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Gender And Internal Migration In Wuhan, Hubei Province, China:
Rural Hometowns, Factory Work, And Urban Experiences

by

Milena Urszula Janiec-Grygo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Geography
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Gender, Internal Migration, and Factory Recruitment Practices in Hubei Province, China

Milena Urszula Janiec-Grygo

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on gender and scale as key aspects of the rural-to-urban migration process in China. Its specific aim is to connect economic and social reasons for rural women's migration towards urban factory work. Contemporary large-scale migration studies show inconsistencies and contradictions concerning reasons for migration, especially as it relates to gender. Thus, migration research often emphasizes the positive social changes experienced by women workers, in effect signaling that the most important needs of women migrants can be satisfied without economic gains. In contrast, the proposed study seeks to show that social and economic reasons intertwine within women's experiences of and explanations for their migration.

The theoretical framework for the proposed study is based on postmodern understandings of gender, economy, and society. Data for the study was acquired through qualitative techniques, specifically through interviews with workers. The findings of this study supported the thesis that both economic and social factors informed women's decision to become migrants. In addition, this study revealed specific experiences of women workers related to migration. Thus, women decided to become migrants largely because their education allowed them to gain employment in urban areas and ability to gain independent income. Although social networks played a large role in the recruitment of rural women workers, they were not necessary to find employment. Experiences of

factory work reveal that the relationship between women and their employers are less restrictive than expected. In addition, rural women's experiences of being migrants in the city, although constrained by timings of factory work, encompass both material and social forms of consumption.

Overall, migration outcomes reflected changing social status of women in the rural areas. Thus, this research approaches migration as a dynamic process. Embedded in this process are fluid identities of migrant women workers. Through questioning the meanings of 'social' and 'economic' migration, this research adds to existing studies on gender and migration in China and contextualizes the value of women workers to China's economy. Alongside, the study moves away from shop floor politics to the wider space outside the factory, thus linking urban and rural contexts. In a broader sense, this research aims to inform theories related to the economics and politics of migration through adding a spatial component to social understandings of the gendered migration process.

Chapter One

Introduction

Since the economic reforms of the late 1970s and the setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in coastal areas, China has been experiencing a significant increase in the movement of people from rural to urban areas (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 211). Internal migration, regulated and unregulated, has been under scrutiny by researchers seeking to describe its scope as well as reasons behind it (Fan 2005; Gaetano and Jacka 2004). In such studies, two different factors emerge as principally influencing internal migration – the state and the individual desires of the migrants themselves. The state shapes migration by restricting migrants' rights to legal work and residence in the city, in effect supplying cheap and flexible labor to domestic and multinational companies. Moreover, individual migrants are seeking to participate in capitalist enterprises to fulfill desires for better opportunities. Young people, especially young, rural women, now have a chance to move to cities, to change their own future, to broaden the horizons, and to enjoy the new cultural landscapes that urban areas provide.

A valuable study of complex individual desires associated with women's migration is provided by Jacka (2005). Within her research, an especially powerful example of such desires is represented in the words of Zhou Ling, a migrant woman in Beijing,

The state [guojia] is very happy about this state of affairs. They have cheap labor and they can see it's very hard for you – for migrant workers – to cause trouble [naoshi]. There is an economist at Peking University – he is very famous. Once on TV he said – it made me so angry – “it's great all these peasants coming into the city, they are like water. When the city needs them we turn on the tap and let them in, and when we don't need them we turn the tap off and send them back home.” I was so angry – we're people, not water. You see we have no way out. He didn't have any thought for our needs as human beings. We need to marry and have children, we need to have a stable family and we need opportunities to develop ourselves. Young people want to change their fate, to go forward, to realize their worth. That is what they yearn for (Jacka 2005, 261).

Thus, while the state's control of migration, through the giving of urban residence and working permits to a small percentage of the rural population, constructs a perfect workforce for capitalist enterprises, for many young people staying in the village means limited prospects for better education and employment. Moreover, while the work undertaken by peasant women in the city is widely perceived as hard, low paying, and even unbecoming – as women are sometimes stigmatized for working and living unsupervised by their families – for many young women it is still a positive alternative compared to life in the village (Hew 2003a, 2003b; Lee 1998).

Currently, persistent unemployment and underemployment, in rural areas, combined with limited access to social benefits, has created large streams of migration in

China. Since there are so many rural workers entering urban areas, cities have become a place of conflict between rural migrants, on the one hand, and urban elites and government officials on the other. As L. Zhang (2001) describes it,

The emergence of this large mobile population has challenged socialist state control of the population, which has been primarily based on the household registration system (hukou) and is reshaping state-society dynamics in an era of increased mobility and marketization. In particular, the “congregating zones of floating population” (liudong renkou jujudian) that have mushroomed on the outskirts of Chinese cities are viewed as problematic by upper-level government officials due to migrants’ relatively autonomous socioeconomic practices in these newly formed community spaces (201).

The potential for conflicts around the presence of rural migrants in cities has thus not gone unnoticed by the government. In 2001, the Communist Party debated the elimination of the hukou system in some SEZs as well as discussed the hukou system as creating second-class citizens (Brooks and Tao 2003). Yet, the situation regarding government control of migrants has not completely changed. Moreover, negative assumptions towards peasants remain unchallenged in society (Zhang 2001). Since migrants meet often with prejudice and exploitation, and the process of migration itself is expensive, it remains open to question if migration improves or worsens the lives of rural workers (Zhao 1999).

The aim of this thesis is to explore women’s perspectives on migration in

economically growing China. Previous research has shown that young, single women are most vulnerable to exploitation among migrants, yet the possibility of working in the city also provides women with economic and social improvement (Hew 2003a, 2003b; Lee 1998). Based on such understandings, this research highlights the complexities of gendered narratives of migration. More specifically, it inquires into the migration of young rural women and their experiences of being recruited into urban factories, in terms of their own understandings of the extent to which they are being exploited to sustain government-supported economic reform in China (Fan 2004a; Solinger 2003; Wang 1998), or whether they view factory work as an experience that creates positive opportunities and improves their lives (Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein 2000). The next section elaborates on the specific questions that will guide this inquiry.

Central Arguments and Research Questions

The broad questions that this research asks are related to why and with what consequences migration occurs. These questions are based on two theoretical understandings of migration: the first that studies of migration cannot be conducted through isolated economic and social understandings, and the second that an interlinked economic-social approach to migration also requires an interlinked understanding of space. In general, migration studies often immediately treat migration as a gendered process, in that reasons for men's migration are viewed as being different from reasons for women's migration. In the process, the realm of women's migration practices is often treated as social, with their concerns primarily linked to marriage and their families. Men,

on the other hand, are supposed to migrate for economic reasons. Although some studies question this gendered dichotomy (e.g. He and Gober 2003; Roberts 2002), and although researchers are quick to notice that on the factory floor women become economic subjects (Lee 1998), outside of the factory, the focus shifts towards women's expectations from and towards their marriage partners and family, and away from economic processes. This gendered division between social and economic reasons for migration follows broader notions of separations between 'economy' and 'society', which are in turn reinforced by larger theoretical understandings of the relationship between economic and social processes. Thus, within Marxist frameworks, social structures are always subordinated in the last instance to reinforce economic imperatives and structures (McLellan 2000, 180). In contrast, within postmodern and poststructural studies, there is a tendency to focus on social and cultural issues, with economy often emerging as a secondary concern. Informed by such problems in emphases, the aim of this research is to provide equal attention to both economic and social realms. This becomes all the more significant since excluding women from economic reasons for migrations feeds the agenda of rendering invisible the ways in which utilization of women's labor is crucial to subsidizing the costs of capitalist production.

The interlinking of economy and society also requires an interlinking of the spaces within which notions of economy and society are articulated. Given that economic and social issues are widely discussed in terms of their appearance within urban and rural spaces, bridging the distance between notions of urban and rural does not only define migrant identity but also has to characterize migration research. For instance, economy may be understood in terms of 'urban work' and juxtaposed with the social 'status of

women in rural areas,' so that conceptual divisions are mapped onto spatial divisions. Moreover, economy may be represented by discussions of 'declines in availability of rural work' and social in terms of 'leisure in the city,' again separating events and acts that may be better understood when juxtaposed with one another. Alongside, discourses pertaining to spatial divisions are themselves highly gendered, so that bridging rural-urban divisions is part of a deeper engagement with meanings of rural-to-urban movement in the context of a focus on women. At a larger scale, links between rural migrant women and urban factory work are also key to understanding how spatial and gendered identities and processes are intertwined in the production of the contemporary global economy.

This research focuses on an inland city in China and draws on women's voices as a means to understand processes of migration. By concentrating on the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, it depicts the ways in which internal migration in China is not merely focused on the southern coast, while also illuminating how specific differences between rural and urban places provide the impetus for internal migrations. Wuhan is an important industrial and transportation center in China, but it is also a city struggling to compete with coastal SEZs, so that it enables an appreciation of the spatial divisions that characterize the contemporary economy of China. By working through women's voices, this research also supplements the transnational, national, and provincial orientation of migration studies by adding evidence from the position of rural hometowns, family homes, and women's bodies. These situated experiences of capitalist processes should not be omitted from migration studies but used in order to connect urban and rural spaces. The specific sub-questions of this thesis are:

- What led women to leave their villages and become migrants?

- What role do social networks play in the recruitment of rural women workers?
- What are women's experiences of factory work?
- What are rural women's experiences of being migrants in urban contexts?

Significance

Since the opening of China's market to the global economy, regulation and supply of women migrant workers has become central to its economic growth (Fan 2003, 2004b, 2004c, 2005; Solinger 2003; Wang 1998). Two major concerns that are especially evoked are, first, about producing a cheap and expendable workforce, and, second, about creating new economic opportunities for women workers. Therefore, this study continues and enhances inquiries into women workers in China.

Existing studies on internal migration in China distinguish between men and women's reasons for migration. Thus, they show that men are more likely to migrate for business reasons, whereas women mainly migrate for reasons related to marriage and family (e.g. He and Gober 2003). This study questions this gendered notion of reasons for migration by showing that women also migrate for economic reasons, and that social and economic reasons for migration cannot be strictly separated on the basis of gender. Instead, reasons for migration have to be seen as a meld of social and economic reasons.

This research extends existing studies focusing on rural-urban differences, especially in terms of the increasing rural-urban income gap (Fu et al. 2005) which is becoming an important issue in China. Explicitly, it will add to the study of migration by introducing new narratives on perceived economic and cultural differences between the country and the city by women workers. In this study, the identities of migrants are

viewed as dynamic – not fixed to one place, but linked to both origin and destination. Therefore, this research supplements studies of migration, by arguing that women workers challenge the urban–rural divide through the process of migration.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The next chapter critically examines the current structure of China’s economy, specifically the notion of ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics’, which provides the broader setting within which opportunities for migration arise. In addition, this chapter introduces agriculture and industry in Hubei province and the city of Wuhan. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical frameworks utilized for this research, including the gender and migration studies from which it draws and the postmodern and poststructural perspectives that guide its methods. Chapter Four describes specific methods and procedures used during fieldwork, including interview processes and choice of respondents. Chapters Five and Six detail findings from interview data. The division of interview data into these two chapters follows the movement of migrants between rural and urban spaces. Chapter Five focuses on women’s lives in rural hometowns, the reasons for their participation in migration, and social networks that draw women towards cities and factory work. Chapter Six focuses on routines of factory work, relationships between women, their co-workers and management, experiences of city life, and the outcomes of migration in terms of experiences of return. The concluding chapter reflects on the potential social and economic transformations of women’s lives as a consequence of rural-urban migration.

Chapter Two

China's Economy and Spatial Divisions of Development

This chapter introduces the broader setting for this research, including both national and regional characteristics of China's economy. It begins by following debates over the extent to which China can be classified as a socialist or capitalist economy. In the process, it outlines broader national planning policies and consequent regional differentiations in levels of development. The last two sections detail the state of Hubei's rural economy and Wuhan's urban economy.

Socialism, Capitalism, and 'Chinese Characteristics'

Within existing studies, the Chinese economic model is often described either as 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', or as 'Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics.'. The Communist Party of China refers to its economic model as 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' that encompasses market economy and socialism (Peoples' Daily Online). Alongside, economic scholars, writing both within China as well as within the Western academy (e.g., Huang 2008; Karmel 1994), point to the Chinese economic model as a hybrid; namely, accommodating characteristics of both capitalist markets and socialist planning (e.g., Burkett and Hart-Landsberg 2004, Breslin 2004, Tang 1998) thus

arguing that it should be considered 'Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics'. Here, researchers try to understand the Chinese hybrid model through the prism of comparisons with European, American, and Japanese economic models (Redding 1996). This section will detail these current academic discussions on China's economy. The argument is divided into three parts. First, it seeks to prove that the discourse about 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' mainly used by the China's Communist Party is open to challenge. Second, it analyses the problems that also attach to academic discussions of 'Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics'. Third, it concludes with a critique of a purely structural understanding of a singular 'Capitalism' in China.

Throughout its recent reforms, China's Communist Party has emphasized the market over social reforms within the Chinese economic model. 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' thus does not accurately describe economic changes within the country. A number of studies have dealt with this dichotomy between state rhetoric and actual economic changes. Accordingly, researchers who have placed China in the capitalist economic system facilitated by the political communist regime have challenged the assumption that the Chinese economy follows a socialist model (Burkett 2005; Breslin 2004; Tang 1998).

According to Breslin (2004), when Deng Xiaoping promoted economic reforms he used ideas about market and planning to show that the differences between the two in both capitalist and socialist economic systems are actually more blurred than clear-cut. Following Deng's push for the maintaining of capitalist market practices, the Chinese government defined the economy as a 'socialist market economy (Breslin 2004, 7).' The People's Republic constitution reflects this change and states that,

The state owned economy, i.e. the socialist economy with ownership by the people as a whole, is the leading force in the national economy. The state will ensure the consolidation and development to the state-owned economy (Breslin 2004, 7,8).

The communist party maintains that the difference lies in the prioritizing of the ‘people ownership’ (Socialist model) over ‘private ownership’ (Capitalist model) (The 17th CPC National Congress 2007). Hence, Deng defended his view in the following way:

The fundamental difference between socialism and capitalism does not lie in the question of whether the planning mechanism or the market mechanism plays a larger role. [The] planned economy does not equal socialism, because planning also exists in capitalism; neither does [the] market economy equal capitalism, because the market also exists in socialism. Both planning and market are just economic means (Breslin 2004, 7)

Breslin (2004) remarked that many neo-liberal researchers view China as a highly controlled market with a greatly pronounced role of the government in the economy (21). In effect, however, the Chinese government further liberalized the market and since 2002 the Party accepted entrepreneurs from the private sector into its ranks as a so-called ‘advancement element’ (Breslin 20) even as political power remained in the hands of the

Communist Party, including revolutionary elders, military leaders, and members of the Central Committee (Shirk 1993, 10).

Magdoff and Foster (2004) have pointed out the downfalls of the current marketization in China:

The ideological struggle that takes place is linked with differences over the rate and direction of growth. Unfortunately, growth in itself is the deity worshipped by “capitalist roaders”, whereas the crucial questions are: What kind of growth? For what purpose? For whose benefit? Should the growth be geared toward satisfying the desires of intellectuals, managers, business owners, and the bureaucratic political groups and classes? Or, should that direction of growth be oriented towards improving living standards and quality of life for the mass of the people?

Similar concerns about promoting economic growth as the main goal of the party and abandoning (or lessening) of the social protection and social development for the people were raised by Russian Proletarskaya Gazeta¹. In the view of Proletarskaya Gazeta, the Chinese government uses the communist ideology to pave the way for capitalism. Thus, it states that,

As their ideological idol, at the present time the Chinese revisionists are propagating Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese Gorbachev. The Chinese revisionists, covering themselves with Marxist phraseology about the building of 'socialism

¹ Proletarskaya Gazeta is a publication backed by Russian Marxist-Leninist movement.

with Chinese characteristics' and with superficial Communist attributes, are building a savage capitalism based on the brutal exploitation of the Chinese proletariat. This revisionist lie politically disorients the oppressed masses and holds in check the process of class ripening of the proletariat (Proletarskaya Gazeta 2003,1).

Therefore, according to the Gazeta, the Chinese government follows a Western capitalist economic model, while socialist agenda has no practical influence over the direction of the economy so that 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' does not correctly depict Chinese economic model. In some studies, the Chinese economy emerges as a specific case of capitalism, with capitalism itself understood not as a fixed economic entity but as context-specific economic process. Thus, Walker and Buck (2007) explained the relationship between capitalism and China in the following way, 'Like a virus, capitalism cannot survive without living hosts, whose DNA it alters in order to reproduce' (39-40). In this understanding, capitalism does not exist in its pure form anywhere, and instead of being a clear economic mode of production or point of destination, it remains a process set in a particular place. In the case of China, not only is the economic system by and large capitalist, but it can be better executed due to the political system that allows the state to take on paternalistic role, allowing for the exploitation of its citizens (Magdoff and Bellamy-Foster. 2004).

A number of researchers discuss Chinese capitalism in terms of 'capitalism with Chinese characteristics' (e.g., Huang 2008; Karmel 1994). For instance, Karmel (1994) justifies uniqueness of China by pointing towards the "combination of public, semi-

public and private management, with decentralized distribution of responsibilities profits and rewards (1120). In similar vein, other scholars evaluate the Chinese economy as a 'strange case' of capitalism (Harvey 2005). Wu (2008), however, provides an insightful criticism of Harvey's (2005) viewpoint of the Chinese economy as a abnormal capitalist model. He notes that Harvey, '[...] emphasizes that China is a 'strange case' as the outcome has been a particular kind of neoliberalism inter-digitated with authoritarian centralized control (Wu 2008, 1093)'. Wu's evaluation of Harvey's argument is twofold. First, Wu seeks to portray Chinese system as operating within the neoliberalisation model. Second, he proposes rethinking of the presupposed 'authoritarian control' over the economy and state in China. In his view, neoliberalisation may encourage the consolidation of power (Wu 2008, 1093).

At the outset, Wu provides a brief discussion of Deng's 1978 reforms from the perspective of the consolidation of political power by the Chinese government. According to Wu, the promotion of economic growth actually legitimized the CCP's power, since it showed to the Chinese people the government's presumed knowledge about economic issues, its leadership in promoting changes, and its concern about China's performance on the international market (1093). Similarly, Breslin states that '[...] Chinese Marxism had always been as much about China as it was about Marxism, and as many commentators have noted, nationalism remains an important element of the CCP's approach to maintaining legitimacy' (Breslin 2004, 2).

Further, Wu analyzes the pre-reform socialist market economy in China in terms of the recessionary tendencies of the contemporary cycle of capitalism. He ascribes the emergence of the crisis as a result of over accumulation. Although the socialist

economies are often viewed as having shortages, in this case, Wu maintains that there were some parts of the economy that could be described as leading to over accumulation,

Because of the effective concentration of capital by the state apparatus, labor reproduction had to be achieved without 'the principle of equal exchange', which had to be achieved through a 'welfare state' regime (the so-called redistributive state). In state socialism, effective accumulation supported by state-led extensive accumulation reached its limit' (Wu 2008, 1093-1094).

Hence, according to Wu, the state had a large pool of cheap labor, and no effective way of using the productive power of its workers in the most efficient way. Wu compares the economic crisis that followed over accumulation and led to post socialist transition in China as similar to the post-Fordist transitions experienced in the West. As a result, since the reforms, China maintains its cheap and numerous labor force and encourages workers to participate in the private sector economy (1094).

Alongside, Wu (2008) challenges the idea that China is an authoritarian state. He views the Chinese state in terms of hegemonic power, specifically the political process through which the government is able to justify its power to the society. Moreover, Wu describes Chinese society as culturally 'totalitarian' in the sense that there are no drastic divisions between the state and the society. Wu explains that in China there has been a 'patron-client' relationship between the state and the society for centuries (1094). In Wu's words, '[...] Chinese society was a "society of acquaintances" and it is in this sense that it was a totalitarian society,' and further he assesses that in China [...] the "ruler" and the

“ruled” are intimately intertwined in the web of society (1094).’ Moreover, Wu explains that it is through the economy that the Chinese government consolidates its power (1094).

Wu also discusses the negative results of economic reforms. For example, the privatization of the housing market has led to the lack of affordable housing for middle and low-income families, in particular in urban areas. Thus, cities are utilized to promote further economic neoliberalisation, specifically through speculation on the real estate market (1094). The increase in prices of health care, education, and housing has been described in China 'as the “three new mountains” for the poor to climb (Wu 2008, 1095)'. Given Wu’s criticism of the notion of China as an instance of ‘abnormal capitalism,; it is important to ask where the persistent interest in defining capitalism in China as ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics’ emerges? Thus, Dirlik analyses discourses around “Chinese capitalism” as an alternative paradigm of development (17). He suggest that the current economic reforms in China are in keeping with the global economy, and thus the rhetoric of capitalism with Chinese characteristics 'may be little more than an invention of a new post-socialist post revolutionary discourse on capitalism’ (Dirlik 1996, 17). Further, Dirlik (1996) explains this discourse in the following way,

I use the term to highlight what may be a fundamental problem of explanation to invert, if you like, the cause-effect relationships between Chinese characteristics and a Chinese capitalist, what have come to be identified as Chinese characteristics may be the effect of the development of a capitalism that has its source elsewhere, in the global economy. In other words, the discourse on

Chinese capitalism does not merely describe; more importantly it may be a discourse creating its object (18)'.

Moreover, via literary and historical analysis, Dirlik ascribes the rise of this term not to a discourse created by the Chinese people themselves, but rather to the discussion of U.S. scholars on possible Chinese/Confucian forms of capitalism. Thus, he links the creation of this term to the work of Kahn, Berger and Redding, MacFarquhar and Hofheinz, as well as Kotkin starting in late 1970s (Dirlik 1996, 19). These writers discussed the potential capitalist economic mode of production as supported by 'Chinese – Confucian' values. These values are broadly understood as consisting of loyalty and strong ties to the family, society, and government, and strong work ethics, meaning a commitment to education and work. In turn, the Chinese people themselves took on the image of a superior worker and citizen and recreated discourses on traditional Chinese values to fit in the currently promoted capitalist economic model. As Dirlik explains further, this in turn creates numerous contradictions.

The culturalist “Chineseness” argument not only ignores this structural context, but also suppresses the contradictions that are quite evidently visible in the discussions on Chinese capitalism. Like all ethnic essentializations, the discourse on Chinese capitalism suppresses the class and gender differentiations, and even ethnic differences, among the people encompassed within it. Chinese exploiting the surplus labor of other Chinese by taking advantage of oppressive labor regulations (as in the special economic zones of the People's Republic of China)

or the vulnerability of illegal immigrants (as in Chinatowns, USA) is dissolved into the discourse of Chinese capitalism through the vocabulary of cultural traditions. So is the exploitation of young women who make up the majority of the labor force in special economic zones, whose bodies contribute significantly to the accumulation of capital through oppressive conditions of factory production, or flourishing “entertainment” and “tourist industries” (Dirlik 1996, 27)

Therefore, the discourse about ‘Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics’ is primarily used in order to avoid discussions of capitalist enterprises in China. In addition, it is constructed to situate China as the ‘Other’ case of Western forms of capitalism. Overall, Chinese economic policy at the present is largely driven by the government’s goals of economic growth, so that economic policies have to be understood as subordinating commitments to social goals. This is not altogether a voluntary decision. The Chinese government through its collaboration with World Bank and other foreign agencies leaves itself vulnerable to such contradictory goals. The aim of Western investors is to secure better deals for foreign direct investment in China’s economy, and the Chinese government seems to accede to the same objectives. However, in the process social protections from the state, such as education and health care, are rapidly becoming out of reach for a large segment of China’s population. Therefore, there are two important factors that contribute to the current direction and spatial distribution of economic growth in China – government policies, for example, as they relate to internal migration of

people, and foreign direct investment, which provides pressure for more economic incentives and actively reshapes lives of China's workers.

However, while Wu's (2008) argument that the Chinese economy should not be evaluated as if it was removed from global economic structures is valid, discussions of the Chinese system as simply capitalist (Wu 2008; Walker and Buck 2007) seem to ignore other economic structures beyond capitalism, such as household economies and economic practices of China's minorities. Depending on the space that people are bound to by their government; namely, the country or the city, the interior of China or the Coast; people found themselves to be winners or losers of the economic reforms. In turn, state policies tied to capitalist structures have created uneven development resulting in increased internal migration. The next section describes spatial variations in China's development in terms of national policies and their consequences for specific regions of China.

China's Regional Divisions

Although different forms of central planning are present in many economies, even those that claim to be guided solely by the invisible hand of the free market, in China decisions made by the central government have especially visible results. Thus, the division of the country into three macro-regions of development had a great impact on regional economic outcomes, with spatial divisions of development also becoming apparent in the movement of people from poorer, interior regions to the richer coast.

The contemporary economic and political situation has emerged in increments during reforms leading from a state-planned to a market economy. Initial reforms were

set by the Third Plenum led by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, which made economic development a priority over communist ideologies (Breslin 2004; Cannon and Jenkins 1990). In 1997, the CCP set up four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to promote joint ventures with foreign companies (Cannon and Jenkins 1990). In 1981, the Chinese government accepted individual ownership as legal (Breslin 2004).

In addition, from 1981 to 1985, the state abolished communes and introduced the Household Responsibility System (Cannon and Jenkins 1990). The Household Responsibility System is a new diversification system implemented in the countryside since the 1978 economic reforms in place of collectivization. Under this policy, a household can lease a parcel of land and in return has to provide the state with a quota of grain or crops. The household can then use the rented land towards their own enterprise, and any surplus agricultural production can be sold to the state or in private markets (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 13).

In 1984, the CCP ‘opened’ an additional fourteen cities in coastal areas (Cannon and Jenkins 1990), and set up Township and Village Enterprises in rural areas around cities (Christiansen. and Zhang 1998). Until 1994, the government protected urban jobs, especially in State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) which systematically produced losses (Breslin 2004). This situation changed in 1995, when China joined World Trade Organization (WTO) (Breslin 2004; Solinger 2003), and then created the Company Law to downsize SOE operations (Breslin 2004).

These economic changes have to be set in a background of China’s regional development divisions. Since the late 1980s, the official party line changed from an injunction that provinces should be self-sufficient to a policy that regions should develop

in accordance with their comparative advantage (Cannon and Jenkins 1990; Breslin 2004). Hence, the construction of Special Economic Zones in the coast was a strategy to 'contain "alien" FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] within specific regional constraints (Wang 1997, 4)'. The CCP explained this shift by pointing to the inequalities in outputs across the country (Breslin 2004; Jingzhi 1988). For example, Jingzhi (1988), an economic geographer from China, justifies it thus:

Since 1949, accumulated investment has been evenly distributed over the country, but the production levels of industry and agriculture vary greatly from region to region. One of the most fundamental problems relating to the distribution of production in China is the relationship between the developed regions and the backward regions. Investment in different regions needs to be rationally appropriated and a balance achieved through careful planning. The gap in economic and technological levels, and in per-capita income between the advanced and backward regions needs to be closed. This is best achieved through the gradual modernizing influence of the advanced regions on the backward regions (Jingzhi 1988, 40-41).

Consequently, CCP divided China into three macro regions, namely, Coastal, Central, and Western (see Figure 1). In general, Coastal regions received support to develop their industries, trade, and tourism and to bring in foreign investment, hence leading to the setting up of SEZs (Cannon and Jenkins 1990). Central regions were put in charge of new technologies, providing energy (coal and electricity), and increasing

agricultural output (Cannon and Jenkins 1990; Jingzhi 1988). Western regions were to supply natural resources, develop transportation, and invest in education (Cannon and Jenkins 1990). However, these divisions were not based entirely on geographical correspondence as much as they were a result of strategic military policies of the state (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 28; Jingzhi 1988, 41-42). Moreover, these developmental divisions became deeper as provinces started competing over production and sales of their exports, to the point of setting up tariffs to control inflow of cheap raw materials (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 46-47).

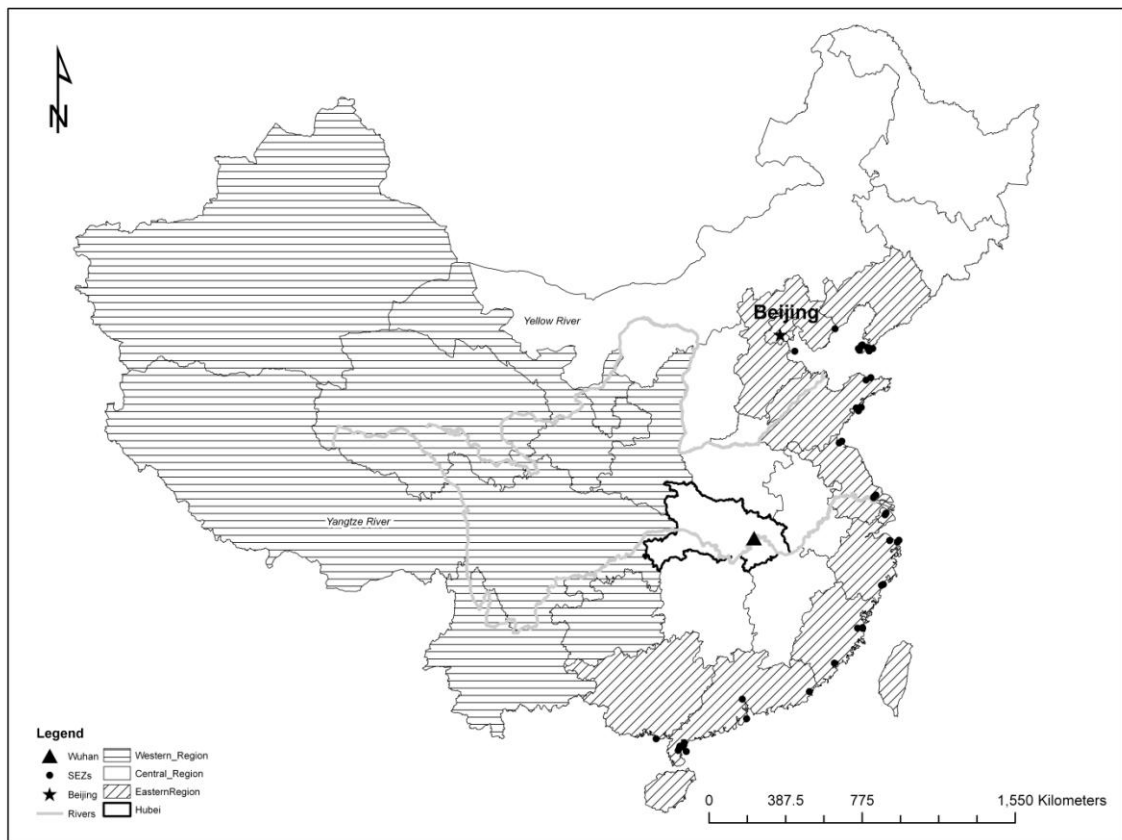


Figure 1: China's Regional Divisions.

For example, businesses from Guangdong supported by Chinese government's economic policy were able to profit at the expense of other provinces. Cannon and Jenkins (1990) describe the situation thus:

The most serious grievances leveled at Guangdong include those arising from its practice of buying raw materials or even finished goods from neighboring provinces with Chinese currency (Renminbi), then selling them abroad so that foreign currency earned never gets to the inland provinces. Since foreign exchange can be sold to those who will give more yuan than the official rate, Guangdong entrepreneurs can then afford to buy from their suppliers at higher rates, so cornering the market and boosting inflation (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 47)'

Still, according to Zhang and Wu (2009), even the coastal areas are '[f]acing intense competition inside and outside of the regions, [so that] local government has strengthened its ability to intervene in local economic development (18).' Thus local governments often resolve to consolidate and annex nearby administrative units in order to combat competition (ibid.)

These recent economic changes in China had significant impacts on rural populations. For example, Breslin (2004) describes transformations in rural China as follows:

In the countryside, mechanization and the replacement of collective socialist motivations with private and profit motivations resulted in the loss of an average of six million workers a year in the 1990s. It is widely accepted that around 120 million rural workers are without work for most of the year, though a figure nearer 200 million has been mentioned in private in interviews. One of the consequences of this increased rural unemployment is the growth in migration – both state sanctioned and supported, and illegal (Breslin 2004, 3).

The most economically disadvantaged population lives in rural areas of the country. Thus Wang (1997) estimates that '[m]ore than 487.68 million laborers live in the rural area, separated by strict hukou [household registration] system from the 217.8 million in the urban area (9).' In addition to restrictions on spatial mobility, new employment rules have followed the entry of foreign companies into the market creating difficult working conditions (Wang 1997, 3). The lack of worker protection rights, prohibition of independent unions, large unemployment numbers, and restriction on legalization of employment for rural workers, makes Chinese workers vulnerable to exploitation (8). As Wang describes it:

The Chinese labor thus has a weak bargaining position versus the FDI employers. Consequently, there is clear lack of labor rights in FDI enterprises. Young and female workers are the most welcome labor for the primarily assembly line factories. Many managers frequently ask their female job applicants to be young

(under 25), “good looking,” unmarried and of a certain height. Photos are generally required as a part of application package (Wang 1997 8,9)

Women workers are especially subject to the drawbacks of limited worker rights, thus, a high percentage of women workers employed by foreign companies report experiencing sexual harassment. Moreover, women workers are fired more easily based on reasons having very little to do with job performance, but rather linked to their age, marital status, sickness, or pregnancy (Wang 1997, 9).

A number of people however continue to support economic reforms despite such allegations. For example, in an interview with Becker (2004) Xie Shaoming, tannery owner from Xinji, a city located in Hebei Province assessed that 'thanks to the Government policy on private business [...] we ordinary people have become rich' (Becker 2004, 93). Thus, on the one hand, the current economic agenda creates economic opportunities for many Chinese people; on the other, it lacks social development goals, such as health care and education. Burkett and Hart-Landsberg (2005) summarized this trend in the following way:

In sum, without denying the importance of naked class interest, the key dynamic driving China's transformation was the path-dependent channeling of policy options into pro-market, pro-capitalist directions. The results were increasing alienation of economic priorities from grassroots needs and capabilities, and corrosion of the state's ability to plan and direct economic activity, both of which

only reinforced the growing dependence on markets, private enterprise, foreign capitals and exports (Burkett and Hart-Landsberg 2005, 3)'

From this broader context of economic reforms, the next section moves into a specific discussion of the economy of Hubei province, the case study for this research in gendered migration in China.

Agriculture in Hubei Province

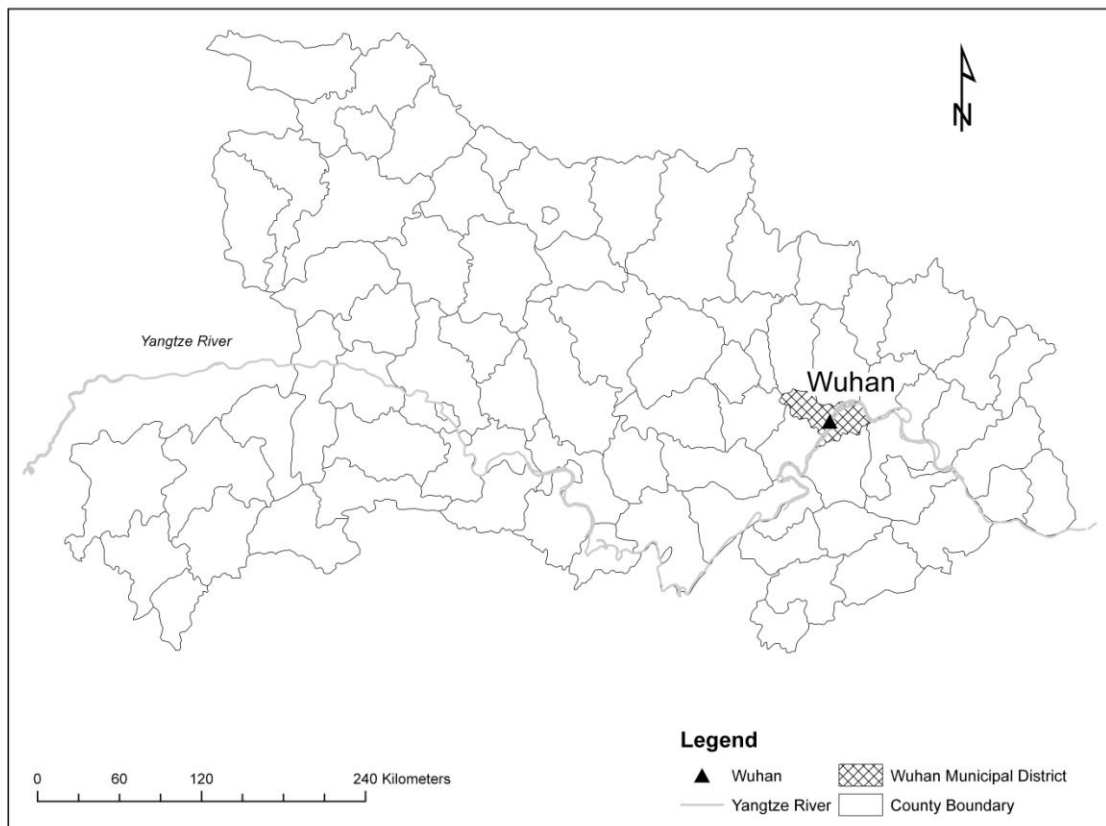


Figure 2: Wuhan, Hubei Province.

As shown in Figure 2, Hubei province is located in China's Central region. According to 2000 Census Data, it has a population of 59,508,870 (China Data Center. 2009). Hubei province is largely rural, with almost 60 percent of its residents registered in rural areas (China Data Center. 2009). The capital city of Wuhan, located along the Yangtze river in the eastern part of Hubei, is also the major industrial center of the province. The majority of people in Hubei province are Han, and most speak Mandarin, either northern or southern Mandarin (China Data Center. 2009; de Blij and Muller 2002, 448). Since colonial times, and continuing into communist China, the province has been a major producer of agriculture and industry, and has been a transport and communications hub (Jingzhi 1998, 378). Currently, however, the agricultural sector is declining creating an underemployed workforce (Solinger 2001; Veeck et al. 2006). However, since the government promotes industrial growth in Hubei, the province receives rural migrants (Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein 2000).

Hubei has a humid climate which is, among other factors, a result of the many rivers crossing the region. Yangtze and its tributaries serve as a source of economic wealth and are an important link between the coast and the interior of China. Due to the Yangtze, Wuhan is a major inland port and recipient of goods from coastal areas. According to de Blij and Muller (2002), 'Above Wuhan the river dwindles because the depth of the Chang [Yangtze] reduces the size of vessels that can reach Yichang. River boats carry coal, rice, building materials, barrels of fuel, and many other items of trade' (455). The industrial boat traffic decreases once it reaches Wuhan, and tourist boats take over upstream of the city. Many Yangtze River cruises originate from either Wuhan or Yichang. Therefore, Hubei rivers help tourism, industry and agriculture. Cressey (1934)

called these rivers ‘the very arteries of life’ (in Brandt 1989, 4). Veeck et al. (2006) describe the Yangtze region as

... truly the agricultural core of China. Centered on the Chiang Jiang (Yangtze River) and its many tributaries and large lakes, most of the region is low-lying, well-watered, alluvial plain. Double cropping of winter wheat (or winter barley), rape, and rice is most common, although nonirrigated areas are given over to cotton, corn, peanuts, and other dry land summer crops. Traditionally, the mean yields of all of these crops are the highest in China (216-217).

While Hubei seems like a perfect place for agriculture, during recent years, many farmers have abandoned rice fields, and crop production has become economically less feasible (Veeck et al. 2006, 216-217). This is partly because farmers in the northern coastal areas have increased their rice production. For example, Veeck et al. (2006) state that:

In Northeast China [...] irrigated rice offers much greater returns than the traditional corn and spring wheat. So, despite potential water shortages and ecological damage in the future, rice production in the Northeast has exploded since 1985 in farmers’ pursuit of comparative advantage. Farmers here, even paying more for water, can generate much more income from rice, especially because imports of corn and soybeans from the United States and other nations (a result of post-WTO economics) holds domestic prices for these crops down (212).

Veeck et al. attribute this to the development of new rice varieties that do not need southern climate (211). Thus, farmers in Hubei have decreased land allocated to rice production by approximately 551,000 acres (Veeck 2006, 212). Instead, farmers have switched production to fruits and vegetables or even herbs and grass seeds for higher profits (ibid.).

Besides the growing of rice, farmers in Hubei also focus on livestock farming, including chicken, ducks, and geese (Jingzhi 1988, 282). In the last few years, cases of the bird flu virus have caused further damage to farmers' incomes. According to F. Zhang (2004),

The province has also closed 133 poultry markets and vaccinated 22.47 million birds. "It is a disaster for the poultry industry of Hubei, and it will take time for the province to recover, even given the unrelenting control work and the increasing awareness of residents," Mei said [Mei Zuen is vice-director of the Hubei Provincial Bureau of Agriculture]. However, for many farmers who only breed several chicken and ducks in their houses for their own consumption, the loss is not serious. "In my village, there is only one big duck breeding farm which has 168 birds, and the income from poultry breeding accounts for less than 5 per cent of the total earnings of a family," said Shi Jiaojie, head of the Shengli Village of Yangxin County, which sees the latest bird flu case of Hubei on January 2. About 1,000 people of the 2,300 residents of his village have become migrant workers, whose income has become the main money source of their families.

The decline of the agricultural and livestock economy has thus led to outmigration for agricultural work. For instance, rural workers migrate from Hubei to Xinjiang to pick cotton. A report in China Daily (2005) describes the migration of Du Xingwu, a farm worker originally from Hubei,

... Du came to Xinjiang in 1991 and was quickly promoted to be an official due to his effective management. He took charge of 48.5 mu (3.3 hectares) of cotton this year, which could bring in 30,000 to 40,000 Yuan (US \$3,800-5,000) net income. When asked whether he missed his hometown, Du said he used to visit in 2002, but found he no longer belongs there. "I didn't get used to the lifestyle there, which is quite impoverished and backward. I am accustomed to my present life," said Du.

However, migration does not ensure long-term work. Eventually, these migrant workers are going to be laid-off since 'modern technology will eventually replace manual labor,' and the report mentions that 'automatic cotton-picking machines are ready to do their duty, cutting labor time' (China Daily 2005).

The situation with agriculture in Hubei province reflects widening rural-urban gaps across China. Although, since the 1978 reforms the economic situation of many farm workers has improved, numerous peasants still live impoverished lives compared to their urban compatriots. According to an estimate published by the US-China Business Council (2007),

Average annual rural incomes in 2006 rose 7.4 percent in real terms to RMB 3,587 (\$462) while average annual urban incomes, at RMB 11,759 (\$1,514), rose 10.4 percent. China still has an estimated 120 million surplus rural laborers, many of whom are migrating to cities to look for work. To help alleviate rural poverty, China will establish a national system of subsistence allowances. At the end of 2005, China had 23.7 million rural poor – defined as living on less than RMB 683 (\$88) a year. Unlike urban residents, few rural residents have received subsidized healthcare or education, and only a small percentage participates in pension systems. The government is trying to address these issues. Since 2006, rural children in western China have been entitled to free education for nine years; this will be extended to the rest of the country in the next few years (US-China Business Council 2007)

According to Hubei Basic Data, an information source maintained by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), in 2000 the average GDP per capita for Hubei was 7,188 Yuan. At the same time, however, the per capita income of peasants was only 2,930 Yuan. Similarly, the consumption level amongst peasants was 1,760 Yuan whereas in cities and towns it was 5,719 Yuan. It has been argued that this situation could be changed if agricultural processing was also undertaken in Hubei. Accordingly, Chao (2003) reports that, ‘It is estimated that the province could gain an added value of 100 billion yuan (US \$12.1 million) from processing the crops it produces.’

Another issue of concern to rural populations is tax burdens. Since 1958, Chinese peasants had to pay a separate agricultural tax. However, Chinese Congress decided to abandon the tax beginning in 2006. On an online blog discussing taxation issues in the U.S. and internationally, Chamberlain (2006) explains the importance of the lifting of China's agricultural tax thus:

The repealed agriculture tax was similar to a modern property tax. It was a lump-sum fee paid by farmers based on the amount of cultivated land and number of family members. And as with property taxes, the tax was widely perceived as unfair, for two reasons. First, the amount of tax was based on a proxy for grain production not income, forcing farmers to bear the same tax burden both in prosperous and lean years. Second, the tax devoured a large portion of farmer's incomes. While the average agricultural tax amounted to just \$36 per family, that's a hefty tax bite given the annual per capita income of Chinese farmers of around \$242 (nearly 15 percent). Until recently, China has operated parallel tax systems for urban and rural taxpayers. One of the goals in repealing the agricultural tax is to unify the tax system and simplify tax rules.

This tax reform was necessary. In Hubei province, as well as many other provinces, the situation of farmers was worrying. In 2002, Hubei was the site of a dramatic event in which '[d]esperate farmers, seven in all, ... committed suicide by swallowing poison last year due to unbearable pressure from local officials for various fees and taxes' (Liu, 2002). Nevertheless, while farmers in Hubei province no longer

have to pay the agricultural tax, they still have to secure medical care and education by themselves, while people living in urban areas can enjoy free education for their children and available healthcare. In addition, villagers' pensions are very small compared to their counterparts in the city.

However, the Chinese government keeps investing in coastal cities, progressing slowly towards reforms in the countryside. In the words of Veeck et al. (2006),

Farmers living near the east coast are more sophisticated than those in the rest of the country because of the coast's more diverse markets, including those for export crops and products. As a consequence, farmers living in proximity to large cities or within the coastal provinces have the highest rural incomes, while the more remote, less-commercialized, interior provinces report the lowest incomes. In this sense, the inequity of space plays out in yet another way in the contemporary Chinese landscape with higher rural incomes in coastal areas (226).

Industry in Wuhan City and Hubei Province

Wuhan, as mentioned earlier, is one of the most prominent industrial cities in China (Jingzhi 1998). Due to its location along the Yangtze river, the city has a comparative advantage in terms of transportation. According to Jingzhi (1998), Wuhan fulfils two kinds of economic functions, namely that of a 'Large Comprehensive Economic Center' and a 'Communication and Transport Hub' (376-379). As a large economic center, Wuhan is 'characterized by developed light and heavy industries and

high output values of various kinds of products' (Jingzhi 1998, 376). In terms of its role as a communication and transportation hub, Wuhan is

situated on the middle reaches of the Chang Jiang [Yangtze] at the junction of the Chang Jiang and the Hanshui river. It is one of China's largest inland ports. In addition, the Beijing-Guangzhou rail line and the Wuhan-Daye and Hankou-Danjiangkou rail lines meet at Wuhan, making it one of China's biggest railway transport hubs. Wuhan forms the center of the roads network in Hubei province and is linked by air with many other large cities throughout the country (Jingzhi 1998, 378).

After the economic reforms of 1978, Wuhan's industrial prominence has declined. Solinger (2003) describes job losses in Wuhan thus,

Wuhan, an old heavy-industry base in the heartland of China, admittedly has been harder hit by lay-offs than areas along the coast where light industry predominates, where foreign investment is much greater and where local revenues are far higher (62).

Despite this closure of many factories, Wuhan has tried to promote itself to foreign and domestic investors as a site of booming industry with potential for economic growth equal to SEZs. For example, an official city guide declares "Wuhan aims to catch up to its richer compatriots on the coast" (Mooney 2005, 8), and goes on to say that,

Morgan Stanley economist Andy Xie wrote recently that Wuhan has the potential to become next Shanghai arguing that the city could take off in the next few years. Mr. Xie says that if Shanghai becomes too expensive, Wuhan could be an important alternative for foreign investors looking for a new place to put down capital. Citroen, Budweiser, Philips, Coca-Cola and NEC are all here already. ... Mr. Xie says Wuhan has a number of advantages. One, it has 35 higher education institutions, ranking third in science and education just behind Beijing and Shanghai, which means investors can pick from a pool of well -trained workers and technicians. Second, its industrial base has become more relevant to the current stage of the county's development. Wuhan's industry is diverse and it is especially strong in iron and steel (Wuhan Iron & Steel Co. is China's second largest steel producer), automobile manufacturing, shipbuilding, machinery, scientific instruments, textiles, chemicals, and food processing. Third, Wuhan is just 15 hours from Shanghai ports by truck, and the additional cost of shipping from here is negligible (8-9).

Yet, Wuhan does not have economic subsidies and exemptions to offer to foreign investors equal to those in Shanghai, since it has not been officially designated as an SEZ (Jingzhi 1998). The exaggerated promotion of Wuhan as a foreign investment destination thus needs to be questioned. For instance, in the quote above, the notion of 'negligible' shipping costs is not clear, and the ways in which it compares to Shanghai is glossed

over. An official government website describes the flourishing foreign investment, or in some cases preparation for investment, in Hubei province as follows:

More than 8,000 foreign enterprises have been established with the approval of the provincial government, together with over 400 representative offices. 120 out of the top 500 transnational companies have come to Hubei to observe the investment feasibility, among which 50 have set up either enterprises or offices in Hubei ... (CN 2004a).

France is one of the biggest foreign investors in Hubei province. A report on CN (2004 b) notes that French businesses have so far invested about U.S. \$2.3 billion in Wuhan, and this comprises 33% of the total French investment in China.

While Wuhan cannot facilitate concessions available in SEZs (Jingzhi 1998, 379), it does offer access to a variety of heavy and light industry jobs. Partly, due to its location on the Yangtze River, Wuhan has access to transportation networks, which has led to industrialization in the city (Jingzhi 1988). The surplus labor force created by the decline of agricultural opportunities in Hubei province is thus attracted to the increased economic opportunities available in urban areas like Wuhan.

The declining agricultural economy of rural Hubei province thus provides a contrast with the relatively secure industrial growth in the city of Wuhan. This economic difference also becomes important because Wuhan emerges here as an alternative to more long-distance internal migration towards southern China. Migration however is not merely structured by spatial differences, but is also linked to the identities of migrants

themselves. The next section thus extends the discussion of China's economic development by focusing on the ways in which women have been specifically represented in studies of internal migration.

Chapter Three

Gender and Migration: Linking Economy, Society and Space

This chapter surveys pertinent literature on internal migration in China as well as considers broader theories related to gender identities. It is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on explanations for migration, in particular questioning the division of reasons for migration into economic and social categories. The second section elaborates on the particular role of space and scale in studies of gender and migration.

Economic and Social Components

Existing research explains the current increase in China's internal migration in three ways. First, increase in migration is viewed as resulting from agricultural decollectivisation and the introduction of the household responsibility system. Within this view, increasing efficiencies of production on farms has simultaneously produced surplus labor which has been forced to look for alternative employment (Wong, Li, and Song 2007). Second, industrial restructuring and improved economic opportunities in coastal areas has attracted migrants to urban areas (Wong, Li, and Song 2007). Related to this industrial restructuring are the recruitment practices of companies that target specific kinds of workers (Lee 1998). A third set of reasons identified by studies are the beneficial

social opportunities (e.g. marriage, increased personal freedom, social networks) that are connected to migration (Lee 1998; Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein 2000).

These reasons are in turn structured by the state through the household registration system, and regional differences in development that have been installed through deliberate state policy. As already discussed in Chapter 2 (16-17) in terms of regional differences, Coastal, Central, and Western Regions were created by the government and presented in the Seventh Five-Year plan to secure control over capitalist development as well as to use regional comparative advantage for technologically advanced industrial production, increased agricultural production, and utilization of natural resources (Cannon and Jenkins 1990, 40-42). These regional divisions have led to a concentration of wealth in coastal provinces, so that people are currently migrating out of non-coastal provinces at higher rates than ever before, and economic differences between provinces continue to amplify (Fan 2005). By international standards, the rural-urban income gap is large in China, and Sicular et al. (2007) find that even after adjustments for cost of living and varied sources of income, the inequalities between urban and rural areas remain substantial.

It is not just state policies that structure migration patterns. Studies have also been conducted on the social characteristics, such as education and gender, of those who migrate. Zhao's (1999) study of Sichuan province in the Western development region (1999) determined that male workers are more likely to migrate than female workers, unmarried people more likely than married people, and younger workers more likely than older workers. More specifically, the study sought to examine the link between schooling and decision to migrate, and concluded that while the choice to migrate was not

significantly related to level of schooling, yet schooling was one of the factors influencing permanent migration. In a study of Hubei province, Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein (2000) provide an overview of differences between men and women migrants, focusing in part on satisfaction with outcome of migration. According to their study, women who moved to the city independently of their families and were able to set up their business experienced greater satisfaction about positive change in their financial status than those women who officially moved to the city to join their family or husband (228).

In a comprehensive analysis of national census data from China, He and Guber (2003) begin by describing male-female differences in reasons for migration. According to them, men are more likely to migrate towards industry and business, whereas women are more likely to cite marriage as a reason for their migration (1228). However, in their modeling of migration flows, such gender differences do not emerge as strongly. Thus, even as their study found that foreign direct investment structured the flow of male migrants, female migrants were drawn towards township and village enterprises situated in the urban-rural periphery, a glance at the actual maps suggests that both male and female workers are moving towards economic opportunities in coastal regions (1235). As He and Guber conclude, this shows that the strong link presented earlier between women and marriage-related migration needs to be questioned. Thus, female migrants can also be said to respond to economic growth (1243). He and Guber thus cite concerns about the “real motivations” of female migrants and recognize that “social migration” may be used to conceal economic reasons (1245-1246). In their words, “[w]hether stated reasons reflect traditional and accepted gender roles or real motivations is unclear to us at this

time. Economic considerations may be hidden under the guise of social migration as in the case of marriage migration' (1245-1246). This points towards the need for further research to reveal the intertwining of economic and social reasons in rural women's decisions to migrate.

Recruitment practices are another facet of migration. Thus, Warner's (1997) comparison of joint ventures and state-owned enterprises in Beijing focuses on human resource management issues, including hiring practices, in these companies, and show how they have become more formal and strict since the 1978 economic reforms (38-39). This means that the recruitment of workers is being increasingly controlled by factory management, and, in terms of my research, points to the significance of focusing on recruitment for an understanding of migration. However, in China, business recruitment practices do not operate by themselves, but are linked to existing structures of social networks.² Thus, Fan's study of new migrants in Guangdong province in southern China (1996) showed that 'organized efforts were made to recruit migrants, and chain migration took place when potential migrants learned of new employment opportunities through friends and relatives' (37). Similarly, Lee's (1998) study of migrant workers in Shenzhen, an SEZ in Guangdong province, describes how young women escaped without parental consent through the help of locals who promised them urban employment (78, 84). One of the aims of my research is to link such understandings of social networks and migration with the formal recruitment practices of urban factories. I seek therefore to provide a balanced overview of the role of social practices and management practices in

² Social relationships in China are governed by a system of exchanges of gifts known as 'guanxi.' This has been extensively studied to gain insights into the differences between Western and Chinese business practices. For an understanding of such differences, see Selmer (2002).

existing analyses of migration.

Another important consequence of migration is the ways in which it changes the status of migrants in their communities of origin, which brings us to the role of return migration in understanding the outcomes of migration for women. For instance, in a study conducted in India, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2003) find that low-caste male community members enhance their status in villages through participation in migration. Thus, the ability to display knowledge of urban culture enables previously powerless members to challenge ideas of powerful members of the community and modify social relations in their communities of origin. Similar results are likely to be obtained in the case of women migrants in China. In a study of migration patterns originating from Sichuan and Anhui provinces, Fan (2004b) shows that women migrants contribute substantially to the well-being of their households (187). This suggests that migration is a pathway for women to raise their status within their native communities, in contrast to existing anthropological accounts which often emphasize sons as a principal source of power for women (Wolf 1972). In my research, I will therefore consider actual or potential experiences of the return of women migrants to their native villages.

Thus, economic and social reasons for migration need to be bridged in order to provide a more thorough analysis of migration in China, and this is one of the principal aims of the proposed research.

Spaces and Scales

Feminist geographers have been prominent in the study of migration, linking gender identities to spaces and scales of economic development. A prominent theoretical understanding has been provided by Massey (Massey 2005, Anderson 2008) who argues that since the global economy is constructed across many scales, processes of production and consumption should also be analyzed across scales, from transnational to local. For Massey, places are always under construction, their social and physical fabric always changing (228). Alongside, people can use the same space differently. While powerful actors are able to expand their mobility and distribute it in general, less powerful actors remain relatively immobile thus reinforcing current power structures (150). In other words, the same space is a plane of exclusion or access to different groups of people. (Anderson 2008, 228).

Nagar et al. (2002) have identified and reviewed current discussions related to gender, globalization and development. The emphasis in their article is on the need for a grounded approach to mend disconnects between the structural of the economic studies and poststructural feminist approaches. Their call is for '[a] grounded, feminist approach starts from the lives of a variety of people with diverse relationships to globalization, including unorganized workers, undocumented immigrants, and those who are not involved with political movements (269).'

The authors argue that existing studies often focus on formal networks, and large-scale economies, national as well as multinational/transnational. However, since capitalist

structures are also supported by informal economies (260), in particular those at household level, Nagar et al. (2002) maintain that,

Gender is central to the operation of this subsidy. First, as profitability crises encourage restructuring, a series of spatial shifts (from factory to sweat- shop to home) and ideological shifts (from family-wage work to poorly paid feminized work) cheapen production costs for global investors and producers (261).

In other words, capitalist profit is subsidized by the social construction of gender differences which ensures access of informal and cheap labor (261). In the authors' assessment,

[...] discourses of global capitalism continue to position women, minorities, the poor, and southern places in ways that constitute globalization as dominant.

Images of passive women and places (frequently southern, but also deindustrialized places in the north) are constructed and simultaneously serve to construct discourses of globalization as capitalist, as Western-centric, and as the only possible future for the "global economy" (262 - 263).

However, Nagar et al. (2002) point out that the outcomes of globalization can be contradictory for women, as they may often be subjected to exploitation but simultaneously also experience improved social opportunities. For instance, they observe that 'feminist scholarship has [...] challenged the idea of women as mere victims (273).'

Nagar et al. (2002) also argue that globalization does not just happen to women; on the contrary, women often shape globalization, for instance through non-governmental organizations or community organizing. There is a need therefore to identify the creation and re-creation of global spaces through women's activities. Therefore, studies need to encompass, 'the specific cultural, political, economic, and social consequences of the transformation of particular historical circumstances as different places are drawn into the social relations of globalization in different ways (276)' in order to contextualize and link gendered global processes in terms of both Western and non-Western subjects.

In a similar vein, Silvey's (2006) review critically examines current and past literature dealing with migration theory. She focused on three aspects of migration studies: scale, place and identity, and borders; her argument being that spatial theories and methodologies should be adopted to deepen our understandings of migration. Silvey points out the advantages of a geographical understanding:

In particular, geography's explicit attention to the gendered social construction of spatiality can enrich interdisciplinary approaches to the study of gender and migration. Scholars from other disciplines may build on the work reviewed here to ask critical questions about the gender politics of their own discipline's spatial logics and implicit geographic theorizations.

Silvey begins by showing how early work on migration and scale was skewed towards supporting colonial expansion. Later work on scale by Western scholars (e.g. Ravenstein 1976) sought to develop a unified migration theory that specifically

constructed non-Western women migrants as irrelevant to migration on national and international scales, thus lowering the importance of urban and household scales. However, feminist studies that sought to critique this approach were also limited in that they exclusively sought to include women in ‘larger scales’ with an agenda of emancipating women. These studies thus excluded those women for whom homes and neighborhoods were in fact spaces of liberation while spaces beyond their neighborhoods mainly functioned as centers of discrimination and exploitation (Silvey 67-69). Silvey reviews work on place and identity to argue that

At the center of this work is attention to the roles that gender and other social differences play in shaping unequal geographies of mobility, belonging, exclusion, and displacement. Feminist migration studies pivot around understanding the social and spatial dimensions of mobility associated with – now axiomatically – gender, citizenship, race, class, nation, sexuality, caste, religion, and disability (65)

The feminist approach to migration reveals the power structures behind peoples movement and the construction of identity of groups that fit in or are excluded from different places, unraveling variations in constructing gender, race, class, and ethnic identities (70). Consequently, Silvey states that,

These arguments revolve most generally around the question of who has the power to define a place as accessible to whom, how various social groups

experience places as inclusive or exclusive of them and others, and how the regulation of space reflects and reinforces the privileges and interests of some groups over others (Silvey 2006, 70)

Silvey also examines migration scholarship that focuses on borders. In particular, she finds that,

Most conventional migration scholarship in geography implicitly conceptualizes borders as empirical delineations across which to measure and define migration [...]. Feminist geographers, by contrast, make borders themselves the focus of investigation and examine the socially specific processes tied to their development (72)

Thus, feminist migration studies enables the questioning of how borders are constructed through migration rather than treating borders as already existing natural entities.

A more explicit spatial understanding of rural migrant women's experiences of urban work is provided by Kelly (2002). The aim of his study is to identify multiple levels of spatialized labor control. He introduces the topic by reviewing current labor control theories, not just in terms of organized labor, but also spatial, social, cultural, familial and gendered contexts surrounding the negotiations of conditions of labor. Kelly follows four main approaches to understanding labor control. First, he engaged in the analysis of workplaces and the ways in which this space used to produce and reproduce worker-employer power relations. Second, he analyzes the global level of labor control

within which capital chooses the cheapest and most docile workforce, therefore encouraging states to engage in processes leading to creation of such labor. Third, he deals with the issue of scale; namely, the scale at which unions should or should not operate and how this is regulated by both factories and the state. Fourth, he seeks to understand the construction of familial and gendered processes of labor control. Kelly's provides three case studies of gender and labor control comparing Penang state (Malaysia), Batam Island (Indonesia) and Cavite and Laguna provinces (the Philippines). His comparisons reveal that labor control may not necessary be negotiated only through unions but also at the individual level, and that the agendas of both workers and employees are informed not just by company and state policies, but also by ethnic background, nationality, and migration status of workers. According to Kelly, the silencing of local unions is achieved not just in terms of atomizing local labor through specific channeling of labor disputes at the workplace, but also through the hiring of migrant workers.

Continuing with the theme of women's experiences of work, Lee's study of factories in southern China shows how connections are made between gender and specific kinds of work within the factory, and analyses 'gender as a means of control and an organizing principle for class relations at the point of production, and workplace as a site for gender construction, formation, and reproduction' (Lee 1998, 23). Lee's work takes Burawoy's (1998) material approach to shop floor politics and widens it by documenting the use of gender construction as a means of control and resistance. In her analysis, management assigned specific gender qualities to workers in order to maximize the production process and implement or adjust specific factory policies. Such gender

constructions also vary across factories, and Lee demonstrates that these differ even when the two factories belong to the same parent company. In her case, the factories were owned by the same company – Liton – but the factory in Hong Kong utilized ‘familialism’ to sustain a ‘hegemonic’ relationship with its workers, whereas the factory in Guangdong utilized ‘localism’ to produce a ‘despotic’ relationship. These suggest that management philosophies adjust to the spatial and social contexts in which they function.

Alongside, this research seeks to link the specific case study and the wider realm of migration theory in terms of Burawoy’s (1991) ‘extended case method,’ an analytical method that is also utilized by Lee (1998). She describes it as follows:

‘Taking a social situation as the point of empirical examination, this method “works with given general concepts and laws about states, economies and the like to understand how those micro situations are shaped by wider structures.” In thus tying the social situation to its determining context, the researcher seeks to constitute the case at hand as anomalous with regard to existing theories so as to reconstruct the theory accordingly (10).’

Thus, through my case studies, I seek to contribute to theories of women’s migration in China, especially through connecting social and economic reasons for migration.

Wright (2003) provides a similar analysis of how different management styles are arrived at in different spaces through constructions of cultural and gender identities.

Thus, she explains that,

Sure we know that workers around the world are indeed facing more work in return for less remuneration, and we know that women still earn a pittance, as they have for decades, on assembly lines of multinational firms. But to know these things is not to know how this pattern is constantly recreated across the diverse terrain that is global capitalism (300).

Comparing discourses on migrant women workers in Mexico and Southern China (Dongguan) she reveals how the construction of migrant identities is aimed at improving labor turnover rates at researched factories. Wright's method of analysis is tied to feminist economic theories, so that

[...] as numerous feminist scholars of industrial capitalism have long demonstrated, to understand the changing geographies of capitalism, we must interrogate how this system materializes through different configurations of social categories, such as gender and cultural identity (292).

Wright reveals how the Hong Kong Chinese managers located in Dongguan struggle for power with their American counterparts and in order to gain more control over the company aim for better control over their workers. In order to retain good workers at the peak of their physical fitness and remove less productive workers, they construct their identity as 'factory fathers' who seek to ensure the moral and work standards of 'factory daughters'. This is done through various forms of disciplining including limiting

women's spatial mobilities inside and outside of the factory and installing forced illness/injury and pregnancy check-ups.

Ultimately, management of the Chinese factory was able to outperform American executives operating in Mexico due to stricter control over labor. Hong Kong managers explained their success in terms of better understandings of Chinese culture, specifically in terms of paternal authority over daughters' sexuality and the imposition of work values to presumably ensure workers' well being (295). Through her case studies, Wright (2003) was able to connect the cultural construction of migrant workers as valuable to capitalist production.

Other studies of migrant women workers focus on consumption in order to provide analysis their experiences of urban life. Thus, a valuable study was provided by Sun (2008) who followed domestic workers in Beijing and examined their consumption within urban space. Thus, Sun observes that migrant women do not necessary have to buy products in order to connect with the urban lifestyle. Their consumption can be virtual or they may participate in consumer experience by refusing to buy products. For example, migrant women prefer browsing goods in supermarket in order to see the newest products and enjoy anonymity provided by the supermarket.

Feminist geographic understandings of migration have thus documented the critical role played by spatial strategies of labor control in ensuring the construction of migrant women as a disciplined workforce and the ways in which such strategies though broadly similar also show variations across contexts. Women's wider experiences of migration are shaped by such conditions of work, but also include migrant locations between rural origins and urban destinations. Before delving into the ways in which

women factory workers in Wuhan provide a less constrained understanding of migrant women, the next chapter outlines the methods utilized to approach women as participants in this research.

Chapter Four

Approaching Women's Voices

This research is designed as a micro-level study and seeks to understand the experiences of women migrants through privileging their own perspectives. This chapter focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of this research as well as on the specific methods and procedures that were used to address questions related to women's experiences of rural to urban migration. It is divided into six sections, the first three providing a broad overview of the research design and the remaining detailing the specific experiences of fieldwork. The first section of this chapter introduces the broad theoretical frameworks that have shaped my approach to women as subjects of research. The next section further elaborates on the importance of using women's voices to inform studies of migration. The third section describes specific procedures used during fieldwork as well as introduces problems of positionality connected to this study. The remainder of this chapter describes the processes through which I was enabled to conduct this research, the case studies utilized in this research, and provides an overall introduction to the interview subjects that participated in this research.

Postmodern, Poststructural and Feminist Frameworks

Most studies on internal migration in China, including some utilized in this chapter's review (e.g. Wan 2007; He and Gober 2003), focus on the national or provincial scale, and draw on quantitative data related to migration and development from the Chinese census. In the process, they use statistical data and models to analyze and predict migration and development patterns (Fan 2005, 1996; He and Gober 2003; Rozelle et al. 2002; Liang 2001; Wang 2001). Even as such quantitative analysis are useful for providing evidence regarding broad trends in migration, they are likely to miss unregistered female migrants. This is because quantitative analysis operates on data gathered on the basis of questions compliant with migration policies of the Chinese government. Moreover, the voices of women migrants, and migrants in general, remain absent in such generalized overviews. Given this, the qualitative method was chosen as best suited for this study of women migrants.

My utilization of qualitative methods is also linked to the grounding of this study in postmodern, poststructural, and feminist theoretical frameworks. Postmodernism and poststructuralism support non-universal approaches instead of grand theories, and thus are attentive to a diversity of viewpoints (Johnston 1979, 269). Postmodern theory also questions intellectual stratifications which divides knowledge into inferior and superior forms (Peet 1998, 195). For the purposes of this research, postmodern theory will be used to focus on issues of cultural and social identity, poststructural theory to focus on the economy, and feminist theory to focus on gender issues. These theoretical frameworks

will enable analysis to proceed in four kinds of ways.

The combination of postmodern, poststructural, and feminist theories will assist in discussions of political economy as it relates to gender, instead of exclusively privileging class identity as occurs within Marxist approaches. Postmodernism and Marxism share the same ideas about controlling a category of people through institutions, knowledge, and ideas. However, Marxism privileges class-based forms of struggle, and provides a prescriptive theory that argues that once the working class gains control over the means of production, social conflict will come to an end. In the Marxist view, identities like gender and race thus become irrelevant. Conversely, I believe that non-class identities are relevant and important. Even if workers control the means of production, gender and race inequalities would not necessarily cease to exist, because this has been the case throughout most of history, under different economic systems, and in many places.

Furthermore, using poststructural and feminist approaches to political economy, I propose to look into different economic and social systems. Marxist researchers usually view Chinese internal migration only from the perspective of one prevailing economic system; namely, capitalism (Harvey 2003). Instead, I agree with J.K. Gibson-Graham's (1996) view that the analysis of economy only in terms of capitalism is limited, and that we should discuss society as existing within many economic systems operating at the same time. In this way, an individual can play different economic roles. For example, a woman may be an owner of a small enterprise, but at the same time, at home, she may work without compensation for her husband under feudal economic conditions. Economic systems that have to be viewed as coexisting and intertwined networks between, for instance, multinational corporations, factory workers, indigenous systems of

exchange, and household economies. Therefore, my aim is to understand the complexities of economic identity.

Thus, postmodern and poststructural theoretical frameworks will allow me to challenge strict notions of identity as it relates to migrant workers. Postmodernism stipulates that forms of identity and knowledge are socially constructed, historical, and fluid. Thus, instead of seeking to separate economic and social reasons for migration, I will consider how these reasons intertwine. I will also challenge the notion that rural and urban identities can be separated and instead consider how these place-based identities link within the figure of the migrant. Postmodern feminist theory also becomes important in questioning presupposed differences between the motivations of migration for women and men. Therefore, feminist studies informed by postmodern and post structural theoretical frameworks can question current gendered discourses on migration.

My research seeks to ask Chinese women about their specific experiences of migration. I want to avoid portraying Chinese women only as victims of the capitalist process and a non-democratic government, but also to represent them as independent decision makers (Jacka 2004; Hew 2003; Lee 1998). Therefore, I am going to ask the women to characterize their own experiences and draw my ideas of migration from there. To illustrate, let us consider these two different portrayals of women migrant workers provided by Beynon (2004) and Jacka (2004) respectively. Beynon describes migrant women as follows:

The accounts and feelings of migrant women in Chengdu [capital city of Sichuan province] outlined here point to the impact of migration on their

attitudes toward and expectations of marriage. Not only do they gain a sense of independence and value by working in the city, they also absorb new ideas on love and ideal relationships and critically examine the rural life of women (146).

Thus, she depicts women as passive, who upon their entrance to the city learn how to become assertive. I would argue that ideas about ‘love and ideal relationships’ mentioned above preexist migration, but whereas in the village women cannot freely express them, they can do so in the city environment. Jacka’s (2004) study supports this assessment that a desire for independence is not what young women acquire by being in the city, but rather the quality that they already possess and that provokes their migration. This is how Jacka writes about the first wave of migration of young women in the 1980s:

To leave home and migrate to the city one had to be rebellious – to go against dominant patriarchal understandings of the position of young women, and pursue individual self-interest with great determination and persistence. Such a determination to rebel comes through very clearly in Zhou Ling’s narrative. Her decision to leave home was motivated most immediately by her sense that her parents did not understand her, by the desire to get out of the countryside and away from a joyless, constricted life that her parents had led, and by a rejection of what other villagers understood was to be her future as a woman of a poor, low-status rural family (176).

This quote represents Chinese women as negotiators of their future. I prefer the approach it embodies because here Chinese women are portrayed as active agents shaping their lives.

Women's Voices

My aim is to enhance existing perspectives on migration by focusing on the influence of gender relations and local social networks operating between the countryside and the city. My broader methodological approach is mainly borrowed from studies conducted by Lawson (2000) and Mohanty's (1994) who are writing on construction of women's identities. The postmodern feminist theory used in the study supports the notion of including women's voices within research on migration, and therefore changes power relations embedded in mainstream notions of expertise and knowledge by bringing in the role of experiences. Postmodernists and poststructuralists are concerned with the ways in which discourses facilitate or restrain power, so that knowledge cannot be ideal or whole (Johnston 1979, 280-282).

In this vein, Lawson (2000) through the stories of rural migrant workers in Ecuador, reveals how migrants' identities are constructed through processes of migration, rather than only through place-based connections to either origins or destinations. Lawson proposes that current research on migration should be undertaken through qualitative methods, which seek better understandings of migration as discourse. An insight into migrant experiences reveals neo liberal processes, but also engages with

construction of migrant identities shuttling between origins and destinations. In Lawson's words,

Rural to urban migrants, within 'southern' nations, are also responding to transformations of their national spaces through globalization. Drawing on insights from transnational research, a series of interesting questions open up for internal migration research – examining the places through which migrant identities are formed; migrants' experiences of complex processes of inclusion and marginalization, and their contradictory experiences of the project of globalized modernization, urban progress and national belonging. (Lawson 2000; 176)

Lawson refers to Silvey's research on women's migration (1997; 2000), arguing that Silvey 'illustrates that while women migrants desire the independence of waged work in export processing zones, they struggle with challenges to their own morality and femininity by members of their origin communities' (177). Therefore, gendered perspectives on migration reveal diverse and contradictory social constructions of migrant identities. The results of Lawson's study on rural migrants in Ecuador are similar to Silvey's findings showing that migrant workers often seek factory work that they perceive as 'modern' and thus presumably opening new, better opportunities for their children, even though as migrants they also experience alienation and prejudice that prohibits them from entering desired job markets. Accordingly, this particular group of migrants although disenchanted with their opportunities believes in neo-liberalization

promises of better life under new market economy.

The importance of directly approaching women's voices also connects with issues of representation. Thus, Mohanty (1994) challenges feminist writers who portray women as if they are part of universal struggles and histories. She points out that in these universal and undifferentiated narratives, non-western women are represented as uniformly oppressed, and sharing common experiences of being 'powerless, exploited, sexually harassed' (200) and therefore universally 'powerless' (ibid) and thus condemned to an unsuccessful struggle against patriarchal exploitation.

Gaetano's (2008) study of the struggles of rural migrant women workers in Beijing, can be said to provide such depictions of migrant women as mainly victims of the migration process in China. Gaetano shows how '[r]ural women are [...] concentrated in the most stigmatized occupations, whether domestic work, janitorial services, hotel and entertainment, or prostitution (631)'. Yet, these categories do not exhaust the jobs available to migrant women. Accordingly, in her own article she describes a rural migrant woman working as a teacher for migrant children. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the generalization of 'selling their bodies' as the only option available to powerless migrant women as opposed to documenting the various ways in which migrant women find themselves working in the city. This is not to say that Gaetano does not point out the complexities of migration outcomes; for instance, the cultural pressures of urban life, or the changing social structures which enable access to independently chosen marriage partners.

This thesis therefore foregrounds women's own perspectives, as well as the diversity of their perspectives, towards processes of migration and practices of work,

without prejudging these as either leading to a uniform victimization or enabling an automatic freedom from conservative social mores. The next section focuses on the use of the interview method to elicit this range of women's voices in terms of both the possibilities and limitations of such face-to-face encounters.

Interviews and Positionality

This research is based on face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with workers from three factories in Wuhan. The interviews were based on an open-ended questionnaire and used to obtain detailed information on workers' experiences and opinions of migration. More broadly, the interviews provided a sense of social relationships in rural contexts and how these transfer to urban contexts as the women move into factory work.

I borrow my understandings of qualitative survey and interview techniques from Fontana and Frey (2003) and Merton et al. (1956) who provide a comprehensive overview of the range of qualitative research procedures. An interview in essence is a conversation between two people, where the interviewer has to be a respectful listener to grasp someone else's story (Fontana and Frey 2003). For a study to be legitimate, a researcher has to reveal her/his bias, accept that the knowledge that s/he will produce will be partial, and be open to challenges (Fontana and Frey 2003). I conducted the interviews in as friendly an atmosphere as possible, without unnecessarily intruding on the privacy of my respondents. Participation in interviews was entirely voluntary. In addition, privacy of participants was protected throughout the fieldwork and post-fieldwork processes. All the names, including of participants, factories and hometowns, are pseudonyms and

cannot be used to identify specific people or places. The conduct of personal interviews raises the issue of the relationship between the researcher and researched. The significance of the researcher being an insider or outsider to the community being studied, in terms of quality of research and access to information, has been a prominent area of debate within feminist research (Abu Lughod 1993). It has been argued that the researcher should remain neutral during the interview. However, many researchers admit that the process of interview influences both the researcher and the participant, making it impossible for the study to be fully objective (Fontana and Frey 2003). I agree with the position that it is impossible not to be affected by the stories of others, and that this response is in fact an important part of being attentive to respondents.

I assumed that problems of my positionality will arise because of my identity as a Western woman. However, only a few of the participants were suspicious of me, and this was mainly due to two reasons. First, women approached for interviews sought to find out whether I was a journalist, especially since my research took place before the Olympics. Second, some expressed concern about whether my intent was to test cosmetics, because they had heard about cases of Westerners using Chinese people for unscrupulous laboratory research. Still, I found a connection with workers, besides that of my gender, based on my own experiences of migration, and most of all in terms of my age. Most of interviews are conducted with younger participants, since I felt comfortable around them and they were more forthcoming to me than older participants. Many younger participants treated me in a friendly way after finding out that I was a student and expressed the willingness to help me.

Experiences with Interviewing

During my previous visit to Wuhan, I had become acquainted with various faculty members and students at one of the local universities who were willing to assist with my research. This university was also the institution that I was affiliated with while I conducted research in Wuhan. In addition, my research assistant was a student there, at the time of the research. In order to provide an initial check of the relevance of my survey and interview questions, I submitted the questions for review to selected faculty members at the university, and repeated the same process of review with my research assistant as well as some of the workers who I interviewed, mainly at the beginning of the research.

I did not do research on dairy companies as I had initially planned. Apparently, the principal dairy multinational, Dewberry (pseudonym), had decided to leave Wuhan when I arrived. The owner of another dairy company did not want to meet with me so I decided to ask my friends for ideas on how to meet women migrant workers. In the course of making these initial decisions, my research assistant, was especially helpful, also because she is from Wuhan and her friend, Jay, worked for an electronics factory. Although I hoped that I could do the study at Jay's factory, after I inquired about the workers, he said only a few workers are women. It was decided that in order to include factories that employed more women, I needed to focus on textile industry. Following these conversations, I asked for help from yet another person, Mr. Wang, a doctoral candidate in social studies at the local university who had experience with similar kinds

of studies, would help me get acquainted with workers, and in essence would vouch for the integrity of my study.

The process of finding women workers turned out to be easier than expected. Mr. Wang, my research assistant, and I took a taxi to a northern part of Hankou. We met Lee, my other acquaintance, in front of the park gate. We were soon in front of a factory and my colleagues spotted young women who came out of the factory gates, settling on the bench in front of the open factory gate. We began to talk about my research with the women, and they seemed agreeable to being interviewed. The very first interview I conducted was with Yang, who approached as one of my friends was talking to the workers about my study. Yang had a newspaper in her hand. She was dressed casually in shorts and T-shirt. She asked me if it was me that wanted to do some interviews. I asked her when she would be available, and she said that right then would be great. I did not expect to do an interview because it was already getting dark. We were standing in front of the factory, on a walkway between the factory and a small square park. It was dusk, but the lamplights had not come on yet. Although it was evening, it was still hot and humid. I sat on a folder file I laid down on the sidewalk, and asked Yang and my assistant to sit on a bench. Through this arrangement, I was able to have a conversation face to face. I pulled out a recorder, and I asked Yang if recording would be all right with her, and she agreed. We talked about my study. When we reviewed all the documents, she was ready to start. Thus began the process of collecting women's voices for my study.

After the interview, we talked a bit about the research process. Yang had been a bit anxious at the beginning, but now she was relaxed and also happy that she could help me. We both felt that the interview went smoothly and Yang decided she would keep in

touch. She introduced me to her friends and we talked for a while. Off record, Yang and her friends told us that working for the factory had great financial benefits and that they were able to make even as much as ¥ 2100 a month. In addition, they were able to receive some training. Overall, workers who we met that day had a favorable attitude towards their job. They did not have overtime work that evening and we all exchanged phone numbers in case we could set up interviews for later. Afterward we picked two more factories where we approached workers for interviews.

Since many workers wanted the company of their friend/s during the interviews, I soon shared my camera with the participant's friend so that she would not get bored while I was talking with the participant. That proved to be the most enjoyable for everyone, the pictures turned out to be fantastic, and the participants felt a sense of excitement connected to the interview process.

Interviews were usually conducted in the park, but some of them were carried out in the workers' dormitory. I was not sure if it was acceptable that we were sitting on the bench in the park, however, my research assistant has told me that it was better if we conducted interviews in public places, so workers would know that they could trust us, as well as feel safe in a familiar but open space. In general, there are always workers sitting in the park after 6 pm. From there, they have fast access to a small restaurant, canteen, bank, and a grocery store. Sometimes, my interviews would be interrupted; for instance, if someone was passing by, I usually interrupted the interview myself so that the participant's privacy would be protected, or if the participant wanted to answer a cell phone call. However, the most annoying enemy to my research, were mosquitoes. No one wanted to talk to us after 8 p.m. because of the number of mosquitoes that showed up.

Soon I started buying mosquito-protecting cream, for participants and myself. Sometimes we would interrupt the interview and take a walk to stretch our legs. Sometimes the participants wanted an explanation about the relevance of the question to my study; usually they were curious about the importance of writing out daily activities of migrants in urban areas because it seemed strange to them that someone would want to know about their daily routine.

Although from the literature (and common knowledge), I knew that factory personnel often worked overtime, the actual connotations of this did not sink in until I began to conduct interviews. Thus, women were often busy in the evenings, and though many workers felt that chatting, eating, and shopping together was all right, many of them were apprehensive towards an hour-long interview.

Besides conducting interviews in the park or restaurant, some interviews were conducted in the workers' dormitory. This dormitory was located in a five-story brick building. In front of the door, there was an iron gate and the door was covered in metal. Both the gate and the door required several keys to open. All these precautions were there in order to prevent theft. Going into a narrow dark corridor reminded me of the dangers of fire in enclosed spaces as described by Enloe (2000, 168-171). Dormitories consisted of single staircases which led upstairs to rooms where workers and the management lived. Workers' beds were either standing side by side, creating a single sleeping space that they shared, or there were bunk beds in some rooms. The only difference between living conditions of workers and the management was that the woman factory owner lived separately with her husband in her room, while workers shared their rooms. However, the conditions of the room were the same. Workers were slightly embarrassed by their living

conditions, but accommodated me in one of the rooms so I could have a bit of privacy during interviews. Since the door remained open, I did not pursue questions about conflict with management when I thought that there might be a chance of the factory owner passing by. However, the factory owner, a young woman, was always willing to accommodate me, for instance, by babysitting some of the workers' children while I interviewed them. Still, she declined to be interviewed herself, only mentioning that it was hard to be in charge of her own factory. She was in her early thirties and used to work at a factory doing sewing work like my informants, before she saved enough money, got an investor, and gathered contacts with shops around the city to start up her own business. Thus, she was a role model for many young women whom I met, who like her wanted to some day have their own business.

My research assistant helped me in numerous ways and was crucial to the conduct of interviews and translation and analysis of interview results. First, she always supported my aim to do this research even when the possibility of initiating it was bleak. She helped in choosing the field site and getting around the city. My interviews were conducted in Hubei province, and therefore required the use of Mandarin. During our drive on the bus, my research assistant would help me polish my Chinese pronunciation of different phrases and taught me new ones. She interpreted for me during the interviews, and whenever we would meet with participants casually after their work. Since verbal and non-verbal communication are equally important in an interview, her translation would also help me understand the cultural nuances of the discussion

Describing the Factories

Wuhan city is divided into three historical sections, namely Wuchang, Hanyang, and Hankou, and 'Wuhan' is a combination of these three names (Graham 2004). In the future, urban planners seek to further develop Hankou to accommodate the service industry and financial industries, and build a main shopping and tourist area located along the bank of the Yangtze River amidst old colonial buildings; Wuchang will be developed through higher education institutions along with high-tech companies to employ graduates (this area also contains a major tourist attraction, the Huáng Hè Lóu complex); Hanyang is already a site for heavy and light industries and will continue as such. A current concern for Wuhan's urban planners is lower levels of private factory ownership as compared to the Eastern part of the country.

Within Wuhan, the municipal government has designated three economic zones (Graham 2004).

1. Wuhan East Lake High Tech Development Zone: This is considered the 'Optics Valley.'
2. Wuhan Economic Technology Development Zone: This accommodates an auto parts industry for Dongfeng Citroen Automobile Company.
3. Wuhan Wujiashan Technology Development Zone: This encompasses food manufacturing and bioengineering. Major investors in this zone are food producing companies like Presidency Company from Taiwan and Danone Group from France.

In addition, there are other industrial enterprises in Wuhan outside these three economic zones.

Wuhan has been traditionally associated with textile production (Solinger 2003), and there are several textile factories owned by Chinese companies. Participants of this study came from three factories: Blue Jay, Abiu, and Chrysanthemum (all pseudonyms). Blue Jay, the government owned factory, had its own brand and produced for the local market. Abiu factory is privately operated by a group of owners, and functions as a subsidiary factory for other brands. At the time when I conducted my research, they produced for Chinese brands but the year before they produced for an international brand. Chrysanthemum was privately owned and produced for either its own shops, or shops that the owner had an agreement with located throughout Wuhan. Blue Jay factory, was located in old brick large building. However, the windows on the second floor where the machines were located were large and let in a lot of light. In the evening you could see workers through the well-lit windows There were two different steel gates leading into the factory. The workers' dormitory was located right in front of it close to the canteen. Abiu had the biggest building, but its windows were rather small, and the surroundings were also less green. A security guard was located in the security post in front of the gate. Chrysanthemum was the smallest factory, and rented space together with other manufacturers in a big industrial steel building.

Describing Interview Participants

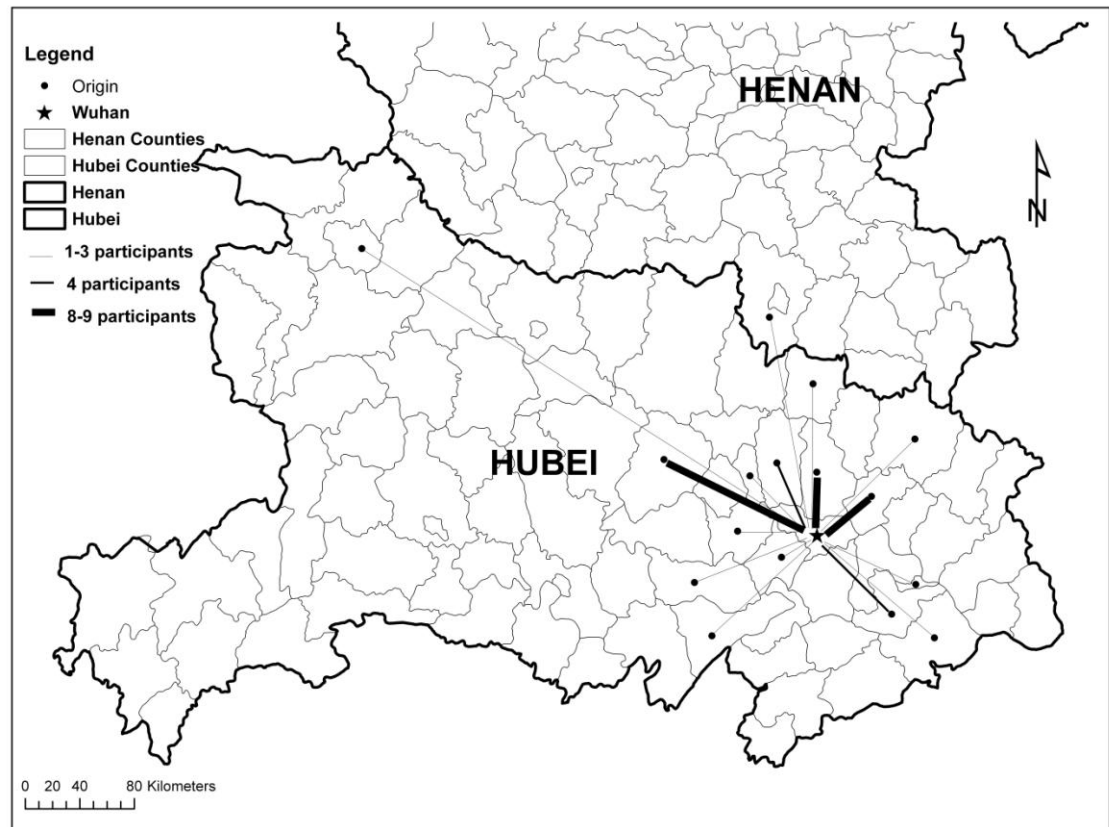


Figure 3: Participants' Origins

This thesis draws on interviews with 50 women. As shown in Figure 3, interviewed participants came from 16 small towns. The map shows the town nearest to the participants' home village. Fifteen of those towns were located in Hubei province and one in Henan. Most interviewed workers came from farms on the outskirts of Zhangjiajie, Laitan, and Peitian. Zhangjiajie, located 44 kilometers from Wuhan, is a small town connected by a highway with Wuhan. The town itself has a major government buildings, a clinic, schools, paved roads, electricity, and some apartment buildings. Another town is

Laitan, located about 125 kilometers from Wuhan, which in turn is located near a town with a newly built hospital, near a Provincial Road, apartment buildings, and a railroad station. Small fields and vegetable paths surround villages around Laitan. Peitian (50.5 kilometers away) is located near a town with newly built apartment complexes and roads, surrounded by small villages amidst fields and lakes, and is close to a Provincial Road that leads to a highway connected to Wuhan. The participants thus came from a mix of towns with rural land uses and towns that were becoming more urbanized around Wuhan.

Age	Number of Participants
18	11
19	7
20	11
21	2
22	7
23	2
25	2
26	1
27	1
28	1
29	1
30	1
31	1
32	1
46	1

Table 1: Participants' Age

As shown in Table 1, interviewed workers were between 18 and 46 years old, and a majority of the participants were between 18 and 22 years old. Although I was allowed to interview only those workers who were 18 years old or older, I was approached by many young women who were younger, some as young as 14 years old, and who were

disappointed that I could not interview them. They wondered why I was concerned about their age, when the factory obviously did not care. Purposefully, I tried to interview mainly young, single women workers, since there is already literature that primarily deals with married women. For instance, Wolf (1985) mentions here preference for interviewing older women as follows:

Some of them [older women] were overworked – in particular, the women I met in Shaoxing – and all of them took their jobs seriously. They, more than younger women I interviewed, had a sense of history, for their lives had spanned an enormous social revolution that their daughters experienced only by hearsay. When young women glibly answered my questions with political slogans and spoke scornfully of their parents' feudal ideas, I had to fight back my impatience with their shallow understanding [...](57)

Thus, the assumptions Wolf made usually conformed to her experiences with married women, whereas young women's answers did not seem to fit with expected opinions about the status of women in China. However, young women's often more critical and defiant answers also provided an opportunity for better examination of possible social changes in terms of gender status brought about by women's migration.

In terms of education, six women had finished primary school, five had studied only up to junior high school, 38 had finished junior high school, and one had finished high school. Thus, the majority of women had finished junior high school (middle school). Many of my informants connected staying in school not with gender, or grade

performance, but rather exclusively with financial status. In fact, KaiQi told me that ‘either your husband or you must be rich people if you can go to school for such a long time’. In addition, KaiQi, Luoshi, and JingYing often asked Yingqun and me about our university experiences. Especially, they were interested in Yingqun’s college life, and her school financing in particular. Young women workers remarked that Yingqun and I live on the whole carefree lives, especially Yingqun, since ‘she has so much time for dating’ as they said. Still, I did interviews with women who were over thirty years old who were a bit condescending upon hearing that I’m still in school at my age. They were shaking their heads when they heard from Yingqun that people in the U.S. might go to school at any age. The general assumption seemed to be that scholarly work is not ‘real work’, and thus brings no benefit to society.

Level of Education	Number of Participants
Primary school	6
Did not finish middle school	6
Middle school	37
High school	1

Table 2: Participants’ Education Level

Forty of the interviewed women were single (never married), and ten were married. Among the ones that were married, nine had children. Single women in the interviews did not have any children. Although, the reproductive health of women was not a concern of this study, issues concerning abortion came up during interviews.

Alongside, older participants expressed discontent that women in the U.S. may have kids and no husband and explained to me that in that case abortion is a clear choice for single pregnant women. As always, my question about marriage and children became amusing for the younger girls. It always seemed to be funny to the younger generation that when I asked whether they were married, I would follow this with asking if they had kids, even when they mentioned that they were not married – to them having kids was tantamount to being married. A number of participants actually thought that the reason that single women in the U.S. have babies is that abortion is prohibited. They were puzzled when I said that abortion is legal.

Issues concerning population policy matter to this research since the migration of women has to be put in the context of the number of young people per household. In this case, since participants came from rural areas, their choice to migrate was undertaken in spite of other siblings being available for migration. This is because the one-child policy has not been uniformly implemented across China, and rural couples are often allowed to have two children. It has also been found that a majority of rural couples decide to have more children than permitted in disregard of population policies, as has been shown for instance in the case of rural Hubei province (Cheng 1984).

Number of Siblings	Number of Participants
1	14
2	24
3	6
4	5
5	1

Table 3: Number of Siblings of the Participants

My conversations with rural women migrants reflect this notion of more than one child per couple in the countryside, since as Table 3 shows most migrant workers revealed that they have many siblings, including brothers and sisters.

With this introduction to the interviewed women and processes of interviewing, the next two chapters delve into the findings of the research. The main narrative themes brought up in interviews will thus be rehearsed, as well as the insights these provide into processes of migration as they connect economic and social issues and bridge rural and urban spaces.

Chapter Five

From Hometowns to Factories: Strategies of Mobility

This chapter follows the processes through which rural women arrive at Wuhan. It begins by describing agricultural livelihoods and infrastructure and facilities in hometowns. It then focuses more specifically on the gendering of social relations in rural areas, since this is likely to be a crucial aspect of women's understanding of city life after migration. The third section focuses on the choice of Wuhan as a destination for migrants, noting the extent to which this city is one node in a larger chain of migration. This is followed by women's own viewpoints on reasons for their migration. The final section of this chapter considers the ways in which women are hired by factories, focusing on both the role of social acquaintances as well as women migrants own proclivity to serve as benefactors. Overall this section discusses how rural women become available for factory work by analyzing how rural experiences and the ability to leave rural places are shaped by gender.

Home Village [家乡]

Whenever I asked participants where they are from, the usual answer was that they are 'from Wuhan'. However, later they would clarify that they are from a town near

Wuhan (usually from around 36.5 to 399 kilometers away). Furthermore, most workers lived on the outer edges of the town, or in a village nearby, where the majority of land was designated for farm use and most of their parents were farm workers. Thus, instead of specifically naming their hometown right away, they preferred at first to identify with Wuhan or a big town near their village. For example, I asked XiZheng about her hometown,

XiZheng: It's right on outskirts of Wuhan, the place is called Wuzhen.

Milena: So it is not a small town?

XiZheng : Actually it is like a farm, but it is not a private farm, it belongs to the government.

Milena: Is it like a cooperative? Or do you have a percentage of land that you can cultivate on your own?

XiZheng: The government owns all of it. The factories that are built there belong to the government and farming land also belongs to the government. Seldom farmers have their own land. Many people work in a pastry factory, or in a field; however, majority of people work in a private factory in a nearby town.

Therefore, XiZheng pointed out that although in her village there is available farm work, many people take up employment outside of agriculture. In this case, there is factory employment available near the village.

Work in the village is diversified, in terms of crops that farmers plant as well as various types of employment. Many migrants remarked that agriculture in their villages

focused on rice. In addition to growing rice, some migrants remarked that their parents had fish ponds, orchards, watermelon fields, and greenhouses with vegetables. Although sources (China Daily 2005) emphasize that the Hubei cotton industry is declining compared to other provinces, some of the workers' families had cotton fields. For instance, Bichang talked about her family's agricultural work as follows:

Bichang: My parents grow cotton and rice.

Milena: They grow cotton? ... I am asking because I heard that the cotton industry is declining in Hubei province.

Bichang: I do not know about that, but I am from near Zhangjiajie and actually many people in my hometown grow cotton.

Changes in agricultural work practices are currently ongoing shaped by the moving away of young people as well as by the kinds of populations that have stayed behind. Huang discusses work in the village in the following way:

I think the work in the village is diversified; some of the people do agricultural work and some of them have family business. Because I live in the village I can guess that most people in my village are growing rice on the field. Most young people have moved out to work in the city; however, most of the seniors stay.

Huang thus attests that, first, agricultural work is linked primarily to growing rice, and second, the out-migration of younger people has meant that agricultural responsibilities

are now falling to a large extent on elderly members of the village. This subject often came up during the interviews, and is significant because villages are left to further deteriorate due to inadequate workforce and investment in family farms. Alongside, some farmers abandon their fields in order to gain more profitable non-farming work in their hometown. For instance, this was pointed out in the interview with Yang.

Milena: What kind of job do your parents do?

Yang: They are rice paddy farmers.

Milena: ... Do they also have their own field or farm animals?

Yang: In the past, they had their own field but now they have changed their field into a storehouse so they do some business by themselves.

This change in terms of employment between generations is likely to create and increase a technological gap as well, whereby old people have no access and/or resources to use new technologies.

From the interviews, it seems that in recent years the government has provided many improvements in villages around Wuhan. Thus, the majority of interview participants remarked that road conditions were good enabling automobile use, due to recent improvements and/or construction. Nevertheless, for many small town residents, train transportation was still the most reliable form of transportation, as illustrated by XinTian's comment: 'It's convenient now in the countryside, you can just get on train, you don't have to walk all the way.' While road quality was not an issue in hometowns, other forms of communication were often mentioned as being somewhat limited. As

Huang noted, '[m]ost people have a stationary phone in their house, but some people who are too old do not have any cell phone or anything like that'. However, a majority of the young workers did not reflect on the technological gap as a matter of generational difference, but rather linked this to the limited economic resources available to people left behind in the village compared to migrants.

Every participant I interviewed had access to electricity back in her hometown. However, not many women had access to tap water. Instead, many families had set up wells in the yard. In asking XiZheng how she liked the school building back in her hometown, and whether they have electricity and running water, I was told that,

XiZheng: Well, now they updated the school building. We have computers and everything was renovated. Electricity is just everywhere, just like in Wuhan. Water... It is not running water or a well. We have a tower that holds the water and people can go fetch the water from the tower. It is underground water brought to the tower.

One of the major differences between the city and the countryside was in terms of healthcare. For instance:

Milena: Is health care available in your hometown?

XinTian: I am from Heshun, Heshun is a rather poor town, so no ...

Moreover, those participants who had access to a doctor, did not have access to specialized medical care. For instance, Hong remarked that, ‘Yes. It is a clinic, resembling a family doctor's office, people go there when they catch cold or something, but not when they need surgery or they are seriously ill’. Still, most women felt this was sufficient; for example, Dan said, ‘There is a doctor and a clinic in my hometown. You cannot compare with Wuhan, but I think it is good enough.’ In addition, some women said that they never felt the need to visit the doctor when they were back home. They thought that only seniors and the seriously ill should go to a doctor, while young and healthy women like themselves did not have to go to a doctor. This in turn reflects on the lack of resources for preventive care among the participants.

A number of interview participants noted a difference between the city and countryside in terms of air quality. For example, FengShu remarked that, ‘Although I live in a village the air is fresh there, here in Wuhan the air is not as clean’. Participants also mentioned air conditioning facilities as a problem and the downside of living in urban areas compared to their villages. Some participants also appreciated life in rural areas when compared to the overcrowded space of the dormitories. They also missed the open spaces of rural areas. For instance, XinTian used to enjoy walks, and in her words: ‘I would visit my family and friends and sometimes take a walk, because there is nice scenery there.’

Given that the agricultural economy no longer seems to be attractive as a livelihood option for young people, migration from rural areas is likely to constitute an important part of how rural places reinsert themselves into the wider national economy of China. However, to understand the specific consequences of migration for women, it is

important to consider women's perceptions of gender differences across rural and urban contexts, and this is the theme of the next section.

Women's Status in Hometowns

The majority of workers when asked about gender differences in their hometowns viewed these through the prism of structural differences and generational differences. By structural differences, I am referring to the provisions that the Chinese government provided in the constitution towards equal opportunities for men and women, which had impact over the years of the communist system on perceived gender differences. For instance, Wen stated that,

Nowadays women's situation is good. My grandparents' generation prefers boys to girls but it has changed now. At the present time, girls and boys in the countryside have the same opportunities. I do not know for sure, but I think, these days men and women are treated equally.

Therefore, many interviewed women, both single and married, said that the discrimination against women was a thing of the past and now men and women in rural China enjoyed the same social status. Those participants often reflected on the government's discourse about gender and compared gender policies since the establishing of the People's Republic and before that. However, often these conversations did not bring up experiences of everyday life to support or disprove structured social changes.

In addition, a few participants stated that in terms of education women are better off than men due to their beliefs in what they perceived to be inherent gender differences. Thus, they argued that girls are more likely to stay at school. For example, Shu claimed, 'Boys are often more undisciplined, so girls are more likely to get more education' Thus some women believed that women naturally possess more patience and other desirable characteristics.

Some women felt that they were treated better in their hometowns than in Wuhan. For example, according to Ying, 'I think men and women are treated equally in my village. Men and women get education equally. I do not think they treat men and women equally here. They treat women rather coldly here, they prefer men'. Therefore, their negative migration experiences in the city reflected positively on their assessment of status of women back home.

A number of informants noted that there are still differences between status of men and women not on the structural level, but which reveal themselves in complex details of everyday life. For example:

Huang: People prefer boys to girls. If there are two girls and one boy in a family, they will treat the boy better than they will treat girls.

Milena: In what way do they treat them better?

Huang: Mostly in the way they give out food. They will save better food for the boy. For example, better pieces of chicken. Moreover, in education ... if a boy's performance is not as good as the girl's, parents still will send the boy for higher education.

Thus, some of the participants shared their awareness of gender differences as visible through their daily experiences.

Moreover, some participants reflected on the cultural pressures for having a son. Thus, Zhang, who is 23 years old, just married, and lives with her in-laws, acknowledged that,

Yes, there is a difference. People prefer to have boys than girls. Actually, it is like if they have two kids, a boy and a girl they are going to be treated well in the family, but if they have two girls they will try to have a son no matter how much it costs. Fines do not matter; they wish to have a boy.

Specifically, Zhang was referring to couples deciding to have more children, despite government-imposed fines for more than two children in rural areas. Population policy laws vary from province to province. In general, while urban residents are usually allowed only one child, rural residents are allowed to have more than one child, usually two. Fines are levied if such policies are not followed. Still, some women thought that current population policy enforced by the Chinese government resulted in improving the status of women. Thus:

Dan: Since the population policy limits the number of children, and most people have only two kids, they are treated essentially the same.

Milena: Do you think there is any inequality here?

Dan: No. Here people have only one child ...

Therefore, Dan thought that if parents will have only one child they will provide their child with care regardless of gender. However, the issues connected with choosing a child's gender were not mentioned in these conversations.

It also soon became apparent that women's viewpoints on gender differences became more nuanced as the interview proceeded. Thus, although some women initially claimed that gender differences were minimal, after more specific questions about differences between men and women in terms of education, they would often change their minds and state that in fact there was a differentiation in treatment between the sexes. For instance:

Guo: Most men and women are treated equally in my village.

Milena: Are men more likely to go in for higher education?

Guo: Yes [laughs]

Milena: What happened?

Guo: Sorry, I am going to contradict myself ... actually, in this aspect, people prefer boys to girls ...

Thus, most informants usually did not perceive any differences until questioned more pointedly about education. Other participants, however, immediately connected gender and access to education as being one of the challenges to better women's status in rural areas. Bichang described gender differences as follows,

Bichang: Yes, it happens a lot, for example, there is a married couple in our village, and when his wife gave birth to a girl he was very displeased. That is right, girls have to leave for work, go out, when they are very young, however, parents keep boys in school even if a boy has a poor performance at school.

Milena: Do you think it is going to change in the future?

Bichang: I think it is changing now, I think people are becoming more open-minded and the situation will change.

Since parents expect their sons to provide for them when they get older, they often put greater emphasis on their son's education. In addition, girls may be regarded as less capable in academic performance.

Still, problems facing women in rural areas should not exclusively be tied to a belief that investing in male child will ensure a better future for parents, as opposed to investing in girl's education. It should also be considered in view of the parents' income level. This argument became visible in my conversation with Li.

Li: I think they [men and women] are treated differently. My hometown is regarded to be conservative. Men are considered a backbone of the family, so there is more attention paid to men.

Milena: Do you think it's changing?

Li: When I was young there wasn't much difference, but when I grew older and I contributed to my family financially, peoples' attitudes changed. Still, parents

often think that boys can outperform girls at school. Since higher education leads to a higher social status parents invest in boys.

Milena: Do you notice any difference between men and women here?

Li (consults with a friend): I think here, in Wuhan, it is different than in the village because in the city most people have resources and money and are able to get higher education.

Therefore, the choices parents make regarding their children's education should be tied to limited economic resources at their disposal, rather than solely to gender-based discrimination. Economic hardship in rural areas leads to parent's decisions to cut of funding for education for their children. For this reason, workers talk about the perceived difference between access to education for girls in rural area as compared to Wuhan. It can be argued that a turn towards utilization of daughters' incomes is partly structured by the one-child policy, which ensures that certain families do not have sons to depend on. However, in the case of rural China, families usually can have more than one child. Thus, if they choose to invest in their daughter's education, it is not necessarily because they did not have a son, but rather that they had the resources to support their daughter's intellectual pursuits. In the same way, Yunchun identified poverty as the main factor hindering young women from getting education.

Yuchun: Some of the families treat them [young men and women] equally and some not; it depends ... If the family has enough money they will sent girls and boys to school

Milena: What if they do not have money to give to both kids

Yuchun: Then they are likely to give it to the boy

Milena: How about your own family?

Yuchun: We all work in the factory

Thus, equal opportunities for men and women are complicated by economic structures to which rural families are tied. In urban areas, young people regardless of their gender have better access to good, free education whereas many families of young people in rural areas have to balance costs of education with costs linked to providing access to proper nutrition and healthcare. Since many rural families have limited incomes, they are often unable to give education to all of their children, and they may choose to invest only in the male child. However, more often both children are not going to be able to go for higher education, and will have to start work at a young age diminishing their long-term career prospects.

Reasons for Migration

Participants mentioned a number of reasons for migration. Choice of their destination was negotiated between their need for a better income and distance from their families. Their decision to migrate was often tied to their level of education and/or having skill needed to gain urban employment. Another reason was to improve their economic situations, or the desire to gain independence. All these reasons create a mix of socio-economic factors that are present in workers' narratives concerning reasons for migration.

The choices of migrant workers are influenced by what they believe society, mainly their families and friends, expect of them. Thus, the choice of Wuhan as a place of destination was greatly connected with its proximity to women's family homes, even if the wages they received here were lower than those they would receive in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, or other SEZes located in coastal areas. Thus, Hui remarked about her job in Wuhan,

Hui: ... I used to work in Dongguan like my colleague.

Milena Why did you decide to change your work? What brought you here from Guangdong?

Hui: My family is closer and I used to get sick in Dongguan. I never got used to the weather over there.

Likewise, Ying pointed to her parents as a principal reason for change in destination.

Milena: What do people in the village think about your migration?

Ying: They do not really have any opinion; it is so common. Many people work in Shanghai, Shenzhen, and other cities.

Milena: So why did you choose Wuhan?

Ying: Because of my family, to be closer to them ...

This is true for married workers as well, who in addition to their parents have to consider their husbands and in-laws in choosing their destination for migration. Thus:

Milena: Where was your first job?

Shengxia: I went to another city

Milena: Why did you decide to come here [to Wuhan]?

Shengxia: Wuhan is closer to my hometown. I wanted to be closer so I can visit my family more often, give them money as well.

Another married women, Song, when asked if Wuhan was her first destination said,

Song: No it is not. Before I got married, I used to work in Shenzhen, but after I got married, I moved here, to Wuhan.

Milena: Why Wuhan?

Song: Because it is closer to my hometown, so it is more convenient to visit my family back in my hometown.

Being closer to their hometowns did not however mean that women regularly went to visit their families. While married women may leave their children back in their hometown with grandparents, as one of my respondents did, and they want to visit as often as they can, in the case of single women it is not always so. Women visit their hometowns twice a year regardless of actual distance between the city they migrate to and their hometowns. Most women go back to their hometown twice a year during festivals, even though their hometowns are not located far from Wuhan. For example, Li pointed out that, 'I visit my family twice a year during festivals, when the factory is

closed'. Most interviewed women remarked that it takes from two to three hours to get home, and they do not regard cost of travel as high. For example, when I asked YongXi, who visits her family twice a year whether it was expensive to travel back home, she said, 'No it isn't. In one direction by train it is only ¥25 and ¥50 by bus'. Thus, decreased distance and relatively minimal costs do not mean that young women are really closer to their parents, or rather closely supervised. In fact, the idea of migrating closer to hometown is viewed as originating from the women's families rather than from the women themselves. Thus:

Milena: What first made you think about migrating from your village?

HaiMei: I wanted to earn my own money and Wuhan is closer to my home.

Milena: Is it you who wanted to be closer to Wuhan or your parents?

HaiMei: My parents hoped I could work closer to my hometown.

For some women, the journey to Wuhan itself was a compromise between what parents considered to be safe distance and girls considered to be a place that provided a viable source of income, though not as an exceptional opportunity as SEZ city may provide. Rather than migrating to a far away city and then coming back closer to home, a few of the women started their migration by working in small enterprises in small towns near their village, like Qingqing Fang who said, 'No, my first job was sewing clothes for the shops. It was not in Wuhan, it was in a very small town near Yingcheng, it was near my village', or Ying who when asked about her work in Wuhan said, 'No, I used to work for a different factory. It wasn't here, but in Huangxi, a town on the outskirts of Wuhan.'

A number of women considered it natural to migrate after finishing junior high school, and some participants pointed out to the skills that they had acquired and could use only as a consequence of migration. This makes it a typical migration case whereby migrants move in steps. Thus, they first must acquire material, social, and cultural capital (Portes 2008) before to be able to secure their migration. Thus, some of the intertwined women would not have had opportunities to utilize their vocational education in the village. Some participants mentioned the need to use their skill or learn a new one as a reason to migrate. For example, according to Yang,

First of all, my village kind of belongs to Wuhan's municipal area; it's close, it's not very far from here, and secondly, I received career training, skill training at school, so after school I came here to use those skills.

A majority of women wanted to improve their and/or their families' economic situations through migration. Some young women considered themselves an encumbrance to their family when they were staying at home. In the words of WangXian, 'When I was back n my hometown I had to face my parents everyday. It made me feel bad.' Therefore, leaving home becomes a way to lessen the guilt associated with not contributing to family finances, as well as to improve their own economic position. Although not many participants spoke of feeling pressured by their families, a majority reflected on their own and their family's financial situation when they decided to migrate. Thus coming to the city was usually a welcome change. As FengShu stated, 'I left because my family is not doing well, in terms of money'.

When I asked about the outcomes of migration, a number of women spoke about economic returns. XinTian mentioned that, 'I usually give half of my earnings to my family. People think it is good that I am able to bring money back home.' Similarly, Wen chose work in the factory largely for financial reasons.

Wen: Before I worked here for the textile factory I worked for a hotel. But then I was able to learn how to work in a textile factory, and so I was able to gain employment here. And why I wanted to work outside of my village is this, that I wanted to earn my own money, so I could open a family business.

Milena: Is working in a factory better than working in a hotel?

Wen: I can earn much more working for the factory. However, I have to say that it was more comfortable, and less stressful to work in the hotel.

Married women also mentioned the value of their earnings from factory work. For example Bichang said, 'Back when I lived in the village, I used my parents' money, but now that I earn my own money I can give my parents money myself.' Moreover, another participant, Song, remarked that, 'I needed money. I would like to send my son to a better school in the future, so I decided to come to Wuhan.' QiangSe echoed similar sentiments:

QiangSe: My family economic situation was not good, so I decided to come to work here.

Milena: What do people in the village think about your migration?

QiangSe: Many people want to work in the city, especially in a factory.

Milena: Do you view your migration as positive or negative ?

QiangSe: Overall it has been positive.

Milena: How?

QiangSe: Because I can help my family with my earnings and I have some money of my own that I can control to buy clothes and food.

Independence was also mentioned as an important facet of the outcomes of migration. As Ying remarked,

Ying: When I was still in school, I wanted to see the world outside, so I went outside to work as soon as I graduated from junior high school. It does not matter whether I am happy or unhappy here, because I am independent here, I am in control.

Thus, living on their own was considered an important factor in making the decision to migrate. It signified being an adult and gaining the respect of their parents. Similarly Ming stated that, ‘When I used to be younger, my parents used to yell at me. Now since I got a job, I am more grown up, more responsible. They are treating me very well now.’ Therefore, many women valued their independent lifestyle in the city. Yet, it is not that women became independent-minded after coming to the city. In fact, it is clear that the decision to migrate was made by women themselves. This especially applies to married women who chose autonomously what kind of work they will pursue and where. For example:

Milena: What does your husband think about your work here?

Shu: It depends on me, so my husband would not say anything about it.

Milena: But does he support you working here?

Shu: It is my decision; he does not have any input about what I do ...

Accordingly, women often spoke of themselves as being self-assured, certain of their beliefs, and confident about the decisions they made regarding their everyday way of life, including their decision to migrate. For example, Song remarked that,

Song: I don't know but I don't follow newest trends. I have my own rules, my own standards. People offer me advice on how to live, but I still like the way I run things myself.

Milena: Can you give me an example?

Song: Example? I do not have one, I am just independent.

However, as noted before, independence does not arise in a vacuum, but rather is associated with the economic system in which women are placed, and thus it comes through financial means.

A few participants discussed the social benefits of migration. For example, Bao pointed out that her migration had enabled her to gain new acquaintances: 'I experience more things in Wuhan. I can meet people from all walks of life.' Another participant, Yilin, thought that new experiences connected to migration brought about valuable life

lessons: 'It's positive ... since I entered urban society and have been through lot of things, I feel I have become more mature'.

The reasons for migration are thus intertwined. Ultimately, the social agenda that women may have is tied to economic means within which they operate; conversely, their wealth could be a means of access to social groups. I had the following conversation with three women, Kaiqi, Luoshi, and Jingyang, about the importance they place on marriage and wealth.

Milena: So what is more important to women migrants, is it money or marriage, which one is more important, or are they tied? What do you think?

Luoshi: They are together.

Kaiqi: Yes, they are, that's right

Jingying: They are tied together both of them, ... marriage and money.

Milena: Can you elaborate?

Kaiqi: It is like that: you can fall in love and get married, and you may be happy together but if you are poor, if you are struggling financially it can all fall apart, so people want to have more money to ensure contented marriage.

Luoshi: They are very much tied. And money and social life are both important. You cannot have one or the other, but you want to have both.

Jingying: You know I would make this comparison: water is meaningless without a cup and a cup is meaningless without water. Money can help your social status but without good marriage, it will not have any meaning. However, even good marriage may not survive if there is no money.

As illustrated by the above conversation, economic and social reasons for migrant women workers are often intertwined. The demarcation of migration as economic or social, might in fact have more to do with what are viewed as acceptable reasons for migration, than the actual complexity of the migration decision and experience. It is likely that since social reasons for migration seem an acceptable category which women may justify their stay in the city, women will ultimately choose to define their migration through social reasons which they consider to be the customary answer (Roberts 2002). Thus, official statistical data needs to be questioned as so-called 'social' migrants often engage in work, and travel towards economically growing areas (He and Gober 2003). Although this study specifically focused on young factory workers, it sheds light on desires that drive rural women migrants to pursue jobs in the city and questions gendered categories within which this particular group of women is often placed.

Recruitment Processes

The decision to migrate is linked to opportunities for urban work, and this section discusses the social networks and processes of hiring through which women obtain their employment. Specifically, this section discusses the meanings of guanxi, the role of social networks in the finding of factory work, recruitment based on merit, and the extent to which earlier migrants serve as benefactors for new migrants.

When asked about the meaning of guanxi one the workers had this to say:

Shanyun: Guanxi is a relationship that you have between colleagues or workers. If you help them, they will help you. You cultivate guanxi everyday.

Milena: How does it work?

Shanyun: Guanxi is ...guanxi people live peacefully with each other.

Milena: Do women and men have different guanxi with people?

Shanyun: Guanxi is the same Men have guanxi with other men and women with other women.

Milena: So what would you need to do to have guanxi?

Shanyun: You have to help others out.

Since guanxi does not only involve gift giving, but also is a social process often involving the spending of time with people from whom one needs a favor, its gendered aspects are noteworthy in which women often (but not exclusively) hold connections with other women, while men with other men. In terms of power relations, since men often have more access to government and business resources, it can be limiting to women who seek to achieve success through guanxi.

When it comes to becoming aware of the employment opportunity, many workers remarked that they “have been introduced to the factory by an acquaintance”, meaning that someone recommended the worker to the factory boss or the designer/group leader. Most of the women were introduced by relatives (aunts, uncles), or people from outside of their family but from their village with whom either they themselves or their parents had good connections (guanxi). In fact, 45 out of 50 interviewed workers started their

migration and work through somebody's help. The experience of Yuchun demonstrates the value of social networks in enabling migration.

Yuchun: My father arranged for me to work in the factory. There was no recruitment process. There is a board outside of the factory so you can see whether they need people or not, and people can just go in and they get hired.

YongXi had a similar experience to relate:

YongXi: My relatives visited the factory. They thought it was a good place to work, so then they introduced me here. We all came together. One of the managers is from my village, and this person provided me with some help. I did not know this person directly, we are just from the same place.

The workers who obtain their job through an introduction are not tested for their skills, and usually an experienced worker teaches them what to do. The only thing that everyone is required to do is to fill out paperwork. At the entrance of the factory, future workers had to fill out a form for the Human Resources office, fill out their personal information (for instance, name, hometown, phone number, ID number), and then they are taken by HR personnel to the factory floor where the group leader teaches them how to sew an item, and/or use one of the machines. Upon arrival of the migrant worker, the factory usually provides access to the dormitory and sometimes offers an advanced paycheck. Some women however obtained their job through merit-based recruitment tests. Thus, Yanzi had the following to say about how she obtained her job:

Yanzi: There is a test. If you can follow the process of making something, then you can prove that you can work in a factory.

Milena: Is it [the test] for everybody or is it only for some people?

Yanzi: Not everybody. If you have an acquaintance or a relative, good guanxi in a factory, then you don't have to go through the test.

Milena: Guanxi is a Chinese concept. Can you tell me about it?

Yanzi: It is like this: if you have no skills but you have a friend or a relative in a factory, someone who's a line leader or someone who has any clout there, then they will let you in. But if you come in and you have no guanxi, then you basically have to depend on passing the test.

Milena: How was the wage decided?

Yanzi: We don't make the same amount of money each month, our wages depend on amount of work that we do, they are not decided up-front. Wait ... that's not all. You know if someone has better guanxi, if someone has good guanxi with the line leader or factory owner, this person will get a higher performance score than she deserves, so this person will get higher salary.

Yanzi had help in getting her previous job at the supermarket, but she could not use these connections to facilitate a job at the factory. In addition, as Yanzi mentioned, in addition to gaining entry to a job, good guanxi helps in negotiating a better pay. Those women who chose to rely on their skill to get their job took pride in their own abilities to gain employment instead of relying on guanxi. In Wen's words:

I actually know many people here, since it is close to my hometown. However, I did not ask for any help from them in order to get this job. My position depends on my skill, and wages depend on how much work I do.

Later on, during one night when I was talking to some of the women at a restaurant after they got off work, some participants mentioned their frustration at putting in overtime, while some girls with good guanxi left work early, but still received tokens for overtime. Yanzi and many of her coworkers work overtime almost everyday of the week in order to gain better wages.

This raises the question of were the participants just beneficiaries of this informal migrant network, or whether they themselves were benefactors as well. Women uniformly expressed a will to help other women migrate, but not many had actually participated in facilitating the migration process for others. Perhaps this is because many of the interviewed women workers were very young; it was their first job in Wuhan, and thus perhaps they did not think that they could provide good enough prospects for other migrants. Those women who helped other migrants were often well established migrants in Wuhan. In addition, they felt their responsibility was to find a job that they themselves felt was reliable, from a place that they trusted. Yin, who is a forty six year old mother of two, came back to work in Wuhan over ten years ago, and visits her hometown often. Thus, she confirmed, ‘Yes, I helped some people to find a good quality job here in the factory and other places as well’. Another respondent, Yang, when asked if she would facilitate migration for others said that, ‘It depends on whether this factory is good or not. If this factory is good for people to work, then I think it is beneficial to help my friends,

to help people in my hometown to work here.’ It was also pointed out that groups of workers within the same factory often came from the same towns. For instance, Guo pointed out that, ‘There are a number of workers from my hometown, Hongcun, here [in the factory she works in].’ Although workers did not necessarily create instant friendship with people from their hometowns, they could often identify other workers who came from the same area. The majority of workers had a friend either working in the factory or were acquainted with someone in the factory.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the hometowns from which migrant women are drawn, the reasons for their migration, and the processes through which women came to obtain factory work. In their hometowns, most interview participants had families dependent on farm work – at least the older generation. In terms of gender relations, although women’s status in rural areas has improved, women often experience lack of access to higher education compared to men, but more importantly to their urban counterparts that had more economic resources and better access to education than rural residents. Their choice of the destination for migration is a balance between the economic necessity of working in the city and the wish of their parents that they remain close to home. As to timing of migration, most women migrated after finishing junior high school. Although economic reasons were the primary factors for migration, these intertwined with social reasons, such as being able to establish an independent lifestyle. A majority of women used social networks in order to migrate, but these were not

absolutely necessary as it was also possible to earn employment on the basis of one's skills. Having charted the movement from small towns and rural areas to Wuhan, it is not time to move to a consideration of life in the city itself, and this is the task of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

‘The City Leaves Me Breathless:’ Factory Work and Urban Living

This chapter aims at introducing factory work and the wider urban environment in which migrant women are placed. At the outset, the chapter discusses issues related to uncertainties regarding urban residency status. The next section of this chapter delves into worker’s schedules, and discusses the type of relationship the factory management has with the workers. The chapter then moves to workers’ views on living in the urban area and their leisure activities. Finally, the chapter evaluates the value of migrant remittances as well as their experiences of return to their hometowns. This chapter thus foregrounds connections and disconnections between the space of the factory and the space of Wuhan, as well as provides a reflection on the distance between rural hometowns and life in the city from the viewpoint of women migrants.

Urban Hukou

In order to engage with the role of the state in the construction of migration, this section will attempt to evaluate the registration of migrants. One of the most important issues concerning economic migration in China is the hukou (household registration) system (Sicular et al. 2007; Wan 2007; Fan 2005; He and Gober 2003; Zhao 1999, Chan,

Liu, and Yang. 1999.). Under the hukou system, people have to register as either rural or urban residents. Urban residency is highly desirable, because of better availability of work, education, and healthcare in the cities. In order to migrate from one area to another, citizens have to register through obtaining a permit. Registered migrant residents are divided into either permanent or temporary. To apply for permanent or temporary status, migrants have to fulfill province-level requirements for eligibility. To be eligible, a worker has to pay for a permit, as well as have certain qualifications in desired occupations. These qualifications vary from province to province. Temporary or permanent urban registration has more to do with legal status of the migrant than the actual time of stay in the city.

However, there are many unregistered migrants living in cities. These migrants have jobs and produce economic impact, even as they cannot fulfill the requirements for temporary and permanent registration (Lee 1998; Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein 2000). A number of these unregistered migrants are likely to be women. As Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein (2000) point out, ‘... to the extent that female migrants engage more often in occupations outside state employment, such as domestic and other service work and market sales, they qualify less frequently for permanent registration’ (219).

According to some scholars, the limits placed on migration through the hukou system has positive connotations because it enables ‘equitable population distribution,’ and reduces the liabilities that would be imposed on cities due to an increasing migrant population (Fan 1996, 29). Another view takes a critical position on the hukou system and argues that it sets up discriminatory practices to better suit China’s economic development at the cost of workers. Moreover, hukou has a negative impact on the safety,

social care, and education of the migrant population (Jacka 2005; Fan 1996). Yet another way of looking at hukou is to argue that the system is irrelevant because the discriminatory practices embedded in society will exist regardless of the hukou system. For instance, Wan (2007) argues that ‘it is not clear how eliminating this restriction [hukou] would help close the rural-urban or regional gap. An obvious counter example is the persistent gap in India where such administrative restriction is not instituted’ (33). However, I would argue that changing the legal system would at least give workers’ rights to address their grievances against discriminatory practices.

Given that, the hukou system limits women from legal participation in migration, and because it remains unclear within existing studies whether women migrate for social or economic reasons, a study on women migrants becomes crucial at the current juncture.

Thus, from literature, it appears that getting an urban hukou is a major improvement for workers, since acquiring urban residency allows them to use social services, such as health care and access to education. In the interviews, I asked some of the workers about the urban hukou application process in Wuhan. Most of the workers I interviewed did not have permanent urban status, but many did not perceive getting it as a difficulty. Thus, Yang said,

Milena: Do you think that it is hard to get Wuhan hukou?

Yang: Nowadays ... No, I think it is not.

Milena: Some women have complained that it is difficult. Why do you think it is not difficult anymore?

Yang: I have not tried it myself, but I did hear from people that if you need to work here then you could change your residency.

Shanyun who has obtained urban hukou described the process as unproblematic.

Shanyun: It is very easy.

Milena: Do you have to pay for it?

Shanyun: You just go there and pay.

Milena: How long ...

Shanyun: It took just one month.

I turned the recorder off and we just chatted about hukou for ten or fifteen minutes. She said that maybe it is not as easy to get an urban hukou in Beijing or Shanghai, but in Wuhan it took her one month to get it and she thought it was easily achievable. She suggested that it is because Wuhan is not as popular a destination for migration as SEZ cities and it is not as developed as other cities, therefore, the city government does not see a reason to curb migration and the city's population rates.

However, KaiQi, thought differently.

Milena: Is it easy or is it difficult to get residency here?

Kai Qi: I think it is difficult ...

Milena: How long do you think it usually takes?

Kai Qi: I don't know, I don't have it myself ...

Milena: Is it difficult because of the cost or are the requirements that the administration puts on migrants difficult?

Kai Qi: It's both the process takes a long time and it is costly. However, with urban residency it is much easier to find a job ...

When I asked Jingying what she thinks about getting urban hukou, she said that she has heard from other women that no one really gets openly refused, but rather the public servants make the process so long that people just give up. Still, many participants worked without having changed to 'permanent' urban residency. Therefore, it seems that notwithstanding women having urban jobs, either factory or service jobs, they are likely to be excluded as part of the official economy when compared to men (Goldstein, Liang, and Goldstein 2000).

Experiences of Factory Work

The lives of women workers are scheduled around factory routines. Despite the fact that participants came from three different factories, their work schedules were virtually the same (see Table 4). On a working day, majority of the workers from all three factories wake up around 7:10 to 7:15 p.m. Those workers who have young children and/or live away from the factory have to wake up at 6 a.m. However, these workers usually do not work overtime. Participants usually eat their breakfast on their way to work, and buy it from the street vendor. On most days, work starts at 8 a.m., but sometimes workers can come in later at 9 a.m. There is a lunch break, usually between 12

and 1 p.m., however, some workers take it earlier – 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Without exception, workers eat their lunch at the factory canteen, although some complain that the food does not taste good. After an hour of lunch, they go back to work. Regular working hours end between 5 to 5:30 p.m. Then workers usually take a short break to eat something from the street vendor, and then they go back to overtime work. Depending on the factory, overtime work ends between 9 and 10 p.m. However, some worker's schedule is a bit different. For instance, Shu is married and has a son. She usually wakes up at 6:30 a.m., and begins her day by washing family clothes. Afterwards, she wakes up her son and prepares him for school. She walks him to school. Then she goes to the factory and on the way she picks up breakfast. She starts work with everyone else at 8 a.m. Shu leaves her work at 5 p.m. and goes to pick up her son from school. When they get back to the apartment, she prepares dinner for her family, and turns in for the night at 9 p.m. During their day off, the workers wake up early if they are planning to visit their families back home. Usually, they get on a bus or a train and then spend their day off with their family. Otherwise, they sleep in or spend a leisurely day in terms of the activities listed in Table 4.

Work day:	
6:30 AM – 7:10AM	Day begins
7:15 AM – 7:40 AM	Breakfast at the street vendor/canteen
8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Work begins
11:00:00 AM	Lunch break at the canteen*
12:00:00 PM	Work resumes
5:00:00 PM	End of regular work period
5:30:00 PM	Dinner from the street vendor/canteen
6:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Overtime work
10:00:00 PM	End of day
Day off:	
Early or late (depending on schedule)	Day begins
Mostly 12:00 PM – 9: 00PM	Reading fiction books; shopping at nearby flea market / clothes exchange center / supermarket / grocery store / Hanjiang Lu; meeting with friends; visiting the amusement park; browsing books at the book stand at the flea market; roller-skating, taking a stroll/walking at the park at the bank of the river using a computer at an Internet Café to watch movies; play or browse; watching TV; doing laundry; cleaning room; sleeping in

Table 4: Participants' Schedules

The work at the factory is repetitive and tiring. In addition, workers do not get many days off – only one day a month. Thus, Yanzi often feels exhausted compared to how she felt back in her hometown. In her words: ‘First of all rural life is simple and city life is busy; city life leaves me breathless.’ In similar vein, many workers complained about being worn-out. For instance, Jiaxin said, ‘I think I had more time to relax in my hometown, here in the city I do not really have that much time to relax, I have to work from morning until night’. Similarly:

Dan: I am tired here from all the work, so if I have free time I just want to rest, to not go anywhere. And in the village it was basically the same. See, whenever I have free time my husband works in a factory, whenever he has time I work in a factory, so we do not get to spend much time together.

When talking about her free time, Rong reflected a concern shared by other workers, namely, an inability to find friends, or a boyfriend, and a feeling of loneliness. Thus, many workers spend their free time not in a group of good friends, but rather reading newspapers and books, browsing the Internet, or watching movies on the computer. Rong described her experiences of factory work in the following fashion:

Rong: There are some changes since I started working; since I have been working here my personality changed. Or rather, my temper changed a lot and my family has some negative ideas about my working here.

Milena: How did you ... how did your character change?

Rong: It is easier for me to get angry since I took this job because this job is dull and has a lot of trivial things to do and I get very tired so ...

Milena: So are you easily irritated?

Rong: Yes, exactly. I felt that I am less happy than before and the workload is heavier than before and I have less time to spend than before, leisure time I mean.

Even during a day off most of the workers remain close to the factory. The furthest point in the city some of them ventured was near Hanjiang road, for either shopping or

skating/walking at the riverbank. This is still in Hankou, in the same part of Wuhan that their factories are located. Thus, although many workers talked about the excitement of living in the city, in reality their daily activities, even those on the day off, seem constricted. That is not an issue of transportation, since there are buses, trains, and ferry access around the town, but rather lack of information about places they could visit, and most of all lack of time. After all, they have little time for the rest, so it seems too precious.

Although majority of workers usually had some other people from their hometown working in the same factory, it did not create instant friendships. Therefore, although many workers talked to their colleagues, went shopping together, or shared a joke, some could not find real friends, and they rather spent time by themselves, enjoying reading the newspaper, or surfing the Internet. This applied to the level at which workers were organized at work, which is to say that in case of a conflict workers had to direct their grievances directly to the management. Workers do not have any unions or other organizations. So, whatever conflict occurs, they have to solve it via the group leader or the boss. I asked Yilin where they go in case of a conflict. She replied, 'There is no such an organization that we could complain to ... We often complain to our friends' Moreover, most women do not complain, even to their friends. Accordingly, Ying said, 'I will not complain to anyone, I will try to have fun, to relax, to relieve the pressure from work'. Similarly Ming stated, 'I handle it on my own, I don't talk to friends or parents about it'.

In terms of the help managers provide, most workers received help with their accommodations, advanced paycheck, and assistance in terms of their provisions. Still,

on day-to-day basis, workers could not identify any other help they received from management. Some participants mentioned that managers told them how to do something right if they had made a mistake. Thus, when asked about what kind of help they have received from the management, an overwhelming majority of interview respondents answered in akin to Ying: ‘Sometimes they will give me suggestions on how to improve my work’. Thus, employee –employer relationships were rather carefully negotiated, based on unspoken expectations, than overwhelming oversight and outright, visible restrictions.

When it comes to workers’ paychecks, this varied from month to month, as workers negotiated their pay per finished item rather than set monthly wages. For instance, Yuchun explained, ‘We work for the credit or token system and the group leader decides what work we should do’. However, after some time on the job, workers can negotiate better pay per produced items. Thus, Dan clarified that, ‘The salary is according to the workload, but if you work in a factory for a while you can argue with your boss to give you a better salary, and basically the boss decides what kind of work you will do.’

After reading about China’s factory work (e.g., Wright 2003), I expected the salary of the factory workers to be low (about ¥400); however most of the workers were pleased with the amount of money they made. Workers claimed that they can make as much as ¥ 1500 to ¥2100, although some said that they make about ¥1000. Still, the salary they received seemed high compared to what I expected. That was of course including overtime hours that they took almost every day. Moreover, off record I asked one participant, who had a high-school diploma and knew a little English if she did not

think that an office job would offer her better economic opportunity. Her response was that with current unemployment, it would be difficult for her to access an office job, and she believed that the work in the factory offered her a comparatively good salary. Money for the dormitory is withdrawn from workers' paychecks; however, workers do not have to necessarily live in a factory's dormitory, and may choose to rent their own apartment. For instance, when I asked Ming,

Milena: What help did the managers provide?

Ming: No help.

Milena: Not with living arrangements?

Ming: I did not need that, so I got extra earnings instead

This ability to not stay in dormitories differs from the description of factory work offered by Wright (2003), Kelly (2002), and Lee (1998) In the case study presented by Wright, mobility of migrant women workers in Dongguan (southern China) was greatly limited, their privacy limited, and their bodies subjected to control in order to increase production and better the labor turnover rates. However, in case of the three Wuhan factories, workers were not as restricted in the factory or outside of their work. Another striking difference was that although the majority of interviewed workers were young women, some interviewed workers were married, and had children, while as described in Dongguan's factories, workers who were pregnant, more than 20 years old, or married would be let go. Furthermore, contrary to the stories from coastal textile factories and small manufacturers in rural areas (Lee 1998), workers in Wuhan did not have to wear

uniforms, instead they were allowed to wear their regular casual attire. For instance, one of the informants, Xue said that, ‘It is a bit more casual in Wuhan than in my hometown; people here wear casual clothes to work in the factory’. Therefore, since it was summer, most girls wore shorts and t-shirts with sneakers. In addition, Blue Jay factory gave some of the clothes to workers who made them as well, thus one of the participants, Yuan, confirmed that, ‘In any case, the factory let us wear some clothes that we produce. That’s right – it’s nice’. While Kelly (2002) showed that factories in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Phillipines actively restrict workers’ mobility in order to gain greater productivity, in the case of the three factories studied in this thesis, workers were less physically restricted. However, there were other factors that restricted workers’ mobility. First, workers had a limited time for leisure activities. Second, even during their free time, they limited their movement themselves. However, it is important to point out that my study shows how management styles differ across China and across companies. It seems that studies of this nature done in SEZs, especially in Southern China, reveal extremely strict and exploitative management style, while in this study workers experienced far more autonomy

The factory usually closes twice a year, once during winter and once during the summer. This gives workers an opportunity to visit their families and/or look for other factory work . Thus, Wen remarked that:

It works like this, every year when a factory reopens in the summer or after the spring festival, the factory will post signs that they need people. Workers can

come in and inquire about the position, and see whether or not they like the conditions in the factory. If they like it, they will stay and work there.

As the ultimate way to complain about work is to quit, workers are able to do so usually during traditional holidays. However, this situation is possible only when the kind of work that they can perform is available. In coastal cities, there are many more migrants, and the recent global economic crisis has had ramifications in terms of workers coming back from the Spring Festival and finding factory doors closed.

At the end of each interview, I asked this question: ‘What role does your factory play in the economy of China, or the global economy?’ Although, most women wanted to skip this question, or said that they do not know, or most often they said that they do not think their factory plays any role in the local or global economy. Some women did think about their connections to local and /or global markets. For instance, Ying said about her factory, ‘I think that it contributes to Wuhan's economy but that's about it.’ Therefore, participants recognized that factories played some role in the wider economy, but were not keen on exaggerating that role. Thus, Qingqing Fang remarked, ‘The owner of the factory, our factory, it is kind of famous in Wuhan, but it can hardly be contributing to the China's economy or global economy.’ Alongside, Wen commented, ‘They hardly contribute anything to the global economy. It is a very small enterprise, the owner has shops around Wuhan, and the factory produces only what the shops need.’ Many answers reflected women’s sentiments about the extent to which their factory and its products were known, instead of considerations regarding how their livelihoods were tied and propelled by the local and global capitalist structures. Still, some workers linked their

livelihoods to their factories, like Mei who stated that, ‘Well, there are many things. Factory helps workers to earn money. However, without the workers the factory would not stop.’ In addition, many women felt connected to current social political and economic events in the country on more personal level. For instance, Ming remarked that,

Ming: I think the products that are produced by my company are very good, and strictly checked for quality.

Milena: And your personal contribution?

Ming: I think I am contributing. After the earthquake [2008 Sichuan province earthquake] I gave my money to charity to support victims of the earthquake

Milena: What about the economy?

Ming: I do not know ...

Still, other participants thought that the contributions of their factory role should be recognized. For example, Guo stated that, ‘I think that every factory plays certain roles in the economy, like producing people’s attire’. Moreover, Zhang informed, ‘I think the factory contributed to Wuhan area, because it is a good, influential brand’.

One possible reason why participants refused to engage in questions about the participation of their factories in processes of globalization could be that this was an unexpected question in the interview within which most questions were focused on their daily routines and experiences of urban and rural life. Further, women might have felt that they do not want to engage in a discussion of issues that they perceived as irrelevant, since they saw their factory as contributing primarily to the local economy. Another

reason is that this question requires time to think through, and even if the participants are encouraged to take their time, they still felt a pressure to respond immediately, so they rather skipped the question than giving an answer that they have not thought through. The global to local connection also involves connecting global economic processes to the Chinese economy to work in factories and then to women's own lives, and these connections might have seemed convoluted to make through the interview. Perhaps if asked a question about the market economy and availability of their factory work, it would have been easier to build connections with their personal lives.

Nonetheless, while I listened to workers' descriptions of different places, I reminisced on Massey's (2005) analysis of global connections, in particular through experiences of travel that imply social divisions. Based on participants' description on availability of entertainment and the vast possibilities that the city offered, although they did not explore as much of the city as they wished, migration had already altered their social status and made them feel cosmopolitan. The fact, that they could go back to their experiences and make comparisons between different Chinese cities, for instance Wuhan and Shanghai, had already changed their outlook on and participation within processes of globalization.

Experiences of Urban Living

A number of women shared their excitement at being in the city. For instance, participants liked the orderly look of the city. YueLing remarked that, 'It is very good here. The surroundings are much nicer. For example, the roads are so much cleaner here,

and there are trees planted everywhere.’ In addition, informants often remarked on easy transportation, and differences in architecture. This came up very often in conversations with migrant workers, as they pointed to ease of finding a place to live and a job. For instance, Guo said ‘Wuhan is more developed. I mean it has more cars, traffic is worse here, and there are more houses and apartments available here’. Similarly, Yu remarked that, ‘Rural life cannot compare to city life. To be specific, rural jobs are mainly physical, and probably in the city there is more opportunity I think [to do a different kind of work]’. Moreover, Huang said, ‘Wuhan is one of the more fortunate cities in China, and there are many work opportunities here. The transportation is exciting. I felt fresh and excited about coming here.’

Alongside, availability of transportation made access to an array of goods and services easier. For instance, XinTian remarked, ‘There is a difference, for example transportation is better. It is not as inconvenient as in the rural area. Shopping is much more convenient here.’ Thus, transportation and access to stores in Wuhan seemed agreeable to many migrant women, since back in their villages some of them had to walk a few kilometers in order to visit a store. Moreover, participants appreciated that they had more variety of goods, than in the stores near their hometowns.

However, aside from more superficial differences between urban and rural areas, workers also perceived less obvious differences between the city and the countryside, especially in terms of lifestyle and character of the people. Specifically, participants viewed urban society as more sophisticated but also complicated. Thus:

Huang: The landscape is more beautiful in the rural area, the air is fresher, but housing is much better here. There are differences between the rural area and a city, for example, most people in the rural area do not have higher education, as many people in the city do, so the way people express themselves is different.

Milena: What do you mean by expressing themselves?

Huang: Just simply the way they speak ...

Similarly, Hong said that: 'It's very different here. In the city you feel free unlike in the village;' and Yuchun remarked that, 'People in the city know how to enjoy their life but people in the rural area are very safe and strict about their lifestyle'. Since many workers came to the city to earn money through factory work, they perceived city folk as busy and materialistic. For instance:

Shanyun: There is a big difference, city life is more regular, stable, village life is more casual. I think that in the rural area, I would just sleep and waste my time, but in the city, I would sit on bench and have some personal time, or maybe take a shower.

Milena: What does 'casual' mean? How would you define it?

Shanyun There is no concept of time in their [rural] life.

Milena: People don't live in a hurry?

Shanyun: That's right.

This does not necessarily mean that women had positive opinions about urban lifestyles. On the contrary, they often thought urban residents were much too preoccupied with making money, especially since their own jobs often consisted of 11-hour workdays. For instance:

Wen: ... people in rural areas are more free than people in urban areas. For example, people in rural areas wake up early in the morning and they go to sleep early at night. However, people here are more focused on making money, so they are more restricted by time.

Thus, migrants view urban life through the prism of the demanding schedule of their factory labor that required timely appearance to complete everyday routine work. Thus, other city experiences become difficult to gather, as Xue described, ‘The only way of living here is work.’

Although city life seems scheduled, it is also often described as ‘complicated’, i.e., frightening, mainly in terms of safety. Most participants did not view city as a safe place. Accordingly:

Wen: It is not safe, I do not like going into crowded areas, it is too complicated.

Milena: Is crime more likely to occur in crowded areas?

Wen: It is not good, crowded areas have higher crime rates, because it is much easier for thieves to steal there. Streets that are narrow, for example. Mall is much safer.

Migrant women thus often associated their safety with what they thought of as ‘simple’ rural residents as compared to busy, ‘complicated’, ‘sophisticated’ and thus untrustworthy city folk. In this meaning, ‘sophisticated’ has a negative connotation, when describing untrustworthy city residents. For example, Huang commented, ‘Not very safe, not ideally safe, but it is pretty alright here in Wuhan, but there are so many people here, but people from here are pretty sophisticated.’ Another participant explained:

Qingqing Fang: People that live in rural areas are more simple, straightforward, or naïve. However, people living in urban areas, people are more sophisticated.

Therefore, I need to pay more attention to the urban people.

Milena: In what way do you need to pay more attention?

Qingqing Fang: There are many people in urban areas. There may be among them those people who are not good in their heart, so I need to pay more attention to what their intentions may be. Overall, cities are more economically developed than rural areas, and people here are complicated. On the other hand, in the rural area, people are not complicated in their minds, they are easier to get along.

Newcomers in the city seem to be especially vulnerable, as city appears to be different to what they perceive as orderly small town life. As a person confronted with everyday violent news reports on the Internet and TV, I had to confront my own indifference, towards the aggression that workers encountered in the city. Robbery was one of the most

frequently mentioned, as workers recalled things being stolen in the dormitories, or apartments, or at the nearby amusement park.

Urban Leisure

Life in the city provides many opportunities for entertainment, for example, karaoke bars and movie theaters. Thus, I asked workers about their movie watching experiences. However, the majority of the participants had never been to a movie theater, either because of lack of time, not having friends to go with and not wanting to go by oneself, or considering it a ‘waste of money’. This last reason is tied to availability of newly released copies of movies on the Internet, and thus true for not only migrant workers but also urban residents.

Compared to other participants, BoBaiBo had more time to explore the city. Perhaps this had to do with her having good connections to the factory management and thus being allowed more leisure time, since she did not work overtime. However, BoBaiBo, still considered her work at the factory to be stressful. I asked BoBaiBo about city entertainment.

Milena: Do you visit urban malls?

BoBaiBo: I think malls are too expensive to shop at. We usually prefer to shop somewhere where we can afford to buy something.

Milena: For example?

BoBaiBo: Some places where it is cheap: Hanjiang street and Changjiang street, small stores or stand with clothes, these kinds of places.

Milena: How would you compare your leisure in the city with how you used to spend your free time in your hometown?

BoBaiBo: City has much more entertainment, for example karaoke and shopping, roller-skating and parks where you can stroll, but in the rural area, there is not such entertainment. Basically you can just can spend time with your friends, or surf on the internet, that's about it.

Milena: Do you go out to see movies?

BoBaiBo: I do like watching movies at the theater.

Many workers did not have friends to share their leisure activities. This is illustrated in my interview with HaiMei.

Milena: Do you go out to see movies?

HaiMei: No, I do not.

Milena: Is it too expensive?

HaiMei: I have no one to go with.

Milena: With whom do you like to spend your free time?

HaiMei: I prefer to spend time alone.

However, Yuchun had a different experience.

Yuchun: Sometimes I will go to see a movie.

Milena: Not many people here go to the movies ...

Yuchun: There is a theater near the factory, so if I am bored I will go there to watch a movie.

Still, it does not mean that workers were disconnected from local and global popular culture. A majority of the workers had seen many popular movies online, so that the internet provided them with an informal ways of consuming popular culture.

When asked about a favorite place for shopping, majority of participants identified the French chain supermarket, Carrefour. For instance, Song said that, 'I like the French supermarket here in Wuhan, Carrefour. I have a favorite store in Shenzhen but it doesn't have a chain in Wuhan.' Accordingly, workers seldom preferred shopping at the mall but favored supermarkets and flea markets. This seems to be corresponding with Sun's (2008) findings, where migrant women workers sought experiences of urban, global culture in the vicarious and unanimous shopping experience of supermarkets. The issue that many participants did not like shopping for clothes or cosmetics, or shopping altogether came up in interviews quite often. For instance, this conversation with Qingqing shows her detachment from consumer-driven places.

Qingqing Fang: If I have friends that can go out, then we will go out shopping, to buy some things, but if not then I prefer to stay at the dormitory, read books and clean a bit.

Milena: If you go shopping do you have any favorite place you go to?

Qingqing Fang: No I don't have any. However, if I go shopping I prefer to walk around, in quiet places.

Milena: What's your favorite bookstore?

Qingqing Fang: Well, it is not a bookstore. I buy books at the bookstand at the flea market.

However, shopping was acceptable to facilitate contact with friends. Nevertheless, most women liked other activities than shopping, for example chatting with friends, spending time on a computer, or participating in sports. I asked Yilin,

Milena: You mentioned that you visit supermarkets but do you visit urban malls?

Yilin: I am not very interested in shopping in malls.

Milena: Alright, uhhm ... so can you compare spending your free time in the city to the way you were spending your free time in your hometown?

Yilin: Here in Wuhan, when I have free time, I will go to the Internet café and I can surf the Internet or just go grocery shopping. However, back in my hometown, I could talk to my family members and watch TV and visit my friends to chat with them.

Several authors have mentioned their ethnographic experiences of going shopping with factory workers (e.g., Sun 2008, Lee 1998). Since I myself was confronted with participants telling me that they cannot really think of their favorite place for shopping, because in their free time they prefer to do things other than shopping, I was surprised

when some of my informants asked if I wanted to go shopping with them. I asked them why, since apparently they did not go shopping themselves. They responded that they thought that this is what I was interested in, and since they considered me their guest, they wanted to show their hospitality this way. Thus, although we made some trips to the local market, we mainly decided to spend our time at one of the local restaurants that was open late at night, and thus we could meet there after work. That made everyone content since we all were able to taste different food and young women were pleased with a change from the canteen food that they deemed to be unsavory.

Usually during our walks to the market or the restaurants, participants would discuss the latest novel they had read and question me on my reading. They were very disappointed at how little fiction I read compared to them and that I haven't read some of the books they did, even more so if the author was an American. After all, I was supposed to be educated, and thus fond of reading. My weak defense that I had to read numerous non-fiction books and articles as a student did not meet with their approval. They were happy to inform me about latest publications, plots of books they have read, and make recommendations in terms of Chinese classics and Western novels. It remains a question for me then whether our ethnographic experiences come entirely from us wanting to participate in the 'real' life of our participants, or whether these experiences are a mediation between what we expect of our participants and they of us as researchers, especially foreign researchers. Thus, should we rethink our view of Chinese migrant workers as just consumers entirely preoccupied with shopping, and instead reflect on our own assumption of what young women do in their free time that in turn may influence their decision about how to respond to us. This is important because many publications

discuss migrant women's leisure time only in terms of consumerism. Thus, this body of literature asks questions about what women buy, in what ways their consumer experiences are restricted, what products are advertised to migrants. However, as Sun (2008) pointed out migrant women also enjoy other aspects of city life than consumer consumption, and have interests outside shopping that are worth bringing into discussions on migrant identities.

In addition, dichotomy of leisure and work is connected to how migrants experience global processes. For instance Massey (2005) reflected on a need for more critical assessment of people's mobility and assessment of globalization, thus pointing out that immobility may be defined in different ways and people that may be the most engaged with globalization processes (for instance factory workers) may be at the same time limited in their mobility. Alongside, there is a need in the current discourses on migration to steer away from reproducing assumptions about the presupposed exclusion of the South from the connection and mobility of globalization. Thus, this study shows that although migrant workers may be limited by their timing and space of the factory work at the same time migration provides them with global, cosmopolitan experiences. In addition, while some Chinese rural women in their hometowns may still have to use wells in order to get drinking water this does not exclude them from watching the newest Hollywood productions on the Internet at the flea market Internet Café near their village, or sharing their experiences of travel to other Chinese cities. And the fact that there is more attention brought to building roads, as roads facilitates commerce, where as there is less emphasis on providing tap water to rural population, may also be connected to globalization, as the government seeks to expand its participation in the transnational and

Chinese market and thus invests in infrastructure that would facilitate this process.

Experiences of Return and Remittances

Most migrants return to their hometown twice a year, especially during the Spring Festival that traditionally is a time for family reunions. In terms of family attitudes towards women's migration, there were experiences of both support and indifference. According to Xue,

Milena: What do people in the village think about your migration?

Xue: They are not very supportive

Milena: Why not?

Xue: Because they say that your daughter works in a textile factory, they think it is not so good.

Perhaps this attitude is prevalent among some groups of people in the rural communities that do not have much experience of migration. In contrast, most workers thought that their migration was viewed in a positive way by people from their hometown. For example, Qingqing Fang said, 'They think it is a very good choice to work in the textile factory.'

However, while some women perceived some changes in their family status since they started their work, their responses varied, some answered that they have not perceived any changes, and that they expected that their families will always treat them

well regardless of their financial contributions. For instance, Huang remarked that, ‘Since when I was a child, my father and mother have loved me very much; this hasn’t changed’. Other participants felt that there is a change due to their economic contributions, or even just due to the fact that they are living independently of their parents, even if they did not make any contributions. According to 18-year old FengShu,

Milena: Do you think your status within the family has changed since your job?

FengShu: I feel that our relationship is warmer. It improved.

Milena: Do you help your family with your earnings?

FengShu: No, I do not because they did not want to accept my money.

I was interested in manifestations of urban consumption among rural migrant workers as they visit their hometowns. One of ways in which migrants can demonstrate their financial success, is through clothes that they wear (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). However, from previous studies, it seemed that young women were likely to change into clothes that people in their hometowns were more accustomed to, i.e., less revealing, less Western-type attire. Thus, I asked some of the participants about their choice of dress to wear during home visits. For example, KaiQi does not change her attire when she goes back home.

Milena: Do you think there is a difference between how people dress in rural and urban areas

KaiQi: People in urban areas wear makeup and like to dress up, whereas people in rural areas dress simply.

Milena: So when you go back home do you change the way you dress?

KaiQi: No, whatever I wear here I will wear in my home town. I will not change what I wear.

Milena: What do your parents think about what you wear?

KaiQi: Well, sometimes if my clothes reveal a bit of skin, they will think that is too much and suggest I put on something less revealing; sometimes they do not like what I wear.

Milena: What about your friends? Do they admire what you wear?

KaiQi: Admire? Maybe not, but they definitely like what I wear ...

Another participant, Yang, dressed up whenever she was visiting her hometown.

Milena: Can you tell me if would you change the way you dress when you go back home?

Yang: I do, I dress better.

Milena: Why do you do that?

Yang: I want people to think I am doing well, that I am successful here in the city.

I don't want for people to worry about my migration here ...

Thus, it seems that these young women often use their urban dress style to show their success in the city. At the same time, they use their accomplished appearance to reduce the worry about their well-being in the city that their friends and families may have.

Many participants kept money to spend on their own expenses. This shows that women are were not solely providing for their families, but also strengthening their own financial independence since they are spending a portion of their money on themselves. A majority of participants however usually reserved a significant portion of their income towards remittances. For instance, Yuchun said, ‘I opened a savings account for my family. I put money from my paycheck there and whenever they need money they can withdraw from this account – it's theirs.’ Contributing to their parents’ incomes may cause some social changes in terms of gender relations in the countryside. Although some parents may see their daughters as future economic providers but only in terms of low paying jobs, other parents may see their daughters as future caretakers akin to their sons and thus be more willing to invest in their education/training. In addition, women may experience a better status within their own family. For example, Yanzi used to give majority of her income to her parents, however, now she gives them about half of her income. I asked her about what her migration meant to her family,

Milena: Do you think your status within the family has changed since your job?

Yanzi: Yes, it did. When I was younger, my parents used to like my younger sister more and now that I started making money, and contribute to the family income, they treat me much better, even better than my younger sister.

Milena: Do you help other people from your village migrate?

Yanzi: I definitely do, because I can see that without the work here, young people just stay at home in the village feeling bad, feeling useless. I encourage them to come here.

Milena: What do people in the village think about your migration?

Yanzi: I think in the beginning people in the village were worried. But now they can see that I'm more mature, that I know how to distinguish evil things from good things, what I should do and what I shouldn't do.

Milena: Can I know what those things are?

Yanzi: When I was younger people were worried I'm going to date a lot, now ... well, ... I'm not dating a lot but ... I'm allowed to have dates ...

Therefore, for Yanzi, her financial independence as well as help that she has given to her parents resulted in more personal freedom that she now enjoys.

Surprisingly, almost all married women contributed to their parents' income (although commonly not large sums), but not necessarily to their in-laws or husband. Conversation with Dan (30 years old, married for 6 years, has a son) revealed that she shares her income with her parents.

Dan: Yes, I give money to my family

Milena: By your family you mean whom?

Dan: My parents

Milena: Approximately how much?

Dan: It is hard to put a percentage value on it cause it changes. Whenever I have extra money I give it to them, and sometimes it is more than other times.

Some of the married women supported both their parents and their in-laws. For instance, XinXing said, 'I will give money to my parents and my in-laws every time when I go back home during a festival.' This is especially the case when migrant women leave their children with their parents and/or in-laws back in their hometowns. This was depicted by Song.

Milena: Do you help your parents with your earnings?

Song: I do. It is not a lot of money, it is not a small sum either, but whenever I have extra money, I give it to my family.

Milena: That is your parents or in laws

Song: Actually, both, my parents and my in-laws. I give money to my in-laws as well, because they take care of my son while I am here.

Therefore, although the literature (Wolf, 1972) points out that married women have greater economic significance to their in-laws than their parents, this particular group of women seemed to be connected more with their natal families than their in-laws.

In returning to their hometowns, migrant women display the success of their migration and are also likely to challenge the attribution of low value to women's earnings. Thus, both single and married women utilize their income both to maintain their ability to stay

in the city as well as help their parents and in-laws further justifying household-level support for women's migration.

Conclusion

This chapter verified the importance of guanxi for many of the workers in terms of securing their jobs in the city. However, it also pointed out that workers can successfully gain employment based on merit, rather than social networks. This chapter has also questioned the type of work relationships that are experienced by women in China, by pointing out that although southern coastal SEZs utilized 'localism' to produce a 'despotic' relationship as related by Lee (1998), factories in Wuhan had a relationship akin to that described by Lee in Hong Kong that utilized 'familialism' to sustain a 'hegemonic' relationship with its workers. Therefore management practices are not the same across mainland China. Still, workers lives remain tightly scheduled around factory work. Even though the factory does not restrict workers' movement during their leisure time, workers remain close to the factories. Thus, many workers engage in activities that do not require social engagements and distant travel into different areas of the city, especially as they do not view the city as a safe place. In addition, although majority of interviewed workers did not have urban permanent residency, they were able to secure their jobs, and some believed that gaining urban hukou is not difficult, especially in Wuhan where there are not as many restrictions as in SEZs. Finally, the chapter engaged with the positive differences in perceptions of women's migration due to provided to

families. By returning home for periodic visits, migrant women convey their economic success in the city and install confidence in their well-being among family members.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The findings of this study place it within current discussions that are taking place between different transnational and national bodies on migration. Thus, the United Nations (UN) recently published a Human Development Report (2009) focused on migration which makes these recommendations:

The principal reforms proposed center around six areas, each of which has important and complementary contributions to make to human development: opening up existing entry channels so that more workers can emigrate; ensuring basic rights for migrants; lowering the transaction costs of migration; finding solutions that benefit both destination communities and the migrants they receive; making it easier for people to move within their own countries; and mainstreaming migration into national development strategies (United Nations Development Programme V).

Thus, in essence it argues that although costs of migration is often high, such migration resolves many development problems. This however ignores structural issues, so that unequal levels of spatial development will not be resolved merely through moving people

from one place to another. In other words, a celebratory narrative of more or less forced migration should be avoided.

The specific case study explored by this thesis sheds light on gendered migrant experiences. Although this particular group of participants came mostly from rural areas in Hubei province (only one participant was from Henan) and thus migration took place across a short distance, for the majority of interviewed participants it was still a leap, in the sense that they came from being children in their parental homes to being independent adults and active participants in the economy of China.

Participants' experiences of migration need to be analyzed in a context of multiple scales, namely, global, state, factory, and family. Thus, these structures inform strategies those women migrants choose to employ in order to gain employment in the city.

Management style appears to be connected to the way in which factories are bounded to the global economy. From literature dealing with factory work in China (e.g. Wright 2003; Lee 1998) it seemed that factory's workers lives are going to be spatially limited by the factory in order to advance production processes. However, this thesis shows that factory practices are likely to differ based on location. Thus, factories in Wuhan differ from management in the southern China factory described by Wright (2003) which had 'despotic' relationship with workers and accordingly used overt disciplinary methods towards female workers in order to maximize the production, for example, by constraining movement on the factory floor, confining women to their dormitories, and conducting forced illness/injury and The approach in Wuhan instead can be described as hegemonic. Therefore, not all participants worked overtime. In addition, living in a dormitory was not required and many workers were able to rent an apartment. Moreover,

workers were able to keep their jobs regardless of their marital status. Workers were also not forced to wear uniforms, instead they wore casual clothes. However, factories in this thesis were limited to Chinese-owned ones which did not depend on foreign investment. What is more, their production was geared towards the Chinese market. Therefore, this study cannot describe management practices used by foreign companies in Wuhan. Thus, it is likely that because factories in this study did not participate in the global economy, their management practices were less despotic, and provided relatively more autonomy to workers

On the state level, migrant workers are limited by the hukou system, which limits their ability to find work and use social benefits, such as education and healthcare. In these terms, this study was limited as did not deeply engage with the issues of registration system. The reason for it was twofold. First, this study took place over a short time that did not allow for majority of participants to engage in sensitive topics, such as their registration status. Second, those workers that brought up issues of hukou pointed out that although it was much easier to gain employment with urban hukou, they were able to secure their job at the factory without such registration. In addition, one of the participants who had urban hukou regarded the process as less difficult when compared to cities located in SEZs.

On the level of the factory, workers were negotiating between the importance of securing their income through overtime work and leisure. Workers felt compelled to take as much overtime as was available in order to compensate for their low wages, thus limiting time for leisure activities. Moreover, during their day off most of the workers remained in proximity to the factory. Thus, it seemed that many workers felt exhausted

by the factory schedules and their work seemed to dictate their lives outside of the factory space.

Many workers used the help of their relatives, friends, and acquaintances from their hometowns to gain employment in the factory. Thus, it would seem that social networks and *guanxi* played an important role in facilitating migration. However, a few migrants reported receiving no help and being hired based on merit, using only their skills in order to gain factory work. However, the fact that workers underlined their pride in gaining employment without *guanxi*, proves that this is still an important part of Chinese economy.

In addition, families in part limited women's migration, as choice of Wuhan as a destination for migrant women was connected with its proximity to women's family homes. In general, their education and training allowed them to gain employment and some women initially migrated to SEZs, but later they traveled back to Hubei province to find work in Wuhan. Still this did not ensure parental control, as young women maintained the same limited amount of visits to home villages. In addition, married women were able to move their household to the urban area and therefore to some extent separate themselves from traditional in-laws household thus changing their socio-economic status. Thus, although Wolf (1972) pointed towards importance of having a son in order to raise woman's social status, as suggested by Zhang (2009) monetary gains from the factory work also produce changing socio-economic outcomes for rural women workers. Hence, through migration participants sought better economic opportunities independent of their parents or in-laws. This autonomy was visible also through the way in which single women distributed their income: although majority of single women sent

a large part of their income back home, some of them also saved a portion of their income for future economic investments.

Women migrants also sought to gain cosmopolitan experiences connected with travel. Women's experiences of the city were in general set around activities they pursued on their own, without wider social engagements. However, these leisure activities did not necessarily involve consumption of products (Sun 2008, Lee 1998) available in urban areas, but also consumption of culture (reading books, watching movies in the Internet Café), and pursuit of sports activities. However, perceptions of urban space to some extent limited participants' mobility as interviewed women did not consider the city to be a safe place, since the city dwellers presented themselves as 'complicated and sophisticated'.

Migration thus emerged as a matter of intertwining socio-economic factors. Reasons for migration revealed by women show that the urban space is a meeting point between work and leisure. In addition, intertwining social and economic motives are visible through use of social connections (*guanxi*) in order to secure work. This study reveals that the space of migrants is in between the urban and the rural. This in-betweenness is visible through return visits during which workers establish their success by displaying their urban attire. In addition, urban work supports rural economies through remittances that workers distribute to their families. It is also present in social connections between home village and urban jobs. Thus, urban-rural spaces become bridged through processes of circular migration (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003).

It can be argued that this study compares two different economic structures experienced by women: the feudal system experienced at the home level (Gibson-

Graham 1996) and the capitalist system outside of the hometown. Thus, saying that women benefit from engaging in capitalist economy is only true insofar as we are comparing one exploitative system to another, where women gain relative economic/social freedom by engaging in factory work in the market economy.

What kind of future does capitalist globalization in China bring for factory work and women workers in rural Hubei province? Factory work as linked to multinational companies cannot remain the source of employment for rural populations since the pressure from transnational companies is to cheapen the labor. As Chinese labor becomes more expensive, multinational companies will want to move elsewhere. Still, China has a huge consumer market, and those companies that are geared towards Chinese consumers may become a viable source of employment for migrant women. On the other hand, global economy has visible influence over China's market, and thus it remains to be seen how the work of migrant women will be affected by the ups and downs of the global economy.

There is a need for more migration studies that would engage more deeply with meanings of space, economy, society, and gender, and bring about better understandings of migration. In addition, to gain a more complete understanding of issues tied to mobility, long-term studies are needed which can be committed to this area. Specifically, this kind of biographical research could look into changes that over time are presented by migration. After all, women could change their responses with time. Moreover, research should engage further with married women, and can also include men. However, this could potentially shift the focus from research on women. Future research could also take on more difficult questions concerning registration [hukou] issues and work in informal

sectors of the economy. In addition, there is need to expand factory comparison studies between SEZs and Central and Western areas, as well as further investigate comparisons between foreign-investment and Chinese factories especially from geographic perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for interviews with workers

访谈问题

Personal Details

个人资料

1. How old are you?

你多大年纪了？

2. Can you tell me about your education?

教育背景

3. Are you married? When did you get married?

是否结婚？什么时候结婚的？

4. Do you have any children?

是否有孩子？

5. Do you live with your parents or in-laws?

是否和父母或公婆同住

6. What kind of work parents or husband's family do?

您的父母或丈夫那边的家人是做什么工作的？

Appendix A: (Continued)

7. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

您是否有兄弟姐妹？

8. How often do you see your family?

您多长时间看望您的家人？

Home village

家乡

1. Where is your hometown? How far is it from Wuhan?

您的家乡在哪里？离武汉有多远

2. Did you go to school in your hometown? Describe facilities for schooling in your hometown.

您是否曾就读过家乡的学校？请描述家乡学校的教学设施

3. Is health care available in your hometown? What kind of doctors are available in your hometown?

您的家乡是否有健康医疗中心？那里有怎样的医生？

4. Where does your hometown get electricity and drinking water from?

您家乡的生活用水电是如何获取的？

Appendix A: (Continued)

5. What is the main occupation of people in your hometown? Is it agriculture, family business, factory work, or government employment?

您家乡的居民主要做什么？农业生产？家庭私营？工厂打工？政府机构雇用？

6. What is the condition of roads in your hometown?

您家乡的路况怎样？

7. What are the means of communication in your hometown? Are phones available to every household? Is there a post office in your hometown? Do you have access to internet facilities there?

您家乡的通讯设施如何？是否每个家庭都有电话？是否有邮局？是否能上网？

8. Do you think men and women are treated differently in your hometown? Are men more likely to go in for higher education? Do you notice any difference between men and women here?

您是否感觉到男人和女人在您的家乡受到的待遇不同？是否男性更容易接受到高等教育？

您注意到这里的男性和女性是否在待遇上不同？

Migration Process: Recruitment Practices and Social Networks

外出务工进程：招聘措施和社会关系网

1. What first made you think about migrating from your village?

什么是促使你外出打工的首要原因？

Appendix A: (Continued)

2. How was the migration arranged?

外出打工是如何被安排的？

3. What help did locals in the village provide?

当地村民提供了怎样的帮助？

4. Is this the first job you've held outside your village? Is Wuhan the first destination you have migrated to?

这是否是您第一次在外打工？武汉是不是您第一次外出打工的城市？

Experiences of Factory Work

工厂工作经历

1. Can you tell me about your specific daily routine, including both work and leisure activities?

能否具体的告诉我您每天的流程，包括工作和休闲活动

2. How were you recruited? What did you think of the process? How does it compare to other experiences of being recruited?

您是怎样被招聘的？您如何看待招聘过程？相比其他的招聘经历如何？

3. Did you know anyone in Wuhan? What help did locals in Wuhan provide?

您在武汉是否有熟人？武汉本地居民提供了什么帮助？

Appendix A: (Continued)

4. What help did the managers provide?

主管或经理提供了什么帮助？

5. What role does your factory play in the economy of China, or the global economy?

您的公司在中国或者世界经济发展中扮演了怎样的角色？

6. How was the wage for your position decided?

什么决定了您工作职位的工资？

7. Do workers have a collective organization to complain to?

您的公司是否有可以投诉或提意见的集体组织（工会）？

8. Are there workers groups for recreation?

是否有娱乐休闲性质的工人组织？

Experiences of Urban Living

城市生活经历

1. Can you tell me about your specific daily routine, including both work and leisure activities?

能否具体的告诉我您每天的流程，包括工作和休闲活动

Appendix A: (Continued)

2. What does the word 'lifestyle' mean to you?

您是如何理解“生活方式”的

3. Can you tell me if urban and rural lifestyle differs?

农村和城市的生活方式有什么不同？

4. Do you visit urban malls?

您是否逛商场？

5. Where do you prefer to shop?

您喜欢去哪里购物？

6. Where do you like to spend your free time in the city?

您通常在城市的哪里度过闲暇时光？

7. How do you spend your free time in you hometown?

您在家乡的哪里度过闲暇时光？

8. Do you go out to see movies?

您是否去影院看电影？

9. With whom do you like to spend your free time?

您有空时通常和谁在一起？

Appendix A: (Continued)

10. Do you think city is a safe place?

您认为城市是安全的地方吗？

11. How does the city compare with your hometown?

您如何比较城市和您的家乡？

Experiences of Return

返乡经历

1. How often do you go back?

您多长时间回家一次？

2. Do you think your status within the family has changed since your job? How has it changed

您是否认为您的家庭地位在工作之后有所改变？如何改变的

3. How do you help your family with your earnings?

您是如何用工作收入帮助您的家庭的？

4. Do you help other people from your village migrate?

您是否帮助您的同乡外出打工？

5. What do people in the village think about your migration?

您家乡的人是如何看待您外出打工的？

Appendix A: (Continued)

6. What has been your overall experience of migration? Do you view your migration as positive and negative?

您外出打工的总的经历是什么？您如何看待外出打工的利与弊？

Appendix B: List of Interview Participants

	Name	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Number of Siblings	Level of Education	Approximate Distance of Homevillage from Wuhan (km)	Living Arrangements	Interview Date(s)
1.	Yang	20	Single	0	5	Middle school	80	Dormitory	05/11/08 06/07/08
2.	Wan	19	Single	0	2	Did not finish middle school	50.5	Apartment	05/20/08
3.	Rong	20	Single	0	4	Middle school	112.5	Dormitory	05/18/08 07/04/08
4.	Yanzi	19	Single	0	2	Middle school	44	Dormitory	05/21/08
5.	Li	18	Single	0	3	Middle school	44	Apartment	05/18/08 07/05/08
6.	Bichang	18	Single	0	2	Middle school	62	Apartment	05/19/08 07/03/08
7.	Wenjie	18	Single	0	2	Middle school	44	Dormitory	06/01/08
8.	Yuchun	22	Single	0	4	Middle school	125	Dormitory	06/01/08
9.	Shi	22	Single	0	4	Middle school	109	Apartment	05/23/08
10.	Hui	19	Single	0	1	Primary school	104.5	Apartment	05/23/08
11.	Shu	28	Married	1	2	Middle school	104.5	Apartment	06/18/08
12.	Ming	18	Single	0	1	Primary school	50.5	Apartment	06/18/08

Appendix B: (Continued)

13.	Qingqing Fang	19	Single	0	3	Middle school	62	Dormitory	06/09/08
14.	Zhang	23	Married	0	2	Did not finish middle school	166	Apartment	06/25/08
15.	Bao	23	Single	0	2	Middle school	50.5	Apartment	06/25/08
16.	Ying	18	Single	0	2	Middle school	50.5	Apartment	07/05/08
17.	FengShu	18	Single	0	1	Primary school	125	Dormitory	07/07/08
18.	ShengXia	26	Married	1	1	Middle school	44	Apartment	05/13/08
19.	Mei	31	Married	1	2	Primary school	399	Apartment	05/13/08
20.	BoBaibo	21	Single	0	2	Middle school	44	Dormitory	05/15/08
21.	JiaXin	18	Single	0	2	Did not finish middle school	121	Dormitory	05/15/08
22.	TongLi	20	Single	0	1	Middle school	121	Apartment	05/21/08
23.	Jie	19	Single	0	1	Middle school	44	Dormitory	05/11/08
24.	ShanYun	20	Single	0	3	Middle school	125	Dormitory	05/26/08 06/04/08
25.	JingYing	20	Single	0	2	Middle school	80	Dormitory	06/09/08
26.	Yilin	20	Single	0	2	High school	80	Dormitory	06/29/08
27.	Huang	22	Single	0	1	Middle school	36.5	Dormitory	05/20/08
28.	KaiQi	18	Single	0	1	Middle school	50.5	Apartment	06/16/08 06/28/08
29.	Luoshi	20	Single	0	2	Middle school	67	Dormitory	06/16/08

Appendix B: (Continued)

30.	YongQi	20	Single	0	2	Primary school	121	Dormitory	05/28/08
31.	MeiZhen	20	Single	0	1	Did not finish middle school	125	Dormitory	05/11/08
32.	Xi Zheng	25	Single	0	1	Middle school	44	Dormitory	06/23/08
33.	Yuan	21	Single	0	1	Middle school	65	Apartment	06/23/08
34.	Dan	30	Married	1	3	Middle school	44	Apartment	06/29/08
35.	YueLing	27	Married	1	2	Did not finish middle school	62	Apartment	07/03/08
36.	Song	32	Married	1	2	Did not finish middle school	62	Apartment	07/08/08
37.	Guo	20	Single	0	4	Middle school	125	Dormitory	07/08/08
38.	Yu	20	Single	0	3	Middle school	50.5	Dormitory	06/04/08

Appendix B: (Continued)

39.	Fei	22	Single	0	2	Middle school	125	Dormitory	06/04/08
40.	Xue	18	Single	0	1	Middle school	125	Dormitory	06/12/08
41.	Hong	19	Single	0	2	Middle school	125	Dormitory	06/12/08
42.	WangXian	22	Single	0	2	Middle school	65	Dormitory	06/14/08
43.	Ting	18	Single	0	2	Middle school	65	Dormitory	06/14/08
44.	QiangSe	25	Single	0	2	Middle school	125	Dormitory	05/28/08
45.	Yin	46	Married	3	4	Primary school	50.5	Apartment	07/09/08
46.	Xiyilei	29	Married	1	3	Middle school	81	Apartment	06/20/08
47.	XinXing	22	Married	1	1	Middle school	44	Apartment	06/20/08
48.	XinTian	19	Single	0	2	Middle school	80	Dormitory	07/10/08
49.	HaiMei	18	Single	0	2	Middle school	104.5	Dormitory	07/10/08
50.	Wen	22	Single	0	1	Middle school	50.5	Dormitory	07/10/08