. Rural residents have few bargaining power regarding whether or not they are willing to get their farmland recruited for public use. While many young respondents are unwilling to farm, for those middle-aged, old, and disabled respondents, farming provides an important source of income. For example, respondent TW7, a 45-year old and disabled woman from Factory A, said that she could only find a temporary job in the factory because of her disability. She described her views on farming as follows:

> In the past, we used cattle to plough the farmland. Now farming has become a much more mechanical operation. Because of the improvement in farming technologies, farming has become easier. Usually, people hire professional farmers and they use machines to cultivate the farmland. Even though I am disabled, I am able to do farm work. I just need to be present in the field during the farming process. My husband does not work as well. We hire somebody doing farming work. We used to live on farming. But several years ago, our farmland was appropriated to build factories. We received some subsidy and kind of rents each year. But that money was not enough to sustain our living expenses. I started to work last year. That was the first time that I had ever worked. In my village, most young and middle-aged women have gone outside to work. I was almost the only one who had never worked before, since I am disabled and my family does not want me to work outside. I have got used to being at home. When I started to work in the factory, I often felt upset and that I was not suited to work. Sometimes, I feel panic at work and always want to go home. I have to get used to working though.

Rural residents have engaged in industrialization by many ways, such as integration into factory work. Industrialization has also changed rural residents' traditional lifestyle and their views on farming and rural life. Opportunities for out-migration are not open to all though. This study identified seven major factors that impact women's migration decisions and status, including economic and employment opportunities in one's home area, the financial status of the family, the generalization and normalization of rural-to-urban migration, the role of social networks, one's age, disability, and experiences and views on farming and rural lifestyle. One's out-migration decisions are sometimes motivated by personal factors, such as one's willingness

to see the world, to gain autonomy and independence, to change their fate, and to look for a better future. In the interviews, some respondents recalled that they decided to leave their home village because they felt "having no idea about the future" or "having nothing to do at home." In many cases, several factors intersected with one another, altogether impacting women's migration decisions and choices.

5.3 Rural Migrant Women Workers' Migration Experiences

5.3.1 Livelihood

This study finds that women workers have few control over their income and in many cases they are happy to or feel obligated to give their salary to their parents, parents-in-law, or other family members. Many respondents (47.4 percent) indicated that they sent money to their parents when they worked in the city as out-migration workers, and the remittances contributed to the improvement of the financial status and living conditions of their families. For example, respondent B8, a 37-year old returned migrant worker, talked about her experience of sending remittance to her family when she worked in the South.

> I went to Guangzhou in 1994, and got my first job in a handbag factory… At that time, I earned around 400 Yuan per month… The factory provided free meals and accommodation. My expenses were very low. I spent around 60 Yuan per month, and sent the rest of my earnings to my parents. At that time, we were really poor, and I felt that I could not spend all my income. I felt happy when I sent money to my parents… After getting married, I sent my wage to my parents-in-law. They only have one son (my husband). I thought that we should give the money to the elderly. My mother-in-law was

happy with that. Giving money to my parents-in-law, my husband would be happy as well. I have got used to that.

Rural women workers provide a social safety net for kin in rural areas. It is important for average families, particularly for families whose incomes are disrupted by industrialization. It has become a privatized way of funding risks and dislocations associated with China's rapid industrialization and inadequate pensions for the elderly. Many women work for their parents and children. Respondent B13, a 28-year old returned migrant worker, mentioned that she sent her earnings to her parents when she worked in Zhejiang province.

I sent almost all my earnings, around 1000 Yuan per month to my parents. At that time, I was still quite young. As a child, it was not safe to have so much money. It would be safer if I gave money to my parents. My parents have gone through many difficulties and hardships in life. It was not easy for them to raise a child. I felt happy being able to earn money for them. My earning contributed to the improvement in our financial status.

The interview data also indicated that respondents of different ages and marital status usually have different views about saving money and sending earnings to their parents. For example, respondent B28, a 28-year old worker, pointed out that,

Personally, I feel that the post-90s (those who were born after 1990) have less motivation or capabilities to save money. They are different from us who were born in the 1980s. In the countryside, many post-80s people have experienced poverty as they grow up, so generally the post-80s are aware of saving money. I do not think it is because of one's marital status. Instead it is more related to one's age and year of birth…I need to save

money, because I have a child. I want to provide the best living condition for my son, and also I want to save some money for him to buy a house and marry a wife in the future.

For younger respondents, paid employment provides income for their lifestyles. For example, respondent B27, a 17-year old worker, noted that she rarely saved money or sent her earning to her parents.

I often hang out with my friends and spend a lot of money. I neither give my wage to my parents, nor ask for money from them. Some of my friends save money, but they rarely give their savings to their family as well. Even if they save money, they mainly save for themselves.

While most respondents (73.7 percent) indicated that they can save money through out-migration and that their income helps improve the financial status of their family, some respondents indicated that they experience economic difficulties in the city due to the high costs of living in migration destinations. In this study, 26.3 percent of respondents mentioned that they could rarely save. These respondents noted that low earnings, increasing costs of living in the city, and mortgage commitments are the main reasons that they are unable to save. Some of them decided to withdraw from out-migration and return to their home areas because everything is expensive in the city. Responent B9, a 20-year old returned migrant worker recalled her experience.

I went to Zhejiang with my friend in 2010. At that time, I was 16 years old. I found a job in a textile factory…I did not really have any saving in the first year. At that time I was just an apprentice. I only got a minimum wage. Being far away from home, I have to pay

for everything. Costs in Zhejiang were high. I lived in the dormitory, and went outside every Sunday. The factory canteen did not provide free meals. Sometimes, I went to the local market with my co-workers. I never bought anything expensive. But still at the end of each month I almost had no money left. The living costs were high, so I came back home.

Generally working close to home is easier for women to reduce living costs and save money. Respondent B6, a 27-year old returned migrant worker, said that

> The living costs in the city were high. It was much higher than that of my hometown. At that time, I worked in a shopping mall, selling clothes. The employer did not provide accommodation, so I had to rent a place to live. I rented one bedroom. The rental was around 400 Yuan (around CAD 65) per month. After paying for the rental and deducting the cost of meals, I had almost no saving at all. It was difficult to save. I was a "yue guang zu" (people who use up all the money that they earn every month). I only stayed there for two years. Then I returned home. I found a job in a nearby factory. Working close to home is good. At least I can live at our own house. I do not have to pay for rent. The living expenses are much less than before. That helps me save money.

5.3.2 Experiences of Communication Difficulties, Fear, and Homesickness in Migration Destinations

There are some respondents maintaining that they experienced cultural differences and had the feelings of being discriminated against, being lonely and homesick in the city. Respondent B6, a 27-year old worker, left her village and went to Changzhou, a city in Jiangsu

province, when she was 20 years old. She described her two years' out-migration experiences as follows:

> I moved to a completely new place. It took a long time to get used to the new environment. The climate was different, the food, the local dialects…all were new to me. One friend invited me to the city, but soon after I arrived the city, she left. When I met with difficulties, I could only rely on myself. Sometimes, I felt quite helpless by myself.

Some respondents indicated that they experienced communication difficulties with local people and workers. For example, respondent B29 talked about her experience of working in Qingdao. She mentioned that she rarely talked in the workshop because of the dialect barrier.

> At the beginning, I felt that it was difficult to communicate with local workers. I did not dare to speak with them, because I spoke a quite different dialect. I just focused on my own work. I rarely talked. Also, I seldom interfered in other people's affairs. Maybe because I was too young, I often felt afraid.

Some respondents indicated that they experienced feelings of fear in alien environments. Respondent B9, a 20-year old worker, talked about her feelings as an out-migration rural migrant in the city when she first moved to Zhejiang.

> I went to Zhejiang with my friend in 2010… At that time, I often felt upset, because it was unsafe around the factory area. Anything could happen. My mom often worried about my safety when I worked there and told me that I should be cautious. Because of safety and financial concerns, I decided to return home.

Some respondents indicated that due to the feelings of homesickness and loneliness, they only stayed at the migration destinations for a short period of time. Respondent B23, a 17-year old woman worker, left her home and went to Qingdao at the beginning of 2013. She stayed there for only three days. For other respondents, discrimination experienced by them also provided the impetus to return home. These respondents indicated that they felt being discriminated against or looked down upon due to both their status as non-local outsiders and peasants. For example, respondent B12 used to work in several cities. She described her experience as an out-migration rural migrant worker as follows:

> I often felt that I was lower than others. When I went outside for shopping, I was very afraid that they could see that I was non-local, and I came from the countryside. I did not dare to bargain with people in the market. If I proposed a lower price, they would look down upon me, but if I pay a higher price, I would spend more money. Local urban people sometimes looked down upon us…That feeling was not good. So, I decided to move back to my own place. Even though I earn less than before, I have more confidence staying in my hometown.

The experience of discrimination also exists among workers who work in the same workshop. For example, respondent B30, a 28-year old worker, recalled her past experience of working in Guangzhou:

> At that time, I was still quite young. I had few social experiences. Most workers were older than me. There were around 400 workers in that factory. Most workers came from South China, such as Sichuan, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces. Within the workshop in which I worked, only two workers were from my home province. The first challenge

that I experienced as a non-local rural worker was the language barrier. I did not understand their dialects. There were communication difficulties. So I rarely talked with others. Local people were quite arrogant sometimes. I often felt being looked down upon by local workers. They sometimes grabbed work from me. We were paid by piece. That means, the more pieces that one could finish, the more one would earn. As an outsider, coming from a far place, I did not dare to challenge them. Also, I did not dare to tell my supervisor and workshop director. You know, our hometown was so far. At that time I was too young to challenge anyone. I thought that since I would work there for a long time, I should maintain a good relationship with my co-workers. I did not want to get into trouble.

As discussed above, respondents, in particular those who engage in out migration, often experience inadequate income, the feeling of homesickness, and being discriminated against in the workplace and in the city. On the other side, many respondents reveal that through rural-to-urban migration, they earn more income, and the remittance is an important income source for rural households, which contributes to the improvement of their financial status and living conditions.

5.4 Return Decisions

5.4.1 One's Marital Status, Childbirth Status, and Childcare Role

Chang noted that compared to men, rural migrant women are younger and are more likely to be single (2008, 57). Tan found that two-thirds of rural women leaving home are unmarried, whereas the rate for men is nearly half (2004, 248). As discussed in Chapter One (see Table 1),

in each age group, the proportion of male rural migrants is higher than that of women, but these gender differences are less pronounced among younger workers (Zhang and Deng 2013, 188). There is a direct link between women's migration and marital status. Rural migrant women often return to their home village for marriage or after getting married (Zhang and Deng 2013, 188). As Fan C. noted, women tend to return to their home areas before they are past "marriageable age" (2004, 199). Zheng and Niu found that while men and women have quite similar reasons for out-migration, they may decide to return to their hometown for different reasons (2013, 677). While men are more likely to return to their hometown because of economic or employment reasons, women are more likely to return to their hometown because of traditional gendered roles and the need of caring for children and supervising children who are in school. According to Zheng and Niu, usually men decide to return to hometown for the following reasons, including being unable to save money through their employment (18.9 percent), being unhappy with their work (14.1 percent), more opportunities in the hometown (11.9 percent), taking care of families (9.9 percent), taking care of child (8.7 percent), being unfamiliar or uncomfortable with life in the city (6.7 percent), and poor health conditions (6 percent) (2013, 649). Women often decide to return to their hometown for family-related reasons, such as marriage (20.6 percent), taking care of children who are at school (18.2 percent), being unable to save money through their employment (11.9 percent), childbirth and childcare (11.8 percent), taking care of families (8.9 percent), being unhappy with the migration experience (8.3 percent), and being uncomfortable with life in the city (5.3 percent) (Zheng and Niu 2013, 649).

Age, marital status, childbirth status, and childcare are the main factors that influence women's migration decisions. Most out-migration women are young and unmarried when they leave home, but move back to their hometown due to engagement, marriage, or childbirth.

Respondents indicated that they decide to withdraw from out-migration and return to their home areas because of "getting married," "planning to find a partner," or "having child." Around 59 percent of respondents return to their hometown either to get married, or after they get married. Respondent A4 was an example. She came from a small village in North-East China, and moved to Qingdao with her parents several years ago. She planned to return to her hometown to look for a partner.

> I plan to leave the city before the end of this year, because I have to go back to my hometown to find a partner. I am 24 years old. It is time to get married. My parents also planned to move back.

The interview data indicated that most rural women workers who have out-migration experiences often take out-migration as a temporary or short-term employment arrangement, unless the whole family move out to the same urban area together. Most out-migration rural women workers believed that they still have to return to their home areas, which is often related to the fact that most of their relatives remain in the rural areas, and the custom that "fallen leaves return to the roots," which means that one will eventually return to her place of origin. Also, most parents rely on their adult children for financial support, care, and emotional support as they get older. The close interaction among families determines that many respondents still have to return to their hometown for settling down. Usually, respondents return to their home village or buy a house or an apartment in the town or county near their home village. In addition, the expectation that married women should focus on household tasks, such as raising the child and doing housework, also determines that many out-migration rural women return to their home areas after getting married. The interviews also find that rural migrant women tend to marry

people who are from the same place of origin, and few people get married in the city. The local awareness is quite pronounced, which is partially related to the fact that most elderly rely on their adult children for care. Respondent B15 left her home and started to work in the city when she was 15 years old. She noted that,

> In our village, people believe that "once one is married and becomes somebody's daughter-in-law, if she still goes outside to work, even for just one year, the mother-in-law would be unhappy, and the husband might be unhappy as well." It is better to maintain a good family relationship. If I want to go outside to work, my mother-in-law would say that we do not need you to save money. "You just need to support the child and yourself. I do not need you to save, why do you still want to go so far away to work?" I do not want to have conflicts with them, so I would stay at home and work near home.

Generally, in the countryside women give birth to children soon after getting married, or even before getting married. Parenting is one main reason that respondents decide to return home and work in factories close to home. Ye, Pan, and He found that around 40 percent of rural women withdrew from out-migration and returned to their home areas to care for children, grandchildren, or the elderly (2014, 89). They found that more than 90 percent of women decided not to participate in out-migration to care for other family members, and among them 84.3 percent mentioned that they needed to take care of their children and grandchildren, and around seven percent had to take care of the elderly (Ye, Pan, and He 2014, 89). The experience of respondent B28 is typical.

> After getting married I returned home, because I got pregnant and had a child. In my village, few women outmigrate after having children, and it is often taken for granted that

women should take care of children at home. As their children grow up, women are expected to supervise the children.

Working close to home provides a solution for married women to combine local employment with parenting. Respondent B14, a 31-year old married woman worker, noted that,

> My child lived with my parents-in-law when I worked in the South. Sometimes they spoiled my son... Although the average salary in the South is higher than that in my hometown, the income gap is narrowing. Now I do not want to go out to work. After having the child, I feel that the income is not the most important thing for me. The most important thing is getting together with families. It is mainly for children. I want to settle down. I do not want to be floating. So I decide to return to my hometown.

Respondent B13, who worked in Zhejiang province for seven years, had recently returned home. She decided to move back to her home area for employment due to both child care and elderly care.

> My parents are getting old. There are some new factories established close to our village. Working near home, I can go home every day. I can see my child and my parents, and I have the time to take care of them... Before I got married, I had nothing to worry about. Now I must think about many things, the elderly and the child.

The interview data suggests that women are more willing to take lower wages, seek informal or temporary employment arrangements, and work close to family in order to maintain

work-life balance. Women are making calculations not driven solely by economic necessity, but also by family obligations and the work-life balance.

5.4.2 Women's Family Roles: Balance Between Work and Life

This study finds that age, motherhood, housework, and childcare usually influence women's migration and employment decisions as well as their employment status and experiences. According to the ACWF's investigation, women often leave the workforce because of traditional gender roles and domestic need of labor (Jiang and Yang 2013, 163). The percentage of women who left the workforce because of marriage, motherhood, and childcare was 52 percent higher than men (Jiang and Yang 2013, 206-207). In rural areas, 75.4 percent of women left the workforce because of housework, while only 13.5 percent of rural men left the workforce due to housework (Jiang and Yang 2013, 164). Furthermore, as Jiang and Yang noted, once women left the workforce, many of them (40 percent) had difficulties finding jobs again (2013, 207-208).

This gender difference is perhaps not surprising, considering that women are the main undertakers of housework. Comparing the data of rural and urban areas, around 76.5 percent of rural women who did not engage in any employment stayed at home, doing housework and caring for families, which was 61.5 percent higher than rural men, and 7.3 percent higher than urban women (Yang and Zheng 2013, 334). Around 74 percent of married women decided not to work due to childcare, and then elderly care (26.9 percent) (Yang and Zheng 2013, 334).

Housework and childcare occupies a large portion of the day for women. For example, respondent TW2, a 36-years-old temporary worker in Factory A, described her activities on Sunday as follows:

> Usually, I get up at 7 am. After having breakfast, I wash the clothes. We do not have a washing machine. My home is not here. We will move back to our hometown, so, we do not buy a washing machine. Hand washing is very time-consuming. I spend three to five hours, almost the whole morning, on washing clothes. Then it is the time to prepare the lunch. After having lunch, I go to a nearby market to buy meat, vegetables, and some daily necessities that we need for next week. And then I cook the supper.

Older women also spent a large amount of time everyday on housework. For example, respondent TW1, a 58-years-old temporary worker, described her daily routines as follows,

> Usually, I get up before 6 am. After preparing the breakfast and lunch, I go to work around 7 am. In the afternoon, I get off from work at 4:30 pm and ride to school to pick up my grandchildren from school. Then, I cook the dinner and wash clothes in the evening.

Both genders have pressures of earning money and caring for their children and aging parents. Men have more pressures of earning money, and are often taken as main breadwinners for the whole family. In rural China, it is taken as "losing face" if a man cannot financially support his family. Although in the past women were mainly taken as care providers and at most secondary wage earners in the family, in recent years, due to growing demands for money, women also are under pressure to earn money. In some cases, women earn more income than their husbands. In addition, most employed women have multiple tasks, including motherhood, childcare, and housework. Women are also expected to supervise children for their study and provide emotional support for their family. Most rural women workers are therefore sandwiched

between caring for their children and aging parents, and need to find a balance between work and family. For respondents in interior areas, although wages in urban coastal areas are generally higher than local wages, withdrawing from out-migration and working close to home have lessened work-life conflicts. As some respondents argued, "although the earnings are lower in our hometown, I can take care of my child by working close to my home" (B18), "many married women chose to work in factories in the vicinity, because they can take care of their children and family" (B19), "I decide to work in the vicinity, mainly because it is convenient to take care of the child. Otherwise, I would go out to work" (B21). On the other hand, returned outmigrant women provide a critical resource for rural development. According to respondent B30,

> There are many enterprises investing in our county in these years. Many people in our county are experienced workers who had experiences of working in garment factories. That is an important reason that companies invest and establish factories in our hometown. I think it is more convenient for us, for workers. Since we are close to home, it is convenient for us to take care of the family and the child.

Nevertheless, young and unmarried rural women, such as those post-90s generation still prefer to leave home and work outside. A higher income, the motivation to see the world, to gain independence, and to escape parents' supervision leads them to leave home and migrate to other cities.

5.4.3 Care Provision and Housework Support from seniors

There are generally four types of household structures in China's rural areas, including core families, empty nest families, intergenerational families, and traditional extended families

(Huang 2014, 316). Huang pointed out that the number and the proportion of core families, composing of the couples or couples with their children, has kept growing, but there are increasing numbers of "empty nest families" as the population ages and adult children choose to go out to work (2014). There also are more intergenerational families, because rural migrant workers often leave their children with grandparents, and finally, the number of traditional extended families, composed of families of three or more generations also keeps rising (Huang 2014, 316). Among these four different types of household structures, empty nest families and intergenerational families are temporary family arrangements, because many rural migrants, in particular women, return to their hometown after getting married and out-migration is often a temporary livelihood strategy. In my field research, I found that despite the growing number of core families, most families live very close to their parents or parents-in-law after getting married. Many respondents live on the same street with their parents or parents-in-law, and in some cases, their parents-in-law divide their own residence into two areas by building a wall or fence within the yard. There are close interactions among families via financial support and care provision. As Ma, Li, Tang, Wang, and Shi pointed out, the close connection and interaction among family members and between different generations are the main characteristics of contemporary Chinese families (2013). Many families rely on the help and aid from their relatives in both economic and non-economic terms, which become an important resource for many independent and core families to rely on (Ma, et al. 2013, 23-26).

Women in their middle and late 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s need to care for and financially support both their young/adult children and aging parents, and therefore, are sandwiched between their children and parents. Dorothy Miller originally coined the term "sandwich generation" in 1981. Initially, it mainly referred to women in their 30s or 40s who needed to care

for both their own children and their parents. In contemporary rural China, the sandwiched generation includes not only young and middle-aged women and men, who care for both their children and parents, but also embraces older women and men in their 50s or even 60s, who provide continued care and financial support to their adult children. Due to the lack of public care support in the countryside, rural families usually rely on senior family members mainly women for care support. Grandparents are expected to be caregivers. The ACWF's investigation found that more than 60 percent of respondents aged between 18 and 29 with children under three years of age mentioned that their parents or parents-in-law help with raising and taking care of their children (Jiang and Yang 2013, 209). Overall, among employed women respondents, the younger of the group, the higher of the proportion for those who obtain support from their parents, parents-in-law, or other relatives (Jiang and Yang 2013, 210)[28]. In addition, in most families senior family members work on the farmland although farming has become increasingly mechanized.

In this study, the majority of married respondents revealed that their parents-in-law take care of their children while they are working, including picking up their children from school, cooking, and supervising their children after school. Grandparents also cultivates the farmland for their adult children. Due to the change of the one-child policy in 2015, all couples are allowed to have a second child. Respondents revealed that one important factor that they take into account for whether or not and when to have a second child is whether or not their parents or parents-in-law are willing to and able to provide care support. In the meantime, as seniors are

[28] According to the investigation on Chinese women's social status, among 276 participants who are aged between 18 and 29, 36.2 percent of them took care of their child when the child is aged below three, 62.7 percent of them mentioned that their parents and parents-in-law took care of the child, and only around one percent of them mentioned that they relied on the market or other institutions to take care of the child, such as domestic workers and kindergartens (Jiang and Yang 2013, 210). Among 2820 women participants in the age group of 30-49, 43.7 percent of them took care of the child by themselves, 49 percent of them relied on their families, and 6.5 percent of them mentioned that they relied on the market and institutions. Among 424 participants who are aged between 50 and 64, 53.5 percent of them took care of the child by themselves, 34 percent of them relied on their families, and 12.5 percent of them relied on the market and institutions (Jiang and Yang 2013, 210).

living longer, many people are sandwiched between their grandchildren, adult children, and old parents. Due to the lack of a pension, older women also have largely participated in paid employment, but constrained by their age and caregiving, they are usually under informal, temporary or part-time arrangements.

Generally, the logistical support and care provided by one's parents or parents-in-law plays an important role in supporting women's participation in paid employment.
For example, respondent TW1, 58 years old, was a temporary worker in Factory A. Both her son and daughter-in-law worked in the same factory. Similar to many other people in their village, respondent TW1 and her husband live with their son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughters. They separated their original place of residence into two residences by building a low fence within the yard. She pointed out that her daughter-in-law was a full-time worker, who started to work several months after giving birth to twin daughters. Respondent TW1 helped raise children and undertake most farming and housekeeping tasks. She stayed at home for almost eight years, and started to go out to work two years ago, after her grandchildren started to go to school. Respondent TW1 initially worked at a nearby factory as a housekeeper, and later on, she came to Factory A as a temporary sewing worker. During the daytime, her husband sent their granddaughters to school, and she cooked for the whole family after getting off from work. She also had seven acres of farmland. She also worked on farms of her relatives and fellow villagers who went to work in other cities, or who were unable to cultivate due to disability, illness, or death of the main laborer of the household. Respondent TW1 earned around 5000 to 6000 Yuan per year from farming, which became an important income source for her household.

The experience of respondent TW1 revealed that the support from seniors for housework, childcare, and farming plays an important role in promoting their adult children's participation in

full-time employment. Childcare does not necessarily terminate women's participation in employment if there are other family members providing care support to the mother. Chains of care among women within the family compensate for the deficit of public care services in rural areas and promote women's participation in paid employment. There is an obvious absence of men in chains of care in rural families, which further enhances the traditional gender division of labor between men and women. The possibility for employed women to maintain work-life balance is enhanced, mainly by shifting the weight to the older generation, in particular to older women.

The following case tells an opposite story. Respondent TW2, 36-years-old, came from a small village in Jining. She was a part-time worker in Factory A. She left her home village and moved to Jiaozhou, a coastal city in her home province, with her husband after getting married. She stayed at home for three years after giving birth to her child, and had recently returned to work. She complained that in her hometown most parents-in-law help with childcare, but her parents-in-law refused to care for her child due to poverty and poor health. She explained that although she did not have to stay at home for the whole day to look after the child, she had to pick up her son from kindergarten, and therefore, she had to work as a part-time worker in the factory. She wished to work as a full-time worker in the factory to earn more income and have access to social insurance.

5.5 Summary

This chapter concludes that due to the commodification of rural society and the gender division of labor, women are expected to be both wage earners and caregivers. Out-migration and participation in paid employment has become a common choice for both men and women

from the rural areas to earn money. While women are more likely to withdraw from out-migration and return home after getting married, they again provide a reserve army of labor when factories move to rural areas to find skilled laborers due to the labor shortage trend and increasing labor costs in urban coastal areas. There also are growing demands for cash and multiple wage earners due to the commodification of almost every aspect of rural society, including food, goods, services, and human relations. Women provide a critical resource for industrialization and local growth, in the meantime they also compensate for the lack of care service in rural areas.

While both men and women are expected to earn income for the family, women are still the main caregivers in the domestic sphere. Based on official statistics and my interview data, this study finds that household work and caregiving occupies a large proportion of women's off-work time. Due to lack of public care services in rural areas, most families have to find private solutions, such as working close to home and displacing caring responsibilities to older women. The chains of care among women within the family have just reinforced the traditional gender division of labor.

CHAPTER 6 Rural Women Workers' Employment Status and Experiences

6.0 Introduction

This chapter examines rural women workers' participation in paid employment, their experiences within the workplace, the daily settings, employment arrangements, and their views on employment. This chapter has six sections. In the first section, I discuss changes in the urban labor market and factories' recruitment criteria, and then the implications of these changes for women's participation in paid employment. The second section deals with rural women workers' perspective on employment. In the third section, I describe the daily settings in which women work and live, and how respondents perceive their working environment. In the fourth section, I discuss women's different employment status (formal and informal employment) and employment arrangements (regular full-time, part-time, and temporary employment), and factors that affect these arrangements. In the fifth section, I discuss women's views on their employment and their satisfaction with their employment experiences. The sixth section sums up the findings of this chapter.

6.1 Changes in the Urban Labor Market and Factories' Recruitment Criteria

In recent years, changes in the urban labor market and in factories' recruitment criteria have promoted women's participation in employment. For example, Factory A gradually relaxed its recruiting requirements with respect to workers' age, educational attainment, marital and childbirth status, and the migration status, due to worker shortages in the past decade. The

findings based on observations in Factory A also apply to other factories. When Factory A was established in 2001, it mainly recruited young and out-migration rural migrant workers, or young, local, and married women who had already had male children. The factory management revealed that, compared to out-migration rural migrant workers, local rural workers were more likely to ask for higher earnings, better welfare, and more benefits. In addition, the factory management assumed that local rural workers were usually difficult to monitor, because these workers living at home were thought of as being more likely to steal factory property. Furthermore, it was assumed that local rural workers usually had a stronger sense of their legal rights, and were more likely to unify or strike for employment benefits. Because of these considerations, when the factory was first established, it preferred to hire out-migration rural migrant workers. To avoid providing women maternity leave, the factory preferred to employ married women who had already had a male child. The factory also had some requirements regarding workers' educational attainment, previous working experience, and personal appearance (for instance, the factory refused to employ those who look ugly or who wear poor clothes). As one 38-years-old woman worker recalled, "Getting employed used to be very difficult. In the past, if one woman in the village got employed, people would say 'how capable she is!'"

Starting from 2003, due to the overall trend of labor shortages, Factory A has gradually adjusted and relaxed its recruitment requirements. First of all, the factory adjusts its age requirement from the age range between 18 and 30, to the age range between 18 and 40. There is no further requirement with respect to workers' place of origin, marital and childbirth status, or skills. However, it is worth noting that although the age requirement for the recruitment of workers is relaxed, age is still one important factor that affects one's employment status. My

study finds that there are limited employment choices for women who are aged above 40. Older women are mainly concentrated in non-production or service sectors in the workshop, such as housekeepers or temporary workers. Also, the majority of these workers work under informal and temporary employment arrangements, and the wage for these workers is low. According to Li and Li, this is "age discrimination against women" in the labor market, because middle-aged and older employed women are often concentrated in low-income positions (2011). Secondly, as labor shortages and the instability of the labor force has become a major challenge for the factory, the factory has decreased requirement with respect to workers' migration status. In recent years, Factory A has mainly hired local rural women who come from nearby towns and villages. The factory management revealed that out-migration rural migrant workers tend to be more "floating" and unstable, because they are more likely to change their jobs and migrate to other cities. Also, the factory management pointed out that out-migration rural migrant workers who come from the same place of origin tend to unify and bargain with the factory, or leave the factory together. Therefore, in order to increase the stability of the labor force, Factory A has changed from preferring to recruit out-migration rural migrants, to mainly employ local rural workers. Consistent with the overall aging tendency in the Chinese society, there is an aging trend of the workforce. Workers have a large age span, ranging from 18 to 65 years old, although those who are aged above 40 are mainly concentrated in temporary employment. As one respondent recalled, "In the past, most workers were young and unmarried. Now the majority of workers in the factory are middle-aged women. Most workers are married and have children. There are few young and unmarried women in the factory." For local rural women workers, participation in paid employment has become increasingly popular. As some respondents

revealed, in their village many women have participated in paid employment. As respondent TW10, a 49-year-old disabled worker in the Factory A said,

> Almost all young and middle-aged women in our village have been employed. Most of my fellow villagers have gone outside to work, either as contract or temporary workers. Only those women who are 50-to-60 years old stay at home, looking after their grandchildren.

6.2 Rural Women Workers' Perspective on Employment

In this study, 59 percent of respondents were happy with their employment, 23 percent were unhappy with their employment, and another 18 percent said that they were generally ok with their employment, and it was just a livelihood strategy. The main reasons that respondents felt happy with their employment included getting along well with co-workers (24.4 percent), being happy with their work schedule (20.5 percent), working close to home (14.1 percent), being familiar with their work and working environment (13 percent), being able to maintain a balance between work and life (11.5 percent), being able to get connected with other people (nine percent), being motivated to work hard to earn money (nine percent), reasonable wages (nine percent), and being able to earn income and gaining financial independence (around seven percent). In the interviews, many respondents did not have high expectations for their employment, and were generally happy with their employment, as long as they received money through their employment. Many respondents maintained that they had limited employment choices and had to accept low earnings since they had low level of educational attainment. Also, many respondents did not expect to gain upward mobility at work due to the lack of self-development or training opportunities, and the onerous workload and family obligations.

The major reasons that respondents felt unhappy with their employment included the boring, repetitive, and exhausting nature of the work (19.2 percent), low wages (15.4 percent), and inappropriate schedule (15.4 percent). Other reasons that women felt unhappy with their employment included the paid-by-piece wage system, strict work discipline, poor and unhealthy working conditions, high-rate of job-related diseases, poor welfare, bad attitudes of supervisors, large working pressures, and being far away from career dreams and plans.

As for the meaning of employment, 88.4 percent of respondents thought that employment is important to them. Around 78 percent of respondents thought that through employment, they earn incomes and sustain their livelihood. More than 17 percent of respondents thought that women should work and gain economic independence. Around 15 percent of respondents thought that through paid employment, they get connected with more people, while 11 percent of respondents mentioned that they work for their family and children. Another 11 percent of respondents thought that employment is important because they learn new ideas and broaden their horizons through employment, while 9.6 percent of respondents felt that work is better than the boredom of staying at home. Also, respondents mentioned that employment is important to them, through which they earn money and improve their financial status, learn new things, gain value and respect from their husband and parents-in-law, kill time, gain confidence and more experience, and experience personal growth. The significance of employment is related to one's marital status. Some respondents mentioned that work is not important to them before they get married, but after getting married and having children, they found that work becomes more important to them, because it is a major livelihood strategy for women to earn income and support the family.

6.3 Uncovering the Daily Setting: The Workplace and Experiences of Women Workers

A study of the workplace and the working environment is important, because the workplace is a major space of women's daily life. This section discusses the workplace and the working environment of factories to uncover the daily settings in which women workers work and interact with others. The discussion mainly focuses on Factory A, as I have spent more time there, in total of 40 days over two field trips, as a participant observer on-site.

6.3.1 The Large Workload and Long Working Hours

There are four workshops in Factory A: a Cutting Workshop, a Sewing Workshop, a Washing Workshop, and a Quality Control Workshop (in which products are examined and packed). Most workers in the Sewing Workshop and the Quality Control Workshop are women, while in the other two workshops the majority of workers are men. During my fieldwork, I mainly stayed in the Sewing Workshop and the Quality Control Workshop.

Many respondents revealed that they often have large workloads and work under pressure to meet workload and quality-control requirements. Usually team leaders set up the total output target of the day in the morning, ranging from 800 to 1200 pairs of jeans, which depends on the deadline of the products, the number of workers in the team, and the producing capacity of the team. Team leaders often put a whiteboard on the wall, on which they set up the specific output targets, which are monitored every two hours (see example in Table 9). If any worker in the team does not accomplish their output goal during the day, the worker has to work overtime, which will not be remunerated.

Table 9 Production Target Board in the Factory Workshop (Pieces)

Team 8	Date: 2015/2/4	Time	10:00	12:00	15:00	17:00
Contract No: X08509	Front	Target	260	500	750	1050
		Actual Achievement (AA)	280	500	700	
	Back	Target	260	500	750	1050
		AA	260	500	700	
Check: Color; Needle Quantity	Sewing Together	Target	260	500	750	1050
		AA	260	480	730	
	Quality Check	Target	260	500	750	1050
		AA	270	480	750	

Factories usually do not respect the national regulations on working hours. For example, in Factory A workers work six days per week and often need to go back to work during the weekend. The regular working hours are between 7:30 am and 5:30 pm, with a short lunch break at noon. Many respondents noted that due to the large workload and the piece rate wage system, they often have long shifts. Generally workers work between nine and 11 hours per day. The Chinese Labor Law regulated that the working hours should not exceed eight hours per day and 44 hours per week. In Factory A, every week workers work around ten to 22 hours more than the regulated working hours. In addition, workers frequently work overtime. It is normal for workers to get off from work at 8 pm or even later. During the second round of my fieldwork, because it was near the Chinese Spring Festival, one of the busiest seasons of the year for most garment

factories, the factory had many deadlines to meet prior to the holiday and workers got off from work at around 10 pm everyday. Workers had very low remuneration for their overtime work. In chats with workers in the Quality Control Workshop, workers revealed that they were paid four Yuan per hour (approximately CAD 0.85) for their overtime work, and had a three-Yuan dinner subsidy. The food in the canteen is expensive, which cost between three and ten-Yuan for one regular meal.

Employed women usually experience intense work-life conflicts. For women employed in factories, these conflicts are exacerbated because of long working hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and the lack of flexible hours. Although work-life conflicts might be lessened by working close home or shifting caring responsibilities to the older generation, the problem has not been really solved. The WID approach that emphasizes liberating women and getting women out of poverty by engaging women in paid employment does not really solve this dilemma.

6.3.2 Strict Work Discipline and Low Trust in Workers

There is strict work discipline in factories. In Factory A team leaders held meetings everyday during which they called the roll to see whether or not all workers had arrived on time, and then emphasized the work discipline and workload for the day. Usually they spoke very fast and loud at the meeting, which sounded like arguing with somebody. Workers are not allowed to eat or drink in the workshop. They also are not allowed to talk, laugh, chat with others, use their cell phones, or look and walk around during work. The time that one stays in the washroom is under monitor as well. Workers are required to keep busy and attentive during work. Even for those who are able to accomplish their workload before off-shift times, they have to keep busy and help other workers in the team. As one worker said, “I need to keep busy. Even if I finish my

work, I should keep busy. If I sit down or walk around, the team leader will be unhappy and blame me." During work, team leaders and the workshop director often walk around in the workshop and monitor whether or not all workers focus on their work. Due to the strict work discipline and multiple monitoring from the factory management, women workers have very limited freedom and autonomy. There are some large security banners attached to the wall, reminding workers of the significance of their employment, and asking workers to work hard, safely, and efficiently. For instance, there are banners saying "If you cannot guarantee your employment today, you will not be able to sustain yourself tomorrow," "Build safety awareness and promote safety in the workplace," "Get distracted, then the accident will knock at your door," and "If you do not work hard today, tomorrow you will work hard to find a job."

There is a central controlling system in the workshop, and there are cameras in almost every corner of the workshop. Workers' activities are under constant monitoring. Only one entrance is used while other entries are always locked. Workers who live in dormitories are not allowed to go back to the dormitory during the daytime, for the purpose of preventing workers from stealing things from the workshop. All these monitoring systems show a very low level of trust in workers.

6.3.3 My Experience in the Field

The following text describes my experiences and feelings of working in the workshop as a participant observer.

The First Day in the Quality Control Workshop in Factory A

January 20, 2015

> There were more than 300 workers in the workshop, but the workshop was very quiet. Almost all workers focused on their own work. There was little communication among workers during work. It was quite cold in the workshop due to the large space and poor heating system. I worked at the regular checking procedure. The regular checking included checking every detail of the product, from sewing to the color. During work, I had to stand up and bend my head down. I only worked four hours for the first day. In the afternoon, my legs got swollen. My eyes became dehydrated. I also felt neck, back, and feet pain. The work was not very difficult, and required few skills. But the work was quite boring and repetitive. Also, it made people feel sleepy during work.

There were some workers noticing me, a new face, in the workshop. Several workers talked with me during lunch breaks and told me their experiences when they first started to work in the factory. One worker said that for the first two weeks when she started to work in the factory, she felt pain in shoulder, legs, and back, and after the first two weeks, she got used to the work and the pain. For most respondents, their job required little skill, but required great patience for the simple, repetitive, and exhausting work. Many workers work very hard at the cost of health. Occupational diseases, such as muscle pain, body deformation, and stomachache, are common among workers.

The workshop director selected a relatively easy task for me, checking the finished product. The workshop director also asked one worker to train me and another worker to rework on what I examined in case of any error. The workshop director and one team leader came to see me from time to time, and asked me what the experience felt like, and how did it compare to study in school. I only worked with workers on the assembly line for three days. Then, I went to

work with temporary workers in the workshop. Basically, temporary workers in the Quality Control Workshop simply worked on cutting extra lines of jeans. Temporary workers welcomed my stay with them, because my work could contribute to their piece-based work. Since temporary workers worked at the very back area of the workshop, and they were paid by piece and did not belong to any team, there was less monitoring. They often chatted during work. I took the advantage of working with them and joined their conversations. There were several respondents inviting me to have lunch with them in the canteen and go to the local market for grocery shopping.

I was particularly impressed with the experience of visiting one respondent's place of residence and touring around her village. During my second field research, respondent TW1 invited me to her house for dinner with her husband and her twin granddaughters. While respondent TW1 rode her bicycle home, I took a bus to her village. Usually on the way back home she bought ingredients from street vendors, and then cooked for the family. Respondent TW1 told me that meat is more expensive than seafood, so they rarely buy meat, but if their granddaughters ask for meat or when they have guests they will buy some meat. The day I visited her family she bought chicken necks, a popular alternative to pork and beef, which are much cheaper. Her husband was 60 years old, who was employed as a part-time security staff in a newly built high-rise apartment in the village. Respondent TW1 and her husband had a division of labor: while TW1 was responsible for grocery shopping and cooking, her husband was responsible for picking up their granddaughters from school using their farm tractor. Respondent TW1 also prepared food for her son and daughter-in-law, who lived just next door and often got home late due to overtime work in their factories. After having dinner, respondent TW1 showed me around her village, which is quite modern and urbanized. There is a main road, separating the

old and new village. On the left side of the road, there are several rows of one-story houses, and on the right side, there are newly built high-rise apartments, villas, a kindergarten, and a bus station. Most villagers still live in those traditional houses, while there are some young people buying an apartment there. Generally, the apartments and villas are targeted for urban customers or those who are wealthy in the village. However, by the time I visited the village, most apartments have not been sold yet. The security staff said that only one family moved into the apartments. Respondent TW1 and her little granddaughter were very proud of their home village when they showed me around. Most people in the village have been employed, and as people earn more income, their village becomes more modernized although most of them still could not afford an apartment. There are buses connecting the city and the factory, but most workers still ride bicycles or motors to work, which can save costs incurred by buses. Also, there is a fixed bus schedule and workers might not want to miss the last bus, as they often have to work overtime with short notice. To save money and have the flexibility, most workers ride to and from work.

There are some women workers showing interests in me. They asked me such questions as "Where do you come from? How old are you? Are you married?" Women workers are especially interested in my marital status. In their eyes, getting married and giving birth to a child is an important and unavoidable life stage for women. It is believed that the earlier one gets married, the better, because as women get older, they will be less attractive and competitive in the marital market and a good man of the same age might have been married out. Marrying a "good" husband is regarded as one most important thing for women, which may determine their fate. There is a saying that "men are afraid of choosing a wrong career, while women are afraid of marrying a wrong husband." Although in cities women tend to get married late, in the

countryside it is taken as abnormal for both men and women if they have not got married after the age of 30. Usually people get married at around 25 years of age. Even in the city, women who have not got married in their late 20s or 30s are usually taken as *shengnv* meaning "unmarried (left behind) women" who are unsuccessful or not charming. In the interviews, most women are cautious to talk about their marriage. One respondent from Factory C was unsatisfied with her husband and her mother-in-law. She asked whether or not I am married and told me it is very important to find a right person. I could feel the pressure and struggles that she had been experiencing with her marriage at that time. She talked about divorce, her disappointment with her marriage and also her hesitation of getting divorced. In another interview, one divorced respondent said that she was ashamed to admit herself as a divorced woman to her co-workers and fellow villagers, even though she decided to get divorced because her husband had a girlfriend. Although women workers become more independent and confident as they start to work and earn money, divorce is still a big issue for women in the countryside. Regardless of the reason for divorce, a divorced woman gains little empathy. Instead she might be blamed for lacking tolerance or patience, being aggressive, or having a strong personality. A divorced woman and any economic or life difficulties that she experiences after getting divorced will become a negative example or a bad role model for other people in the village. Undoubtedly, it is difficult for a divorced woman to get married again, while a divorced man in the countryside can find a new partner easily and soon.

During my stay in the field, many workers could not understand why a graduate student would be interested in knowing them and go to the workshop to learn their experiences. Some women thought I was there just to experience a different lifestyle. As some respondents pointed out, their daily life was nothing but simply and repetitively working in the workshop. While

some respondents thought that through participating in my interviews their voices and concerns might be heard by the government, the company or the public, other respondents thought it was good enough that somebody was interested to hear their life experiences and struggles. Many respondents do not believe in social upward mobility or positive changes in their life and workplace. Due to the lack of self-development and training opportunities, long working hours, onerous workload and family obligations, and their low level of educational achievement, most women workers are locked at the bottom rung of job and social ladder once they start to work in factories. Despite different understandings of my research project and their participation in the study, most respondents were happy and open to share their experiences and talk about their concerns about employment.

6.3.4 Women Workers' Mobility Across Different Job Sectors and Upward Mobility

There are some studies finding that in factories while men are concentrated in management and technical positions, women are more likely to be employed in those low-skill and low-technical jobs, which are thought of as women's occupational sectors (Du 2011, 112). In my study, respondents noted that they have limited mobility across different workshops and teams, and there are few professional training opportunities for them. In Factory A, the factory management restricted workers' mobility across different working procedures or among workshops, for the purpose of maintaining the stability of the labor force. As one team leader in the Sewing Workshop noted, "If everyone wants to be relocated to another workshop, it will be a mess. Also, it will not be a good management." Respondent TW8 worked in the Sewing Workshop in Factory A for three and half years. She tried to change to another workshop in the factory due to the onerous workload in the Sewing Workshop, but her request was rejected

several times. She was told that she had to resign first, and then return to the factory as a new worker. Due to the seniority wage system (wage growth with years of employment), many workers stay at the same working procedure and in the same workshop. Once workers start to work in one workshop, generally they are not allowed to change jobs except for the following situations: 1) another workshop needs a worker and the worker who wishes to change her job coincidentally meets the skill and technical requirement for the position; 2) one new worker has difficulty with learning the skills during the apprenticeship and it is possible to relocate the worker to another workshop due to labor shortages in the factory; or 3) the worker knows the factory management who may help them.

There are some but limited evidence of upward mobility. My field research found that most rural migrant women are concentrated in low-skill and low-technical job sectors, such as sewing workers, quality control workers, and temporary workers. Among workers there are different job positions, which are associated with pay and employment benefits. For example, at the end of the year, workshop directors receive an 8000-Yuan bonus, team leaders received a 4000-Yuan bonus, vice team leaders received a 2000-Yuan bonus, and regular full-time workers received a 500-Yuan bonus. Temporary workers had neither bonus nor paid holiday leave. In my interviews with the factory management, the management revealed that most workshop directors, team leaders, and the factory head are promoted from regular workers in the same factory. In Factory A, managers are mostly men, but the workshop directors and team leaders for the production are mainly women, who are workers as well and are promoted from regular workers to leaders in the workshop.

Getting promotion is possible. Respondent B31, the head of Factory B, was a success story and the role model for many workers in the factory. Respondent B31 used to be a regular

worker, and later on was promoted to be a team leader, workshop director, and the head of the Factory. The factory management indicated that they consider workers' performance, personality, and the team spirit as factors for promotion. Although promotion means a higher earning and better employment benefits, most respondents in this study showed little interest in seeking promotion. While some respondents noted that they have little chance for promotion due to limited number of positions at higher levels, more workers emphasized that they do not want to work as a supervisor or team leader which means more responsibilities, demands more time and efforts, and intensifies work-life conflicts. In each workshop, there is only one workshop director and eight team leaders for around 300 workers. Respondent B29, a 32-years-old worker, noted that,

> I have stayed at the same position without any change or promotion for more than ten years. There are few opportunities for promotion and future development.

There are some respondents arguing that they do not want to get any promotion, because a higher position is usually associated with more responsibilities and requires more efforts and time, which is especially difficult for those women who have got married and have children. For example, respondent A2, a 34-year-old team leader in the sewing workshop, talked about her experiences as a team leader as follows:

> It is not an easy task. I have 38 workers to supervise. If anyone cannot come to work, the supervisor has to replace the worker to make sure the team can fulfill its daily production task. I do not dare to blame workers, even if there are quality problems with the product. We have had worker shortage problem for several years. To maintain our workforce, we rarely blame workers. No one wants to be blamed. The workload, the responsibility, and

the pressures for team leaders are often large. I am the last one who leaves the workshop everyday. The income that the team leader earns is not high. I think if the wage for the team leader would be higher and could reward the time and pressures, I would be more willing to undertake all these responsibilities and anxieties.

Sometimes, a higher position means more pressures and even security threats. For example, respondent A2 noted that,

> There are conflicts between workers and team leaders. In the past, team leaders often got threatening messages or calls from workers. Almost every team leader in the factory has that experience. For example, if the worker wants to quit the job, there might be some conflicts between the worker and the supervisor. The factory regulates that a worker has to apply to quit the job at least one month ahead. Otherwise, the worker will not get the wage for that month. Although it is the policy of the factory, some workers thought it is the problem of the team leader and it is something personal. So, in cases when workers want to leave but still want their wage for that month, the threats might happen. The threatening calls or messages are more likely to come from out-migration rural migrant workers. Local workers rarely do that. Usually they target their team leaders. At the beginning, I felt uncomfortable with it. I felt it might be dangerous to be a supervisor. Later on, the more threatening phones that I got, the more I got used to those messages. My family does not want me to work as a team leader, because they think my job might be dangerous.

One year after conducting the interview with respondent A2, I saw her in the workshop during my second field trip. It was 7 pm and she looked tired. Her son played around in the workshop waiting for her. She told me that in the past year, she tried to resign several times, but was refused by the manager. She pointed out that,

> There is huge working pressure. I cannot sleep well at night. In particular, we have the worker shortage pressure. Now we only have 29 workers in the team. It is definitely not enough to accomplish the production task. We cannot fulfill the large workload. We have to work overtime almost every day. I have to work as a regular worker on the line as well. Due to the large working pressure, I have lost much hair.

In my interviews with other team leaders in the factory, "the quality and quantity pressures" and "labor shortages" were identified as the main reasons why they felt unwilling to be team leaders. Also, once team leaders resign from work, few of them return to work as regular workers, because the change of the position from a team leader to a regular worker is often taken as losing face.

6.3.5 Women Workers' Employment and Health Conditions

The interview data shows that the inappropriate work schedule, the piece rate pay system, and poor and unhealthy working conditions are the main factors that lead to workers' poor health conditions. More than 19 percent of respondents in this study revealed that their workloads are onerous and their jobs are physically exhausting. Around 15 percent of respondents noted that their work schedules are inappropriate, and they have long hours, frequent and non-negotiable overtime. One major source of exploitation of these workers is the piece rate pay system, under

which workers are paid by their productivity rather than by hour. The opportunity to earn more income motivates workers to focus on their work and increase the speed of production so that they can accomplish more pieces of work and earn more wages. Due to the intensive and constant work for long hours, many workers have acquired occupational diseases, such as neck, shoulder, back, and joint pain or deformation; poor vision; eye diseases; and, stomachache. In addition, the poor working conditions also lead to occupational diseases. Some workers said that they often have headache, tinnitus, depression, and insomnia due to factory noises. In the textile factory, due to the high temperature in the production site, workers often catch cold. Also, because there are dust and cotton fibers in the air, workers are more likely to develop lung diseases. Respondent A1, an 18-year-old worker from Factory A, noted that,

> During the working hours, we have to stand up. We cannot sit down, talk, or play with our cell phone, otherwise, we will be fined. Sometimes we need to bend at the neck and the waist. I often have back and waist pain. Many workers, in particular those senior workers, have acquired vocational diseases after working in the factory for so many years. Some workers have serious waist and back deformation. It would be better if we could take a break, do some exercises or at least have the time to walk around during work. But if the factory does not change the piece rate pay system, most workers will still keep working in front of the machine so that they can accomplish their daily output targets and earn more money.

Respondent B 29, a 32-years-old worker, has worked in garment factories for around 15 years. She discussed her health conditions as follows:

> Because of the paid-by-piece wage system, everyone works hard. The harder you work, the more you earn. I started to work in factories when I was 17 years old. After three years of working in the factory, I had some occupational diseases. I have serious back pains. This has often bothered me.

Due to the piece rate wage system, workers seldom take break. The time of having water, having lunch, and going to toilet is restricted. Usually workers work between 7:30 am and 5:30 pm with a one-hour lunch break at noon. Most workers have a very quick lunch and return to work immediately after having lunch. Due to the poor work schedules and short lunch breaks, some respondents note that they have stomach diseases. For example, respondent TW2, a 36-year-old temporary worker, noted that,

> We are not allowed to have lunch in the workshop. Some of us eat secretly at the water room of the workshop. Usually, we finish the lunch within five minutes and get back to work. We are paid by piece. No one really spends one hour on lunch. Time is money.

The problem of eating is more prominent in Factory C where the machines keep running for 24 hours. There are some respondents noting that they have to eat in the workshop, or they have to wait until they get off from work. As respondent C11, a 21-year-old worker, revealed,

> Usually we eat in the workshop. Because the machines keep running for 24 hours, we have to eat in the workshop, and have to work while eating. I eat very fast. The canteen staff brings food to the workshop and sells food there. Sometimes, I buy food but I do not have the time to eat. It is unhealthy. It is harmful to the stomach. I wait until I get off from work.

Respondent C9, a 27-year-old worker, also noted that,

> Most workers have to eat in the workshop. I never eat in the workshop, because it is very dirty and unhealthy to eat in the workshop. There is yarn in the air. Also, I have to look after the machine. I feel very busy at work. I do not even have the time to eat.

Many respondents revealed that the food in the canteen is so expensive that they only buy congee, steamed buns or rice from the canteen as the principal food, and pickles as dishes. Workers often bring food or some leftovers from home as lunch, but because there is no microwave in the workshop or canteen, most workers eat cold food. In many factories, the sanitation facilities are poor as well. In the three factories in which I conducted my fieldwork, the washrooms are dirty. There is neither hot water nor soap in the washroom, the workshop, or the canteen. Due to the poor facilities in the factory, few workers washed their hands before having lunch. The poor working environment and poor facilities have negative impacts on workers' health. As respondent C4, a 21-year-old worker from Factory C, noted,

> There are two entries in the workshop. We just use one entry and the other entry is always locked. During working hours, both entries are locked, because we have a certain temperature and humidity requirement to ensure that machines operate well. In the workshop, the yarn in the air and the poor ventilation makes it difficult to breathe. The working environment is so poor. In the winter, many people catch cold because of the temperature difference. While it is very hot in the workshop, it is very cold outside. I wear T-shirt and shorts in the workshop. When I get outside, I need to wear cotton-padded clothes. Sometimes we need to go back and forth. It is easy to catch a cold.

Respondent C4, a 21-years-old worker, further discussed medical facilities in the workshop. She noted that,

> There is a clinic in the factory, but there are very few medicine choices. Most pills sold at the clinic are not good. I bought some pills in the clinic before. But the pills did not work at all. Most of the time if you get sick, you have to pay the costs by yourself. We have to pay all medical costs by ourselves unless we get hurt or cut by the machine in the workshop.

Mental health is a common concern among rural migrant workers. According to a questionnaire sent to 4,280 migrant factory workers in Shenzhen in 2009, there was a high prevalence (21.4 percent) of clinically relevant depressive symptoms among factory workers (Mou, Cheng, et al. 2011). The depressive symptoms are attributed to many factors including "living far away from their rural families, familiar culture and social networks; living in factory dormitories; working long hours; and, leading disadvantaged and vulnerable lives" (Mou, Cheng, et al. 2011, 213-214). Due to onerous workloads, large work pressures, the lack of freedom at work, strict work discipline, and constant monitoring at work, many workers feel anxiety throughout work. During my second field visit, I witnessed the breakdown of a male worker in Factory A. Although this thesis focuses on stories of women workers, the following story indicates that despite privilege for men, men also have experienced great pressures and mental problems associated with their participation in paid employment. This story occurred at a special time. It was only one week before the traditional Chinese New Year, which was also the busiest time of the year for many factories. Both factories and workers experience large pressures of

completing the production tasks before the holiday. The onerous workload and non-negotiable work schedules impose significant pressures for workers. Women are not the only group who are vulnerable in their employment and the repercussions of this life are also for men too.

February 6th 2015, Friday

It was a warm afternoon. After having lunch and getting out of the canteen, I noticed that there were some workers gathering at the left side of the canteen and discussing something secretly. One young male worker got almost naked and looked very angry. There also were several managers. The man's father and brother were there, trying to get hold of the naked man. The worker kept screaming and tried to protect himself by not letting anyone get close to him. My co-workers said that the man had been outside for the whole morning and became abnormal last night. That worker came from a small village in Heze, an inland area in Shandong province. He had purchased the return ticket of February 9th to his hometown for the Spring Festival Holiday and tried to return home one week earlier than the regular holiday time. He kept asking his team leader and the workshop director for an early leave, but was rejected due to shortages of workers and the large workload during the pre-holiday time. During daily meetings, team leaders emphasized the output target goals, the significance of quality, deadlines, and work disciplines. Workers need to work till late night almost every day. It was extremely difficult for workers to ask for leave during this time. The worker asked for leave several times. After being rejected, he got very angry and disappointed. Moreover, because workers were paid one month late, he could not simply leave. As the roommate of the worker described, for almost one week, the worker had often been angry, depressed, and

under pressure. His roommate said that the guy kept saying that he felt very tired, had nightmares, and feared darkness. After the worker's father and brother arrived at the factory, the factory management called the emergency phone, and sent the worker, as well as his personal belongings, to the ambulance.

Throughout that afternoon, those workers with whom I worked kept talking in whispers, expressing their sympathies to that young man and his families. Workers talked with anger and were disappointed with the indifference of the factory management to the worker. The factory management responded to this "small crisis" quickly by paying the workers' wages and asking the workers' roommate to pack the workers' stuff, which meant that once getting out of the factory he was no longer a worker in the factory and the factory will no longer be responsible for the workers' health and medical costs. After this crisis, when I talked with the general manager and his assistant, they also noted that that worker's father and brother were very kind and honest, only asking for the wages. That male worker came from a small and very impoverished village in Heze. Generally it was believed that people from the countryside were easy to deal with, and unless they asked for further compensation the factory management would not give money to the worker. Not surprisingly, this story became a popular topic among workers for several days. Women workers tried to find an explanation of why that man got mad. The explanations included his personal health history, the work, and even spirits and ghosts, but from that afternoon no further news were heard about that man worker.

6.4 Different Employment Status and Arrangements

In this study, respondents have different employment status and arrangements, which affect their earnings, welfare, and social protection status. Overall, there are two forms of employment: formal and informal employment, based on whether or not the enterprise is legal and registered, and whether or not workers are entitled to social insurance. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), informal employment includes both employment in the informal sector and employment in informal jobs both inside and outside the informal sector (ILO 2013, 2). The definition of informal employment used to be mainly enterprise-based. As the understanding of informality has evolved in recent decades, the definition of "informal employment" becomes both enterprise-based and job-based. In 1993, the internationally accepted definition of "informal employment" referred to "employment and production that take place in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises;" while the new definition of "informal employment," based on discussions at the 90th session of the 2002 International Labour Conference, referred to "all employment arrangements that do not provide individuals with legal or social protection through their work, thereby leaving them more exposed to economic risks than others, whether or not the economic units they work for or operate in are formal enterprises, informal enterprises or households" (ILO 2013, 2-3). Both the nature of the employment sector and workers' social protection status distinguish between formal and informal employment. The three factories in which I conducted my fieldwork are all registered and formal enterprises. However, not all workers in these factories participate in social insurance plans. The social protection status of workers varies with the workers' employment arrangements.

Among respondents of this study, there are generally three forms of employment arrangements: regular full-time employment, part-time employment, and temporary employment. Regular full-time workers have labor contracts with their employers; work regular hours; earn

regular wages; and, have paid holiday leave, lunch subsidies, and employment benefits. In contrast, temporary workers and part-time workers have none of these benefits. Temporary and part-time workers are mainly paid by piece, hour, or day. Temporary/part-time workers belong to the category of informal employment, since they are not covered by insurance through their employment. Among regular workers there are both formal and informal employment arrangements, depending on whether or not the enterprise and workers participate in insurance.

According to the Chinese labor law, employers and workers should participate in social insurance, which includes pensions, working injury, medical, unemployment, and maternity benefits. Employers and workers are obligated to pay insurance premiums jointly. Although in recent years the insurance participation rate among rural migrant workers has been rising, the proportion of rural migrants who participate in "five insurances" is still quite low and uneven. According to the 2013 NBS rural migrant workers survey report, only 15.7 percent of rural migrant workers paid into a pension, while 28.5 percent had employment injury insurance, 17.6 percent had medical insurance, 9.1 percent had unemployment insurance, and 6.6 percent had maternity insurance (NBS 2014). Due to the low rate of participation in all forms of insurance, most rural migrant workers are concentrated in informal employment. According to the investigation on Chinese women's social status that was conducted by ACWF, in 2010, 51.6 percent of employed women in urban China were in informal employment (Jiang and Yang 2013, 159). The investigation shows that the majority of women work in informal employment but rates increase with age. According to ACWF's investigation, temporary women workers tend to be older: 55.8 percent for those aged between 18 and 29, 58.1 percent for those aged between 50 and 59, and 63.3 percent for those who are aged between 60 and 64 (Jiang and Yang 2013, 161). Also, the reasons for women's participation in informal employment vary among different age

groups. For example, for those who are aged between 18 and 29, marriage and childbirth are the main reasons that women choose informal employment (Jiang and Yang 2013, 160). For those who are above 50 years of age, it is difficult for them to get into formal sectors. Usually, women retire earlier than men, and some retired women come back into the labor force under informal employment arrangements (Jiang and Yang 2013, 160).

In some cases, women's participation in temporary or part-time employment is deemed as involuntary. For instance, women who are aged 45 or older or who are disabled have fewer employment choices, and thus their employment arrangement is taken as the result of having no other choice. In other cases, women's temporary employment arrangement is deemed as voluntary, because part-time employment gives them more flexibility to care for their children, farms, and household chores. However, as the ILO report pointed out, "the social context, social norms, and the extent of public support for child care determine the degree to which women actually 'choose' their working hours" (ILO 2013, 33). Thus, in some cases, temporary and part-time employment is "the only way women are able to hold a job and meet their care-giving responsibilities" (ILO 2013, 33).

Overall, a temporary/part-time job is easy to get, with few or no technical or skill requirements and no previous working experience required. According to the director of the Quality Control Workshop in Factory A, "It is easy for job-seekers to find a temporary job in the factory, as long as their eyes can see, they can use scissors, and do not destroy the clothes." One advantage of temporary employment is the flexibility that the employment offers. For workers, temporary employment provides employment opportunities, in particular for women who have difficulties to get into formal sectors, due to aging, or physical or mental disability. For the factory, employing temporary/part-time workers helps reduce labor costs, since there are no

regular wage, benefits, or insurance obligations for workers. In the three factories examined in this thesis, the average wage for a regular worker in Factory A is around 3000 Yuan per month. For temporary workers and trainees, wages range from 800 to 2000 Yuan per month. Temporary employment is often associated with "a shorter job duration than standard employment," "greater exposure to spells of unemployment," "less coverage of employer-sponsored benefits," and "greater fluctuations of earnings" (ILO 2013, 28).

In the three factories, temporary and part-time workers are mainly composed of women who are above 50 years of age, the disabled, and those who have small children (or grandchildren) to take care. Financial need and desperation drive them into informal employment. Usually, newly recruited workers also have to go through apprenticeships, ranging from three to 12 months, during which they work as trainees, and are only paid a fixed and small wage, and are not entitled to social insurance.

Four factors stand out in my interviews with respect to one's employment status and opportunities, including age, gendered roles, domestic demand of labor and farming, and personal health conditions. First, the factories often set up an age requirement for its recruitment of full-time workers. Usually, factories prefer to recruit women who are under 40 years of age. While Factory A mainly recruits women who are aged between 18 and 40, factories B and C generally hire women who are aged between 18 and 30. Although in recent years the age requirement for the recruitment of workers has been relaxed due to labor shortages, age is still an important factor that impacts one's employment opportunities. Some respondents who are 40 years of age or older revealed that although they are unhappy and unsatisfied with their job, they will not change their job and they worry that they will not be employed elsewhere because they might be thought of as being too old.

Second, caregiving and household work also limits women's employment opportunities. The following case demonstrates how age, childcare, and housework influence one's employment status and arrangements.

> Case 1: Respondent TW3 was a temporary worker in Factory A. She was 60 years old, and was one of the oldest workers in the workshop. She mainly lived on farming and the income that she earned in the factory. She started to work in the factory three months ago. She said, "My son and daughter-in-law are too busy to take care of the child. They have a store and have to go to the store every day. I stay at home for almost six years and took care of my grandson." After her grandson went to school, she started to work in Factory A. She had to pick up her grandson from school every day and sometimes attended parent-meetings for her grandson. Also, she was responsible for cooking for the whole family. Because of these responsibilities combined with age, respondent TW3 decided to undertake temporary employment.

Third, farming sometimes impacts women's employment opportunities. The ACWF's investigation finds that in rural areas, farming is still an income source for around 75.9 percent of women who were aged between 18 and 64 (Jiang and Yang 2013, 183). The rate of women's participation in farming varies among non-migrant rural residents, returned rural migrants, and the left-behind who remain in the countryside but whose families move to urban areas. Among these three groups, the rate of participation in farming is the highest (85.0 percent) among left-behind women, whereas that for returned migrant women is the lowest (62.7 percent). The latter group learns non-agricultural skills and gains capacity to participate in non-agricultural employment (Jiang and Yang 2013, 183). Among these three groups, the rate for women's

participation in farming is consistently higher than that of men (see Table 10). There also is a generational effect – while young and middle-aged women have largely participated in factory employment, older women still concentrate in farming. The ACWF's investigation found that the rate of participation in farming among rural women aged between 18 and 39 is 65.2 percent, while that for those aged between 40 and 64 is 83.2 percent (Jiang and Yang 2013, 184). My field research finds that as most young and middle-aged rural residents participate in out-migration and non-agricultural employment, some of them give their farmland to their parents or rent it to their relatives or fellow villagers. It is taken for granted that the elderly, especially unemployed older women are responsible for farming, but farming income is no longer enough to sustain a family. As a result, older women also seek employment, despite that constrained by age and skills they are mainly employed as temporary or part-time workers.

Table 10 Rate of Laborers' Participation in Farming in Rural Areas Based on Migration Status (%)

	Men	Women
Non-migration Rural Residents	68.7	79.8
Returned Rural Migrants	55.1	62.7
Left-behind Rural Residents	67.4	85.0

Source: Investigation on Chinese Women's Social Status by All-China Women's Federation and the NBS, 2010. See Jiang and Yang (2013, 183).

Additionally, one's health also impacts one's employment opportunities. In Factory A, among 20 temporary workers that I interviewed, five respondents have poor health. Among them, four respondents have physical disability and one respondent has mental problems.

Temporary employment provides job opportunities for these disabled women, but their health conditions determine their informal and temporary employment status.

> Case 2: Respondent TW7, 45-year-old, has a disabled leg. She works as a temporary worker in Factory A. The workshop director introduced her to the factory. She mentioned that it was the first time that she has been employed. Previously, she did not even think of looking for jobs due to her disability. She could only work at most eight hours per day. The workload for a regular full-time worker is often huge and the physical disability will not allow her to work as a formal employee in the factory. Thus, she has to work as a temporary worker in the factory.

6.5 Women's Employment Experiences

6.5.1 Earning Income

The commodification of rural society has led to growing demands for cash and multiple wage earners. Nevertheless, farm income is no longer enough to sustain growing financial demands. In this study, 78.1 percent of respondents noted that paid employment is primarily a survival strategy through which they earn income and sustain the financial needs of themselves and their families. Respondent A26, a 33-year old worker, mentioned that,

> We cannot merely live on farming. In case of flood, drought, or natural disasters, we will not have any income. Factory work means a regular and stable income source. As long as you come to work, you earn income every month.

The interview data indicates that in addition to be main caregivers in the family, women are also expected to be breadwinners for the family, due to the commodification of rural society

and growing demand for cash. Women's paid labor has become an important income source for rural families. Respondent C12 noted that,

> If I quit my job, my parents-in-law will be unhappy. They would say that there are factories recruiting workers. They will feel uncomfortable if I stay at home. They would ask me to look for jobs. My parents-in-law would say, "We have few savings. Your earning is important to us." My husband would also say, "Your income, the 2000 Yuan, is important to us. We need that money."

Many respondents revealed that they usually spend their incomes for daily household expenses and save their husband's income for larger expenses, such as building a house or buying a vehicle. It is often taken as rational because it is believed that usually men earn more than women. This division tends to reinforce the impression that men are the major and more important breadwinners for the family. Respondent B16, a 29-year old worker, noted that,

> After getting married, I spend most of my earning on family expenses. I buy milk powder and food for my child. I am responsible for the grocery shopping. We use my income for daily expenses, and save my husband's income. We save his income for large household expenses, such as purchasing property or vehicles and paying for our child's university costs in the future.

For some respondents, paid employment also means enhanced consumption of consumer products and improved economic and social status. For example, respondent B30, a 28-year old worker, noted that,

> I have been married for two years. We have just bought a house. We have our own plans. At the beginning, we set the goal of purchasing a house within three years after getting married, and buying a car within four years after getting married. We have already purchased an apartment. The next goal is to buy a car. I feel that life is quite fulfilling. We appreciate what we have earned.

6.5.2 Women's Voices at Work and Their Employment Choices

Due to the general trend of labor shortages in China's urban coastal areas, there is a shift from "the factory chooses workers" to "workers choose the factory" (Wang H. 2013, 19). In the interviews, many respondents pointed out that if they are unsatisified with her employment it is easy for them to find another job in nearby factories because of labor shortages and growing vacancies. Respondent C12, a 35-year old respondent, discussed her experience of quiting the job. She noted that,

> I have already submitted my quit application. I am unhappy with my work. First of all, the wage is too low. It cannot meet my expectations. Second, some workers in the factory exclude and discriminate against new workers. There are many workers leaving the factory each month, especially during the mid and the end of the month, after workers receive their wages. Sometimes, workers simply leave the factory and do not even resign.

She further noted that,

> There are many factories in the economic and development zone in the city. If a worker feels unhappy with her job, she can easily find another job. Many factories are recruiting workers. Usually, factories post their recruiting advertisement at the gate area of the

> factory. There is worker shortage problem in many factories. It is quite easy to get a new job. You just need to talk with the security staff of the factory, and they will introduce you to the Human Resources Department. Then you show your ID card. They might ask several questions such as your age, working experiences, and health conditions. But overall, it is very easy to get employed. Almost every factory needs workers. If one has working experience in another factory, it is easier to get employed. Usually, age and health are the two major factors to access one's qualification. As long as one meets the age requirement and can work, she can get the job.

Although most respondents chose to be silent when they felt unhappy with their employment, it happened from time to time during my field trips that women workers went to see their supervisors or workshop directors when they had questions about their wages. There are some respondents arguing that they do not fear of losing their jobs. Due to labor shortages, workers have gained more voices and bargaining power at work, but workers still have limited bargaining power due to the lack of labor unions. One important tool that the factory uses to control workers' freedom to leave the factory is withholding the wage payment. In all the factories that I visited, workers are not paid for the first month when they start to work in the factory. Instead, workers are paid one month later. For example, workers receive their wage for May in June, and do not get paid for their work in June until July. The wage for the first month is like a deposit. Workers can only quit their work and get paid after getting the approval of their quit application from the factory. Otherwise, workers might leave the factory, but will not get the wage of the first month. It is difficult for workers to leave the factory due to labor shortages. Usually, team leaders and workshop directors do not reject workers' resignation request directly,

but would persuade workers to stay, or ask them to recommend other women to replace them. Because of the wage system, many workers do not quit their job even if they are unhappy with their work. It is also believed that even if they change to another factory, things would not be very different. Particularly, those middle-aged and senior women have fewer employment choices due to the constraint of age. There also are some other constraints that discourage women to leave their factory, including the seniority wage system and the concerns about termination of the social insurance. As respondent A29, a 42-year old worker, noted,

> It is not easy to find a job once one is above 40 years old. Those good jobs are not for us. I also do not want to terminate my social insurance plan. As one ages, the cost of changing the job is higher.

6.5.3 Women's Status in the Family

There is some evidence supporting the positive impacts of promoting women's participation in paid employment and income-generating activities. The interview data shows the direct link between women's participation in paid employment and their improved status in the family. Through paid employment rural women workers not only earn a regular income, but also have more voices at home. In this study, 52 percent of respondents thought that their employment impacts their status in the family. More than 85 percent of respondents maintained that they are important decision-makers in their family, while 14.3 percent of respondents thought they do not have any voice at home. There are some respondents arguing that their status in family is related to their employment, because through employment, they gain more confidence and independence, and make a more visible economic contribution to their family.

Some respondents revealed that through paid employment women workers learn new ideas, broaden their perspectives, could better educate their children, and gain respect from their husband and parents-in-law. Some rural women workers emphasized that they feel having more autonomy and independence through participating in paid employment. About 17 percent of respondents thought that women should work, have their own job, and be independent. Through participating in paid employment, women gain more economic power, independence, and autonomy. Respondent B2, a 37-year old worker, noted that,

> Through work, I feel that I am capable. My earnings contribute to increase the income of my household. I would not have the chance to get to know new ideas if I just stay at home. But if I work outside, I will have the chance to broaden my perspectives and learn new ideas. Also, it has a positive impact on my child. I can tell my child what I see and learn at work. Furthermore, by interacting with my co-workers, I learn how to get along with people.

Respondent A10, a 31-year old worker, pointed out that,

> I think women should be independent. Women should go out to work. Every woman should be independent. We cannot rely on others. When you become independent, you will be respected. That is very important.

6.5.4 Paid Employment Means a Different Lifestyle

The participation in paid employment also means a departure from farming, rural culture, and the traditional rural lifestyles. Respondent B3 talked about her perspective on farming and factory work.

> If I do not work, my daily life would be cooking, cultivating the farmland, and looking after my child. Through work, I can earn regular income. Also, I am able to get engaged with more information and ideas and get connected with more people. I can better educate my child. Otherwise, I feel that I have lagged behind. Paid employment makes my life more meaningful.

Some rural residents, in particular the youth have negative impression of farming and rural life. Respondent A9 noted that,

> If I do not work in the factory, I would have to work on the farmland. When we are not busy, for example, in the winter, we would only stay at home. The life in the countryside is unlike that in the city. In cities, there are many activities, but in the countryside, we can only cook, wash clothes, and watch TV. Life would be very boring.

For some respondents, participation in paid employment means more than earning income. Respondent B14, a 31-year old worker, noted that employment means a more fulfilling life experience.

> Employment is important to me. People have to work, because staying at home is very boring. If one always stays at home, she would feel disconnected with the outside world. If one goes out to work, she will know more people.

In the interviews, 15.1 percent of respondents said that they are happy with their employment, because through paid employment, they can know more people and be less socially isolated. Respondent A9 noted that,

I often feel bored staying at home. If I stay at home, I will not have the chance to engage with new ideas. If I work outside, I have the chance to learn new things and broaden my viewpoints. The benefits of employment is not only limited to economic gains. I feel happy during work, because I know more people through work, and we become good friends, or sisters.

The interview data supports some assumptions of the WID approach and shows that paid employment is important to rural women workers, through which they earn wages, gain confidence and voices at home, and get connected with more people. As women become important wage earners for their family, women's contribution to their family becomes more visible and recognized. However, there also are many problems associated with women's participation in paid employment that are overlooked in the WID literature. Many workers expressed concerns about low wages, the piece rate pay, inappropriate work schedule, onerous workload, work-life conflicts, informalization of employment, poor working conditions, strict work discipline, health concerns, lack of self-development or training opportunities, limited access to social insurance, and the lack of freedom both in the workplace and in the choice to leave employment. These problems are sources of exploitation of rural women workers, but are rarely heard both by the factory management and the government authority.

6.5.5 Problems with Factory Work

Almost one quarter of respondents were unhappy with their employment experiences, primarily because of the onerous workloads and the repetitive nature of the work (19.2 percent), low earnings (15.4 percent), and inappropriate work schedule (15.4 percent). A boring factory

life, the poor management, and the unhealthy and poor working environment were also frequently mentioned as reasons why some respondents felt unhappy with their employment. Due to the piece rate wage system and the strict work discipline, workers have to work very hard and constantly in long hours. Respondent B8, a 37-year old worker, noted that,

> My work is very exhausting. What I think of everyday is working hard, earning more money, and sending more money to my family. Sometimes I feel that we live a repetitive life everyday. It is boring. We need to work from the early morning till the evening. We do the same thing almost everyday. There is little change day after day.

Respondent A1, an 18-year old worker, pointed out that,

> We have onerous workloads every day, which often seem impossible to finish. I need to work six days a week, and I often have to work overtime in order to finish my work. I often work until 7 pm or 8 pm. Sometimes I need to get back to work even on the weekends.

Despite with long hours and overtime work, women factory workers still earn low wages that are inadequate to sustain the financial needs of themselves and their families. Income poverty is still a common challenge among rural women workers. Although the official statistics show a constant wage growth for rural migrant workers in China since 2004 because of labor shortages, respondents in this study still find their earnings are low and it is hard to meet their financial needs as price grows and rural society becomes commercialized. As the Oxfam report pointed out, both the companies that seek to keep wages low and productivity high and local governments that seek to attract investment and create jobs have an incentive to keep labor prices

low (Hardoon, Ayele, and Fuentes-Nieva 2016, 26). The price pressures combined with the limited bargaining power of workers contribute to low labor price (Hardoon, Ayele, and Fuentes-Nieva 2016, 26). There are many respondents expressing their hopelessness and frustration with their low-paid employment. For example, respondent B17, a 29-year old worker, pointed out that,

> The wage is too low. We leave home in the early morning at around 6:30 am, and get back home at 7:00 pm. Despite the fact that we work very hard, what we earn is very low. It is just above 2000 Yuan per month. We are paid based on the piece rate wage system, but the piece rate price is very low. Workers at different procedures in the workshop are paid differently. While some workers are paid 0.04 Yuan per piece, other workers are paid less than 0.01 Yuan per piece. The added value for each piece is too cheap. What I can do is finish as many pieces as possible everyday so that I can earn more. But no matter how many pieces I finish one day, my earnings are little, because the piece rate price is very low.

When asked what would be a good job, many respondents emphasize that a decent wage is most important. Respondent C14 noted that,

> A decent income is a most important element of a good job. The wage should be at least 3000 Yuan per month. As for the working time, I wish to work eight hours per day.

The inappropriate work schedule, including long hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and the lack of flexible hours, is one prominent problem for women workers. While long hours make it hard for women to achieve work-life balance, non-negotiable overtime work exacerbates

work-life conflicts. For example, in Factory A, workers work six days per week, and from nine to 11 hours per day. Respondent A7 noted that,

> Regularly, we get off from work at around 6 pm, but we sometimes have to work overtime very late. My child is only eight years old. I wish I could have more time to spend with him in the evening. My parents help me take care of my son in the evening. But they could not supervise my son on his study. I wish we could have fixed and shorter regular working hours, so that I can have more time to accompany my son and supervise him in his studies.

Respondent A10, a 31-year old worker, similarly explained her dilemma,

> My son is seven years old. He is now in the first year of the elementary school. He needs my supervision on his homework, but I do not have much time in the evening. Sometimes, my husband is unhappy. We often have arguments about my working hours.

Overtime work is usual in these three factories that I studied. Some respondents pointed out that during the deadline period or pre-national-holidays, working overtime is normal. In Factory A, many respondents complained that they received the notification of working overtime at the last minute. Usually, the production management makes the decision of working overtime, and workers are notified to work overtime only a few hours before getting off from work. Some workers complained, "We often receive very short notice of overtime. Once we are told to work overtime, we have no rights to say no. I have no command over my own time. It seems that for our managers we are always available for any work schedule and we have nothing to take care of after work." Except for Sunday and national statutory holidays, workers have no other holidays.

It is difficult for workers to ask for a leave, and usually workers are not paid during leave. In Factory C, workers have to ask for leave from team leaders and workshop directors, and then the request is forwarded to the director for production for signature. Usually workers are reluctant to ask for leave, because it is often difficult to get the approval, and even getting the approval, workers are questioned in detail about the reasons, days, and plans of leave.

Due to long hours and frequent overtime work, many respondents reveal that they have little rest time and are unable to participate in professional training or further education out of the factory. For example, respondent A1, an 18-year old worker, explained that,

> I want to learn new skills, such as, accounting, because I want to change my job. I plan to attend a vocational high school. But I do not have the time to attend a vocational high school, because of long working hours. Usually we work very late in the night. It seems impossible for me to attend night school. I want to quit, but it is difficult to get the approval, because of the lack of workers in the factory.

There is little chance for workers to build human capital due to the lack of self-development or training opportunities. For many women workers, once they start to work in factories, they are permanently locked at the bottom rung of the job ladder. As some respondents pointed out, their current job matches their educational attainment and personal capability. Respondent A9, a 30-year old worker, maintained that,

> It is difficult to change the job. Due to my education and knowledge limitations, my employment choices are very limited. Without a university degree, I can only work as a worker. Most workers can only find a job in manufacturing or service sectors.

There are also many respondents complaining the boring and isolated factory life. In the interviews, several respondents talked about their experiences with the factory life. Respondent C1 noted that,

> I have been working in factories for several years. I feel like I have become foolish. We have to work everyday. Our daily life is sleep and work. I am completely disconnected with the world. I do not know how to use the Internet and how to use QQ (one most popular online communication tool in China). I know nothing. It would be nice to have some recreational activities.

Respondent C8, a 24-year old worker, had similar concerns.

> There is no computer in the dormitory. We are not allowed to use any electrical equipment in the dormitory. We would be happy even if the factory would give us a TV in the dormitory. During the rest time, we just eat and sleep. We have nothing to do except for playing with our cell phone. I often feel that I am disconnected with the world. When I go home, my families and friends discuss popular TV dramas. I have no idea about what they are talking about.

Respondent A15 discussed the limits of her employment.

> Most of the time we stay in the factory. I often feel isolated. In particular, for those who live in the dormitory, there is neither TV nor Internet in the dormitory. It is difficult for workers to learn new things. We have few connections with the outside world. I know few people out of the workshop. I am 24 years old, but I have very little knowledge about computers. Nowadays most people use the Internet. I wish I could learn how to use a

computer so that I could be connected to the outside world and learn something through the Internet. I want to start a clothes store, but my knowledge about clothes and fashion is very limited. I wish I could have learned fashion stuff through the Internet.

In addition, some respondents revealed that the interpersonal relations, in particular the management's attitudes toward workers and the relations between workers and supervisors sometimes affect their view of employment. For example, respondent C4, a 21-year old worker, revealed that,

> Our team leader is often angry with us. She frequently loses her temper to us, especially when she is unhappy. She sometimes yells at us. She rarely considers others' feelings. That often affects our mood. Some workers have quit. I often feel hurt and disrespected. When she is unhappy, we all feel nervous. No one argues with her. Most of the time, we just keep silent and listen to whatever she says.

Respondent A16 recalled her unpleasant work experience in another factory,

> I used to work in a Korean shoe factory. The supervisors often yelled at workers. We were not allowed to talk during work. The factory operated 24 hours per day, and workers worked alternatively and changed the shift every eight hours. If anybody could not finish the work within eight hours, as a punishment, she would have to squat on the floor for half an hour. I did not have the experience of being punished, but we all felt angry about this regulation. They did not respect workers. The work in Factory A is exhausting as well. But at least, our management is nice. Although we are just low-income workers in the factory, we feel being respected in the factory.

There is almost no mechanism for workers to express their concerns to the factory management. Workers' concerns are rarely heard both by the factory management and the government authority. There lacks effective labor union that represents workers' interests. Due to workers' limited and lack of collective bargaining power, women workers are more likely to experience exploitation. Many respondents revealed that they do not want to or fear to be "trouble-makers" to their employer. Despite job dissatisfaction, many respondents expressed their hopelessness that they are unable to change their job or their employment status. Respondent C1, a 28-year old worker, often felt too intimidated to complain.

> Usually we choose to be silent. If I complain, people would say that I am a troublemaker. It is difficult to find a job. I do not want to lose my job. Even though sometimes I feel it is unfair, I will not say anything. It is useless to complain.

Respondent C3 had the similar experience,

> We are just workers. We do not dare challenge anyone in the factory. We do not have the capability to do that. Also, we do not know to whom we should complain. Even if I tell our team leader, she does not have the power to change anything. For other leaders, such as workshop directors or the manager, they are high-level people in the factory. I do not think they would be available to us. We do not even have any chance to complain to them.

6.6 Summary

This chapter concludes that paid employment has complicated meanings for rural women factory workers. For many respondents paid employment is a major livelihood strategy through which they earn income and sustain the financial needs of themselves and their families, but many women workers have concerns about their low and inadequate incomes, inappropriate work schedules, work-life conflicts, and abuses in the workplace. Therefore, the WID approach that simply emphasizes integrating women into development and promoting women's employment is problematic. The WID approach, a prevalent development approach in China, needs to be replaced with an approach that regards the nature of employment, the working conditions, labor rights, workers' autonomy and upward mobility, workers' health, their self-development, work-life conflicts, gendered roles, and the traditional gender identities.

Due to the commodification of rural society and the deficit of care in rural areas, women are expected to be both wage earners and caregivers. Paid employment is important to reduce extreme poverty among poor rural families. For most respondents, due to price growth and the commodification of rural society, farm income is no longer sufficient to cover family expenses. Women become important wage earners for rural families. As revealed by many respondents, through paid employment, the financial status and living conditions of their families have been improved. These changes also have positive impacts on women's status in the family. Through participating in paid employment, rural women workers also get chances to get socialized, learn experiences and knowledge, and gain more confidence. Participation in paid employment also means a departure from traditional rural lifestyles. Based on the interview data, this chapter concludes some negative findings around themes regarding income, work-life balance, self-development opportunities, and employment experiences in the workplace. The nature of employment, rather than simply participation in employment, is more relevant to these workers.

First, many respondents expressed their concerns about low incomes that are inadequate to meet the financial needs of themselves and their families. Although they work long hours, most women still experience income poverty due to low wages, price growth, and the commodification of rural society. The paid-by-piece wage system and the extreme low piece rate price is an important source of exploitation of women, which motivates women to work hard and work on as many pieces of products as possible to earn more money.

Second, employed women experience more work-life conflicts. The traditional gender division of labor and the expectation that women are main caregivers in the domestic sphere has not been changed or challenged as women participate in paid employment. Inappropriate work schedules, such as long hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and the lack of flexible hours make it hard for women to achieve work-life balance. Faced by intensified work-life conflicts, rural women workers have started to find private solutions, for example, by working close to home or (and) shifting caregiving tasks to other family members. Today, it is taken for granted that grandmothers should take care of their grandchildren for their adult children who are employed full-time. This intergenerational division of labor constitutes the chain of care among women within the family, which reinforces gendered roles and the expectation for women to be caregivers. Despite these private solutions that contribute to lessen burdens on employed women, the housework, childcare, and supervision still occupies a large proportion of women's off-work time.

Third, the lack of self-development or training opportunities constrains women's employment choices and upward mobility. Once in factory employment, there is little chance for building human capital. Due to long working hours and intensified work-life conflicts for women workers, it is hard for them to acquire further education or professional training. As a result,

many women workers are permanently locked at the bottom rung of the job ladder once they start working in factories.

Fourth, many respondents revealed that they have been experiencing the worst working and living conditions; have limited autonomy, few other employment choices; work under informal arrangements; and, are more likely to experience physical punishment and job-related diseases. Generally workers have onerous workloads and large work pressures, and are often subject to strict work discipline and constant monitoring at work. They also have limited mobility across different job sectors and constrained upward mobility due to the intersections of the low level of educational attainment, their rural migrant and inferior gender status. Many respondents suffered from occupational diseases and mental health concerns, because of the onerous workloads, large work pressures, and long hours. For many respondents, the boring factory life, the poor management, and the unhealthy and abusive working conditions are also the main reasons that they feel unhappy with their employment.

CHAPTER 7 Summary of the Thesis and Implications of this Study

This thesis examines the experiences of Chinese rural women workers within the workplace, and with respect to education, migration, and employment. It provides an analysis of sources of exploitation of rural women workers in their daily contexts. Drawing upon interviews with 86 rural women workers and field notes taken during site visits at three factories in Shandong province, this thesis argues that women's experiences are deeply impacted both by their financial status and by the gender division of labor. In addition to the broader socio-economic contexts, women's migration and employment choices and experiences are also impacted by rural-urban disparities and regional difference, local development, and social support for women and families.

This study finds that due to the commodification of rural society and the traditional gender division of labor, women are expected to be both wage earners and caregivers in the family. Paid employment has complicated meanings for these women workers. Women provide a reserve army of labor in times of labor shortages, and have become a critical resource for rapid industrialization and local growth. Many workers have employment contracts with their employers, more employment choices, and growing bargaining power. For most respondents, paid employment is primarily a livelihood strategy through which they earn regular income and sustain the financial needs of their family. The interview data also shows a direct link between women's participation in paid employment and their voices in decision-making in the family. However, there are still many problems with women's participation in paid employment. In the interviews, I asked respondents questions, such as "What is the major problem with your migration or employment?" "What is a good job in your opinion?" and, "What can the factory or the government do to improve workers' status?" Many women workers expressed concerns

about low and insufficient income, the paid-by-piece wage system, withholding wage payments, inappropriate work schedules, onerous workloads, intense work-life conflicts, informal employment, unhealthy and abusive working conditions, strict work discipline, constant monitoring at work, physical punishment, occupational diseases and health concerns, lack of self-development or training opportunities, limited access to social insurance, safety concerns, and the lack of freedom or choice in the workplace and when leaving employment. There is little chance for women workers to improve their skills or qualifications due to lack of training opportunities and onerous workload and family work. There is limited upward mobility and other employment opportunities. Once they are in factory work, they are permanently locked at the bottom rung of the job and social ladder. Many women workers are unaware of their employment status. They do not know whether or not they have an employment contract, how their wage is calculated, and what are their rights as workers. There is almost no mechanism for workers to express their concerns or communicate with the factory management. Links between workers and the government authorities are also weak. Unless efforts are made to address these problems, employment might become a source of exploitation of women workers.

Contemporary China is at a turning point in its demographic, economic, and social transformation. As China experiences a transition from an export-oriented economy to domestic production, the slowdown of economic growth, economic restructuring and upgrading, and the widening income gap, Chinese economic and development planners should deliver a more sustainable, inclusive, equitable, and human development-based growth approach. In the past decade, the national government has produced a series of policies aimed at protecting labor rights and improving the social and economic status of rural migrant workers. However, the

implementation of the national labor law and social reforms at the local level is still ineffective and poorly monitored.

Both the state and corporations have responsibilities to protect labor rights. Based on the problems discussed above, the national government needs to monitor the implementation of labor law by organizing independent and regular investigations of factory conditions. Local governments should strengthen sound policies for the creation of decent employment for all and the protection of labor rights. The national government should put more pressure on local governments to monitor local factories and companies to respect labor law, protect labor rights, and build safe and decent working and living conditions for all workers. The national state has produced a series of reforms aiming at improving the social, economic, and employment status of rural migrant workers. While rural migrants are generally taken as a whole, current social reforms do not really take into account the specific challenges and struggles experienced by women, such as their precarious employment status, informal employment, caring responsibilities, including being sandwiched between caring for children and aging parents, and the intensified work-life conflicts for women. Economic and development planners should pay more attention to the specific needs of women, and treat rural migrant women workers as a separate social group, who simultaneously must cope with the intersections of being a woman, being a rural migrant worker, gender biases, rural-urban disparities, poverty, and multiple care responsibilities.

Companies should improve the working and living conditions and provide basic services to workers, including bus, health, and training services. Factory management should clearly explain the wage system, the paid rate price, working hours, bonuses and overtime pay so that workers can understand how their wage is calculated. Especially, factories should change

practices such as the paid-by-piece wage system, withholding wage payments, long working hours, and the lack of overtime pay and social protections.

This thesis may be of interest to Chinese economic and development planners, the social protection departments, and organizations that aim at improving the social status of women. There is plenty that the government and companies can do to protect labor rights and improve workers' status. The discussions below set out specific problems that need to be addressed and actions that should be taken by the government, local authorities, or industries.

First, despite long hours and overtime work, women factory workers generally earn only a subsistence wage that is inadequate to sustain their individual financial needs or those of their families. Income poverty is still a common challenge among rural women workers. As the 2016 Oxfam report on *An Economy for the 1%* pointed out, both local governments and enterprises have an incentive to keep wages low and workers have limited bargaining power to change this condition (Hardoon, Ayele, and Fuentes-Nieva 2016, 26). However, the commodification of rural society, the increasing costs of education and marriage, property costs, and the inflation of traditions such as the cash gift have intensified the need for greater income and the imperative to engage in paid labor. There are many respondents in this investigation revealed that their earnings could not meet their income needs nor reward the time or efforts devoted to their work. Today for the labor-intensive garment sector in China, labor shortages and growing labor costs have become the most crucial challenge for their success. While factories seek to minimize labor cost, for workers the wage is still low and inadequate for family needs. This study finds that the paid-by-piece wage system and low piece rate price constitute a major system and source of exploitation of rural women workers. It is also common among factories to withhold workers' wages for a month thereby prohibiting workers from leaving their employment without financial

penalty. The government should continue to monitor companies to increase minimum wages, pay workers on time (on a monthly or bi-weekly basis), and replace the paid-by-pieces wage system with the paid-by-hours system.

Second, long hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and the lack of flexible hours are common for rural women workers, which intensifies work-life conflicts. While most women especially younger women participate in paid employment, the traditional gendered division of labor in the family and the expectation that women should be the main caregivers remain unchallenged. Factory workers struggle with impossible work-life conflicts, because they usually have long working hours, non-negotiable overtime work, and have little autonomy or flexible hours. The official statistics and the interview data show that housework, childcare, and child supervision occupies the vast proportion of women's off-work time. Due to the lack of public care services, many rural women workers seek private solutions, such as working close to home or (and) shifting domestic responsibilities to older women in the family. In the process, a new and intergenerational division of labor has been formed in many rural families, within which women displace their parenting and caregiving tasks to grandmothers. There is an obvious absence of men in the chain of care among women within the family, which further reinforces gendered roles and the expectation that women are the main caregivers in the family. There are also many women seeking informal or part-time employment to maintain balance between work and life. Local governments should provide public care services or encourage the development of care industries, such as day care centers, and provide subsidies to low-income rural women workers to get access to these services. It is important to recognize the value of women's unpaid care work and promote the shared responsibility of both men and women for domestic and caring work. The inappropriate work schedule also presents security concerns for women workers. In

all the factories that I visited, workers work well beyond the maximum working hours per week as regulated by the national labor law. As a result, workers who live at their own places from nearby villages have to travel in the dark morning and late night. Usually, they ride a motor vehicle or a bicycle from and to work, which is not only time-consuming but also is potentially unsafe. Factories should provide safe and free buses for workers to travel to and from work, but more importantly, the government should put more pressures on factories to limit the overtime work, and hire more workers where appropriate; for example, when deadlines are short and production demands are high.

Third, there is little chance for workers to build human capital due to the lack of self-development or training opportunities. As a result, many women workers are trapped at the bottom rung of the job ladder. In my investigation, there were some respondents who imaged different futures and career plans such as opening up a store (a handcraft, tailor, or convenience store). There are several factors identified as major barriers to women workers' professional development goals, including financial difficulties, long working hours, onerous workload and family obligations, low level of educational attainment, few connection, limited access to the internet, and lack of self-development or training opportunities. Local governments should promote development-oriented programs that support women's entrepreneurship and encourage their economic and productive activities, by providing information, education opportunities, professional training, public care services, and access to financial services. In addition, both factories and local governments should provide Internet and communication tools to promote women's education and skills.

Fourth, factories should develop mechanisms, such as setting up a mailbox in each workshop, for workers to report their concerns about their employment to the factory

management. None of the factories that I examined had unions for workers. In Factories A and B, there were labor unions for management and administrative staff, but no union for workers. Women workers have less bargaining power and are more likely to experience exploitation. Many respondents revealed that they feared being labeled as "trouble-makers" by their employers, and thus they rarely unified to bargain with their employer. In this study, most workers had no idea about what is a labor union and were unaware of whether or not there is any labor union in their factory. Workers should know that as regulated by the national labor law they have the right to form and participate in worker unions and to collectively bargain with their employers.

Fifth, education is an important factor that determines one's employment choices and status, and impacts one's income and social status. Based on official statistics and the interview data, this study finds that rural women's education status is the lowest in terms of both average years of schooling and level of educational attainment compared to urban and rural men, and urban women. Rural migrant women are mainly concentrated in low-skill and low-paid jobs, such as factory work and service sectors, and have few other employment opportunities. While some respondents, especially middle-aged and senior women mentioned that their access to educational opportunities had been constrained by family income, younger respondents emphasized that their education status was impacted by multiple factors, including their parents' awareness of the significance of education for girls, gendered roles, the household need of labor, domestic distribution of economic resources and opportunities, and personal choices. Gender bias also leads to women's low level of educational attainment. Due to such traditional viewpoints as "*yangerfanglao*," bringing up sons for the old age, and "*chuanzongjiedai*," relying on sons to carry on the ancestral line, parents tend to give higher priority to the education of boys.

In particular in low-income rural families in which resources are limited, daughters are more likely to lose or sacrifice their educational future for their male siblings. For many respondents, the financial status of the family, parents' understanding of the meaning of education for girls, gendered division of labor in the domestic sphere, and gender biases toward the social mobility of male children are still important factors that impact women's access to further education. In some remote or very impoverished areas, poor education and transportation facilities discourage women to continue to go to school. Greater efforts are needed to give women equal rights and opportunities for education at all levels, including primary, junior high school, senior high school, and college and university, through the provision of financial support such as low-interest loans for women from low-income rural families, public services (shuttle buses from and to school), and the promotion of the consciousness of gender equity. In addition, some rural women decide to withdraw from school, because of their lack of confidence to gain achievement in school or worries of being unable to pass high school or collegage entrance examinations. It is important to encourage young women and promote their confidence, and eliminate all forms of discrimination or neglect of women and girls, in particular in schools and at home, the two major socialization institutions.

Sixth, rural-urban income disparity and rural poverty continues to constrain opportunities for women workers. The rural resident status and rural backgrounds are often associated with poverty and backwardness, which undermines both tangible opportunities for advancement and individual feelings of self-confidence. China has made "huge overall progress against poverty, but it has been an uneven progress" (Ravallion and Chen 2007, 1-3). Continued efforts are required in the long run to reduce rural--urban disparity and promote urbanization in China. On

the national level, it is important to promote sustainable and inclusive growth that reduces regional and rural-urban disparity and gap between the poor and the rich.

Seventh, free and legal mobility of people within the country should be protected. Since 1949, the Chinese government's policies towards rural-to-urban migration have shifted from strict control, to relaxed controls, and finally to the planning and facilitation of migration. The government should continue to facilitate the free migration of laborers from rural to urban areas, but multiple biases and barriers continue to challenge rural migrant workers on a daily basis. These barriers include discrimination against rural migrants in the urban labor market, high school costs for migrant children, the lack of social protection, and limited access to medical and public services in the city.

Eighth, this study finds that rural women are more likely to seek or accept informal employment, because compared to men, women are more willing to or have fewer choices but to accept informal employment arrangements with low pay and few if any benefit. In some cases, women seek temporary or part-time employment due to disability, age, or family care responsibilities. For many women workers, temporary employment is a forced employment choice. Through informal employment, factories take advantage of laborers at a lower cost. Usually factories pay temporary or part-time workers by piece or hour and do not provide any further employment benefit. Although informal employment allows some flexibility to better cope with work-life balance challenge, this flexibility comes at the cost of employment insecurity, lack of social protection, low income, and few employment benefits. Though many respondents revealed that they do not worry about their jobs because of labor shortages, in case of economic slowdown, temporary and part-time workers are usually the first to lose their jobs.

Part-time workers, their families and rural communities are more vulnerable to the shifting tides of international trade and demand.

Ninth, women workers work very hard and risk their health in harsh working environment. In my investigation, Factory A had recently started to organize workers to take part in free physical examinations and health checks. Factories should also provide regular training regarding safety procedures and physical and mental health services. During the long working day, workers should be allowed and encouraged to take regular short breaks and do some exercises and relax during the breaks. Factories should provide clean sanitation and washing facilities, including warm water and hand soap for workers. Local governments should provide relevant health services by setting up health centers and a health committee that is responsible for workers' health concerns in the local industrial zone. More importantly, the factory should provide a healthy working environment and clean up abusive regulations and work discipline within the workplace.

Today, the Chinese economy is experiencing a slowdown of the economic growth and a restructuring and upgrading of the economic structure. In recent years, the Chinese government attempts to steer the economy from rapid growth to medium to high growth. In the 13th Five Year Plan of China, it is predicted that in the next five years (2016-2020), the growth rate of the Chinese economy will remain between 6.5 percent and 7.5 percent. It was also referred to as the "new normal" of the Chinese economy in the official discourse. In terms of the economic structure, contemporary China is characterized by new industrialization driven by innovation and technical progress, an information society, rapid urbanization, and the modernization of agricultural industry. The future growth of the Chinese economy will rely more on innovation and technical progress, compared to labor-intensive industries. The manufacturing sector,

China's traditional pillar industry, is experiencing a challenging environment caused by labor shortage, wage growth, and growth in labor cost. The service sector has become increasingly important as the driver of the economic growth. In terms of the employment structure, there is a decrease of the population in agriculture and a growth of people employed in the service sector.

As the economic growth slows down, the overall labor demand may decrease. With the economic restructuring and upgrading, there is new and higher labor demand, and a growing gap between labor qualifications and labor market demand. Within these new contexts, the national government gives priority to employment growth, and encourages the growth of the industrial sectors that may lead to employment growth. In the 13th Five Year Plan, the Chinese government is committed to promote the development of labor-intensive industries, the growth of medium-sized and small enterprises, and the growth of service sectors to stimulate employment growth. Overall, these changes pose both opportunities and challenges for rural women. It is important for them to improve their skills and qualifications and build human capital to meet the new labor demand. On the other hand, as China enters a rapid ageing society, there is growing demand and pressure for the elderly care services. Due to the lack of an inclusive social safety net and social care services, family is still the main unit of the elderly care in the countryside. That means there will be growing financial and care pressure for the working-age population, and in particular for women due to gender roles. In the long run, how to deal with the economic trend, the new labor demand, and how to balance between participating in paid employment and care will become a constant challenge for these women workers.

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Appendix A Basic Information and Characteristics of Respondents

Code	Age	Marital Status	*Hukou* Status	Migration Status	Employment Status	The Factory
A1	18	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A2	34	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Team Leader	A
A3	23	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A4	24	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Regular Worker	A
A5	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Regular Worker	A
A6	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A7	31	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural	Regular Worker	A

				Worker		
A8	26	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A9	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A10	31	Married	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Team Leader	A
A11	31	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A12	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A13	37	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Team Leader	A
A14	33	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A15	24	Unmarried	Rural	Out-	Regular	B

			Hukou	migration Worker	Worker	
A16	36	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A17	25	Unmarried	Urban Hukou	Urban Worker	Regular Worker	A
A18	23	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Regular Worker	A
A19	32	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A20	27	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A21	38	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A22	36	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A23	24	Married	Rural	Local	Regular	A

			Hukou	Rural Worker	Worker	
A24	32	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A25	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Team Leader	A
A26	33	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
A27	27	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
B1	20	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B2	37	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Workshop Director	B
B3	30	Married	Rural	Returned	Regular	B

			Hukou	Migrant Worker	Worker	
B4	25	Married	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Regular Worker	
B5	27	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B6	27	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B7	32	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B8	37	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B9	20	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B10	23	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B

B11	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Vice Team Leader	B
B12	32	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B13	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B14	31	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B15	27	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B16	29	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B17	29	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B18	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant	Regular Worker	B

				Worker		
B19	30	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Team Leader	B
B20	26	Divorced	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B21	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B22	19	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B23	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B24	26	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B25	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B26	28	Married	Rural	Returned	Regular	B

			Hukou	Migrant Worker	Worker	
B27	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	B
B28	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B29	32	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
B30	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	B
C1	28	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C2	25	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	C
C3	33	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural	Regular Worker	C

				Worker		
C4	21	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C5	19	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	C
C6	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	C
C7	22	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	C
C8	24	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C9	27	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C10	33	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C11	21	Unmarried	Rural	Local	Regular	C

			Hukou	Rural Worker	Worker	
C12	35	Married	Rural Hukou	Returned Migrant Worker	Regular Worker	C
C13	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C14	20	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C15	20	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C16	17	Unmarried	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
C17	24	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	C
TW1	58	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural	Temporary Worker	A

				Worker		
TW2	36	Married	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW3	65	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW4	Unknown	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Regular Worker	A
TW5	36	Married	Rural Hukou	Out-migration Worker	Regular Worker	A
TW6	Unknown	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW7	45	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW8	38	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW9	Unknown	Married	Rural	Local	Temporary	A

			Hukou	Rural Worker	Worker	
TW10	49	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker	A
TW11	55	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Hukou	Temporary Worker	A
TW12	52	Married	Rural Hukou	Local Rural Worker	Temporary Worker (Retired)	A

Appendix B Information Letter and Consent Form

Research Investigator

Name: Yongjie Wang

Address: Department of Political Science, University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H4, Canada

Email: yongjie1@ualberta.ca

Background

I am a full-time doctoral student in Political Science at the University of Alberta. I am working on my thesis for a PhD degree. I would like to learn the migration and employment experiences of Chinese rural migrant women workers. About 80 young rural migrant women will participate in this study. Your contributions will be important to explore the research topic. If you agree to join this study, you will be interviewed. I have around 40 questions. I will mainly ask you about your migration experience from the countryside to cities, as well as your employment and urban life experiences.

Purpose

This study will help people know more about the life of rural migrant women in urban China. The findings of this study will be used for my thesis, research articles in journals and presentations at conferences. The findings of the study will not be used for any commercial purpose.

Study Procedures

This study will mainly focus on interviews. Each interview will last between 30 minutes and 60 minutes. I will collect some basic information about you, for example, your age, marital status, family role, etc.. I will also ask you some questions about your migration and work experiences in the city, how do you feel about your experiences, how these experiences change your life, and your future plan. There is no right or wrong answer. You can respond to these questions based on how you understand and feel about your own experiences.

The interview may be recorded on a voice recorder. I will transcribe the interview verbatim from the recording. I will use all or part of the transcript in the final report of the study. But you can also refuse to be recorded. In this case, I will mainly take notes of the interview. At any time during the interview, you can ask questions about this study and the interview questions.

I will comply with University Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. You can find the description of these standards at https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html

After I have collected the data, I may contact you and ask you whether or not you agree with my findings. You will have the opportunity to clarify any finding that I may have misinterpreted. However, you do not need to help verify the findings if you don't want to.

Benefits

You will not benefit from being in this study. But there are some reasonable benefits to society for doing this research. Rural migrants, in particular young and female rural migrants in China are often marginalized groups of society. I hope that the information I get from doing this study will help people better understand this group of people.

Risks

Generally, there are no reasonably foreseeable risks associated with this study. No questions will put your employment status at risks. If I learn anything during the study that may affect your willingness to continue being in the study, I will tell you right away.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to take part in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to be in the study, you can change your mind and stop being in the study at any time during the interview. You can withdraw without any penalty. You can ask to have any collected data withdrawn from the data base. Any data that you choose to withdraw will be deleted from the transcript and will not be included in the study. During the interview, you can refuse to answer any question without giving a reason. Even after the interview, you can withdraw any or all of your data from the study by May 1, 2014. After this time, the data will be included in the data analysis.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All identifiable information (e.g., name, initials, address and contact) will be removed from reports and publications of the study. The information collected about you during this study will be kept safely locked up. Except the researcher (myself), the data collected will not be available to any individual or agency. All paper documents are to be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The electronic files are to be encrypted. The data will be kept for five years following completion of the study. After five years, the data will be destroyed to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. Computer files will be permanently deleted.

You have the right to request a copy of the recorded interview and the accompanying transcript. You have the right to obtain a report of the research findings. If you wish to obtain any of these materials, please email me at yongjie1@ualberta.ca or call me at 001-613-716-9636.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study now or later, please do not hesitate to contact Yongjie Wang at 001-613-716-9636, email: yongjie1@ualberta.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 001-780-492-2615.

Consent Form

Study Title

An Intersectional Approach for Understanding Women's Empowerment - A Study of Young Rural Migrant Women Factory Workers in Export Processing Zones, China (original working title)

Research Investigator

Name: Yongjie Wang

Address: Department of Political Science, 10-16 Henry Marshall Tory Building; University of Alberta Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H4 Canada

Email: yongjie1@ualberta.ca Phone Number: 001-613-716-9636

Check Boxes

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?

□ Yes □ No

Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?

□ Yes □ No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?

□ Yes □ No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

□ Yes □ No

Do you understand that you are free to leave the study at any time, without having to give a reason?

□ Yes □ No

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?

□ Yes □ No

Do you know that after the study, you can still withdraw the data before May 1, 2014, after which the data will be analyzed?

□ Yes □ No

Do you understand that the interview may be recorded?

□ Yes □ No

Do you agree of using the recorder?

□ Yes □ No

Who explained this study to you? _____

Signature and date

□ Yes, I will be in this research study. □ No, I don't want to do this.

Signature of Research Participant: _____

(Print name): _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C Information Letter and Consent Form (Chinese Version)

信息和同意参加表格

研究者

姓名：王永洁

地址：阿尔伯塔大学， 政治学院 埃德蒙顿，阿尔伯塔省，加拿大，邮编：T6G 2 H4

邮箱：yongjie1@ualberta.ca

背景

我是阿尔伯塔大学政治学院的全职博士研究生。目前我在写作自己的博士毕业论文。该论文主要是研究从农村地区到城市的中国农民工女性。大概有 80 位农民工女性将参与这个研究中。您的贡献将对该研究的进行很重要。如果您愿意参与到该项研究当中，您将会接受一个采访。采访问题有 40 个左右。这些问题主要围绕您从农村到城市的移民经历，以及您在城市的生活和工作经历。

目的

该研究将会帮助人们更多的了解在城市打工的女性农民工。该研究的发现主要用于我的毕业论文写作，期刊论文发表以及学术会议报告。本项研究的发现不用于任何商业目的。

研究程序

该研究主要用采访的方法。每个采访需要 30 到 60 分钟。我将要采取一些关于您的基本信息，比如，您的年龄，婚姻状况，家庭角色等。在采访中，我还会问一些关于您在城市的移民和工作经历，您怎么认识您的这些经历，以及这些经历如何改变您的生活，和您对未来的打算。问这些问题的目的，主要是探索农民工女性是否变得能够为自己的生活和未来作决定。您可以按照您的方式和理解来回答采访问题。没有正确或错误的回答。您可以根据您自己的理解和感受来回答这些采访问题。

采访过程中可能会使用录音机。采访后，我将会把录音内容誊写成笔记的形式。我最终将会使用全部或部分的抄本来完成该研究的最终报告。您也可以拒绝使用录音设备。这种情况下，我将在采访过程中采取笔记的形式。在采访中，您可以随时就该研究和采访问题提问。

我将遵守阿尔伯塔大学对于人文研究参与者保护的标准从事该研究。细节请见该网页：https://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/General-U-Policies/20.7.html

收集数据后，我可能会联系您来核对您是否同意我的研究结果。您将有机会来澄清一些您认为我误解的研究结果。不过，如果您不想的话，您可以不用参与研究结果的核实。

好处

该研究具有一定的社会价值。农民工，尤其是年轻的女性农民工通常是社会中的边缘化群体。我希望通过该研究所取得的信息将有助于人们更好的了解该群体。

风险

总体上来说，参与该研究是没有风险。调研问题也不会威胁到您的工作。如果在研究过程中，我发现任何影响您继续参与该研究的意愿， 我将会马上告诉您。

自愿参与

您没有任何义务参与该研究。您的参与将是完全自愿的。即使您决定参与该研究，您可以随时改变主意并停止参与该研究。如果您决定停止参与该研究，您可以要求收回已经取得的数据信息。任何您选择撤出的数据将从调研记录中删除，并且不会在研究中被引用。在接受采访时，您可以决绝回到其中的某个或某些问题，并不需要给出理由。即使在采访之后，您可以在 2014 年 5 月 1 日之前要求撤出部分或全部的数据。在此之后，数据将不会在数据分析中被引用。

保密与匿名

所有能够识别出您的个人信息（比如，姓名，姓名的首字母缩写，住址和联系方式）将从该研究的学习报告和学术发表中删除。除了研究者本人之外，数据资料将不会对任何个人和机构公开。文字资料将会被封存在一个锁着的橱柜中，电子资料将会加密。该研究完成之后，这些数据资料会被保存五年。五年之后，这些数据将会被销毁来确保您的隐私。电子文件将会被永久删除。

您有权利要求采访记录的复印件和相关的文本。您有权利获得一份该研究发现的报告。如果您想获得以上资料，请通过邮件或电话联系我：邮箱 yongjie1@ualberta.ca 电话 001-613-716-9636。

其他信息

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研究题目

以多维度的方法理解妇女赋权 - 对中国对外经济开发区内年轻的农民工女性工人的学习

（暂定题目）

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Appendix D Interview Questions

1. **Personal Information**

   Age, marital status, childbirth status, place of origin, the household composition, the level of educational attainment, age of starting the first migrant job, length of employment in factories, and residence status.

2. **Views or Impressions on Rural Migrants**

   Have you heard of the term "rural migrant workers"? Can you tell me you understanding or the general impression of rural migrant workers in the city? For example, how do you describe a rural migrant worker?

   Who are rural migrant workers?

   Do you identify yourself as a rural migrant worker?

   Can you describe your current and past migration and employment experiences?

3. **School Experiences**

   Can you tell me about your school experiences?

   When did you start to work? What is your highest level of education?

   Why did you decide not to continue with your study? What did you do after withdrawing from school?

   What do you think of your school experiences (in terms of school performance, study interests, and challenges)?

   What does education mean to you?

   What is your parents' view on your education (in terms of the significance of education, the distribution of educational opportunities among children and attitudes towards your participation in school)? Does parents' view on the significance of your education affect your participation in school?

4. **Migration Experiences**

How do you see the migration of rural laborers from rural to urban areas?

Do you have any out-migration experience? If so, where did you go? How long did you stay there?

Why did you decide to leave home? How much do you consider your migration decision came from your own willingness or values (none, 20 % or less, 20% - 50 %, 50% - 80% or 80% - 100%)? Can further explain that?

Why do you decide to return home?

What do you think of your migration experiences? Do you have pleasant migration and employment experiences?

Are you satisfied or happy with your life in the city? Why (or not)?

Do you still have the farmland? How is local employment trend? Is it possible for you to find a job in your hometown village?

5. **Employment Experiences and Experiences within the Workplace**

Tell me about your work experiences.

Are you satisfied and happy with your work? Why or why not?

Are you happy with your work (in terms of the working and living conditions, wages, and relationship with managers and co-workers)?

Why are you unsatisfied with your employment?

Do you feel that you can generally change things in your workplace if you want to? Can you give me an example of your experience?

Do you think a paid job in the city is important to you? What does it mean to you?

Do you experience any discrimination at work? What are the reasons for the discrimination you experienced? Does the discimination experience affect your participation in paid employment?

Do you live in the dormitory? (If so), can you describe your daily life in the factory? Are you happy living at the factory? Why?

Do you struggle between work and life?

6. **Women's Views and Family Experiences**

What is a good job in your opinion?

What may influence or constrain women's participation in paid employment and their personal development?

Are you satisfied with your wage? Is it enough for daily expenses? Can you tell me the general financial and living conditions of rural residents in China today?

Generally, how much control do you feel you have in making household decisions? Control over all decisions [1]; control over most decisions [2]; control over some decisions [3]; control over few decisions [4]; no control at all [5].

Do you have voices in important decisions, such as decision with respect to your marriage, childbirth, and household expenditure?

How do you evaluate your status at home?

Do you wish to have voices in household decision-making? What influence and constrain your status at home? Do you think your status in the domestic sphere is related to your participation in paid employment?

How is the division of labor among your families (for example, in terms of care, farming, and household work)?

Do you need to take care of your parents or children? Who is responsible for taking care of them, and who takes care of them when you work?

Does marriage and the domestic labor demand influence your migration and participation in employment? Can you explain that to me?

What would you like to be or to do in the future? What might influence or constrain your plans? Would you like to change anything in your life? If yes, what do you want to change?

Do you think migration and paid employment will change your life, or the way you think and behavior? In what aspects or ways, do you think you are changed? Is it good and constructive for your personal development?

Do you have any suggestion for those who plan to work in the city? Do you suggest them to go or not? Can you explain why?

Do you think there are more efforts required to improve the social, economic, and employment status of rural women workers? Do you expect other actors, such as the state, the local government or industries to do something for women workers?

Do you have any other comments or questions?

Thanks for your participation.

Appendix E Interview Questions (Chinese Version)

1. 个人信息

年龄、婚姻状况、生育状况、家乡、家庭成员构成、受教育水平、第一次迁移和开始第一份工作的时间、工厂中就业的时间、居住状态

2. 对农民工的看法或印象

您听说过“农民工”这一词么？能请您谈一下对于在城市中务工的农民工的理解或整体印象么？比如，您如何描述一个农民工？

谁通常被认为是农民工？

您能描述一下您现在和过去的迁移和就业经历么？

3. 上学经历

您能谈一下您的上学经历么？

您是什么时候开始工作的，您的最高学历是什么？

您为什么决定不继续上学了？从学校出来以后您做了什么？

您怎么看待您的上学经历（比如学习经历和成绩、学习兴趣和挑战）？

上学对您意味着什么？

您能谈一下您的父母对于教育的认识么（比如在教育的重要性、受教育机会的分配和对您上学的看法等方面）？您父母的这些认识会影响您的上学状况么？

4. 迁移经历

您怎么看待劳动力的城乡迁移？

您以前有前往外地工作的经历么？如果有的话，您去过什么地方，呆了多久？

当时为什么决定离开家乡？您的迁移决定多大程度上是出于个人意愿，（完全不是、少于20%、20%－50%之间、50%－80%之间或者 80%－100%之间）。您能进一步解释一下么？后来又为什么决定返回家乡？

您怎么看待您的迁移经历？您的迁移和工作经历愉快么？

您对那段经历满意和开心么？为什么哪？

您现在在老家还有农田么？当地的就业形势怎么样，在家乡附近好找工作么？

5. 就业经历

您能谈一下您的工作经历么？

您对于自己的就业满意和开心么？为什么？或者为什么不满意？

您对于您的工作满意么（比如在工作和居住条件、工资待遇、与经理和同事之间的关系等方面）？

对于工作中不满意的地方有哪些？

您觉得自己有能力改变工作中不满意的地方么？有什么例子么？

您觉得工作重要么？工作对您意味着什么？

工作中有什么歧视么？为什么？这种歧视会不会影响您参与就业？

您住在工厂宿舍里么？（如果是的话）您能描述一下工厂和宿舍的日常生活状态么？您在工厂中住的开心么？为什么？

您的工作与生活之间有什么冲突么？

6.女性的一些观点和家庭经历

在您看来，什么样的工作是一份好工作？

您觉得影响妇女参与就业和个人发展的因素主要有哪些？

您对于您的收入满意么？收入可以满足日常开支和生活需要么？

整体而言，您在家庭决策中有多少发言权？一对所有的事情都有发言权；对大部分事情都有发言权；对一些事情有发言权；对很少的事情有发言权；或者完全没有发言权？

您在一些重大问题上是否有发言权：如自己的婚姻、生育决定和家庭开支等方面。

您怎样评估自己在家庭中的地位？

您是否希望在家庭中有发言权？什么因素影响和制约着您在家庭中的地位？您在家庭中的地位跟您参与就业有直接关系么？

您的家庭分工是怎样的？您能具体谈论一下么，比如在家庭照料、务农和家务活方面的劳动分配？

您需要照料父母和子女么？您工作的时候由谁来照料他们？

成立家庭、结婚和家务劳动会影响您的迁移和就业么？可以请您进一步解释或给出例子么？

您对于自己的未来有什么设想？您对于自己的现状有什么不满意和期待进一步改善的么？（如果是的话，）您最想改变的是什么？您将来有什么想做的事情么？请问约束因素都有哪些？

您认为迁移和就业是不是会改变您的生活？

迁移和就业有没有改变您行为和思考的方式？在哪些方面会有所改变哪？这些变化是一些积极的么？

对于哪些想去城市打工的人，您对他们有什么建议么？

您觉得在改善女性农民工的社会、经济和就业状况方面是否还需要更多的努力，您期待国家、当地政府或企业能做些什么么？

您还有其他想谈的事情或什么问题么？

谢谢您的参与。