

**Feminization of Agricultural Production in Rural China**  
**A Sociological Analysis**

**Xiangdan Meng**

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**Feminization of Agricultural Production in Rural China  
A Sociological Analysis**

**Xiangdan Meng**

**Thesis**

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For my parents  
In memory of Zhuang(†)



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## Chapter 1 General Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a sociological analysis of the process of agricultural feminization<sup>1</sup> in rural China. It is about rural women, who are working on their own family farms, who have to deal with a more comprehensive task package and therefore with a higher workload as a consequence of the rural-urban migration of the male labour force. Agricultural feminization has been studied from different perspectives. In the present study, I use an actor-oriented approach. This implies that female peasants' own understanding of the processes in which they are involved, is central. Especially important is the question whether or not the deeply rooted patterns of gender inequality are affected by or through the process of agricultural feminization. Other main questions concern the impact of agricultural feminization on the well-being of rural women and the possible effects of agricultural feminization on food production and on food security in China. This study also explores and examines the factors that condition female peasants' attitude to agricultural production, intra-household gender relations and women's well-being.

Agricultural feminization is not a simple derivative of male migration. A more comprehensive conception of agricultural feminization refers to specific changes in agricultural production, such as changes in the actors doing the work, to possible changes in the gender relations within the household and even to changes in interrelations between the rural and urban economy and development. The changes might have influence on agricultural production and gender relations itself.

Agricultural feminization has two dimensions, that is, labour feminization and feminization of farm management (some scholars also call it managerial feminization). They refer, respectively, to women's increased labour participation in agriculture and to their increased participation in the farm decision-making processes. However, the question that has to be answered is whether women's increased labour participation is really translated into new, more equal gender relations in agricultural decision-making. That is, does feminization of farm labour go in the same direction as feminization of farm management? A second question concerns the impact of agricultural feminization on decision-making patterns within the household and control over household resources. It is also asked whether the absence of husbands increases women's influence on public affairs in the village. Alongside this, the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production (plot sizes, kind of crops, use of inputs, productivity) and on women's well-being are important issues.

In general, research on changes in the gender division of labour in agriculture and in women's participation in decision-making in agricultural production and the impact are important issues, both from theoretical and societal perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars use the concept 'feminization of agriculture' but it refers to the same process.

As far as theory is concerned, this thesis addresses knowledge gaps in the existing literature about feminization of agriculture and aims to make a contribution to fill these gaps. The knowledge gaps will be elaborated further in Chapter 2 but the shortcomings identified come down to: 1) a lack of attention for the own views of the women involved in the process of agricultural feminization; 2) the limited attention for the differentiated nature of agricultural feminization; 3) a biased view of the impact of women's increased labour participation on agricultural production as a whole; 4) a lacking of analysis of the intra-household gender relations in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs; 5) no exploration of the factors that positively contribute to agricultural production, gender relations and women's well-being.

Clearly, research on changing rural gender relations is socially relevant as well. Data are gathered about what is happening to female farmers when they have to deal with an increased workload in agricultural production. The absence of the migrant husband might provide the space for women to increase their decision-making power in agricultural production and also in the household. This would contribute to a more equal relationship between husband and wife and benefit women's well-being, at least theoretically. Of societal significance is also the contribution of this thesis to the food security debate. Most of the existing research assumes that women's increased participation in agriculture leads to a regression of agricultural production. This implies that it would have a negative impact on Chinese food security and food sovereignty. This research examines this issue starting from the women's own experiences and farming practices.

In order to give a clear picture of what was and is going on in the gender division of labour in agriculture in the past and at present, the historical development of agricultural production at household level in rural China is illustrated in Section 1.2. Then, the research objectives and research questions are explained in Section 1.3. Finally, an overview of the thesis and the interrelationship of the chapters are given in Section 1.4.

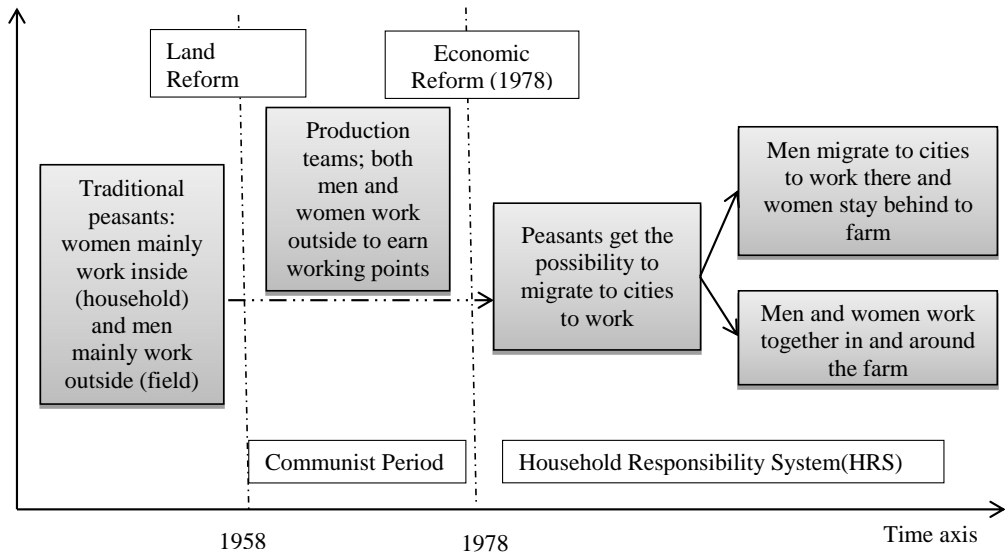
## **1.2 Historical context of agricultural production and the gender division of labour in agriculture**

Agriculture is a vital industry in China, employing over 300 million peasants<sup>2</sup>. China ranks first in worldwide farm outputs, with rice, wheat, potatoes, sorghum, peanuts, tea, millet, barley and cotton as main products. With the large migration of rural male labour force from 1980 onwards, female peasants gained a more comprehensive task package in the agricultural labour process. This implies a change in the division of labour between husband and wife at the household level. However, this was not the first time that changes in the gender division of agricultural labour have occurred. Elaborating on the historical context of the labour division in agricultural production is helpful to understand the historical changes in gender relations at farm household level. Differently structured social divisions of labour in agricultural production contain a different ordering of gender relations.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture\\_in\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_in_China). Retrieved on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug., 2013.

In general, the recent historical development process of Chinese agricultural production at the household level can be divided into three periods (see Figure 1.1): the period before 1958, the Communist period (1958-1978) and the Household Responsibility System period (1978 onwards).



**Figure 1.1: Historical development of gender division of labour in agriculture at household level**

Before 1958, the gender division of labour in the rural households in China was traditional: women were mainly ‘inside’ the house; they took care of the children, the elderly and the household chores. Men were mainly ‘outside’; they did the agricultural field and market work. The gender relations in that era were clearly reflected by some old sayings, such as, *nanzun nibe* (man is superior to woman, 男尊女卑), *nanzhuwai nizhunei* (men’s work centres around outside of the home, women’s work centres around inside of the home, 男主外女主内) and *sangang wuchang* (三纲五常, the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues: the three cardinal guides means ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guides wife. Alongside, five constant virtues include benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity). These traditional norms guided people’s thinking and behaviour and had been followed by the common people for thousands of years. Especially after the foundation of People’s Republic of China in 1949, things changed a lot. However, the traditional norms and values still influences the behaviour and thinking of people to some extent.

In the first period, there was little research about agricultural feminization. Most scholars take 1980 as the starting point of the agricultural feminization process. Some scholar (Hu, 2007; Wu and Zhang, 2008b) pointed out that agricultural feminization was not a new phenomenon and it had already been discussed by Fei Xiaotong in 1945. When Fei did his survey in Yunnan Province during the 1930s, he found a clear gender division of labour in Lu Village. In the practice of planting rice and beans, women appeared to do a larger share of the work

than men. Women were also responsible for the cultivation of a variety of other crops and vegetables which were used for household consumption. Fei observed that, regardless of how many properties a family had, all women had to participate in field work. In wealthy families, however, the elderly men and even young men did not do any agricultural work. Estimated by Fei, in about one third of the families men did not have to participate in agricultural production. Poor families had to find alternative methods to contribute to the household economy. The men in these families went out to do a job such as mining, construction work or long-distance trade. Their wives had to do the farming. One could say that in villages like Lu Village, feminization of the agricultural labour force was a fact, even though the norm was that women's role was 'inside', and men were working 'outside'. However, Fei's case study is mainly understood as the description of labour division in the household and in differentiated classes in the village.

Before 1949, private land ownership existed and land transactions occurred quite frequently. A household's wealth was directly correlated to the amount of land possessed. To reduce social inequality and to consolidate political power the Land Reform (*tu gai*, 土改) was launched in 1950. Land from the rich people (big landlords) was confiscated and redistributed among the poor. Every household then got private land rights. In 1953, the government started to promote mutual-aid teams (*hu zhu zu*, 互助组) which implied mutual assistance between rural households. This way of organizing agricultural production was the predecessor of the People's Commune. The Chinese government started the People's Commune campaign in 1958. As a result of the aims of the 'great leap forward'<sup>3</sup>(*da yue jin*, 大跃进) movement which intended to achieve rapid economic breakthrough (Dutt, 1967), about 26,000 rural people's communes, concerned with both administrative and economic affairs, were active in 1958.

In the collective era, all land belonged to the commune and was managed by the collective's production team<sup>4</sup>. The leaders of the collective organized all the agricultural activities in the commune. Farming households made their living by cultivating collective land. In exchange for contributing labour to the collective, they gained work points. The number of work points the people could earn depended, among others, on their physical strength and skills; higher skilled work generated more points (Wertheim, 1973). The daily maximum number of points one could earn was 10. Usually the men got 7 or 8 and the women - who participated in the farm work- usually got less, 5 or 6 work points. The number of work points a family earned were important; it determined, together with the size of the family, the distribution of food. Zhang (2006) distinguishes two different positions of women in agriculture in this period:

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<sup>3</sup> The Great Leap Forward of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was an economic and social campaign of the Communist Party of China (CPC), reflected in planning decisions from 1958 to 1961. It aimed to use China's vast population to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society through the process of rapid industrialization and collectivization.

<sup>4</sup> Production team/working group: In the communist period (1958-1978), peasants belonged to different production groups in the village. They worked together and earned working points, which could be converted into food equivalent at the end of the year. From 1978 onwards, the household responsibility system came into operation. The term 'production team' is not used in official documents anymore. But local residents, especially the elderly people, still use this term when they describe their living place and so on.

first, women could be full-time peasants (just like men); second, women could play a secondary role in agricultural production. Zhang observes also that rural women's participation in agricultural production gave them a new role in the household. It changed to some extent the traditional norm of "men till and women weave", that is of "men's working territory is outside and women's territory is inside".

However, the communism had a negative impact on the agricultural production because access to food was secured anyway (Lin, 1988, 1992). No difference was made between people doing agricultural production work or not, between people doing more or less, and between people doing well or not. This seriously hampered the enthusiasm of the people engaged in the production and the agricultural productivity was very low. Later on, especially during the famine period (1959-1961), rural households suffered from serious food shortages. All these issues led the communism to fail and induced the hatching of the Household Responsibility System (HRS, 家庭联产承包责任制) in 1978.

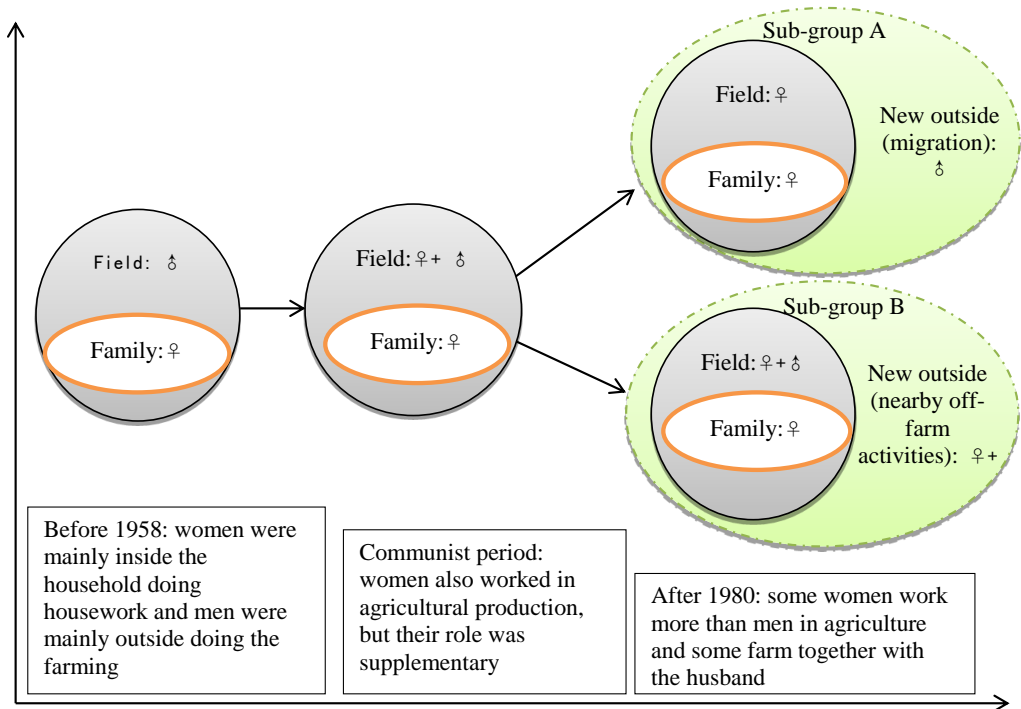
The actions of 18 peasants from Xiaogang Village<sup>5</sup> in Fengyang County (Anhui Province) in 1978 marked a turning point in the organization of agriculture. The peasants signed a secret agreement in which the People's Commune-owned farmland was divided into single pieces on which each family could cultivate their crops. They agreed that each household would deliver a full quota of grain to the state as well as to the commune, and that it could keep whatever remained. They risked their lives with this agreement at that time during the collective period (as privatization went against the communist development direction of capitalism). Therefore the peasants promised that they would take care of the cadres' families if the cadres were punished for this. The secret experiment proved to be very successful and the productivity increased substantially. Similar experiments began in Sichuan and Anhui provinces in 1979 and also here considerable increases in agricultural productivity were achieved. Deng Xiaoping, the leader of the Communist Party in those days, openly praised these experiments in 1980. This system, the HRS, has been adopted nationwide since 1981. At the outset of the HRS, collective land was redistributed and allocated for management to every individual household; each villager (male and female) was entitled to use an equal amount of land (Tan et al., 2006). Thus, the HRS brought the agricultural production back to the level of the individual household; individual household replaced the production team system as the unit of production. The household was entitled to all the production benefits after paying taxes to the collective and the state. At the beginning, the contract period was 15 years; but in 1995, it was extended to 30 years (Christiansen, 1990; Guan and Chai, 1987; Lin, 1987). The land ownership still belongs to the collective, the peasants have usufruct rights.

The gender division of labour in the households after HRS went into operation is partly similar to the labour division in the two previous periods but with some essential differences. The economic reform of 1978 (the Reform and Opening-up) allowed and encouraged peasants to migrate to cities to earn money with work outside agriculture. This was forbidden in the

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<sup>5</sup> The secret agreement signed in Xiaogang Village is the starting point of Household Responsibility System. You can find more information about Xiaogang Village via this link: [http://www.china.org.cn/china/features/content\\_11778487.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/features/content_11778487.htm). Retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

communist period for it was considered a capitalist phenomenon. The migration of the rural labour force started around 1980 and became mainstream afterwards. Statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China show that in 2011, China had 252.78 million rural migrant workers<sup>6</sup> and the majority of the migrants were male (de Brauw and Giles, 2008; Fan, 2003).



**Figure 1.2: Historical changes of the gender division of labour at household level**

The changes induced by male out-migration in rural China, go with different and changing livelihood strategies of the rural households and changes in the rural gender division of labour. Main livelihood strategies are: 1) the husband migrates and his wife stays behind to take care of the household and family and to do the farming work; some women also take an extra-job beyond farming in or around the village (sub-group A in Figure 1.2); 2) both husband and wife stay in the village to work on the farm; one of them, or both, might have an extra-job beyond farming in or around the village, e.g. in transportation or managing an enterprise, such as a wood processing factory (sub-group B in Figure 1.2.); 3) husband and wife migrate together and leave their land to relatives or rent it out to someone else (usually a person from the same village) to farm the land. These livelihood strategies are not static, in the course of time rural households can switch from one strategy to another. For instance, directly after marriage some women migrate together with the husband to work in the city and then return

<sup>6</sup> Source:

[http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj\\_detail.jsp?searchword=%C5%A9%C3%F1%B9%A4%B5%F7%B2%E9&channelid=6697&record=4](http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj_detail.jsp?searchword=%C5%A9%C3%F1%B9%A4%B5%F7%B2%E9&channelid=6697&record=4). Retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

home at a later date when they have a baby or when they are needed in the family (e.g. for their child(ren)'s education and to care for the elderly) and in the farm. Also their health, the loss of their job or bad experiences in the city or at work can be reasons for them to return home. Some women might return to the city again after a period of time; this depends largely on their family situation. Without doubt, agriculture still is an essential part of peasants' livelihoods. Even though its economic contribution to the household is less than the earnings from migration work, it provides a security shelter for the migrants and is especially a means of living when peasants get old.

The notions of 'inside' and 'outside' are important to describe the gender labour division and to understand the organization of everyday life at household level in China. Before 1958, most women worked mainly inside the household whereas men worked outside, in the fields. During the communist period, women's work territory was extended to the 'outside'; they worked in the fields as well, though their role in farming was considered supplementary. After 1980, the wives of the long-term migrants got a primary role in the agricultural labour process along with their work inside and sometimes also an extra job around the village. Migration profoundly reshuffled the notion of inside and outside. The working territory of the rural household expanded even to the cities. To be precise, outside can also mean work outside of the village or working far away from home. Men and women's working territory are both changed to some extent. Figure 1.2 illustrates the changes in the gender labour division at household level. To understand women's well-being and status, it is crucial to understand the new labour division patterns and the changes it induced. As regards the issues of food security and food sovereignty at household and national level, it is also substantial to explore the changes in agricultural production itself. Generally, these are the main research objectives of this study.

### 1.3 Research objectives and research questions

Many researchers endorse that the migration of male labour force results in women's increasing role in agricultural production (Sun and Zhou, 2008; Wu and Zhang, 2008b; Zhang, 2006). This so-called agricultural feminization is taking place across Asia, Latin American and Africa (de Brauw, 2003; Deere, 2005; Ganguly, 2003; Katz, 2003; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008). It has also been amply documented in recent Chinese social science literature (e.g., Chang et al., 2011; de Brauw et al., 2012; Song et al., 2009a; Zuo, 2004). Many scholars studying agricultural feminization suppose that women's increased labour participation in agricultural production goes along with increased decision-making power in agricultural production (e.g., He et al., 2010; Zhang, 2002). Some, however, contest this view (e.g., Kelkar, 2007; Song et al., 2009a). Research about this relationship in rural China is limited, whereas research on the diversity and heterogeneity of agricultural feminization is almost totally lacking in China. In the present study, carried out in Yang village<sup>7</sup> in Jiangsu province in China, the relation between feminization of agricultural labour and women's increased

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<sup>7</sup> In this research, due to some sensitive issues (such as land use issues which are discussed in Chapter 4), the township and village names are pseudonyms. I use Yang as the village name and Hu and Sun as the townships' names. Moreover, in order to protect the privacy of research respondents, the biography recording respondents are only mentioned by their surnames not their full names.

decision-making power in agriculture is one of the main research subjects. Special attention is paid to this.

In this research I use both an actor-oriented approach and a comparative approach. This research interprets female peasants' working and living world from their own perspective in the context of the relatively new labour division pattern. In doing so, it provides a perspective for the design, monitoring and assessment of relevant policies in China. The comparative approach is used to explore the differentiated nature of the newly emerging gender divisions of labour patterns in agriculture. The female peasants in sub-group A, the women who are the central labour contributors in agricultural production, are the target group (Figure 1.2). The women in sub-group B (women who have a supplementary role in agricultural production) are the control respondents. In conducting the research, methods such as questionnaire surveys, participatory observation, structured interviews and biography recordings (Melberg, 2008; Miele, 1994; Pohlmann, 1994; Thorsen, 1994) are used.

Alongside a focus on the current condition of agricultural feminization and the underlying reasons, this research studies its impact on women's work, their well-being, intra-household gender relationships and on agricultural production. The main questions include: Does women's increased labour participation in agriculture lead to their increased decision-making power in agriculture? Does agricultural feminization stimulate or hamper agricultural production? Does agricultural feminization promote gender equality in agricultural production and in the household or not? What are the factors conditioning an equal status between wives and their husbands? What is the impact on women's well-being? In synthesis, the four objectives of this research are:

1) to identify the differentiated nature of agricultural feminization in the context of the changing gender division of labour. Does 'labour feminization in agriculture' go together with 'managerial feminization', i.e. decision-making in agricultural production? To what degree is women's labour participation and decision-making participation in different tasks in agriculture? If different participation degrees are shown, what differences can be discerned and what are the underlying factors? All these questions probe into the changing nature of the *labour process* in agricultural production. These questions are answered in Chapter 6 in this thesis.

2) to gain understanding about how these changes influence the agricultural production in the households. Some scholars point out agricultural feminization leads to the regression of agricultural production (e.g., Goldstein and Udry, 2008; Li, 2009; Udry, 1996). But how do female peasants themselves perceive this issue? Research questions include: What changes in farm areas and cropping schemes emerge after female peasants become main labour contributors in agriculture? Are there differences in the production yields, in the use of agricultural inputs (quality and quantity)? Alongside exploring the changes of women's practice in agriculture, this study examines the impact of women's emotional judgement on agricultural production and explores the factors that contribute to household, and even state, food security issue. These questions are answered in Chapter 5 in this thesis.

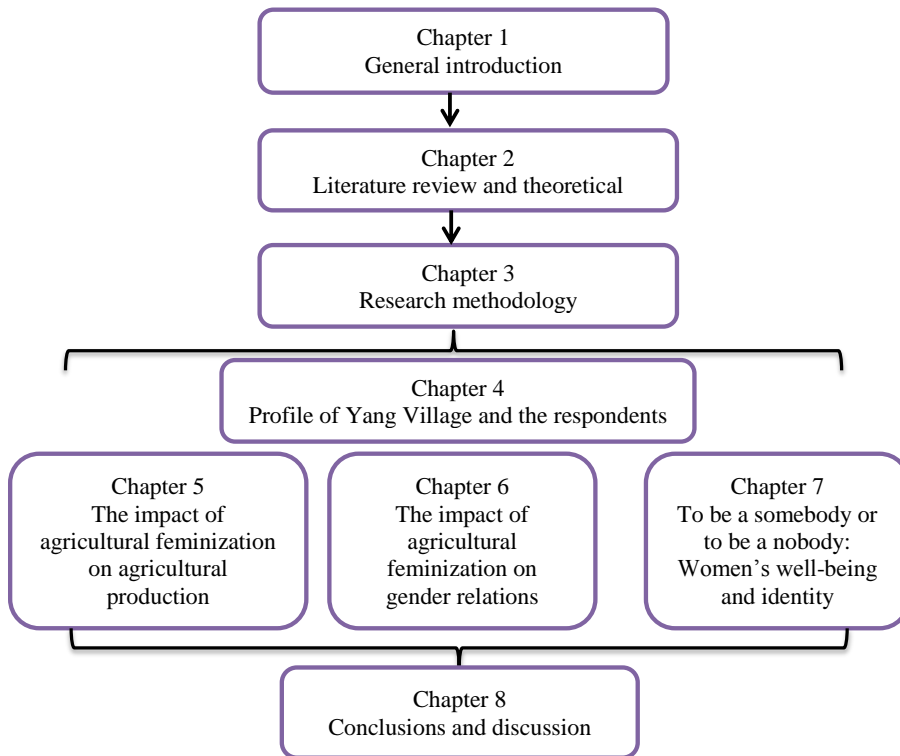


3) to make possible additional changes in rural gender relations visible. As discussed in the theoretical and social relevance of this thesis, there are contradictions about this issue in the prevailing research. For instance, Li et al. (2000) and Zhang (2006) assume that women's enlarged participation in agricultural production results in a lowering of their family status. However, Fu (2003) stresses that obtaining more power in decision-making on agricultural production gives women more confidence and enforces their status in village public affairs. The third objective of this research is to explore the possible changes in rural gender relations in household affairs and village public affairs. Do women have more decision-making rights in the household after becoming the main labour contributor in agriculture? What are the factors that affect women's justifications in intra-household gender equality? Here the questions are meant to probe into (changing) *gender relations* and the questions are illustrated in Chapter 6. Objective 1 and objective 3 are separated from each other, just as the corresponding questions differ. This is due to the fact that, theoretically speaking, the labour process might change whilst gender relations remain the same, or both change or whatever. It would be wrong, though, to assume a priori that the two coincide and converge.

4) to explore the impact of agricultural feminization on female peasants' well-being, both physically and emotionally, and the factors that condition female peasants to have positive well-being situation. The physical burden issues are mainly reflected by the description of female peasants' physical burden in doing agricultural production, caring and housework within the households. Regarding the subjective well-being part, it explores women's emotional burden, such as loneliness, by comparing the situation of the two sub-groups of women through surveys, biography recording and participatory observation. These are discussed in Chapter 7.

#### **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

This thesis consists of eight chapters. The interrelationship of these chapters is indicated in Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3: Interrelationship of the chapters**

Chapter 2 comprises a literature review and discusses key concepts and the theoretical framework used in this research. The main concepts include migration, agricultural feminization, gender and gender relations. The last section in Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework of this thesis.

Chapter 3 introduces the fieldwork process, methods of data collection and sampling, data management and analysis. The research methods used include a survey, biography recording, key informants interviews and participant observation. To select the survey respondents, a stratified random sampling was used (age and whether the woman farms mainly by herself). To better understand female peasants' livelihoods, the life histories of six women were recorded.

Chapter 4 gives a general description of the research site and the respondents. It aims to give a picture of the social context in which I conducted the research and the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In order to have a better understanding of the interview fragments presented in the following chapters, I briefly introduce the women that shared their life history with me (the biographical perspective).

Chapter 5 mainly focuses on the issue of whether agricultural feminization leads to a regression of agricultural production from the perspective of female peasants. It also discusses the role of agriculture within the households as perceived by female peasants and explores the factors that condition female peasants' willingness to continue farming and to do good farming work. At the end of this chapter, by synthesizing women's difficulties and expectations in agricultural work, it tries to make a positive contribution to the elaboration of agricultural policies.

Chapter 6 explores the impact of agricultural feminization on gender relations. It focuses on the gender relations within the households where women became primary labour contributors in agricultural production after the out-migration of their husbands. It discusses not only the changes in decision-making about agricultural production, but also explores the changes in decision-making about household affairs and village public affairs. It further discusses the factors that condition female peasants' view on gender equality.

Chapter 7 presents a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of female peasants' objective and subjective well-being from their own perspective. It starts with the description of female peasants' physical and emotional burden by comparing their situation with that of the control group of women (women who are doing the farming work together with their husbands). It further explores the factors that favour female peasants' well-being, especially at the symbolic level. This chapter is firmly based on biography recording and participant observation.

Chapter 8 contains conclusions and discussion. Firstly, the main findings of the research according to the research questions are synthesized. Secondly, some discussion and policy recommendations are put forward to pursue positive aspects of agricultural production, gender relations, women's well-being and rural development. Finally, some critical reflections of this thesis are elaborated.



## Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underlies this thesis. It is based on an extensive review of the relevant literature. The key concepts discussed include migration, agricultural feminization, gender and gender relations. Agricultural feminization is closely associated with the rural-urban migration of the male labour force in China. Migration is a household strategy. The associated changes in labour division and decision-making in agricultural production affect intra-household gender relations.

### 2.1 Migration

The sweeping economic changes experienced by China in recent decades have transformed the division of labour along occupational and gender lines. Since the introduction of agricultural and other reforms in the late 1970s, labour markets and the nature of labour force participation have changed significantly in rural areas. With the gradual relaxation of restrictions on mobility, China has experienced one of the largest flows of rural-urban labour migration in the world. China had 252.78 million rural migrant workers in 2011 which increased by 4.4% compared to 2010 figures, according to the statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics of China. Of them, 158.63 million rural migrant workers were working outside of their home township in 2011 which increased by 3.4% compared to 2010 figures<sup>1</sup>. “The 2000 census found that 12.2% of the urban population were migrants. In cities (excluding townships), migrants accounted for 14.6% of the population and 19.6% of employed workers.” (cited by Park and Wang, 2010) Rapidly increasing migration has been associated with economic growth in China (Fan, 2008; Liang and Ma, 2004).

Migration involves a permanent move from one community to another in Mallee’s (1997) opinion. However, for most Chinese rural peasant migrants, migration is not a permanent move but involves the special characteristic of circulation. Migrants tend to follow a temporary and circular pattern, moving between cities and provinces in search of improved opportunities. Zelinsky (1971:225-226) defines conventional migration as “any permanent or semi-permanent change of residence” and circulation as “a great variety of movements usually short-term, repetitive or cyclical in nature, but all having in common the lack of any declared intention of a permanent or long lasting change in residence.” A further distinction can be made between commuting, defined as regular travel outside the village (usually for work or education) for 6 to 24 hours, and circular migration, involving continuous but temporary absences longer than one day (Hugo, 1982). For Chinese scholars, the circular migration longer than one day can be generally divided into short-term migration and long-term migration. The accumulative time of working far away from home for under or over 6 months is the borderline distinguishing short-term and long-term migration (Wu and Rao, 2009; Ye and Wu, 2008). Long-term migrants return home on average two to three times a year (Hare, 1999). One explanation for circular migration is the difficulty in obtaining

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<sup>1</sup> Source:

[http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj\\_detail.jsp?searchword=%C5%A9%C3%F1%B9%A4%B5%F7%B2%E9&channelid=6697&record=4](http://www.stats.gov.cn/was40/gjtjj_detail.jsp?searchword=%C5%A9%C3%F1%B9%A4%B5%F7%B2%E9&channelid=6697&record=4). Retrieved on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

permanent resident status, which limits the migrants' access to work and housing. It is also partly attributable to the collective ownership of land in rural areas which prevents the sale of land and makes land rental risky for permanent migrants (Roberts, 2000).

There might be many different reasons that explain, solely or in combination, the engagement of people in the process of labour migration. At the macro level, Chinese internal migration is associated with the institutional restrictions. The free markets for commodities, including labour, (Christiansen, 1990) and the loosening of the household registration system (*hukou*, 户口) has created the possibility for migration (Cai, 2000) from rural to urban areas. At the micro or individual level, migration is motivated by economic goals or lack of jobs and so on. For instance, Murphy (2002) and Fan (2003) see migration as being mainly motivated by economic goals. Murphy (2002:21) states that "migration strategies are not simply opportunistic and immediate responses to push and pull stimuli; they are also products of values." In the opinion of Goodman and Hiskey (2008) and Zhao (1999), migration occurs because of the shortage of farmland and the abundance of household labour. In addition, migration networks is also an important factor that drives migration (Sheng, 2007; Taylor et al., 2003; Zhao, 2003).

Migration might reflect the dysfunctional social or institutional arrangement at the macro level as well. This applies especially to international migration. Migration is a costly decision. Migrants who 'disappear' (according to those family members or friends who are left-behind) often have chosen to leave problematic and difficult relationships. Thus their decision was not random, but was in fact planned after consideration of the costs of remaining in a dysfunctional social arrangement (Ley and Kobayashi, 2005; Osella and Osella, 2000; Valentine et al., 2009). As Cohen and Sirkeci mention, "migration is about security and escaping dangerous situations. For example, many Mexico women migrate to escape familial violence, turning their backs on homes and parents in an effort to find a safer environment in which to live. Migration is rooted in an understanding of the household as the adaptive unit where social actors make active decisions... Moreover, beyond the household, the decision to migrate reflects communal traditions, village practices and national or even international trends." (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011:2)

Culture has a strong impact on migration. As Cohen and Sirkeci (2011:ix) argue, "the choice to migrate is not driven by economic need alone, nor is a desire to leave a natal home a sufficient catalyst for border crossing. Culture, in other words, the social practice, meaning, and symbolic logic of mobility, must be understood along with economics if we are to understand patterns of migration." "All migration is culturally framed and socially defined by the migrants and non-migrants and the conflicts and contests in which they are involved and that they perceive. In other words, there is a cultural framework, or a culture of migration, that helps migrants define their mobility in relation to their household, home community, and world. A culture of migration relates to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual migrants themselves, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their homes, families and sending and receiving communities, the sending and receiving nations, and the global patterns of social and economic life." (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011:10-11) A migrant's strengths and

weaknesses reflect the gender, age, experience (including the experience in migration), schooling, security and the history and experiences of other movers and non-movers involved in the social networks that characterize migration history and experience (Singer and Massey, 1998). For instance, in some cultures, women cannot engage in international migration; instead, women have to stay at home or move locally (Cohen et al., 2008). In China, women's working territory was inside and men's was outside.

The aforementioned aspects are closely correlated. Without the allowance of the institutional context, rural labourers cannot migrate. Without the economic needs of the households or the abundance of the household labour, rural labourers do not need to migrate. No matter which factor is the direct driver for migration, at least, one assured point is that migration is a household strategy and it is not just an individual choice (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011:17; Jacka, 2012). It is essential to research migration and "it is also critical to recognize and understand why people stay behind and do not migrate (Cohen, 2002; Conway and Potter, 2007; Faist, 2000; Fischer et al., 1997)." It is also substantial to know the living conditions of these left-behind people. Generally, the in-depth studies on this aspect are scarce and only a few scholars in China have conducted relevant research. For instance, Ye and his research group conducted a series of research on left-behind population, i.e., children, women and elderly people, in ten villages of five provinces in 2007 in China (Ye and He, 2008; Ye and Pan, 2008; Ye and Wu, 2008 ). The research found that the left-behind populations were facing lots of problems related to the migration of the male labourers in the households, such as the need to supervise the study of the children and the need to deal with the heavy physical and emotional workload.

A gender difference in migration exists in China and usually women are those who stay behind in the village, especially the married women. Murphy (2004) assumes "existing informal rules and gender norms in intra-household decision-making" limit the opportunities of women's out-migration. Lagging female migration is thought to be partly due to women's occupational options as migrants which tend to be inferior to men's (Fan, 2003; Liang and Chen, 2004). Other limiting factors include 'a sex-segregated and discriminating labour market' (Barbero-Bacconnier, 1996), 'the gender income gap'(Zhu, 2002), 'a low educational level'(Fan, 1999; Luo, 2006) , 'sexual harassment or violence against women'(Jacka, 2005:115), and 'a lack of social networks'(Zhao, 2003).

Generally speaking, there has been a rapid increase in the migration of men of all ages to jobs in urban areas (Zhao, 2002b), but women's migration has lagged behind men's (Fan, 2003). Young and single women are more likely to migrate than elderly women (Du et al., 2005) and young female migrants usually return to rural areas when they get married (Fan, 2004). Due to large numbers of rural men continuing to be migrant workers until their late middle age, the large scale labour migration has had a significant impact on the social landscape of rural China. Many villages are dominated by split households with women, children and the elderly(Jacka, 2012; Ye and Wu, 2008 ) and the women have to do the majority of the work in the household. Alongside their work in the household, they are confronted with an increased

workload in agriculture. This change is referred to, in the academia, as agricultural feminization.

## 2.2 Agricultural feminization

Agricultural feminization, i.e. women doing an increasing proportion of farm work, is not a phenomenon limited to China (Gao, 1994; Kang, 2008; Sun and Zhou, 2008; Wu and Rao, 2009), but is also found in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe (Cernea, 1978; Chiriboga et al., 2008; de Brauw, 2003; Gartaula et al., 2010; Inhetveen and Schmitt, 2004; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008; Maharjan et al., 2012). In China, the feminization of agriculture is tightly intertwined with the rural-urban migration of the male rural labour force to search for paid work mainly in other sectors and the interrelations became visible from the beginning of 1980s onwards (Sun and Zhou, 2008; Wu and Zhang, 2008a; Zhang, 2006). The degrees of agricultural feminization varies due to different degrees of migration in different regions in China (Gao, 1994).

According to the Program for the Development of Chinese Women of the Agricultural Ministry (1995-2000), the percentage of rural women's contribution to the whole agricultural output in this period has accounted for 50-60% and their income constituted 40% of the whole family income; in the field of farming, breeding and processing, women made up at least 60% of the labour force (Xiao, 2005). In 2005, the National Bureau of Statistics announced that 744.7 million people were living in rural areas and that female peasants constituted 65% of the farming population (Tu, 2007; Yang, 2008). These data confirm women's important role and position in rural China and reflect the importance of research on agricultural feminization.

Currently, an extensive body of literature on feminization in Chinese agriculture is available (e.g., Chang et al., 2011; de Brauw et al., 2012; Song et al., 2009a; Wang, 1999; Zuo, 2004). Nonetheless, the same literature shows some knowledge gaps that provide the starting point for the research approach followed in this thesis. These knowledge gaps referred to include:

- 1) a conceptual confusion on what is understood by 'feminization of agriculture';
- 2) relatively insufficient attention to the involved gender dimension, i.e., decision-making aspect in agriculture and gender relations within it;
- 3) the tendency to understand this 'feminization' as an overall regression in, and of, agricultural and rural development;
- 4) a disregard of the women's perspective;
- 5) a tendency to only focus on left-behind farm women;
- 6) and a lack of in-depth empirical studies.

Agricultural feminization embraces women's involvement in the labour process and besides this, women's involvement in the decision-making process in agricultural production. These two dimensions relate to manual and mental labour participation in agricultural production and they are known as, labour feminization and managerial feminization of agricultural production. Labour feminization does not lead to managerial feminization directly and the two are often disconnected. Many scholars carry out relevant studies on the same topic, but



there is no consistent understanding of the meaning of agricultural feminization among them. Table 2.1 shows different research data about the scale and degree of ‘agricultural feminization’ in China.

**Table 2.1: Descriptions of the magnitude of ‘agricultural feminization’**

Time	Research group or researcher(s)	Research site and related “agricultural feminization” data
The late 1980s	Canadian anthropologist Lao Leier Berson (cited by Cheng, 1998)	Three villages of Henan and Yunnan provinces; women labour made up 54-74% of the whole labour force and their working time was slightly larger than males’ regarding planting wheat, corn and rice.
1990s	Industrial Development Research Institute of National Development and Reform Commission (Zhang and Liu, 2001)	The percentage of women engaged in agriculture, forestry, livestock sector and fishery increased in the 1990s. In 1990, women practitioners made up 52.4%, and rose to 61.6% in 2000.
2001	The Office of the Fifth Census in Fujian Province	90% of rural women were engaged in agricultural sector in Hui’an County of Fujian Province.
2002	Second Phase of “Chinese women’s social status survey” (ACWF, All-China Women’s Federation)	The percentage of rural women who only participated in agricultural production (planting and breeding) was 82.1%, and 17.4% higher than men.
2002	The Rural Statistical Yearbook (Lin, 2003)	In agricultural sector, female labour force engaged accounted for 53.1% in rural areas of Guangdong Province, in some counties it was as high as 60-70%.
2004	IFAD (cited by Song et al., 2009a)	62% of households in 3 provinces were women-headed households. Gender Assessment of IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development).
2005	The Labour Statistics Yearbook (cited by Chen and Xu, 2008)	The percentage of women working in agricultural sectors accounted for 60.1%.
2006	ACWF (Deng, 2008; Sun and Zhou, 2008)	The survey included 10,000 female farmers in 50 counties of 10 provinces (Hebei, Jilin, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Henan, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu). It found that 74.7% of rural women participated in agriculture, the proportion of women who performed all agricultural tasks accounted for 20.7% of the total percentage (74.7%), 7% larger than men; especially in Gansu, Sichuan and Jiangsu, it reached 32.4%, 33% and 31.4%, respectively.
2006	Shanxi Provincial Women’s Federation (cited by Tan, 2007)	73.1% of rural women participated in agriculture in Shanxi Province.
2006	Tan (2007)	The percentage of women working in agricultural areas was near to 80% in some districts and counties of Chongqing Municipality.
2008	IDRC (cited by Song et al., 2009a)	Female labour force was 78% of the total agricultural labourers, IDRC (International Development Research Centre) supported SAGA (Social and Gender Analysis) project in 3 southwest China provinces.

From the data in the Table 2.1, two deductions or shortcomings can be elaborated: 1) For most scholars, when they are talking about agricultural feminization, they are actually talking about labour feminization (undertaking more workload) in agricultural production, not including managerial feminization. Nothing about gender-dependent decision-making power in agricultural production is mentioned. There is a difference between being a manager with decision-making power and being a helper without decision-making rights. 2) Some data did not illustrate clearly what the denominator of the high percentage of women’s labour participation in agricultural production is. It is different if the denominator is the total

agricultural labour force or the total number of female labour force. In other words, some scholars took the rural female population as a starting point and then tried to explore how many women in this group were involved in agricultural production (e.g. Labour Statistics Yearbook's data). Other scholars perceived agriculture's labour force as a starting point and then explored the percentage of female labour within this labour force (e.g. Rural Statistical Yearbook's data).

To some extent, the confusion in understanding and illustrating agricultural feminization explains the contradictory arguments that emerge in current debates. For instance, de Brauw et al. (2008) demonstrated that although women's participation in China's farming sector was high, there was no dramatic increase of the numbers of women participating in agricultural production during the 1990s. So, different from most scholars, de Brauw et al. (2008) argued there was no feminization in agricultural production. In my opinion, a consistent definition and understanding of agricultural feminization among scholars should be the basis for conducting research and for further comparisons and discussions. It is acceptable that scholars stress different aspects of agricultural feminization. However, to avoid unnecessary confusion, it is paramount to make explicit which meaning or which aspect of agricultural feminization is discussed or researched.

Apart from original differences in region and population, in my opinion different degrees of labour feminization mentioned by different scholars or research groups in Table 2.1 are related to the following reasons: 1) The various interpretations of agriculture. Some researchers used statistics that refer to agriculture in the broadest possible sense, including crop farming, forestry, livestock sector and fisheries (e.g., the research conducted by the Industrial Development Research Institute of National Development and Reform Commission); some limited it to crop farming (e.g., the research conducted by Canadian anthropologist Lao Leier Berson); whilst some took also agriculture-related industrial production into account (e.g., Deere, 2005; Katz, 2003). 2) Some scholars use age as a factor that determines which respondents need to be included in research on agricultural feminization. Usually, agricultural feminization is a phenomenon to be found in the left-behind households, and the left-behind women are the research respondents. However, scholars have different age restrictions for the selection of the respondents, which leads to the different evaluations of the 'percentages' of agricultural feminization. For instance, Wu and Rao (2009) selected women under 55 years as respondents but Mao and Liu (2009) selected women under 60 years. 3) Some researchers neglected a particular group of women. Agricultural feminization can be related to long-term and short-term circularity of the husband and also to daily circularity (van der Ploeg and Ye, 2010). One should not only focus on left-behind women; one should also include those women who are not 'left-behind' but are, anyway, (nearly) exclusively responsible for the main agricultural tasks.

The lack of a consistent definition and understanding of agricultural feminization implies that different judgements on this phenomenon are elaborated and that its impact on agricultural production, gender relations, women's well-being and rural development is assessed in different ways. A common feature in the literature is that feminization of agriculture is mostly

seen as a feature that negatively translates in agricultural production. Most scholars assume agricultural feminization leads to the regression of agricultural production (Goldstein and Udry, 2008; Peterman et al., 2010; Quisumbing, 1994; UNDP, 2003), and only a few scholars argue there is no evidence to support this argument (Meng, 1993; Zhang et al., 2006b). Scholars argue agricultural feminization limits overall agricultural production because women are less efficient crop producers (Chikwama, 2010; Quisumbing, 1994; Saito et al., 1994; UNDP, 2003) due to a relatively lower level of education than men (Wang, 2006; Yang, 2008; Yu et al., 2009), relatively weak physical strength than men (Cheng, 1998; Fan and Zhu, 2007; Li, 2009). For instance, Peterman et al. (2010) point out that when women manage agricultural production, they often have less access to all types of inputs, such as fertilizers, improved seeds, high-quality or irrigated land, human capital or even social and political capital. As a result, production on plots controlled by women is often lower than on plots controlled by men. Regarding the negative impact supposedly induced by agricultural feminization, references are made to land transfer and redistribution (Zhong and Di, 2005), sustained use of land resources (Kang, 2008), application of agricultural technologies (Yang, 2008), development of agricultural industrialization (Huang, 2008), peasants' income increase (Kang, 2008) and national food security (UNDP, 2003; Yu et al., 2009).

Regarding the impact of agricultural feminization on gender relations, there are also contradictions in the existing arguments. Some scholars think agricultural feminization is positive to female peasants' gender relations with their husband, as it provides opportunities and space for women to improve their family status (Fu, 2003). However, most others believe agricultural feminization leads to a further dependency of women on men as the gap of their earnings is enlarged (Gao, 1994; Li et al., 2000; Wang, 1999) and women's educational opportunities and expectations are reduced (Yuan, 2006; Zhu, 2001), which enforces the gender inequality (Deng, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009). Generally, the contradictions between scholars indicate that even basic facts are not clear and there is an absence of much empirical literature on agricultural feminization (de Brauw et al., 2012).

As regards women's well-being, most scholars agree that it is negatively affected by the migration of male labour force and the increased participation of women in the agricultural labour process (Li et al., 2000; Lin, 2003; Yuan, 2006; Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 1999; Zhu, 2001). For instance, studies show that male migration leads to greater responsibilities and an increased workload for women (Asis, 2003a, b; Hugo, 2000; Smith-Estelle and Gruskin, 2003), more financial hardships, difficulties with disciplining children (Battistella and Conaco, 1998; Hugo, 2000), lower access to food (Shenk et al., 2002; Smith-Estelle and Gruskin, 2003) as well as loneliness and isolation (Skeldon, 2003). However, the response to these negative effects are seldom discussed, especially the solutions from women's own perspective.

In general, the negative perceptions of agricultural production, gender relations and women's well-being are due to three factors that partly associate with factors already discussed:

- 1) The 'modernization of agriculture' is the main paradigm that is currently underlying the study of agricultural and rural development. Within this framework there is hardly

any conceptual space for specific development trajectories that build on an increased role of rural women in agriculture and which reflect the specificity of women's involvement (e.g., Deng, 2008; Lin, 2003).

2) There is hardly any attention given to 'positive deviations', since empirical diversity is not granted any important theoretical significance (van der Ploeg and Long, 1994). It might be true that women face difficulties in agricultural production and in their livelihood when the husband is far away. To point out the difficulties or the assumed negative impact is necessary for scholars, but it is also essential to explore how women deal with these difficulties and to explore the factors that condition and/or mediate the negative impact on agriculture, intra-household gender equality and women's well-being.

3) The view of the women involved is almost absent. What is known in Europe as 'actor oriented approach' (Long, 2004; Renting et al., 2009; Ye et al., 2009) is basically lacking, so far, in Chinese studies on agricultural feminization. The important exceptions here are the work done by Ye and Wu(2008 ) and Wu and Rao(2009).

The aim of this thesis is not to discuss whether the modernization approach to Chinese farming is correct or not. The point is that such an approach might potentially distort the representation of rural women's role in China's agricultural production and rural development. Therefore, we have to introduce new and 'open' questions in the debate on agricultural feminization. For instance, is women's increased labour participation really translating into a decrease in agricultural production? Are women just passive victims of the changes in labour division that take place in agriculture? Starting from this perspective, it is evident that women's voices need to be heard. Then it can become clear how they experience their life world, their work, what problems and needs they have and what their views are on gender relations, well-being and even rural development. To sum up, the shortcomings in the literature are starting points of this thesis.

Generally, agricultural feminization, as also mentioned in Chapter 1, in this research is firstly understood as the labour feminization, that is, women are increasingly undertaking more workload in the labour process of agricultural production. Whether labour feminization leads to the managerial feminization – the second aspect of agricultural feminization – is a subject of this research. The starting point in this thesis is that the process of agricultural feminization unfolds in a dynamic, albeit unequal way along five dimensions: First, the changing social and gender division of labour. Second, the role of women in decision-making might be changing. Third, the degrees of labour and/or decision-making participation might be differentiated due to different tasks in agricultural production. Fourth, this may affect agricultural production. Fifth, the same process changes the identity of women and gender relationship with their husbands in general. The feminization of agriculture does not occur in a linear way and changes on one dimension do not translate mechanically to other dimensions.

## 2.3 Gender and gender relations

Gender is a central organizing principle of societies. It is a socially created concept which attributes different social roles and identities to men and women (Giddens, 2006:467). It occurs in the processes of social interaction between men and women, women and women and men and men, and it involves any form of dominance and submission (Acker, 1990). Gender is learnt with the help of social agencies such as the family, the school and the media. Once a gender is 'assigned', society expects individuals to act like females or males. It is in the practices of everyday life that these expectations are fulfilled and reproduced (Giddens, 2006:261). Gender is a critical factor in structuring the types of opportunities and life chances faced by individuals and groups, and strongly influences the roles they play within social institutions from the household to the state. "Gender roles are defined as the social and cultural traits that different societies assign to males and females. Such gender roles are the patterns of behaviour, rights and obligations defined by a society as appropriate for each sex."<sup>2</sup> Although the roles of men and women vary from culture to culture, men's roles are generally more highly valued and rewarded than women's roles: women bear the primary responsibility for child care and domestic work, while men have traditionally borne responsibility for being the breadwinners. The prevailing division of labour between the sexes has led to men and women assuming unequal positions in terms of power, prestige and wealth (Giddens, 2006:467).

Gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of men and women in relation to one another (Bravo-Baumann, 2000). The gender ideology, norms and stereotypes are important part of gender relations. Gender relations vary in different cultures. As regards Chinese society, gender relations have always been unequal. In this patriarchal society, women are expected to follow the decisions of men. The Confucian prescriptions of social positions popularize the notion that women's place is inside the family, whereas men are responsible for the outside, including earning in order to support the family (Fan, 2003). Women are stereotyped as the nurturing family members and are expected to be the primary care-givers (McDowell, 1999:126; Yu and Chau, 1997). Although women's status in the family and society improved greatly after the May Fourth Movement<sup>3</sup>, especially from a legal perspective (e.g., Article 105 of General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that women have equal civil rights to men), most married women still follow the rule of patrilocal residence (Engel, 1984; Lively and Ren, 1992) and they are still suffering from some inequalities and influenced by the gender norms.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: "Gender", World Health Organization, <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story032/en/>, Retrieved on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> It refers to an important movement in Chinese history which happened on May 4th, 1919 in Beijing. The May Fourth Movement was launched by the students first, then the workers joined. It is an anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism movement of the Chinese people. The May fourth Movement directly affects the birth and development of Communist Party of China, which stimulates the extension of the Marxist Theory. Now, Chinese people commemorate this movement on May 4th every year and called it the Youth Day. More information can be found via this link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May\\_Fourth\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Fourth_Movement). Retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept., 2013.

Gender inequalities in Chinese society show in many aspects. Gender inequality can manifest itself in the form of parents' wanting a baby to be a boy rather than a girl. The culture of 'son preference' is still strong. Most couples agree on their preference for male over female children, especially for a first or only child (Lindsey, 2011:66). For the nation as a whole, the 1989 sex ratio at birth was 114 boys per 100 girls (Poston Jr et al., 1997) and the 2013 sex ratio at birth is almost 118 boys per 100 girls (according to Chen Zhu, vice chairman of the 12<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress Standing Committee<sup>4</sup>). The availability of modern techniques (such as ultrasound B test) to determine the sex of the foetus has made such sex selective abortion possible and easy. In general, men have a stronger preference for sons than women do (Baunach, 2001; Kemkes, 2006). Whether a woman gives birth to a boy or not influences her status in the marital household (Li, 2004). There is gender inequality in education as well. Girls have less chance of getting such a good education as boys (Li and Tsang, 2003; Song et al., 2006). Connelly and Zheng's research finds that sex is shown to be highly correlated with enrolment and graduation, with rural girls being especially disadvantaged in terms of both enrolment and graduation rates (Connelly and Zheng, 2003). Gender inequality is also part of marriage (Fan and Huang, 1998). Although the Chinese tradition prescribes that in-laws should have similar socioeconomic positions (*men dang hu dui*, 门当户对), it is widely accepted and expected that husbands should be 'superior' to wives in age, height, education, occupation, and socioeconomic status (Ji et al., 1985; Lavelly, 1991; Shen, 1996; Yang, 1994:220). Marriage in Chinese has two meanings, *qu* (娶) and *jia* (嫁). *Qu* refers to the man and it means he brings a wife to his family; *Jia* refers to the woman and it means she leaves her parents' family to move to her husband's family. So, most people believe the old saying that "a married daughter is just like water that has been poured out" (嫁出去的女儿泼出去的水) and the daughter doesn't belong to her parents any more after marriage". Lots of people still remember and practice the meanings of the traditional culture *san cong si de* (三从四德) to this day. It refers to the three obediences and the four virtues women should follow (which reflects the subordination of woman to man). The three obediences include obedience to her father before marriage; obedience to her husband after marriage and obedience to her son after the death of her husband. The four virtues women need to have are morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent.

Regarding gender inequality in agricultural production, the issue of women's land right is one basic aspect. Life and livelihood in rural China depend substantially on land. Compared to migration's earnings, land is worked for food produce, provides the space for homes and can be a source for wood, water and fodder. Land provides a basic subsistence for an older rural population that has not made a transition to urban employment and it is a real or potential safety net for younger people who are not always in a position to make a secure, long-term transition to work in towns or cities (Judd, 2007). In China, peasants obtain land tenure mainly through land distribution by village communities, by renting from other households, by inheriting household contract entitlements. During the period 1979-1983, China's land system was completely transformed from collective ownership and cultivation to the household contract system (i.e., household responsibility system). This change was based on the

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<sup>4</sup> Source: [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2013-08/24/content\\_29813872.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2013-08/24/content_29813872.htm). Retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept., 2013.

equalized distribution per household size of contracted land within production teams. It implied that every member of a household would receive an equal plot. In fact, however, land was distributed among households instead of individuals and the land distribution was registered under the name of men (Sargeson and Yu, 2011). There was neither clear definition of a natural person's individual rights, nor reference to the rights of women (Zhu, 2009).

Many articles in the law support women having equal land rights as men, as illustrated in Table 2.2, however, there are gender inequalities in practice. Problems especially occurred when the population of a village community changed. As land could not be transferred between village communities when villagers relocated, or when they married into other villages, women lost their land tenure in their village of origin. Due to this, Article 30 of the Law for the Protection of Women's Rights (National People's Congress [NPC], 1992) emphasized that women's entitlement to land should be protected in the case of marriage and divorce. However, this law does not specify the means of providing such protection. If these women wish to obtain farmland, the only means (other than by leasing from other farmers) is to rely on the land redistribution among those households in the villages into which they have moved. According to the Land Administrative Law (NPC, 1998), during the duration of a given land distribution contract, land re-distribution among individual land contractors can be held only when it is agreed to by more than 2/3 of the overall villagers meeting or by 2/3 of the villagers' representatives. To some extent, whether a woman holds land tenure or not, is closely related to the decisions made by village communities to which they currently belong.

**Table 2.2: Articles in the laws that support women's equal land rights as men in China**

<b>Law or Act</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>The Constitution (NPC, 1954)</b>	Article 96	Women and men enjoy equal rights in every aspect of political, economic, cultural, social, and family life.
<b>Marriage Law (NPC, 1980)</b>	Article 18 Article 31	Husband and wife enjoy the right to inherit legacies from each other. In the event of the right to the joint assets of husband and wife will be disposed of upon agreement of the two parties. If they fail to reach an agreement, the court will determine distribution on the principle of prioritizing women's and children's interests.
<b>Inheritance Act (NPC, 1985)</b>	Article 9 Article 10	Women and men enjoy equal rights of inheritance. The spouse is the first person in the inheritance order. As farmland is not private property, the legislative committee of the NPC provided in a special statement that the inheritance of farmland contract rights could not be dealt with in the same way as legacy inheritances. The heir of the contractor would assume the responsibility of fulfilling the contract.
<b>Law for the Protection of Women's Rights (NPC, 1992)</b>	Article 30	Women's entitlement to land should be protected in the case of marriage and divorce.

Although gender equality in land distribution appears to be protected in terms of the legislative framework and economic institutions, sufficient ambiguities remain to create loopholes in the day-to-day functioning (Zhu, 2009). Gender inequality dramatically emerges in the dynamic process after land distribution. This inequality does not imply that women have no access to land tenure, rather it is represented by the fact that women are less, or rather insecure, in their land rights compared to their spouses (Zhu, 2009). Women's interests are systemically divided between households and communities in a way that men's are not. For

those divorced, widowed and remarried women, the issue of access to land is more serious than for married women (Judd, 2007). Some researches support that whether having land usufruct or not relates to poverty and also women's bargaining power in the household. For instance, Li et al. (1998) declare that, in general, land tenure and associated property rights affect the production behaviour of farmers and the right to use land for long periods of time encourages the use of land-saving investments. Agarwal (1997) points out that the holding of property rights, including land rights by women, could substantially strengthen their intra-household bargaining in southern Asian countries. The research of Zhu(2009) finds that the households of the landless women are more likely to fall into poverty without the supplementary income from non-agricultural activities. In this sense, many scholars call for the protection of women's land rights, such as from the perspective of the adjustments in relative laws (e.g., Wang and Zhi, 2003; Zhang and Wu, 2002; Zhao, 2002a).

The inheritance right in rural China is also a highly gendered pattern. As mentioned in the section about women's access to land rights, although relative laws declare women have equal rights as men to inherit the resources and property, there is a significant gap between legislation and social reality. Nevertheless, improved opportunities for women to have waged jobs, education and training have increased their confidence in asserting their equal rights, as well as their bargaining power in intra- and extra-household transfer and redistribution of resources(Zhang, 2003).

In addition, regarding the gender inequality in the household, some scholars point out that the gender division of labour in different tasks manifest the gender inequality itself. For instance, unpaid work is mainly done by women and the main burden of housework and child-care workload is also undertaken by women (Eviota, 1995:5; Sen, 2001). Even within agriculture, there may be separate tasks and property rights for men and women. Cattle belong to men but small livestock (goats, sheep and chicken) belong to women. Or, coffee and tea belong to men but vegetables belong to women. 'Big things' belong to men and 'small things' belong to women(Kelkar, 2007). Women make major contributions to the productive work of the communities, both in public workplaces and in the household side-lines and enterprises; women perform most of the unpaid but essential work of maintaining households, reproducing the human community (especially, but not only, in the sense of early childhood care) and caring for the ill and the aged. Yet women's contribution is not highly valued in the family(Yu and Chau, 1997) and women do not have rights comparable to men within their communities in terms of access to or management of resources, nor do they occupy positions of local political leadership(Judd, 1994:244-245). In Judd's research, she also finds that women are also as significant a portion of the workforce as men in rural industry. However, women are concentrated in relatively unskilled, dead-end work and rarely hold responsible positions. In contrast, men may occupy similar unskilled positions but they will have opportunities to enter skilled positions available in rural industry and to enter managerial and sales-and-procurement positions(Judd, 1994:246).

When it comes to theoretically linking gender relations with male out-migration and rural women's increased participation in the agricultural labour process, there is little research to



build upon. Chinese research on this topic is not so detailed and profound. Agricultural feminization as a phenomenon has been widely observed but is still poorly understood in-depth. Research, especially in-depth empirical research, in which the linkages between gender relations, agriculture and rural livelihood are systematically investigated, is scarce. More detailed information about such interrelations is to be found in some European studies that did better in this respect than Chinese ones<sup>5</sup>. For instance, some scholars illustrated the inter-linkages between farming styles (such as current farming, vanguard farming and alternative farming) and women's role and position in gender perspective (Bock, 1994; de Rooij, 1994; Evans and Ilbery, 1996; Inhetveen and Schmitt, 2004; O'Hara, 1998). Table 2.3 summarizes some inter-linkages between farming types and farm women's role, identity and gender. As illustrated by Fonte et al. (1994:9-10), "A woman's role in agriculture is intimately connected with the type of agriculture with which she is involved... The woman's role depends on the way the practice of farming is organized and, therefore, upon relations in which farming is embedded. It also reflects those specific relations that govern the internal division of labour. Clearly, there are roles that have a critical effect on a woman's identity."

**Table 2.3: Global inter-linkages between type of farming, women's role, identity and gender perspective (cited by Fonte et al., 1994)**

Type of farming	Farm women's role	Identity	Women's position and objectives in gender perspective
Current farming <sup>6</sup>	Reproduction	Different gender roles complementarity	Acceptance of subordination
Vanguard farming	Reproductive and productive functions	Equality	Emancipation defined as interchangeability of the male role
Alternative farming	Commoditization of reproductive functions	Positively valued differences reciprocity	Liberation defined as interchangeability of both male and female roles

Even though there are many inequalities between men and women, gender relations are also subject to change. Many factors induce or impact changes in gender relations. For instance, gender equality can be shaped by legal changes in access rights to productive resources and having one's(women) own income (Francis, 2000) or increased income(Dollar and Gatti, 1999). Women's organizations can also empower women in accessing resources (Agarwal,

<sup>5</sup> Relatively speaking, western people have more awareness of gender (in)equality than Chinese people in my opinion. One basic and important reason for this is that the culture difference. The fundamental difference between (traditional) Chinese society and modern Western society is that the former is a collectivist/familist society while the latter is an individualist society. "Collectivism is characterized by close linkages between individuals and a greater sense of obligation to the group than to the individual. Individualism is characterized by much looser linkages between individuals and a greater sense of obligation to the individual than to the group." (Forbes et al., 2009; Triandis, 1995) This cultural difference, to some extent, gives advantages to Western gender studies to go further or better than Chinese studies in my opinion.

<sup>6</sup> Current farming, in the understanding of Fonte et al. (1994), is a concept that refers to the overwhelming and highly differentiated farming in Europe where reproduction, subsistence and survival is emphasized. Vanguard farming is farming structured in such a way that it conforms to the designs elaborated by agrarian policy, agrarian sciences and agro-business. It refers to those constellations that represent a rupture with current farming. Alternative farming is understood as those constellations in agriculture that embody development patterns which are different from the single output expansion which is central to the notion of vanguard farming. It includes the variety of new market linkages, the redefinition of boundaries between primary production and the transformation of products, the development of new production methods, the creation of different forms of resource mobilization and the integration of farming into new activities.

1994). Moreover, the male's physical absence, such as migration, can also be a factor that impacts on gender relations. For instance, Hugo(2000) and Radel et al.(2012) assume that the out-migration of the husband in rural China brings not only an extra-economic source to the family but also provides opportunities and space for the stay-behind women to decide more things within the household and on the farm, which might influence the intra-household gender relations positively.

## **2.4 Conceptual framework**

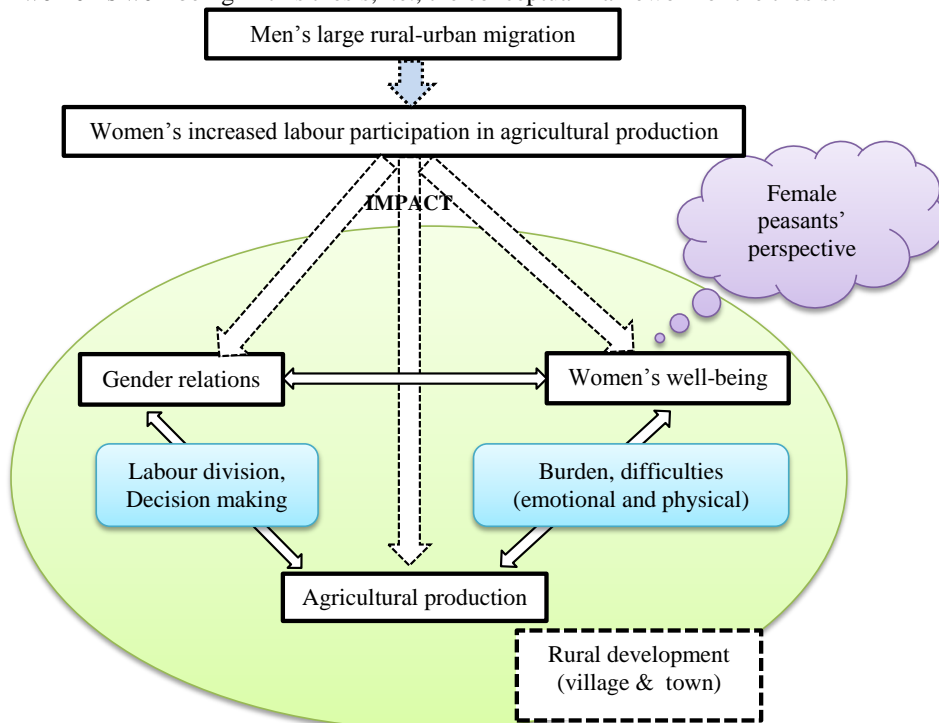
This thesis centres on migration, agricultural feminization and gender relations. Agricultural feminization in China is not just a residual category: it cannot be considered as a consequence of rural male labourers' rural-urban migration only. Agricultural feminization might imply a wider process of social change and it has its own momentum.

Theoretically, this research stands by the argument that husband's migration not only brings an extra-economic source to the family but also provides opportunities and space for the left-behind women to decide things within households and on the farm, and for changing intra-household gender relations. However, whether left-behind women use this space and how women use it requires further discussion based on empirical research. Gender is not limited to the physical presence of men and it is mutually constructed by men and women together. Although women carry and implement gender relations as much as men, this does not imply men and women have the same power in gender relations. Moreover, there are often possibilities for changes in gender relations taking place. Women increasingly participate more and more in the agricultural labour process with the rural-urban migration of men. How do women experience and perceive the possible changes in the decision-making in agricultural production, household affairs and even village public affairs? In their perspective, does the husband's migration benefit or harm agricultural production? Does the husband's migration stimulate or hamper the gender equality between women and the husband? If it hampers the intra-household gender equality, how do women deal with the difficult situations to become more equal with the husband?

This thesis not only pays attention to the analysis of gender relations in agricultural production, household and village affairs, it also explores the factors that stimulate gender equality between husband and wife. Generally, the present research tackles the discussed shortcomings in the existing literature. It does so basically:

- 1) by putting the actor-oriented approach centre stage: how do rural women themselves perceive their own role and prospects; how do they experience the changes that take place in agricultural production, household affairs and even village public affairs?
- 2) by paying especial attention to the intra-household gender relations in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs;
- 3) by exploring the factors that positively contribute to agricultural production, intra-household gender relations and women's well-being and translating these positive trends into policy recommendations.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research tries to analyse the impact of women's increased labour participation in agriculture on agricultural production, gender relations (between women and the husbands), and women's well-being. Male rural-urban migration induces women's increased labour participation in agricultural production (labour feminization) and the physical absence of the husband potentially provides the space for the women left-behind to take a more prominent role in decision-making in agricultural production, household affairs and even village affairs. Moreover, this potential increase in decision-making rights of women might affect agricultural production, intra-household gender relations, women's well-being and even rural development theoretically. The husband's migration, agricultural production, intra-household gender relations and women's well-being mutually influence each other. Firstly, women's increased labour participation in agricultural production might influence agricultural production. Compared to men, women might have differentiated practices and decision-making in doing agricultural production work, such as cropping schemes and farming input use, which might affect agricultural production. Moreover, different gendered emotional judgement and evaluation on farming might influence agricultural production as well. Secondly, women's increased labour participation in agricultural production might lead to changes in their decision-making power in agricultural production and even household affairs, which affect women's status, as well as the gender relationship with the husband. Thirdly, a woman's increased workload in agricultural production due to the migration of the husband influence women's emotional and physical well-being. Furthermore, women's status and decision-making power in the household might influence their well-being. Figure 2.1 presents the inter-linkages between migration, agricultural feminization, gender relations and women's well-being in this thesis, i.e., the conceptual framework of the thesis.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of this thesis**

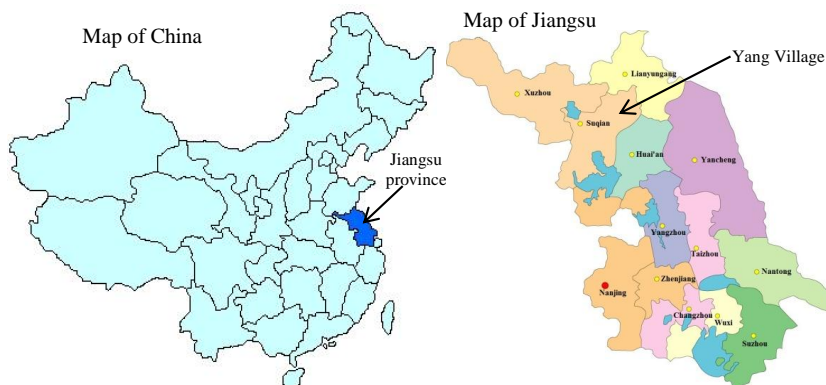
The conceptual framework presented here is closely connected with the research objectives and research questions that have already been presented in Chapter 1. In this conceptual framework, the interlinkages of the research objectives can be seen clearly. Firstly, the discussed interactions generate the differentiated nature of agricultural feminization (1<sup>st</sup> Research Objective). Secondly, the impact of women's increased labour participation in agricultural production on agricultural production (2<sup>nd</sup> Research Objective) is mediated by gender relations and women's well-being. The thesis will discuss the specific modalities that these relations obtain in practice. Thirdly, by putting rural women's own view on the central stage, the changing gender relations (3<sup>rd</sup> Research Objective) in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs will be understood. Finally, the well-being of rural women (4<sup>th</sup> Research Objective) is not studied in isolation but in relation to their daily work and how this is evaluated in more general terms.

## Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This study builds on the methodological traditions of anthropology and sociology. It has a design that combines quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and uses survey, in-depth interviews, biographies and participatory observation as research methods. In order to understand the research subject as a whole, a questionnaire survey helps gain insight into the distribution of the research variables in the population as it can find answers to ‘what’ questions, with relatively more control of the researcher in the process (Grinnell, 2001). In-depth interviews and biographies are preferred when the answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are important, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2008).

### 3.1 Research site

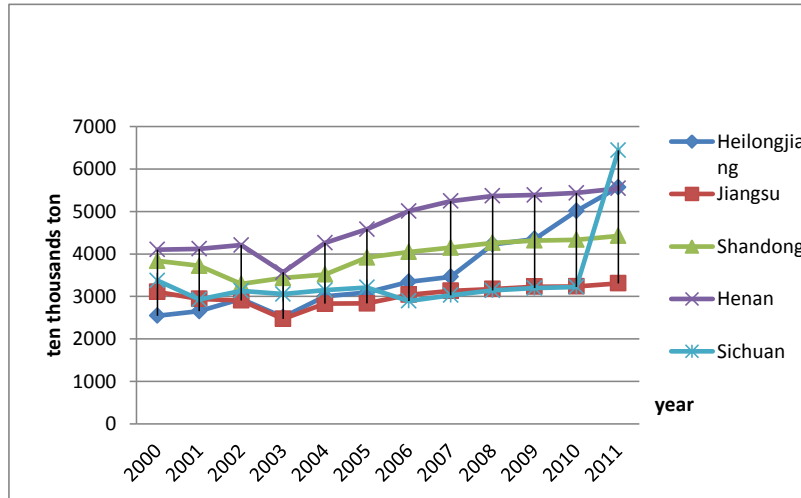
The fieldwork was conducted in Yang Village in Jiangsu Province in China. Jiangsu Province is located on the east coast of China (see Figure 3.1), with a population of 78 million<sup>1</sup> in an area of 102,600 km<sup>2</sup>. The province consists almost entirely of alluvial plains divided by the estuary of the Yangtze River into two sections, Sunan (literally, ‘South [Jiang]su’) and Subei (‘North [Jiang]su’). Sunan is fertile and well-watered, famed for its silk and handicrafts and very densely populated and industrialized. Industries include iron and steel, and the production of automobiles, textiles and electronics. Subei is relatively poor in comparison to Sunan. The majority of Subei, from Xuzhou to the sea, is part of the great North China Plain in its physical geography, as well as in its agriculture and general way of living; it is densely populated. The climate in Subei is cool, temperate continental, with extremes of temperature. The mean January temperature is below 0 °C and the temperature is around 37 °C in the summer. The annual precipitation generally ranges from around 800 to 1,200 mm. Jiangsu Province is one of the richest agricultural provinces in China (see Figure 3.2). Roughly three-fifths of the total arable land is in paddy (wet-rice) fields, and the Jiangsu plain is known as the “land of fish and rice.” Yang Village is located in Subei, in Hu Township of Shuyang County in Suqian Prefecture (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: Maps of China and Jiangsu Province**

<sup>1</sup> According to the sixth national census results in 2010, there were 78,659,903 inhabitants in Jiangsu Province and around 74 million of them have household registration in Jiangsu Province.

Shuyang County covers an area of 2,297 km<sup>2</sup>, with 34 townships, and a population of 1,770,000. Hu Township is located in the southwest part of the Shuyang County and 17 km from Hu Township. There are 11 administrative villages<sup>2</sup>, 5,300 households, with a population of 26,000 in an area of 46.88 km<sup>2</sup>. The transportation infrastructure is convenient as two highways run through the township connecting it to the county town and the city.



**Figure 3.2: Agricultural production yield changes of the five main agricultural provinces in China** (Adapted from National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2000-2011)

There are three reasons for choosing Yang Village. Firstly, Jiangsu Province has been the fourth agricultural production province in China since 2006 and its total produce was 33,078,000 tons in 2011(See Figure 3.2). Yang Village is a typical agricultural production village in this province. Secondly, Jiangsu Province is one of the main out-migration provinces in China<sup>3</sup>. In Yang Village, there are 2,108 residents and 478 households. 389 people work far away from home and they are mainly men. Thirdly, the trust between village dwellers and researcher built by several previous research projects contributes to the conduction of this research. In April, 2007, I was a fourth year bachelor student when I got to know Yang Village for the first time as I participated in a project managed by my later-to-be master supervisor in Yang Village (the project was related to ‘left-behind children’, which was funded by Church Development Service, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, EED). In October, 2008, I went there again to do my master thesis, research on the impact of an educational policy. I lived there with the family of a local primary school’s teacher for nearly

<sup>2</sup> The administrative structure from the highest level to the lowest level in China is composed as follows: state central government, province government, prefecture government, county government, township government, administrative village and natural village(Liu, 2006:90; Sun, 2007:95; Yuan, 2010:55). A natural village is based on the geographical situation. The official documents usually use the term ‘village’ to refer to the ‘administrative village’. However, the rural villagers usually use the term ‘village’ to refer to the natural village. One administrative village includes at least one natural village. Yang Village is a natural village.

<sup>3</sup> See Table 3 in Chan (2010): 1990-1995, the rank of Jiangsu province in migration rate was fourth of all provinces in China; 1995-2000, the rank was seventh; 2000-2005, the rank was fourth again.

two months. The teacher treated me as a daughter and he always went out to do the interviews together with me. With his help, after two months, I could understand most of the dialect and most villagers knew me and accepted me as an insider. These experiences provide me a good foundation to conduct my PhD investigation in Yang Village.

### 3.2 The fieldwork process

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in Yang Village from July 2010 to October 2012. The fieldwork consisted of three partly overlapping phases: the try-out/ preparatory phase, the quantitative data collection and biography recording phase and the supplementary phase<sup>4</sup>. Table 3.1 summarises the fieldwork schedule and relevant activities.

**Table 3.1: Summary of the fieldwork activities**

Phases	Duration	Methods and techniques
Try-out phase	July-Aug., 2010	In-depth interviews, questionnaire survey, participatory observation, informal discussions
Quantitative data collection and biography recording phase	Mar.-June, 2011	Questionnaire survey, participatory observation, in-depth interviews, biography recording
Supplementary phase	Sep.-Oct., 2012	Re-interview the biography recording respondents, participatory observation, in-depth interviews

The preparatory phase consisted of two activities: trying out the first draft of the questionnaire and getting the general background information from key informants. Key informants include the elderly villagers, local teachers, village cadres and local township and county leaders.

In quantitative data collection and biography recording phase (March to June, 2011), I first completed the 100 questionnaires with two assistants (60 questionnaires were carried out by myself). The two assistants are both students who are doing a major in sociology at the China Agricultural University. They had investigation experience before taking part in my research and I trained them carefully before conducting the investigation. Every night during the process of conducting questionnaire investigation, I checked the questionnaires they had finished that day myself to ensure the quality of the investigation. Then, I selected six women from the 100 questionnaire respondents to do the biography recording work. I lived with every respondent for at least one week. Meanwhile, I had some in-depth interviews and informal group interviews with other local villagers. I also got a lot of opportunities to do the participatory observation during this period.

In the supplementary phase (Sept. to Oct., 2012), I went back to Yang Village again to re-interview the biographical recorded respondents and to investigate the changes in their lives in the past year. I also did some in-depth interviews with some local residences.

<sup>4</sup> I had to divide the investigation into several parts due to the limitation of the holidays for going back to China. I gained the scholarship from the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) for my study in Wageningen University. According to the regulations, every year I can just go back to China once for fieldwork. Fortunately, the restrictions of the regulations provide me the chance to track the livelihood changes of the rural people, especially the biography recording respondents, in a longitudinal perspective. Fortune and misfortune are neighbours.

### 3.3 Methods of data collection and sampling

The cross-section questionnaire investigation and participatory observation were to provide a broader picture, while the in-depth interviews and biographies were specifically directed to elicit a profound illustration of the women’s daily life and to see the longitudinal part.

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire survey and sampling

There are three methods for collecting survey questionnaire data, personal, face-to-face interviews, self-administered questionnaires and telephone interviews (Bernard, 2001:242). For this research, I used face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews especially suit respondents who are illiterate for example, and I also wanted the questions to be understood in the same way by all the respondents, especially for those open questions. The educational level of my respondents is generally low. They cannot fill the questionnaire in by themselves, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding of the questions, I prefer to have the questionnaires filled in by investigators. Completing the questionnaires is not the single purpose, to interview every respondent as a case study to explore more information is also an objective. With the notes beside the questionnaire answers, most of the questionnaire respondents can be treated as in-depth interview respondents.

Moreover, the comparative perspective was adopted in this research in order to explore the differences between women who are doing more agricultural production work than the husband in the household, and women who are doing less farming work in the household. That is, 50 respondents in each group.

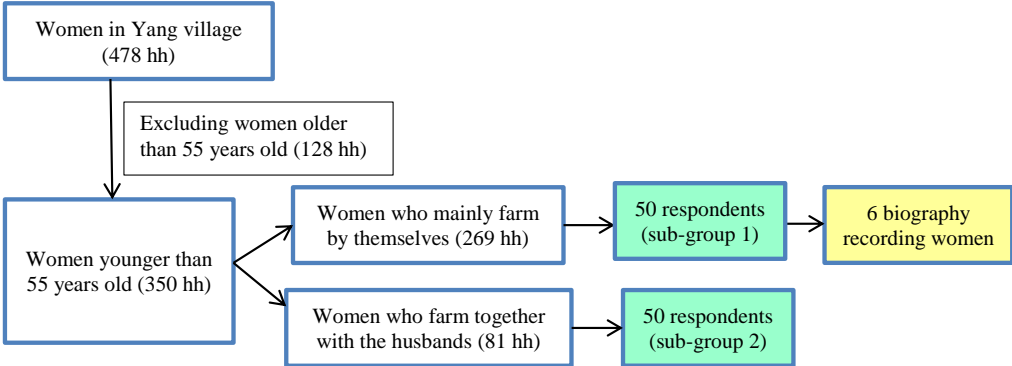


Figure 3.3: Stratified sampling process

Regarding the sampling method of the questionnaire survey, the research uses the stratified random sampling method. There are two steps, which are shown in Figure 3.3. Firstly, I did not include women older than 55 years old in my research. People over 55 years old are usually the elderly people<sup>5</sup> for scholars to conduct research in rural China. The reasons for not

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Ye and his research group (Ye and He, 2008; Ye and Wu, 2008 ) conducted left-behind population research in 2007. They defined left behind women are the women under 55 years old years and left behind elderly are the people over 55 years old.



including the elderly women are: 1) Gender relations is a main topic in this research. Age is a factor that condition women's awareness in their role in the household and gender relations (e.g., Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004). Generally, younger women tend to have more awareness in gender relations issues than older women. I do not want to show a bias caused by age factor at the beginning of the research, although I have also checked the relations between age and some gender related issues in the latter analysing process. 2) The point of this research is to explore the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production, gender relations and women's well-being. For the elderly women, their husbands have a lower degree of migration than the younger male labour force due to physical condition and the requirements of the migrant jobs etc. And then, the elder women usually do the farming work together with the husbands. Moreover, elderly women usually do less farming work than the husbands<sup>6</sup>. If I had not used the age factor as a borderline to select respondents, there would be more elderly women in the control group (women who are farming together with the husband), which is not good for the comparative analyses between the two groups. Totally, there are 478 households in Yang Village. In 128 households' female peasants are older than 55 years old and thus the sample population is composed of 350 households, which is also shown in Figure 3.3.

Secondly, I should randomly select 100 women from the 350 households theoretically to build my database. However, male labour force's migration is a mainstream in Yang Village, there are 269 households of women who do the agricultural production work mainly by themselves (this group is called sub-group 1 in the following text) and 81 households of women who do the farming work together with the husband (women are doing less farming work than the husbands, this group is mentioned as sub-group 2 or the control group in this thesis). There would be more respondents fitting the requirement that they farm mainly by themselves in the households if I select the respondents randomly. In order to have 50 respondents in each group to make comparisons, I did the investigation by randomly entering the houses to check to which group the women belonged. Once there were 50 women in each group, I stopped the questionnaire investigation. In addition, there are nine production teams (villagers' group/working group) in the rural village; I made sure there were some respondents from every production team.

Furthermore, beyond the factors of age and whether women mainly do the farming work in the households, I qualified my research respondents to meet the following requirement as well: the women should work on their own family farms, not for other peasants or in the agricultural processing industries. This criterion is mainly aimed to make it different from some agricultural feminization studies referring to the feminization in agricultural processing industries, such as studies of Lastarria-Cornhiel (2008).

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<sup>6</sup> Other scholars' research results can also support this criterion. For instance, based on the survey in 60 villages in 6 provinces in China in early 2009, de Brauw et al. (2012) point out in their article that, in 2008, the women aged from 26 to 55 years old undertook more farming work than men in the same age group, but women younger than 26 years old and older than 55 years old undertook less percentage of the farming work in the household than men. Zhang et al. (2004a) also claim that women between the ages of 36 and 50 tended to remain both in rural source communities and working on the farm, whereas men did not.

Additionally, in order to make sure the respondents do belong to one of the two groups, before starting the interview I used some additional questions to briefly check to which group the woman belonged. The simple questions include: How much workload do you undertake in agricultural production in the household? Is your husband a migrant? How long does your husband work away from home every year? Usually, women in the first sub-group (women who farm mainly by themselves in the households) have a husband who is a long-term migrant (working far away from home more than 6 months per year) and comes back two or three times a year<sup>7</sup>. The other sub-group of women usually has a husband who is a peasant, and mostly with an extra-job but close to the village. In the second sub-group, husbands do more work in agricultural production and women play the supplementary role in agricultural production. A comparison of women's work in the two sub-groups provides evidence of what implies feminization of agriculture for agricultural production, for women themselves, their work and household gender relations.

### 3.3.2 Biography recording and sampling

Quantitative methods are especially appropriate in answering macro sociological questions and qualitative methods for answering micro sociological questions (Cicourel, 1981). Moreover, 'a longitudinal study design would benefit the research of transformation and change' (Pennartz and Niehof, 1999). However, limited time and resources rendered a long-term longitudinal study unfeasible. But, this research incorporates several women's life histories. In this research, I conducted six biographies (all from the first sub-group of women, who mainly do the agricultural production work in the households, see Figure 3.3) to try to explore the women's lives more profoundly.

Biography is "a story told in the present about a person's experiences of events in the past and her or his expectations for the future" (Nilsen, 1997). A biography is a detailed description or account of someone's life. It entails more than basic facts (such as education and work) and it also portrays a subject's experience of these events. A biography presents a person's life story, highlighting various aspects of his or her life. According to the 'depth' of the accounts, biographies can be divided into comprehensive, topical or edited life stories (Plummer, 2001). The comprehensive biography is a story of one person's life in-depth where the subject's voice is at the centre. A topical story focuses on one particular issue in a persons' life and it is aimed at researching a particular area of life whereas edited stories leave the research's voice at the forefront. My research covers the two types together. During the interviews, I use some leading questions to let the respondents describe their own lives first and to awaken their memories, and I put their voice at the centre.

In order to understand the women's livelihood in depth, I did the biography recording with six women. The following criteria are used to guarantee the representativeness of the six women

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<sup>7</sup> So, in the following text, I sometimes use the term or 'left-behind women/female peasants' to refer to the respondents in sub-group 1. As Ye and Wu's research (2008), left-behind women refer to the women whose husbands are away from the village for a long-term (more than 6 months every year). Sometimes, in order to avoid gender discrimination (further discussed in the critical reflection part of Chapter 8), I use stay-behind women/female peasants to refer to women in sub-group 1 as well.

from sub-group 1: age, education, place of origin (birth place), marriage form<sup>8</sup>, local belief<sup>9</sup>, migrant work experience, current extra-job beyond farming, farming area and household economic situation. The selection criteria of the biographical recorded respondents are shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Main criteria of selecting the biographical recorded respondents**

Name	Age	Educati on	Birth place	Marriage form	Local belief	Migrant work experience	Extra -job	Farm land ( <i>mu</i> )	Economic situation
Liu	37	Junior middle school	Same county	Love- match marriage	No	Yes	No	20	Common
Zhuang <sup>10</sup>	29	Primary school	Different province	mercenary marriage	No	Yes	No	8	Common
Xie	31	Primary school	Same village	Blind date	No	No	No	4	Common
Zhang	50	Junior middle school	Neighbo ur township	Blind date	No	No	No	1.5	Common
Li	43	Illiteracy	Neighbo ur township	Exchange marriage	Yes	No	Yes	5	Poor
Wang	46	Primary school	Neighbo ur village	Blind date	Yes	Yes	No	3	Rich

### 3.3.3 In-depth interviews and participatory observation

Nilsen (2008:91) pointed out, ‘‘For biographical research, it is especially important that tradition sets the stories informants tell into a multi-layered social framework rather than merely analysing them from a discourse and narrative approach.’’ On one hand, I tried my best to select the respondents representatively to explore the underlined social framework. On the other hand, in this research, I also did in-depth interviews and participatory observation to guarantee the information from the questionnaire survey and biography recording is of validity and reliability.

<sup>8</sup> Marriage form is another typical Chinese issue. In ancient times, arranged marriage was the popular marriage style. The young couple could not meet each other before the marriage ceremony and their parents decided and arranged the marriage for them. Later, it changed; the two people planning to be married could meet each other by their parents’ arrangement, which is called ‘blind date’, to decide whether they will marry. Furthermore, there are some poor families who cannot afford the betrothal gift and money so find another solution. If they both have a son and daughter, they can exchange their off-spring for marriage to each other. Sometimes, this happened among more than two families. This is called exchange marriage. Additionally, mercenary marriage is another relatively sad marriage style. Actually, the girls were coerced by human traders and were transported to places far away from their hometowns. There they were purchased by some men. All these kinds of marriage styles can be found in the research site until current time.

<sup>9</sup> Local belief means whether they attend the local ‘Christianity’ activity in the village. In many parts of rural China, there are different kinds of local faiths. The form of these local beliefs are similar to Christianity, but in my opinion, only in the type, but not the content. Many people join it because they want to talk to different people to avoid being lonely. Chapter 7 (well-being chapter) discusses it further.

<sup>10</sup> Sadly, Zhuang died in a car accident in November 2011. I got this news when I wanted to re-interview her in September, 2012. Instead of her, her husband was the respondent to tell me the changes in the past year and his judgement on relative things. Zhuang’s life was blighted by a mercenary marriage. A car accident claimed her life when she had got used to her relatively miserable livelihood. Actually, her life story was always the driving force to encourage me to finish the research and thesis.

The key informants include village cadres, township leaders, county leaders, local primary school teachers and some elderly villagers. From the in-depth interviews with them, I gathered lots of information about the current situation and the social changes in the past years in Yang Village, which are very helpful in understanding the respondents' behaviour and attitude.

Furthermore, I also did the participatory observation in this research. As mentioned in the foregoing 'field work process' part, I lived in Yang Village during the investigation and especially I lived with every biographical recorded respondent for at least one week. During these periods, I had the chance to do the participatory observation and the informal individual and group interviews to get more information.

Participatory observation is a method 'in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time'(Becker and Geer, 1957). It aims to understand the social world from the perspectives of the research population. Participatory observation can be divided into complete participant, participant observer and complete observer; these three types according to the three different roles of the researcher involved in the fieldwork, as mentioned by Bernard (2001:327). In this study, I acted as the second type of researcher, participatory observer.

In this research, participatory observation plays at least two functions: First, it is helpful to find out the answers about some difficult or embarrassing questions, such as the emotional feeling questions. For instance, it is difficult to ask the women their feeling in a direct manner after the migration of the husband. But I can observe their contact frequency and I can feel it after the co-living for a period. Second, it is also useful to get a more profound understanding of the women's living conditions. For instance, I can get a more comprehensive picture of the women's living from different actors' perspective. I can also explore their difficulties in living or agricultural production when they chat with others.

### **3.4 Data management and analysis**

The quantitative data obtained through the survey was entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) by me and an assistant from Wageningen University. Before typing the answers into SPSS (17.0 version<sup>11</sup>), I coded the questionnaire myself and checked for any inconsistencies by either of us. Frequencies, cross-tabulations, bivariate correlations and step-wise regression analyses were performed to provide descriptive statistics of and test for significant relations between variables under consideration.

The qualitative data from biographies and in-depth interviews were either audiotaped or manually noted in the field diary. The information obtained through participatory observation was written down, while some events were photographed. With the interviewees' consent, I

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<sup>11</sup> The 17.0 version is named Predictive Analytics SoftWare(PASW) from January 2010.

recorded some interviews by using a voice recorder. The audio files were later on transcribed and documented. Every night during the field work, I would write down the key and enlightening information from that day's observation or interviews. The transcripts were translated from Chinese into English and typed into MSWord afterwards. Then, the transcripts were coded, interpreted and organised according to different themes related to the research questions using qualitative content analysis approaches<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.5 The importance of a local research assistant

From doing the left-behind children's project in April, 2007, to doing my master thesis and PhD research, I have known Yang Village for six years. From a total outsider who cannot fully understand the local language, I am now a welcomed friend of the villagers. The process is not easy. In this changing process, a good responsible research guide plays a substantial positive function.

In the forgoing illustration about the reasons for choosing Yang Village to do my PhD research, one reason I mentioned was that I conducted my master thesis there and I lived with a local primary school's teacher's family in the village. The teacher helped me a lot and he always went out with me when I did the interviews. As a teacher, he can speak Mandarin and he can translate the local language into Mandarin when I cannot get the meaning of some answers of my respondents. Before conducting the investigation, he always explained to the villagers who I was and the 'kinship' relation<sup>13</sup> with him. Then, the village 'strangers' took me as an insider and I conducted the interviews easily. Besides, he was also my body guard because he protected me from the village dogs. In conducting my master thesis field work, I also knew other teachers because the master topic was related to an educational policy in rural China. After the completion of the thesis, I continued to keep in contact with some of them.

After the good experience of conducting my master thesis, I decided to live with a teacher family again. In the end, I chose a primary school's vice principal, Kezhi's family, with whom to live. There are some advantages: First, teachers usually can speak Mandarin and they are good translators. Not everybody can speak Mandarin in China, especially in the rural areas. Every place has their own dialect, which is difficult for others, especially the people from another province, to understand. Second, a teacher is a respected profession in rural China, especially those local primary and junior middle school teachers. Most adults and even their children were and/or are the students of the local teachers. Teachers are also more credible. Third, Kezhi has a relative high position in the family hierarchy. Although there is no big clan family in Yang Village, Kezhi's clan is relatively big. Then, the villagers give him more respect because of his higher position in the family hierarchy in the village. Fourth,

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<sup>12</sup> Qualitative content analysis is a data analysis method mainly used by anthropologists and qualitative sociologist. It is used for subjective interpretation of the content of text data grounded on the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns that produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world (Elo and Kyng ä, 2008; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> We are not relatives, but he treated me like his daughter, so sometimes he described me like this. He also knows when he treats me like this it can help me to conduct the research and get the relative true information I require.

Kezhi does not have so much workload in the primary school, which is helpful as he could assist me during the investigation when I needed it. He is 52 years old and he will retire at the age of 60. He does not teach the main courses, so he has plenty of time to support my investigation; he even accompanied me to do the investigation. Fifth, he was born in Yang Village. He provided me with much useful information, such as neutral judgement of villagers and local leaders. Sixth, based on the forgoing advantages, he can help me supplement information when I am in the Netherlands through emails and phone calls.

The good assistance of the school teacher really promoted my field work beyond my imagination. Due to the limitation of the time and other resources, I could not be in Yang Village as long I would like to. I needed to enter the village and start my work as soon as possible. Although I did my master thesis and a previous project of my master supervisor there, it is not so easy to conduct the biographies, especially. I preferred staying in their homes and staying with them in one room. They seldom allow a stranger to stay in their houses. One of the biographical recorded respondent said this after nearly one week's co-living, which obviously shows the good guide's positive position.

*“It seemed so strange that you want to live with me at the beginning. You know, I do not know you and I do not know why you want to stay with me. You are like a spy and you want to know everything. If (vice) principal Kezhi had not persuaded me and if he had not had a good relationship with my father-in-law and if he had not had a good reputation in the village, I would not have accepted you living with me.”*

## Chapter 4 Profile of Yang Village and the Respondents

This chapter presents and discusses general information on the research site and the women who participated in my research. It aims to give a picture of the social environment in which I carried out the research and the demographic characteristics of the research respondents.

Yang Village, like many other rural villages in China, is experiencing the modernization and industrialization advocated by the state. In this chapter, firstly, I will describe the social environment of female peasants' livelihood. It mainly includes three aspects: the land issues, local industries, and administrative management and organizations in Yang Village. Secondly, some basic demographic features of respondents, their husbands and the children will be described and illustrated. Thirdly, I will give a brief introduction of the six biographical recorded respondents, which is useful to understand the interview fragments presented in the following chapters. The information presented in this chapter is mainly from the key informants' interviews, participatory observation and some survey questions from the questionnaire investigation. Wherever necessary, the comparative approach is used.

### 4.1 Social, economic and political relations of Yang Village

Since 1978, Yang Village has experienced dramatic changes as a consequence of the general process of urbanization, modernization and economic *opening up and reform policy* implemented in 1978 in China. Generally, the changes caused by modernization and urbanization process are clearly visible at the village level. 35 years ago, there were no tile-roofed houses and tarmac roads, or even a gravel road, in Yang Village. At that time, the communist period had just ended and people started to organize farming at the household level with the implementation of the household contract responsibility system. The state had just released the regulations about mobility. Rural villagers had more possibilities to migrate far away from home to work and earn additional money beyond farming. As a result, the standard of living in Yang Village improved visibly. Currently, most villagers live in tile-roofed houses and some even have two-floor tile-roofed buildings. They have televisions, refrigerators, solar water heaters, mobile phones and even computers at home. According to the villagers, migration became the mainstream in Yang Village around ten years ago and villagers even managed to build up some savings in the last three years. Migration has become a main way to get earnings for the households. Additionally, the conditions for agricultural production were changed. In 2004, the state council began to reduce or exempt agricultural tax in some experimental places and the agricultural tax was abolished in the whole country at the end of 2005. In addition, peasants can also get subsidies for agricultural production every year, such as subsidy for good seeds and grain.

My first visit to Yang Village was in 2007. In the past six years, I have witnessed many changes and continuations in Yang Village. Migration is one example of continuation while changes mainly include: peasants are losing more and more land for commercial residential buildings and flowers and vegetables enterprises; different local industries have started up;

there is no formal organization beyond village committee, even the primary school has been closed, and the people in the village committee changed once a year due to the land issues<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.1.1 Land issues

##### *Women's land ownership*

Yang Village has 4,462 *mu* of farm land, which is divided over nine production teams and cultivated by 478 households. The average farm land size slightly differs between different production teams. According to article 20 of *The Law of the People's Republic of China on Land Contract in Rural Areas* which came into effect on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003, the term of contract for arable land is 30 years. Peasants have the usufruct of the land and there would be no change in the 30 years' land tenure period. According to article 6 of the same law, "In undertaking land contracts in rural areas, women shall enjoy equal rights with men. The legitimate rights and interests of women shall be protected in contracts. No organizations or individuals may deprive their rights to land contractual management, which they are entitled to, or infringe upon such right." However, in practice, not every woman in Yang Village has their own land. According to the villagers, the first land allocation happened around 1980 due to the implementation of the Household Contract Responsibility System Policy. From then onwards, the land was distributed equally to the villagers, regardless as to whether they were men or women, in each production team. According to the law, the land needs to be re-allocated in consistence with the demographic changes after some years. However, it appeared to be a bit difficult to re-allocate the land between families, especially the changes caused by marriages. Some villagers presented their comments like this,

*"Nobody wanted to give out land to the village committee to redistribute if his daughter got married to somebody else in another place... Yes, there is land of the married daughter; however, she cannot take the land away. It's common sense that the land of the married daughter belongs to her natal family... The wives of her brothers could meet the same problem. From a long-term perspective, it is a balance... Of course, the land redistribution is needed when there are 'enough' changes in population composition in the village."*

From the investigation I find that some female peasants do not have land in Yang Village, especially when the women's birth places<sup>2</sup> are not in the village (about 70% of the surveyed women are not from Yang Village, see Table 4.1). However, female peasants seldom claim their own land ownership compared to their husbands. What female peasants really care about is whether their family has the same size of farm land as the other families in their production team. If the household has an equal amount of land as the other villagers, female peasants would not argue about their own land and they put their interest into the calculation of the household as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Article 11 of the Village Committee Organization Law of the PRC (*zhonghua renmin gongheguo cunweihui zuzhifa*, 中华人民共和国村委会组织法), "The term of office for a villagers committee shall be three years, and its members may continue to hold office when re-elected."

<sup>2</sup> Women's places of origin is a factor that condition their well-being, which is further discussed in Chapter 7.



**Table 4.1: Women's places of origin (%.  $\chi^2(5)=3.520$ ,  $p=0.620$ )**

	Same village as husband	Same township as husband	Same county as husband	Same prefecture as husband	Same province as husband	Other province	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	26	18	44	2	2	8	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	32	20	42	4	0	2	100
<b>Total</b>	29	19	43	3	1	5	100

### *Village committee's power in land readjustment*

Although land allocation is regulated under the law on land contract, the village cadre has a certain power in allocating and especially modifying the farm land among villagers. Generally, the village committee can decide the time to readjust the land areas in each household according to the demographic changes. Moreover, the power is associated with the implementation of the 'one child policy' to some extent. One of the main functions of the village committee is to implement the policies promulgated by the state, for instance, the 'family planning/birth control' policy<sup>3</sup> which started in 1979. Generally, a rural couple can have two children if their first child is a girl according to the general regulation implemented by the state, but different places can adjust the regulations according to their own exact economic and demographic condition. In Yang Village, it is not publicly allowed to have a second child when the first one is a healthy daughter. However, the cultural norm 'son preference' is still dominant in China, especially in rural areas. Some couples do not stop giving birth until they have a boy. Usually, the village committee asks the couple to pay money when they break the family policy rules. This is called social upbringing fee. The amount of the fine varies from a thousand Yuan to twenty or even thirty thousand Yuan. How much the couple pays depend on their household economic situation. If the couple cannot afford the fine, the village committee will take some of their household appliance or some of their land as the fine when land readjustment takes place. A woman in Yang Village talked about her story as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Family planning/birth control policy: Birth control policy is a basic national policy of China. It mainly advocates people from Han ethnic group to do 'late marriage and childbearing' and it encourages the people from the other ethnic groups to have more children. The purpose is to reduce the number of Han population, which is the biggest ethnic group in China. According to the policy, the Han married couples can only have one child. However, there are some exceptions for the rural people and the couple who do not have other siblings in the natal families. If they meet one of the following circumstances, they can apply for approval from the family planning administrative departments at the county level (including county-level cities and districts) and to have a second child. The exceptions include: 1) The first child cannot grow into a normal labourer due to non-hereditary disability. This needs to be identified by the medical identification organization at the city or higher level. 2) Remarried couple can have a child when one of them does not have a child in the previous marriage; or when both of them have their own child in the previous marriage, but the ex-spouses have official custody and the new family is without a child. 3) The couple who legally adopt a child and then get pregnant can give birth to the child. 'Legally adoption' refers to the situation that the couple are suffering from infertility after marriage for more than five years, which is identified at or above the county level health care institutions. 4) An only son and an only daughter can have two children if they marry. 5) One of the spouses has worked in mines or deep-water and he/she is still working there, they can have two children. 6) Husband and wife both have the rural *hukou* and their first child is female, they can have a second child (if the second child is still female, they cannot have a third one, otherwise they need to pay the fine, which is called social upbringing/maintenance fees). In addition, different places have different exact policies. In Yang Village, if the first child is female and healthy it is forbidden to have a son.

*“How much land do we have? Well, I do not have any land; my children do not have any land either... Yes, during the readjustment period, we should have been allocated at least three people’s farm land. However, we wanted to have a boy, so I got pregnant again. But as you can see, I only have two daughters. At that period of land readjustment, we did not have money to pay the fine for disobeying the one child policy. The village cadre was very angry and he did not give us the farm land we were entitled to. Now, my husband is the only one in my household who has land, around 1.5 mu. It is not enough for us to survive. My two daughters need money to go to school. My husband must migrate far away from home to work and I make toys for the factories at home. Otherwise, we do not have money to survive... It is unfair. Land can provide you food and/or money. They should not exploit our land for so many years... We do not have power to negotiate with the ‘government’ (she referred the village committee as government).”*

### ***Village committee’s mechanisms in land transferring – peasants are losing farm land gradually***

According to article 32 of the land contract law, the right to use the land may be circulated by subcontracting, leasing, exchanging, transferring or other means. Especially, according to the *Land Management Law* implemented in 1999, the peasants have to return land to the state for public interests, such as the construction of highways, water conservation facilities and national defence projects. It is legal to expropriate the land for public interests and there is little space for peasants to appeal. The village committee and the local government use the legal ‘space’ offered by the law to ‘sub-rent’ the land to business activities or ‘sell’ the land to commercial residence building construction. Sub-renting farm land to business men to set up a vegetable or flower business is temporary, which could also be a development trajectory of the village. However, selling or using farm land to construct commercial residence buildings is strictly restricted according to the related regulations. Although the State Council and the Ministry of Land and Resources implemented some regulations to protect arable farm land in the past years<sup>4</sup>, the local government and the village committee still can find the ‘space’ within the regulations to seize farm land to construct commercial residence building legally. The interests behind the building construction is the driver for the local government’s action. As a result of this, more and more peasants are losing their farm land year by year. During my research, I witnessed two such mechanisms used by the local government to expropriate the arable farm land.

First, constructing a new road creates possibilities for constructing commercial residence buildings afterwards. In 2011, a new tarmac road was laid in Hu Township. It connects the

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<sup>4</sup> Regulations about farm land expropriation, for instance, include: Notice of the State Council on the Promotion of Economical and Intensive Land (*guowuyuan guanyu cujin jieyue jiyue yongdi de tongzhi* 国务院关于促进节约用地的通知) in 2008; Notice of the General Office of the State Council on the Strict Implementation of Laws and Policies on Rural Collective Construction Land (*guowuyuan bangongting guanyu yange zhixing youguan nongcun jiti jianshe yongdi falühe zhengce de tongzhi* 国务院办公厅关于严格执行有关农村集体建设用地法律和政策的通知) in 2007; Notice of the Ministry of Land and Resources on Taking Further Measures to Implement the System of Strict Protection of Farmland (*guanyu jinyibu caiqu cuoshi luoshi yange baohu gengdi zhidu de tongzhi* 关于进一步采取措施落实严格保护耕地制度的通知) in 2003.

township and the main road to the Shuyang county town. But in fact, this road is completely useless. There is already another tarmac road connecting the main road to the Shuyang county town parallels to this new one, which is just about 500 metres away. Some local residents explained to me the mechanism behind this new road,

*“State regulations are very strict as regards to the use of the arable farm land. However, the local government reported that we needed a new road to connect to the county town. It is ‘necessary’ and it was agreed without knowing the ulterior motives going on behind it... Can you guess what will happen later on? The aim of the local government is to construct more commercial residence buildings on both sides of the road. They will obtain more arable farm land and make this legal and reasonable intervention in the end. By selling the land to the estate developers, the local government can make money and then the results can be treated as their political achievements. The leaders can expect to be promoted soon...”*

Fortunately, this was reported to the upper government by somebody and the construction was blocked in 2011. During the field work in 2012, I went back to the same place to see what has happened. I saw a half-constructed abandoned road lying among the farming fields.

Second, industrial buildings are used as commercial residence building afterwards. On 24<sup>th</sup>, Oct., 2011, the Shuyang County government proposed the idea to implement the ‘2158’ project. It exactly refers to, from 1<sup>st</sup> Nov., 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> Oct., 2013, the whole county will have 2 years to construct at least 10 million square meters’ standardized factory buildings with three or more layers, to invite at least 500 new industrial enterprises and to achieve the strategic objective to add new industrial tax of more than 800 million Yuan. During my field work in 2012, one industry building was under construction on the arable farm land in Yang Village. The estate developer is a villager of Yang Village. The following conversations between him and my research guide Kezhi illustrate the underlying reasons for constructing the industry building.

Kezhi asked, *“Did the government find the developer to invest here?”*

The estate developer answered, *“No, of course not.”*

Kezhi said, *“Oh... what will you do with the building if there is no developer coming? It is for industry, isn’t it?”*

The estate developer smiled and said, *“No problem at all. Now, it is an industrial building. You can see big rooms inside. However, later on, we can add the walls inside easily and then we can sell it as commercial residential buildings.”*

Kezhi said, *“Oh... I think the government will not allow this. It is for attracting businesses to make industries, isn’t it?”*

The estate developer responded, *“Do not worry... After two years, if nobody comes here to start a business, we can convert the building into commercial building to sell, according to the regulation... Of course, the government will not prevent us selling the building as a commercial residence building. Moreover, to some extent, they have already*

*known what would happen later on. There are not so many business men who would like to run industries in the villages.”*

Under the shelter of the “business attraction for economic development”, the estate developers and the local governments have occupied a lot of arable farm land. Two years later, some or most of these factory buildings in the county would be changed into commercial residential buildings. The future is unclear. The point is who will purchase these commercial buildings and what would happen to agricultural production and to peasants’ livelihood. From my point of view, this impacts negatively on peasants’ values and agricultural production. From the investigation, purchasing a modern apartment in the town or county is becoming a ‘fashion’ among peasants. Parents think the young lovers need to have a new modern apartment in the town or county before marriage and the man’s parents usually need to acquire it (this is also one of the reasons for migration). If people cannot afford a new apartment for their son’s marriage, they would feel loss of face<sup>5</sup> and be looked down by others. In fact, the values underlying this ‘fashion’ are mainly materially oriented.

Moreover, constructing more commercial buildings actually constitute a threat to agricultural production and to peasants. As we know, there is no good welfare system for elderly people in rural China. The migrants need to come back to the village to spend their old age due to the restrictions of the urban-rural dual economic structures and economic situation. What will happen if there is not enough farm land for the returning migrant peasants? How can they survive without land? How to balance the land use between farming and non-farming activity?<sup>6</sup> As some respondents stressed, farming is a kind of guarantee for them and they can produce their own food in bad times of migration or when they are old. Protecting the farm land for the peasants not only benefits the peasants (such as food security and the guarantee for the declining years), but also contributes to the stability and food security issue of the state. Finding a balance regarding land use for farming and non-farming activity needs more attention from the government.

### ***Peasants’ emotional judgements on farm land***

My investigation finds that young people do not have the same strong emotional feelings about the land as the older people in Yang Village. Young people do not like farming and they do not know how to farm well. These are the risks for the future of agricultural production in rural China<sup>7</sup>. In fact, peasants’ general emotional judgement on farm land has changed in the past years. During the communist era and even in earlier days before this period, farming was the most essential activity in the rural household. It was almost the only

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<sup>5</sup> Face in Chinese is *mianzi*(面子), the concept of ‘face’ can be loosely described as someone’s social status or reputation in the eyes of others. Throughout a Chinese person’s life face must be maintained and enhanced through giving to and receiving from others in both words and actions. It may be something as small as who gets in the elevator first to the awarding of multi-million dollar contracts, but without it you will have very little power or influence. To make someone lose face is a huge dishonour and could mean the end of a relationship.

<sup>6</sup> The land use conflict between farming and non-farming activity is further discussed in Section 5.4 of Chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> The relation between female peasants’ emotional judgements on the farming work and agricultural production is further discussed in Section 5.3 of Chapter 5.

way, at least the main way, to provide the food for the family members. Not working hard and working well in farming meant family members would suffer from hunger. With the implementation of reform and opening-up policy and household contract responsibility system, rural people had the opportunities to migrate to cities to earn additional money for the family. Since the 1980s, more and more migrants from rural areas have shown up in the cities. Before 2005, it was a tough period for the peasants. Peasants needed to pay the agricultural tax and *santi wutong*<sup>8</sup>(三提五统) every year. The net earnings from agricultural production were small. Gradually, more and more peasants lost interest in farming. Some migrant peasants just left the farm land barren for years if nobody wanted to farm it. Even though some peasants sub-rented the land to other villagers and the rental fee was very low at that time. After the exemption of the agricultural tax, some peasants claimed the land usufruct again. Furthermore, peasants do not have a tax burden in agricultural production nowadays and they can also get some subsidies from the state. Despite these changes, many peasants do not consider agricultural production as the most important activity in the household anymore. Migrant paid work has replaced the economic importance of farming in the peasant household. Agricultural production is just a kind of guarantee for the migrant labourers for tough times and later years in the household<sup>9</sup>. In addition, young people do not know how to farm and most of them do not want to do the farming work when they return to the village after some years' migration.

The following quote from a 65 years old man in Yang Village is supportive to the foregoing description,

*“At the beginning of the implementation of the household contract responsibility system, everyone wanted to have land. If you worked hard, you could have a higher yield than others. You did not need to suffer from hunger anymore. After submitting the food to the state, you could have some left. You worked harder and harder, you had more and more produce left. However, it was not such a good life as at the present time. You did not have savings. Later, villagers migrated far away from home to work and they got more money from the migrants' jobs than farming. At that time, if you did farming, you needed to pay tax. For some villagers, all their family members migrated to urban areas to find jobs and they left the farm land barren. They did not want to have land. Nobody wanted to rent land from others because you needed to pay the land owner's agricultural tax and 'santi wutong'... After the abolition of the agricultural tax in 2005, those long-term migrants came back home to claim their own piece of farm land. Although*

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<sup>8</sup> The peasants paid the produce as the agricultural tax before 2005. The average tax rate was defined as 15.5% of the year-round produce. The State Council could define different tax rates for different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities according to the differentiated economic situation. The maximum tax rate was not higher than 25% of the year-round production. In addition, peasants needed to pay the fee of *san ti wu tong*. It referred to the 'three deductions' (for public reserve funds, public welfare funds and management fees) and the 'five charges' (charges for rural education, family planning, militia training, rural road construction and subsidies to entitled groups).

<sup>9</sup> Data in Table 5.6 in Chapter 5 further indicate the role of farming in the household.

*some of them do not farm the land, they can rent the land to others at least to get some money.”*

#### 4.1.2 Local industries – extra-job opportunities

As a consequence of modernization and urbanization, industries also are appearing in some rural areas in China. Yang Village has some local industries providing extra-job opportunities to the local residents, mostly for women. My research finds that about one third of the surveyed women (Table 4.2) have an extra-job in the local industries to earn some additional money to support their livelihood. This goes for the women both sub-groups.

**Table 4.2: Occupations of female peasants (%),  $X^2(3)=3.273, p=0.351$**

	Only farming	Extra-job holding beyond farming	Mainly off-farm work	Only housework	Total
Sub-group 1	64	36	0	0	100
Sub-group 2	64	30	4	2	100
Total	64	33	2	1	100

Having one’s own earnings is essential to one’s decision-making power in the household<sup>10</sup> (Malhotra and Mather, 1997; Vogler, 1998). For instance, “Blood and Wolfe (1960) found that the partner with the larger income was likely to play a more dominant part in decision-making: wives in paid employment had more power than those without and the longer wives had worked, the more power they had. They concluded that as wives gained access to economic resources through paid employment, power relations between husbands and wives would become more evenly balanced.” (cited by Vogler, 1998). To be precise, the extra-job opportunities or the local industries around Yang Village include:

- 1) The watermelon and vegetable yard (enterprise): The yard uses about 200 *mu* farm land and it has 35 peasant workers from Yang Village. Most of the hired labourers are female. Women can earn 40 Yuan per day and men earn 50 Yuan per day. It mainly grows watermelon and some out of season vegetables for the local market. The owners of the watermelon yard are two men named Huang (39 years old) and Xu (48 years old). They are both villagers from Yang Village. Huang has migrant work experience. He did waste collection in Yixing City in the southern part of Jiangsu Province and Xu ran a mushroom yard in Yang Village before running this business in partnership with Huang.
- 2) The village electric factory: It is an assembly factory and employs about 25 villagers. All the village workers are women from 40 to 60 years old. Usually, they earn 20 to 40 Yuan per day depending on what kind of parts they assemble and how many they can do every day. This factory belongs to a brother and his younger sister. They have already done this for years. Before running this factory in Yang Village, they both worked in an electric factory in Suzhou City in southern Jiangsu Province. They started their own business in the village several years later by using the network and technology gained from their migrant work experience. They get the raw material from the Suzhou factory and transport the parts back after the villager workers’ have assembled them.

<sup>10</sup> The impact of women’s extra-job earnings beyond farming on intra-household gender relations is discussed further in Chapter 6.

- 3) The village wood processing factory: The main task of this factory is to process the wood into sheets for a household furniture factory in the Shuyang county town. Only eight village labourers, aged from 40 to 50 years old, work in this factory and half of them are women. They earn 50 Yuan per day. The work does not involve much technical know-how and it mainly needs physical strength. After a short training, workers can manage the work. The boss is a 48 years old man from Yang Village. Before running the wood processing factory, he ran the business of selling trees and saved some money. Later, with the savings, he purchased a reaping machine and engaged in harvesting work for the local peasants for some years.
- 4) The village felt factory: It is a relatively new factory set up in 2011. The owner is a 50 years old man who is not a Yang Villager but from a nearby village. The felt is mainly for the construction sites in the Shuyang county town. There are 20 village workers and most of them are women from Yang Village. The salary varies from 40 to 50 Yuan per day<sup>11</sup>.
- 5) The village lavatory paper factory: A young couple around 35 years old from Yang Village are the owners of this factory. It has a three years' history. Before making lavatory paper, they were in the fireworks business for years and earned some money. The main reason for running this factory is that one of their relatives is a boss in a larger lavatory paper factory in Huai'an City (a neighbouring city) in Jiangsu Province. The couple can transport most of the products to their relative and they sell the rest on the local market. The price of their lavatory paper is lower than the supermarket. 1.5 kilos' lavatory paper costs 10 Yuan. There are five village women, aged from 50 to 60 years old, working in the factory. They can earn 35 Yuan per day and their work is mainly about packaging the lavatory paper into bags.
- 6) The village foam factory: The boss is 45 years old. He was a bricklayer on the construction site far away from home for years and he earned some money. He started this business two years ago. The products are mainly for packaging household furniture. Seven male villagers work in this factory and the salary ranges between 90 - 100 Yuan per day.
- 7) Township garment factory, wood processing factory and electrical factory: In Hu Township (Yang Village belongs to this town), there are some factories as well. The factories include township garment factory, a wood processing factory and an electrical parts processing factory. There are around 200 workers in these three factories and about 20 workers are from Yang Village and most of them are women. They can earn around 2,500 Yuan every month. Furthermore, in the neighbouring Sun Township, there are also two possible working places, a garment factory and a wood processing factory. Around 20 Yang villagers (most are women) work there and they can also earn 2,500 – 3,000 Yuan per month.
- 8) Cottage industry: There are also some jobs that can be done inside the villagers' own homes, such as making rubber balls, making toys and sewing decorative flowers or beads for the clothes. These jobs are part of the factory work; however, female peasants do not

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<sup>11</sup> I tried several times to interview the owner of the felt factory, but I failed. One reason might be that the factory generates lots of dark smokes during production. The boss seldom shows up in the factory in case of impeachment by others for pollution. The factory is located on the common boundary with a nearby village, which is quite far away from the two villages' residential lot. There are two separate roads for the villagers of the two villages to connect to the outside world. Few people notice the factory in the relatively hidden place. The gatekeeper of the factory said the transportation trucks usually came in the night to transport the products out.

need to carry out the work in the factory. They can get the raw material or half-raw material from the factory and finish it at home. Usually, there is at least one contact person in the village who can bring the raw or half-raw material to the village and send back the products to the factory. In Yang Village, totally around 20-30 women do this kind of work at home. The earnings from this work is usually less than the aforementioned extra-jobs, because women who cannot work in the village factory usually have more of a child-caring burden (e.g., the children are younger than 5 years old) or have physical problems. They need extra-jobs with flexible timetables. They are paid by the piece and the quality of the products done by them. For instance, the price of making one rubber ball varies from 6 to 8 Yuan.

Some common features are shown from these local industries in Yang Village: First, most of the local industries are run by the returned migrants. One can consider this as a positive impact of migration on the rural development. Second, the local industries employ more women than men and these factories solve the issue of surplus labour force to some extent, especially for the relatively old female labour force. For instance, the big industries in the cities seldom employ people around 50 years old. They prefer to employ young people between 20 to 40 years old. These extra-jobs around the village provide women in village with the opportunity to get some additional earnings for the households beyond doing the farming work. The earnings from an extra-job usually can cover the living cost of the family members (mainly refers to the woman and her children) in the village. Third, although the extra-job opportunities provided by these local industries are not stable, local residents do not consider this as a risk. Usually, the scales of the local factories are small and they lack sustained orders. So it cannot always provide job opportunities for the villagers. However, the village workers can work at the factories when the factories need them and they can go back home when there is no work. Fourth, some local industries play the function of connecting rural and urban areas, connecting rural and urban development. Some industries are even involved in the global market. For instance, 'made in China' products can be found nearly everywhere in the world. In Yang Village, the early form of 'made in China' rubber balls, toys and clothes can be found.

These local industries are discussed by some scholars as self-employment jobs or township and village enterprises (TVEs) in rural China. Fei (1939) proposed a similar idea of stimulating TVEs to make rural areas robust in his PhD thesis *Peasant Life in China* in 1939. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of self-employed business activities increased significantly relative to township and village run enterprises. Off-farm employment as a proportion of the total rural labour force grew from about 15% in 1981 to about 43% in 2000 (Mohapatra et al., 2007) and during 1998-1995, up to 30 million self-employed workers emerged in rural China (Rozelle et al., 1999a). TVEs have played a significant role in the growth of the Chinese economy since the economic reforms of 1978 and they are more efficient than the State-owned Enterprises (Fu and Balasubramanyam, 2003; Perotti et al., 1999). Although not so many TVEs survived, they are a kind of sign of development, not distress, and it is a component of the dynamic development process that characterises rural China during the reform period (Mohapatra et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2006a). As Entwisle et



al. (1995) also mentioned, “one of the most significant employment trends in rural China is the rise of off-farm self-employment; in recent years, there has been a veritable explosion of traders, merchants, and household-run businesses.” Beyond the contribution of self-employment to rural development proved by the scholars, the result of my empirical research supports the contribution of women working in these factories to farming. Precisely, having an extra-job beyond farming in nearby self-employment rural industries can stimulate female peasants’ willingness to continue farming<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4.1.3 Administrative management, local service & organizations

Yang Village is a natural village according to the administrative structure in China. Yang Village and the other village, Xie, constitute the administrative village Xieyang, which is usually seen in the official documents. Formally, an administrative village has one village committee, but in practice, Yang Village has its own village committee. According to *The Villager Committee Organization Law* implemented in 1998, the village should organize village committee election every 3 years. However, in Yang Village, in the past three years, the village committee has changed once a year. This is associated with the land use issue aforementioned in this chapter<sup>13</sup>. In the villagers’ opinion, the village committee has four main tasks: to implement the ‘one-child’ policy (and to charge the social upbringing fee/fine), to investigate and record the damage of natural disasters to agricultural production (to help peasants get subsidies and insurance), to collect money for *yishi yiyi* (一事一议) and *yizi dailao*<sup>14</sup> (以资代劳), and to adjust farmland according to the changes in numbers of household members between households. In Yang Village, the village committee members include a village committee director, a vice director, an accountant and nine sub-leaders from nine production teams. There was no democratic election in this village and the village cadre was nominated by the township government. The village committee members and the communist party members sometimes have village meetings<sup>15</sup>. The general relationship between village committee and the villagers are not good.

There is no big clan family<sup>16</sup> in Yang Village. There is one village clinic where villagers can buy common medicine for complaints like colds and high blood pressure. There are some

<sup>12</sup> This argument is further discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>13</sup> The state restricts strictly the arable farm land use. In 2011, the village committee attempted to sell farm land from one production team (see Appendix E, it refers to the production group named ⑨). The village committee failed in the end because the villagers in this production team reported the issue to the higher government. As a kind of punishment, the previous village cadre was deposed. However, after the abolition of the agricultural tax, especially the *santi wutong*, the village committee does not have as much funds to organize all kinds of activities. All the village cadres try to get money from the land, for instance, by selling or renting the land to business men to construct buildings or cultivate flowers or vegetables.

<sup>14</sup> After the end of the agricultural tax, fees of *yi zi dai lao* and *yi shi yi yi* is the unique way for the village committee to get money from the villagers. *Yi zi dai lao* is the substitute fee for labour and *yi shi yi yi* is the fees for managing the village collective affairs. *Yi zi dai lao* refers to the situation you can pay some money instead of contributing labour force for the village public affairs. After the rural taxes reform, when the villagers need to do something for the public interests, villagers need to discuss and undertake the cost together. This is *yi shi yi yi*.

<sup>15</sup> In Chapter 6, there are further discussions about the village election and village meetings and the relations with gender issues.

<sup>16</sup> Usually, a clan family is kinship-based and all the family members have the same ancestor. The eldest man in the clan family often has the greatest power in the family. If there are clan families in the village, the village

village shops that sell articles for daily use. There is no real agricultural production cooperative in Yang Village, although the watermelon and vegetable yard is reported to the state as a peasant cooperative. There are two local belief groups. According to the villagers, there is no difference between the two local beliefs, only that two different people organize the activities in two different locations. The main theme of the two local beliefs groups is to tell the people to do good things in their lives. To some extent, these two local belief groups play the function of providing opportunities and places for local residents to communicate with each other and release negative feelings. From this sense, it is like a leisure organization<sup>17</sup>. In Yang Village, 30% of women confirm that they are members of the local belief groups. There is no difference between the two sub-groups of women (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3: Whether women believe the local belief (%),  $X^2(1)=1.714$ ,  $p=0.190$ )**

	Yes	No	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	36	64	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	24	76	100
<b>Total</b>	30	70	100

Moreover, there is no primary school, nor a kindergarten in Yang Village. There was a primary school in Yang Village before 2003. Due to the implementation of the ‘school mapping policy’<sup>18</sup>, the primary school in Yang Village, like many other primary schools in rural China, was closed down. Now, the children of villagers in Yang Village study in Hu Township, the adjacent Sun Township or in the Shuyang county town and they usually board in the schools.

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leader usually come from one of the clan family. When researching issues in rural China, especially the power issues, researchers cannot ignore clan family influences if there are some clan families. As mentioned by Jacobs et al. (1995), “In Chinese society, the clan family was a more important social force than in ancient Europe. There were two major forces that caused this phenomenon: all sons had equal rights of inheritance, and the family had to be kept together. As a result, the extended family grew into a clan. In time this developed into a large social organization centring on blood relations. The clan became very important in ancient China and Chinese rulers used it to control behaviour. Policies and institutions were established to combine the control and power of the clan with the organization of the state. What resulted was family discipline and regulations that had a greater binding force on people than the laws of the state. The influences of such policies and institutions are still strong in China.”

<sup>17</sup> Some people just want to talk with others when they attend the activities of the local belief organization and it is associated with women’s well-being. This is further discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>18</sup> The original intention of the school mapping policy (*buju tiaozheng zhengce*, 布局调整政策) is to solve the problems led by the large amount of migrants in China. With the migration of the parents or the fathers, left-behind children face the issues of supervision. Moreover, comparatively speaking, the infrastructures in the rural areas are worse than the urban areas. And then, the state implements the ‘school mapping policy’ to close down some of the village primary and/or junior middle schools to merge the educational resources to the township, or even to the county town. However, in my opinion, it is not reasonable. From the long-term perspective, there is no motivation for the young people to come back to the village because there is no longer any basic infrastructure for the education of their children. Looking at the consequences of this policy in the research site, it is also negative. Now, students need to go to the township to study at the boarding school and they only come back home once a fortnight. Studying at boarding schools is not good for the emotional well-being of the students, nor the women in the village. In addition, it also brings more economic burden to the household. The economic burden from the educational of children is one of the main reasons for the husband’s migration, which is further discussed in Table 4.8 in this chapter.

## 4.2 General characteristics of the respondents

### *Age distribution and migrant work experience*

The age of the surveyed women varies between 23 and 55 years and the average age is around 45 years old. Table 4.4 shows there is no difference in the age distribution between women who are doing the farming work mainly themselves and those who are doing the farming work together with the husband.

**Table 4.4: Age distribution of women** ( $\%, X^2(2)=2.587, p=0.274$ )

	$\leq 35$	36-45	$\geq 46$	Total
Sub-group 1	10	38	52	100
Sub-group 2	4	30	66	100
<b>Total</b>	7	34	59	100

Some women migrate to cities to work like men as well, but women's migration is not as stable as men's. They usually cease migration work when the family, especially the children, need them. 55% of women (Table 4.5) have migrant work experience, in particular women of 45 years old and younger, but now they are at home. They stopped being a migrant worker after marriage, after the birth of the child(ren) or when the family, especially the child(ren) needed their support.

**Table 4.5: Whether women have migrant work experience** ( $\%, X^2(1)=0.364, p=0.546$ )

	Yes	No	Total
Sub-group 1	48	52	100
Sub-group 2	42	58	100
<b>Total</b>	45	55	100

This reflects the relation between the life cycle of rural women, the gender division of labour and migration patterns, which is a complex, dynamic and diversified relation. Migration is not a simple single move, especially for rural women. During their lives, rural girls and women are confronted with different sides of migration:

- 1) When they are young, most rural girls are left-behind, because their fathers/parents are working away from home (left-behind children refers to one or both of their parents are migrants, e.g., see the research of Ye and Pan (2008)). Some parents are working around the village and some are far away. The rural girls are mainly taken care of by the mothers or grandparents.
- 2) After school and before marriage, some of the girls also join the migration group to work far away from home.
- 3) After marriage, there are three 'turning points' influencing their migration decisions and experience (see Figure 4.1). The last two turning points mainly relate to 'family demand' (Wang and Fan, 2006).

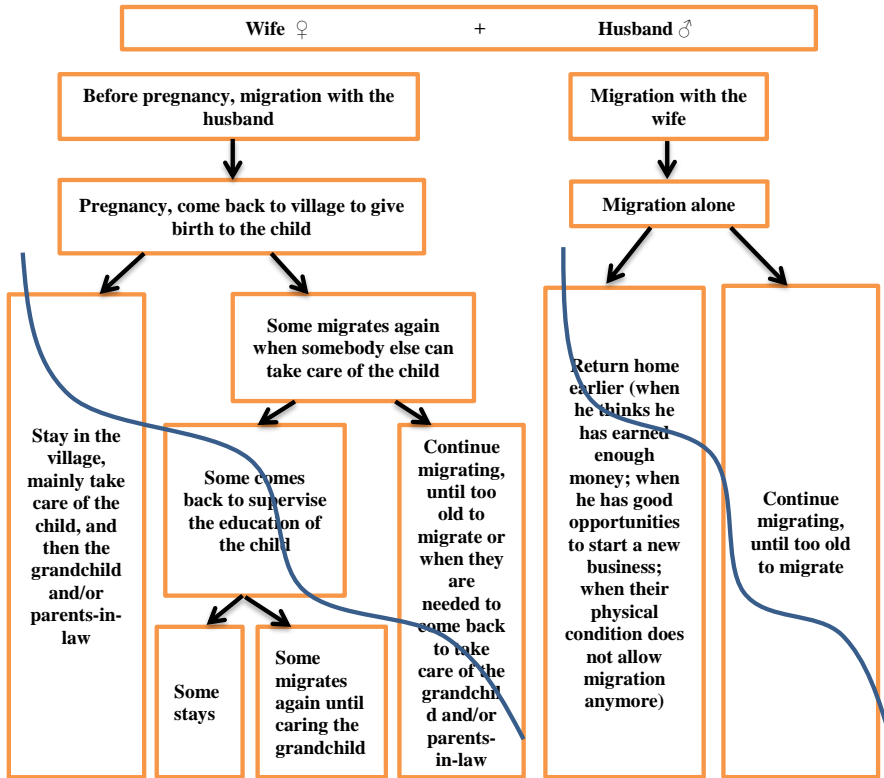


Figure 4.1: Rural people’s possible migration styles

The first turning point is pregnancy and giving birth to a child. Before pregnancy, usually the woman migrates and works in the same place with her husband. After pregnancy, she usually comes back to the village and the husband continues working away. After several years, women prefer to migrating again when somebody can take care of the child, usually the mother-in-law is the guardian.

The second turning point is associated with the ‘education affairs’ of the child. Junior middle school and high school’s entrance exam is essential to students in China. In order to enter a good university, they need to get the chance to study in good junior middle school and high school firstly. Therefore, some women come back to supervise the child .Even though they cannot give any direct educational support, they can prepare a good learning environment for the child. Then, after caring for the child during their schooling, some women choose to migrate again, which depends on their ages. Usually, they are around 40 years old, which is no longer so favourable for migration, and then most women prefer to stay at home. During this caring period, the husband usually continues migration work.

The third turning point is ‘caring for the grandchild’, when the woman has a grandchild, no matter where she is and what she is doing, she will be at home to care for the grandchild. This

is the most important thing in the whole household. In the whole process of migration, the pressure from children's education and marriage are the driving forces and the core points of the adults' livelihood. For most migrant peasants, the main aim for migrating far away from home to work is to earn money to support the children's education and marriage. Reasons for female peasants ceasing migration is also related to these affairs.

Of course, the migration process can stop when the couple think it is the 'time' to come back to the village (the curves in the Figure 4.1 stands for this kind of situation). The 'time' usually includes the following three aspects: first, when the migrants think they have earned enough money from the migrate jobs (e.g., to start a business in the hometown); second, when they have other better job opportunities around the village compared to the migrant job; third, when their physical condition does not allow them to do the migrant work. I interviewed a returned migrant couple during the investigation in 2011, which is one supportive case. The couple experienced migrant work for more than 10 years, even though they are only in their 30s. The husband worked in the lathe factory and the wife worked in the garment factory in Suzhou. They just returned to the village in 2011. They are now running a decoration shop for the apartments in Hu Township. The husband described the whole process like this,

*“Before we started this activity, we did not have a clear idea what to do. We only knew we wanted to supervise the son's study at home after the Spring Festival of 2011, because the son is going to middle school after this summer (in 2011). As you know, it is a very important period for my son's future. We hope he can go to a good junior middle school, and then he has more chances to study in a good university. If we are at home, he can concentrate on his study. He will not miss us so much and we do not need to suffer from the pain of missing him, either...You know, sooner or later, we would come back. We cannot afford the living expenditure in the cities and our parents are here... So, we decided to stay at home and we tried to find a livelihood suitable for us. At first, my wife wanted to run a small supermarket in the township. However, we do not have any relative or friend who has the experience of running a supermarket, so it would be a bit risky. During the Spring Festival, we always discussed with others during the family visits about our plan that we would not migrate far away to work...We are lucky. We got the news that a distant relative of my wife wanted to sell his decoration shop. We considered it carefully. In my opinion, as so many commercial residence buildings are under construction, the decoration shop could have a bright future. Then, we contacted the distant relative. He helped us start up our decoration shop. We bought this house with a street frontage as the shop and the materials he had not sold by using the savings from the migrant jobs... Now, we do not have any savings. All our money has been put into the shop... The distant relative also introduced us to his network in the decorating business. He accompanied me to purchase the goods in Shandong Province for the first time. And then, I know how it works...”*

### *Educational background*

The average educational level of the women in this research is not high. Table 4.6 shows that 46% of the surveyed women who are doing the primary agricultural production in the households are illiterate and 30% of the respondents have only completed primary school. There is no difference between the two sub-groups of farm women. Comparatively, the husbands appear to have a slightly higher educational level than the women. Moreover, my research shows that the educational gap between the women and their husbands in the first sub-groups is larger than the second sub-group. The chi-square value about educational background between women in the first sub-group and their husbands is 16.189 (see the footnote<sup>19</sup>), which is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p=0.040$ ). The corresponding chi-square value in the second sub-group is not significant. The relatively higher educational background of the husbands is, in the women's opinion, an advantage for migration.

**Table 4.6: Educational attainment distribution of women and their husbands (%)**

		Illiterate	Primary school	Junior middle school	High school or technical secondary school	College or higher	Total
<b>Women</b> ( $X^2(3)=3.981$ , $p=0.264$ )	Sub-group 1	46	30	24	0	0	100
	Sub-group 2	52	22	20	6	0	100
	Total	49	26	22	3	0	100
<b>Husbands</b> ( $X^2(4)=7.552$ , $p=0.109$ )	Sub-group 1	10	18	44	26	2	100
	Sub-group 2	0	22	58	20	0	100
	Total	5	20	51	23	1	100

### *Extra-jobs beyond agricultural production*

As shown in Table 4.2, some of the women (33%) have a paid job beyond agricultural production in the village, with little difference between the two sub-groups of women (36% resp. 30%). They can earn some additional money for the family by making rubber balls, or working at the watermelon yard, wood processing factory or small electronic factory. As to the husbands of the two sub-groups of women, the husbands of women in sub-group 1 mainly work in construction (82%, Table 4.7) and come back two or three times a year, totally around 40-60 days (usually in the two busy seasons and the Chinese New Year). The work of the husbands in sub-group 2 is more diverse: 14% of them take agricultural production as the main activity; they are mainly involved in poultry raising activities (such as raising thousands of chickens) and relatively less in crop farming. The other husbands have jobs in nearby construction sites, besides their work on the farm, or are running small shops or work in transport near to the village (Table 4.7). Generally, 88% of the husbands of women in sub-group 2 work within the county and only 28% of the husbands of left-behind women work within the county.

**Table 4.7: Husbands' occupations (%),  $X^2(6)=27.509$ ,  $p=0.000$**

	Only farming	Manufacture and farming	Construction and farming	Transportation and farming	Catering and farming	Business and farming	Others	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	0	6	82	2	8	0	2	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	14	8	36	4	12	16	10	100
<b>Total</b>	7	7	59	3	10	8	6	100

<sup>19</sup> Educational attainment between women and their own husbands: sub-group 1:  $X^2(8)=16.189$ ,  $p=0.040$ ; sub-group 2,  $X^2(6)=6.184$ ,  $p=0.403$ ; total:  $X^2(12)=13.417$ ,  $p=0.339$ .

### *Reasons for husband's migration and women's staying at home*

As to the reasons for the husbands' migration work and women's staying at home, rural women have their own understanding. Working and earning money for the children is the key reason for the husbands' migration. This reason is mainly divided into two parts, first, earning money to support children's education, and then, earning money for the son's marriage. Precisely, it involves buying an apartment in the township or county town or building a new house in the village for the son's marriage. Data in Table 4.8 support this argument. Only 12% of the women said the husbands are earning money for their own later years (women in sub-group 2 mention this motive more often than women in sub-group 1). Earning money for the son's marriage (11%) and education of the children (72%) is the main reason for the husbands' migration and there is no large difference between the two sub-groups of women. There is no tuition fee for primary school and junior middle school students in China now. Every student has 9 years of compulsory education according to the policy implemented by the state. However, most schools are boarding schools in the rural villages<sup>20</sup>, which cost the parents more than non-boarding schools. The students need to pay an accommodation fee and boarding expenses. In addition, if the children's school results are not so good during the entrance exams of junior middle school or high school, the parents need to pay more entrance fees, which is called school-choosing fee or sponsorship, for the children to enter a good junior middle school or high school. It costs usually from 5,000 to 20,000 Yuan per student, which is a big pressure for the peasants.

**Table 4.8: Main reason for husbands' working far away from home (%),  $X^2(3)=10.589$ ,  $p=0.014$**

	Educational fees for children	Debts	For savings	Son's marriage	Total
Sub-group 1	78	8	4	10	100
Sub-group 2	60	0	28	12	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

As to why women stay behind, women argue different reasons to explain it. It seems that earning money is the men's task and duty. However, women do not often use this point as the main reason for not-migrating outside to work. Instead, they use 'caring for children' as the keyword to explain why they are left-behind (56%, Table 4.9). Additionally, 'taking care of elderly people' (8%), 'women need to be at home' (10%) and women 'need to take care of the house' (8%) are mentioned as reasons. Actually, this reflects the traditional rural culture with its gender based division of labour in the household. Care giving is taken as women's task. The father goes out to earn enough money for the children and the mother stays at home to take care of the children, the elderly and the household. Therefore, when there are opportunities to work outside, the male labour force has the priority in migrating for work, and then the woman is left-behind to take care of the children and do the farming work for the household.

<sup>20</sup> There are some factors conditioning the fact that most primary schools and junior middle schools in rural China are boarding schools. One important reason is the large migration of the rural parents/fathers. The state implemented the 'school mapping' policy and it aims to let teachers undertake more responsibility to supervise the left-behind children and to let the students (previously studying in the rural village) to obtain better educational resources in the township schools.

**Table 4.9: Reasons for left-behind (women in sub-group 1, multiple-choices question)**

Reasons	%	Reasons	%
taking care of children/grandchildren	56	caring elderly people	8
have to do the farm work	20	need to keep/take care of the house	8
cannot earn as much /more money than husband	18	illiteracy	6
women need to be at home	10	old	2
bad health condition	10	Total	138

Reasons presented by the left-behind women in Table 4.9 also manifest the gender inequality in salary (“cannot earn same/more money than husband” accounts for 18%) in China. Besides, the physical condition factors, such as bad physical health (10%) and old age (2%), are also reasons for some women being left-behind.

“Women inside and men outside” is the traditional culture in China. The migration phenomenon reflects the same cultural norm. As indicated in the historical changes of the gender division of labour at household level (Figure 1.2), with the migration of the husbands, left-behind women’s working territory is still ‘inside’ and they just expand their working territory to agricultural production beyond doing housework and caring. Moreover, this kind of territory expanding generally brings the left-behind women more physical and emotional burdens compared to the control group of women, and to some extent it also changes the intra-household gender relations between the wife and husband<sup>21</sup>.

### *Children’s situation*

The culture of son preference is still influencing people’s thinking. Traditionally, people who do not have a son cannot be recorded in the family tree after their deaths and they cannot be buried in the families’ graveyard. It is also looked down upon by others. Apart from son preference, a couple might want to have a second child to avoid the first child being lonely. According to the family planning policy, a rural couple can have two children if the first one is female, otherwise, they can only have one child. However, different places can implement different exact regulations to control the birth according to their own economic and demographic condition. In Yang Village, it is not allowed to have a second child if the first child is a healthy female child. In reality, many couples have disobeyed this birth control policy in Yang Village, 59% of the survey women have two children, and one third of the women that participated in the research have three or four children (19% resp. 14%). Almost all the families (97%) have at least one boy 92% of the surveyed couples have disobeyed the family planning policy. If the rate is calculated according to the state regulation about ‘birth control’ (it is legal to have a second child if the first one is female), there are still two thirds (67%) of couples who have disobeyed the policy (see Table 4.10). Totally, in the 100 surveyed families, there are 238 children, 114 are male and 124 are female (Table 4.11).

<sup>21</sup> The issue of left-behind women’s physical burden and emotional burden is further discussed in Chapter 7 and the issue of left-behind women’s intra-household gender relations is further discussed in Chapter 6.



**Table 4.10: Whether the couple has disobeyed the ‘birth control’ policy (%, $X^2(1)= 3.664, p=0.056$ )**

	Disobey the policy	ObeY the policy	Total
Sub-group1	58	42	100
Sub-group 2	76	24	100
Total	67	33	100

**Table 4.11: The number and sex proportion of women’s children ( $X^2(1)= 0.856, p=0.355$ )**

	Male children		Female children		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sub-group1	52	45	64	55	116	100
Sub-group 2	62	51	60	49	122	100
Total	114	48	124	52	238	100

The biographical recorded respondent Liu and Xie explained me why they disobeyed the one-child policy rule. Liu described it like this,

*“We did not plan to have the second child after giving birth to a daughter. I do not think boys are superior to girls. However, one night during the Spring Festival period some years ago, my husband was drunk after a party with his friends. He cried and later I knew the reason is because his friends laughed at him. His friends all have a son, but my husband only had a daughter. It made my heart feel sad and then we decided to have the second child. That is why the age gap between the two children is 11 years... Of course, we hoped the second child would be a son but we did not do the type-B ultrasonic to check the sex. For others, if they want to have a son and the type-B ultrasonic result is negative, they would have an abortion. For us, we agreed that no matter what the sex of the child was, we would only have two children totally. Luckily, we had a son.”*

Another biographical recorded respondent Xie commented in a direct way that she wanted to have a son,

*“I want to have a son. Yes, I have a daughter. I think I have stronger feelings than my husband. Others have a son, so why don t we? Eventually the daughter will marry and live with her husband’s family in the future. We need to have a son.”*

Having more children than the policy allows implies a higher economic burden for the couple. Beyond paying the social upbringing fee for disobeying the family planning policy, the couple also needs to undertake the economic burden of the children’s education and the marriage expenses, especially, of the son. As illustrated in the foregoing section, the education and marriage of the children are the main pressures and the drivers of the migration of the husbands and the stay-behind of the women. Children’s occupations and their marital situation support this argument from the other side. 38% of the children of the surveyed women are in schooling (Table 4.12) and 58% of the children are not married (Table 4.13). They need economic support from the parents. There are more children of women in sub-group 1 in the school than those women in sub-group 2 (45% resp. 30%, Table 4.12). Their children are often also not yet married (62% resp. 53%, Table 4.13) This means that left-behind women in the survey face more pressure regarding the children’s education and marriage than the control group of women.

**Table 4.12: Schooling and occupations of women's children (%, $X^2(6)=15.840$ ,  $p=0.015$ )**

	Preschool child	Student	Off-farm worker	Peasant	Jobless	Soldier	Other	Total
Sub-group1	10	35	46	5	3	1	0	100
Sub-group 2	3	27	59	1	7	1	3	100
Total	7	31	52	3	5	1	1	100

**Table 4.13: Whether the children of women married (%, $X^2(1)=1.881$ ,  $p=0.170$ )**

	Married	Not married	Total
Sub-group1	38	62	100
Sub-group 2	47	53	100
Total	42	58	100

### *Daily expenditure*

The village has several shops<sup>22</sup> where women can buy things for their daily lives, for instance, salt, sugar, vinegar and snacks for children. However, women only go to these village shops occasionally to buy something or to chat there. They usually go to open market in Hu Township by electrical bicycles on every date with a 3, 6 and 9 according to the traditional Chinese calendar. Furthermore, every date with a 2, 5 and 8 in, there is a relatively smaller market than in the village between the Hu Township and Yang Village. There are more pedlars (some peasants sell their own produce) than other days and more choices which usually means cheaper prices. Some peasants from nearby villages also sell their own produce in the open market. People do trading mainly in vegetables, meat, daily necessities (such as soap, toothpaste) and agricultural production materials. There are also some permanent shops in the township, which are open every day, such as shops selling agricultural production inputs, grocers, greengrocers and some wedding supplies shops.

**Table 4.14: The main household expenditures (% , multiple-choice question)**

	Agricultural production	Daily expenditure	Education for children	Illness expenditure	Fees for <i>guanxi</i>	Other	Total
Sub-group 1	40	86	56	18	72	0	272
Sub-group 2	60	98	46	16	72	4	296
Total	50	92	51	17	72	2	284

Beyond education fees for children, daily expenditure, fees for maintaining *guanxi*<sup>23</sup>(关系) and cost of agricultural production are the main expenditure in the household in women's opinion(Table 4.14<sup>24</sup>). Daily expenditure usually includes the cost for food (e.g. meat, snacks for children), electricity and water. A woman portrayed the daily expenditure like this,

<sup>22</sup> Village shops in the research site are information exchange centres as well (see Appendix E, i.e., the map of Yang Village). Due to the locations of the village shops, it is a place where people usually informally meet each other to get or exchange information and news of recent events.

<sup>23</sup> *Guanxi* means relationship, maintaining *guanxi* means maintaining social relations activities, such as attending marriage ceremonies and funerals. More information of maintaining *guanxi*, such as who is participating in it, is further discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>24</sup> The original question is: what are the main household expenditures? a. means of agricultural production, such as fertilizer, agricultural chemicals b. daily expenditure c. educational fees for the child(ren) d. health costs e. fees for maintaining *guanxi* f. other There are two 'other' cases in sub-group 2, one woman said the main expenditure is the costs of purchasing an apartment. The other woman stated the costs of constructing a new house in the village.

*“It seems the daily expenditure does not cost a lot, that is because you do not pay much attention when you just pay five or ten Yuan for something. However, when you calculate all the small expenses, actually it is not a small amount of money at all. For instance, my son is studying in the kindergarten. Every day, I give him one Yuan as pocket money to buy snacks at the kindergarten. Besides, I buy at least two cases of milk, sweets and cookies for him, which cost at least 100 Yuan per month. Every week, I also go to market to buy the fruit and meat for him. I need to pay the electricity and water charges, too.”*

In addition, many women pointed out that it is stressful to maintain *guanxi*. Generally, fees for maintaining *guanxi* takes the second from top place in interviewees about the main household expenditures. Some respondents mentioned,

*“It really costs a lot if you calculate for one year, at least, 2,000 Yuan annually.”*  
*“People have more money than before, especially most households have some extra-earnings and it seems reasonable that you need to contribute more when you have more money.”*

As to health costs, some women mentioned it due to the poor physical condition of themselves or the parents-in-law. Nearly every rural resident has joined the medical insurance scheme which is called ‘the comprehensive arrangement for serious disease’. In 2003, the state implemented The New Rural Cooperative Medical Care System (NRCMCS) in some pilot places to insure rural poor people’s medical expenses for serious diseases. Until 2010, this covered all the rural residents. From the investigation, about 5 years ago, it was found that villagers in Yang Village had started to join the new medical care system. In 2011, they paid 60 Yuan per person per year and the provincial government and the national government paid 200 Yuan for each villager<sup>25</sup> to insure their medical care. Even though the new medical care system covers some of the health costs for serious illnesses, the peasants still need to pay most of the costs for chronic diseases such as thrombus.

### **4.3 The six biographical recorded respondents**

Beyond the 100 questionnaire survey, I also compiled six women’s biographies. Some interview fragments of their biographies will be used in the following chapters. In order to have a better understanding of the fragments presented in the following chapters, I hereby give an overview of every biographical woman recorded.

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<sup>25</sup> In general, the rate of the reimbursement of the health costs is differentiated between different diseases. Moreover, this system is tiered, depending on the location. If patients go to a small hospital or clinic in their local town, the scheme will cover from 70-80% of their bill. If they go to a county one, the percentage of the cost being covered falls to about 60%. If they need specialist help in a large modern city hospital, they have to bear most of the cost themselves; the scheme would cover only about 30% of the bill. Until 2011, about 830 million (96%) rural residents attended the new medical care system. Furthermore, elderly people over 60 years old can get 55 Yuan per month of the endowment insurance from the government according to the Regulations of Rural Social Endowment Insurance implemented in 2009.

***Respondent One: Liu***

Liu is 37 years old and from the southern part of Shuyang County. Her husband is from Yang Village which is in the northern part of the county. She dropped out of school in the second year of junior middle school. Her husband has only completed primary school education. Liu has two children. Her daughter (16 years old) is boarding at the junior middle school in Shuyang county town and the son (5 years old) is at kindergarten in Sun Township (Liu believes the quality of teaching at the kindergarten in Sun Township is better than that in Hu Township). Her husband is 40 years old. He is a carpenter working together with some villagers in Shandong Province. He comes back three times per year during the two harvest seasons and the Spring Festival. He can earn more than 3,000 Yuan per month. He is working together with some villagers as a group. The group of migrant peasants subcontracted some work from the construction site and they divide the earnings out afterwards. The efficiency of this kind of working style is higher than the working style of independent labourers.

Liu also has migrant work experience. Before her marriage, Liu worked in the county town, which is the first migration work experience. At that time, when Liu decided to stop the studying in the second year of the junior middle school, she found a temporary waitress job in the restaurant in the county town and she met her husband there. He was a chef in that restaurant. They fell in love and got married, which was an exception at that time. Liu said her parents did not agree with the marriage because of the poor economic situation of her parents-in-law (the economic situation of Liu's natal family was, and is, better than her parents-in-law), so Liu did not go along with her parents' arranged marriage plans to another man. Liu was a rather proud when she described the marriage experience and she thought she had been lucky that she could choose the man she loved. After marriage, she went to Beijing to work with her husband. Later, she found she could not work because she was pregnant. Before giving birth to her daughter, she came back to the village. Liu migrated to Ningbo City and worked in a garment factory and her parents-in-law took care of her daughter. However, after two years, Liu decided to come back because her daughter's school results were very bad.

Liu farms 20 *mu* land (5 *mu* is the family's own land and the other land is rented from the villagers) and she is one of the 'big' peasants in Yang Village. She is the person that initiated the idea that she would like to rent the land from others in the household. She can earn 10,000 Yuan (net earnings) from farming every year. Liu did not know how to do the farming work before marriage and she said she learnt it from her father-in-law since being married. Now, she is a good peasant in most peasants' opinions. She cares about farming. She does not have an extra-job beyond farming. Giving good care for the children is her main task at home. She always goes to the village shop to see others' playing mah-jong and exchanges information there during her spare time. Some friends also drop by her house to chat with her about farming and other household affairs.

Liu does not have a lot of money pressures. She has a bank card (with a current and deposit function) at home. She said there is no need to ask her husband to transfer the money back for their daily life (her husband does not have a bank card and he brings the money back when he

comes back home) as she could use the earnings from the last years' farming and her husband's migrant work. She plans to purchase an apartment in the township or the county town, which is also one reason for not decorating the house she is living in. Liu built their current house with some hired labourers nine years ago. Her husband did not come back to help her as he believed Liu could manage it and Liu did it well. All the household appliances, such as the washing machine, the electrical bicycle and beds were bought by Liu. She thinks she can manage everything at home and she makes phone calls or sends messages (by using her mobile phone) with her husband every day. She hopes her daughter can go to a good high school and then get the chance to go to university to study. She has also the same hope for her son. She even plans to get the chance to work at the boarding school where her son will go to. She tries to give her son the best care.

***Respondent Two: Zhuang (♀)***

Zhuang was the youngest biographical recording respondent in my research and she was 29 years old when I interviewed her in 2011. Just after several months of the investigation, she died in a car accident in Nov. 2011. Her daughter is 10 years old (boarding in the primary school of Hu Township) and her son is 7 years old (in the kindergarten of Hu Township). Her husband is 42 years old and he works in the construction sites in Zhenjiang or Changshu City in Jiangsu Province. He is a brick mason and he usually earns 3,000 - 3,500 Yuan per month. Zhuang farmed 8 *mu* land and 3 *mu* was leased from another villager (every year she paid 600 Yuan in total). Beyond doing the farming work and caring for the children, Zhuang needed to take care of her 68 years old mother-in-law who had poor physical health (her father-in-law had passed away before the investigation). Zhang had moved to the new living place (two storey house) due to the implementation of the 'new countryside construction' policy at the end of 2010. She had 50,000 Yuan debt from the bank because of the move to the new house. There were no new household appliances in her household. The bed, sofa, TV set, clothespress were all bought about ten years ago.

Zhuang's marriage was a traumatic experience for her because she was a victim of human trafficking. About 10 other women have had the same experience in Yang Village. She was coerced by the human traders when she worked in the nearby city in her home province, Guizhou Province. At that time, she was only 18 years old. She was sold to Yang Village and bought by her current husband, who is 13 years older than her, for 5,000 Yuan. Zhuang had been kept under close watch before giving birth to her daughter. She had planned to run away when she had chance after the birth of the daughter. However, she gave up the idea because she wanted to live for her daughter. She learnt the local language and she started to learn to do the farming work and sometimes she also went to the nearby construction site to earn some money by doing temporary jobs. She felt unsatisfied with the marriage but she continued with it because of the children. Actually, she did not want to have a second child. However, this was not something she could decide by herself. She said,

*“I cannot decide this by myself. They (her husband and mother-in-law) wanted to have a boy. What can I do? You know, my identity is special as I was bought by them so I did not have so much say in the household.”*

Zhuang liked to watch TV dramas about love and she said directly to me that she tended to get the feeling of true love from the TV dramas. Zhuang seldom contacted her migrant husband actively as she said she did not know what to say to him (actually, I think she meant she did not want to talk to her husband when she said this). She did not communicate with her mother-in-law a lot either as she thought they did not have the same interests and concerns. Zhuang had some friends with similar experiences as hers and she believed that only these people could understand her feelings. Zhuang did not tell any of her worries to her parents as she did not want them to be sad.

Zhuang was a very kind-hearted woman. Even though she suffered a lot (beyond emotional feelings, the farming, the language and the different diet were also difficulties for her) due to the marriage form, she treated the mother-in-law very well when she was ill. She also took good care of the children. She undertook all the workload when the husband was working in the cities, although the relationship between her husband and herself was not so good. She had a strong sense of responsibility for the family. The two children were the centre of her life and her reason for living. She disliked farming. She said she would like to run a small shop to sell day-to-day goods in Hu Township when the physical condition of the mother-in-law became better, and then she could take care of the two children at the same time.

### ***Respondent Three: Xie***

Xie is 31 years old and she is from Yang Village. Xie has only had three years of primary education. Due to the heavy workload in her natal family, she discontinued her study when she was 16 years old. She does not have any migrant work experience and is without an extra-job beyond farming. Xie has a 9 years old daughter who is boarding in a primary school in Shuyang county town and a 3 years old son. Xie's husband works in construction site in the county town and he commutes everyday by a motorcar. Usually, her husband can earn 130 Yuan per day and about 3,500 – 4,000 Yuan per month.

Xie farms 4 *mu* land at home but in her opinion her main task is to take care of her son. She was very happy when she referred to anything related to her son. She has the son preference mentality. According to the interviews with her, Xie's husband did not have strong feelings about having a son but Xie had the intention to have a son. She thought they needed to have a son and she did not want to be looked down upon by other villagers. She also pointed out that the daughter would eventually become a member of another family. When she was pregnant for the second time, she went to two different hospitals to do a gender test to ensure she

would have a son<sup>26</sup>. Totally, Xie paid about 50,000 Yuan for the social upbringing fee for the son.

Xie is happy with her living condition. She is pleased that her husband can commute every day and she likes that she can go back her natal home easily when she feels unhappy. It only takes Xie five minutes to walk back to her natal family. During her leisure time, she often goes back to chat with her mother (her father is also a migrant worker) and helps her mother to do some household chores. During the harvest season, the two families help each other. Xie dislikes farming although she is the person who does the primary farming work in the household. About the future plan, Xie would like to find an extra-job once her son can board at the school.

#### ***Respondent Four: Zhang***

Zhang is 50 years old and she has two sons (28 years old and 25 years old respectively) and one daughter (18 years old). The two sons and their spouses are migrants who all work in Zhengzhou City. Her daughter studies in the junior middle school of Hu Township and comes back every two weeks. Beyond taking care of her daughter, Zhang takes care of her grandson, the son of her eldest son, at home. She is a typical case of someone who needs to take care of two younger generations together. Her husband is also a peasant migrant (53 years old, a brick mason) and he works in Shuyang county town and commutes every day by electrical bicycle. He earns around 100 Yuan per day and brings cash back periodically after finishing a certain part of the work.

Zhang does not have migrant work experience, which is not because her educational level is low. Actually, Zhang received eight years' education; she stopped studying when she was in grade two of junior middle school. She said she was lucky because her three elder brothers (Zhang has seven siblings, three elder brothers and two elder sisters, two younger brothers) did not want to study and they did not get good school results. So, her parents put their hopes of a good education on her two younger brothers. Zhang's parents asked her to accompany the two younger brothers to school and to take care of them. So, Zhang had the chance of a good education. All the workload in the household was undertaken by the three elder brothers and the two elder sisters. From the migrant experiences of her two sons and her husband, Zhang does not want her daughter to be a migrant and she hopes her daughter can go on to study in at least a technical school.

In Zhang's life, there is not so much pressure now, especially after 2011. When I interviewed her in 2011 for the first time, her second son had just got engaged but not yet married. Zhang said the son would have the marriage ceremony during the Spring Festival of 2012. When the first son married nine years ago, Zhang gave their own house to her son and daughter-in-law and Zhang built a wing in the same yard for her husband and herself. In 2010, she built a new

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<sup>26</sup> According to the law, it is forbidden to check the sex of a foetus in China to avoid abortion due to the son preference. However, in order to have a son, some people ask help from the relatives or friends working in the hospital to check the sex.

house for the second son's marriage, which is just next to the first son's house. Although Zhang lives in the wing, she felt proud how she had managed the marriages of the two sons. She had full-filled her responsibilities to get both her sons married and she would not be looked down upon by others.

Furthermore, during the whole interview in 2011, Zhang complained a lot about the farm land issue. I still remember that the first time I met Zhang and I told her that I would like to interview her about her opinion on agricultural production and some related things to finish my thesis; she even treated me as the delegate of some companies which would buy the farm land from her. She said she did not want to lose farm land anymore. Before 2010, she had 4.4 *mu* farm land. She was 'forced' to sell 0.9 *mu* land to a developer to build a commercial residence building in 2010 and she was 'forced' to rent out 2 *mu* farm land to develop the watermelon yard. Then, she only had 1.5 *mu* farm land left when I interviewed her in 2011. During the interview, she stressed many times that she was a peasant and farming was very essential to her and her family.

*"We are getting old, what can we do when my husband cannot migrate to earn money? We need land. We do not want to be a burden on the children. I want to have some land for us to provide food for us when we are old."*

Zhang is exemplary for many villagers. They are struggling for almost all of their lives to pay the expenses for their children's education and marriage.

#### ***Respondent Five: Li***

Li, 43 years old, is a very hard-working left-behind woman. Li is always busy with working, even during the interviews, such as breeding the chickens or making rubber balls. She is breeding some chickens in the yard to get eggs for the son (19 years old, studying in the high school in Shuyang county town) and the daughter (5 years old, studying in the kindergarten). Beyond doing the farming work on a piece of 5 *mu* farm land, she also makes rubber balls to earn some additional money for the household. Her husband works in Zhenjiang City in the southern part of Jiangsu Province and he can earn 2,000 Yuan per month. According to Li, usually the money she earns from making rubber balls meets the daily expenditure of her son, daughter and herself at home. When the son needs boarding fees, the husband transfers the money directly to the son because he holds the only bank card in Li's family. Li does not even know the password.

Li is thrifty and she tries her best to make the lives of the family members the best with the least amount of money. Neither the family's economic situation nor her physical condition is good. She has high blood pressure, diabetes and complaints about her wrists, back and waist. She said she seldom ate the eggs as she kept them for her children and her husband. When her husband or her son is not at home, she only cooks one dish and mainly lets the daughter eat it. She makes handmade cookies for the daughter as snacks instead of buying them from the shops. She does not buy the best quality rice at the market and she always consumes her own



produce. It is true that she feels a great deal of pressure concerning the children's education and the son's marriage later on. She hopes her son can continue studying after graduation at the high school, which needs money. She wants to purchase an apartment or build a new house to prepare for the son's marriage, which also needs money. So, she works very hard and she always says "kuqian is a not easy thing" (苦钱, *ku qian* is a local saying, *ku* means bitter or misery and *qian* means money in Chinese, in combination, *ku qian* means earning money is misery).

Li's life is not easy going and miserable to some extent. She did not have the opportunity to go to school when she was young due to the bad economic situation of her natal family. However, her elder brother, elder sister and younger brother all had the chance to go to school. She was chosen by her parents to help with the family's work. She started to do the farming work when she was around 12 years old. Later, her father died due to pulmonary tuberculosis. Her life became worse and worse. There was no money for the marriage of Li's elderly brother so Li was exchanged for a wife for her brother when she was 19 years old. So Li's husband is her sister's in-law's brother and he is 7 years older than Li. Li did not want to go along with the mother's idea to exchange, but there was no choice.

After some years of marriage, Li accepted her destiny and then gave birth to the son. Before being pregnant with her son, Li did not like talking about her life. Her miserable life did not stop because her elder brother died due to liver disease. Li had the strong feeling that her endeavour were in vain. Later, the birth of her daughter brought her more pressure. She did not plan to have a second child. However, she could not have an abortion when she was pregnant with the daughter because she was found to have serious heart problems. If she had an abortion, she would have been in danger of losing her own life. This unexpected pregnancy led to further economic burden for her family because she needs to pay the social upbringing fee (this is related to the fact that her family could not get the compensation fee from the village committee for using her farm land in 2012). There is almost no savings in the bank because of the son's and daughter's education. However, Li showed a bright belief for the future. She believes that her life will become better when the son works.

In addition, she follows a local belief (for around 20 years) and she is one of the leaders in the group. As a believer Li has had some chances to go to other cities. For instance, she went to Huai'an City and Lianyungang City (both cities are in the same province as Yang Village) to give speeches to others. My impression was that Li derived some comfort from her belief.

### ***Respondent Six: Wang***

The first impression Wang gives me is she is optimistic and she looks younger than her years. Wang is 46 years old and she is the only surveyed woman who wears a necklace and earrings in her generation. The household appliances in her household are a bit more fashionable and modern than other households'. In my opinion, this is related to her diverse migrant work experiences in my opinion, including selling fish, growing mushrooms, breeding pigs, working in the restaurant and the construction sites.

Wang has a daughter (27 years old, married and lives in the neighbour town) and a son (25 years old, married in 2010). Her husband is 56 years old; he works in Hebei Province (earns 3,000 – 4,000 Yuan per month) and comes back three times per year. Wang has given up finding extra-jobs beyond farming and takes care of her grandson with the daughter-in-law. *“Caring for the grandson is the most important task for me”* indicates her current stand in life. From observation, Wang has a good relationship with her daughter-in-law. She is wise in dealing with this relationship, using her own words, *“I need to take her as my own daughter and we are a family. Later I will live with them (son and daughter-in-law).”*

The family is entitled to 5 *mu* farm land. Wang farms 3 *mu* land and the other 2 *mu* she has rented out to the watermelon yard. In her opinion,

*“if the children need to be taken care of, I can manage farming as well as caring for the children. If I have time when the children go to kindergarten, then I can do some extra-jobs. However, farming is not cost-effective; I can earn the whole income from farming in half a year by doing extra-jobs.”*

Wang believes she farms better than others. During the interview, I asked her this question, “if you farm 1 *mu* land which can produce 600 *jin* (2 *jin*= 1 kilo) rice or you can farm 2 *mu* land which can produce 1,000 *jin* rice, which one is your choice?” She answered me in confidence, *“I will choose the 2 *mu* land to farm and I believe I can farm well and I will get 1,200 *jin* produce in the end.”*

Beyond this, Wang is the only biographical recording respondent that presented a wish about the village organizations. She said,

*“I wish there would be organizations that can help villagers come together at least once a month. Especially, there should be some people with whom I can share feelings and ideas about how to keep a good relationship with your daughter-in-law. You know, the relations between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws are complex and not many people can deal with it well.”*

For the plans of the future, Wang wants to have a small restaurant in the county town, but because of the grandson she must keep this wish to herself for some years to come.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I described some general social, economic and political relations of Yang Village and gave an introduction of the research respondents. In general, Yang Village is experiencing the consequences of modernization and urbanization. The consequences include positive and negative aspects, for instance, the risk of losing more arable farm land and the extra-job opportunities provided by the local industries.

As to the general features of the research respondents, two kinds of livelihood strategies can be seen in general. For most households in Yang Village, men migrate far away from home to

work and women stay behind to do the farming work and caring for children (and even grandchildren). In the other households, men do not migrate but they find other extra-job opportunities or run their own small businesses as the main means of living beyond farming. Crop farming is not the only livelihood and it is not the main economic source for most households, either. Multiple job-holding is the mainstream for making a living in the rural households. This is also true for the households in which the husband is not involved in out-migration. These husbands have, apart from farming, paid work at a commuting distance from the village. Moreover, part of the women, left-behind or not, have an extra-job along with farming, care and household work.

Regarding the six biographical recorded respondents, I get a strong feeling that they are not living for themselves, but for the children. They make changes in their livelihoods when there are changes in the children's situations. To be precise, they are living for the education and marriage needs of the children. Whether migrating for work or whether undertaking an extra-job beyond farming, depends on whether they need to take care of children or grandchildren and how much time and effort the caring takes. For instance, Li made rubber balls when I interviewed her in 2011 and she started to work in the garment factory in Hu Township in Sept., 2012, because her daughter started to go to primary school so she can commute together with the daughter. Xie did not have an extra-job in 2011 and she made decorations for the clothes at home in 2012 because her son went to the kindergarten and she had more spare time during the day.



## Chapter 5 The Impact of Agricultural Feminization on Agricultural Production

With the migration of a considerable part of the male labour force, China, which has the largest population and also the most farmers in the world, is facing a crucial change in the composition of the agricultural production labour force. This results in an increasing dependency on women's labour input: they are becoming the primary labour force to maintain and contribute to food security in China. The process, that women are undertaking more workload in agricultural production, is defined as agricultural feminization. Some scholars perceive it as a regression that negatively affects food production. Against the background of the existing literature, which mainly focuses on the negative impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production, the exploration of what really happens in agricultural production at the farm level, from the perspective of the women involved in it, is becoming very important. Using an actor-oriented approach, this chapter aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of whether the feminization of agriculture leads to the regression of agricultural production. Then, it also discusses the role of agriculture within the households as perceived by female peasants and explores the factors that condition female peasants' willingness to continue farming and do good farming work. By synthesizing women's difficulties and expectations in agricultural work, this chapter tries to make a positive contribution to the elaboration of agricultural policies.

### 5.1 Introduction

The FAO, World Bank, and CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) all claim that there is an increased participation of women in agriculture, particularly in developing countries in Asia, Latin American and Africa (referred to in: de Brauw, 2003; Deere, 2005; Katz, 2003; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008; Talwar and Ganguli, 2003). Generally, this phenomenon is called the 'feminization of agriculture', although diversity and intensity vary worldwide. Since the 1980s, there has been a clear trend that more and more rural labour force migrates from rural areas to urban areas in China and that rural women are increasingly doing the bulk of the work in agricultural production (Chang et al., 2011; Mu and de Walle, 2011; Song et al., 2009b).

The available literature on 'women's increasing role in agricultural production', which is often understood as a main indicator of agricultural feminization, is rich. However, research on the impact of feminization on agricultural performance and productivity is relatively rare (Fok and Wang, 2011; IFAD, 2005). Moreover, the relatively scarce research on the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production is ambiguous. As synthesized in Chapter 2, some scholars point out that there is not sufficient evidence proving that changes in the composition of the labour force induce adverse effects on farming (e.g., Meng, 1993; Zhang et al., 2006b). However, most scholars assume that due to a variety of reasons (such as lower level of education than men, lower physical strength than men, limited access to inputs and even limited social networks), women are less efficient crop producers (e.g., Chikwama, 2010; Peterman et al., 2010; Quisumbing, 1994; Quisumbing, 1996; Saito et al., 1994; UNDP, 2003)

and it is assumed that women's increased labour participation in agriculture might impact on agricultural production and development negatively (e.g., Cheng, 1998; Fan and Zhu, 2007; Goldstein and Udry, 2008; Li, 2009; Udry, 1996).

Agricultural production is substantial to the food security issue, both at the farm household level and at the national level. With the migration of rural male labour force and changes in the agricultural labour force, to explore what is really happening in agricultural production at the farm level is becoming more and more essential. Does agricultural feminization really lead to the regression of agricultural production? As the pillar of farming work in the households, what are female peasants' opinions on the 'regression arguments on agricultural production' and what are their views on the role of agricultural production? This chapter aims to answer these questions. It also tries to explore the difficulties and expectations of female peasants in agricultural production. That is, the chapter does not discuss difficulties ascribed by others to female peasants; it discusses difficulties and expectations perceived by rural women themselves. To be precise, this chapter aims to research the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production in the following three aspects: Firstly, to research whether agricultural feminization leads to the regression of agricultural production from female peasants' perspective. Secondly, to explore how women themselves value agricultural production and the factors that condition women's willingness to continue farming. Thirdly, to find out the difficulties and expectations women have in doing farming. In order to explore the changes and differences in doing and understanding farming work, the comparative approach is used in this chapter. That is, the chapter compares the situations of women who are mainly doing the agricultural production work themselves and women who are sharing farming work with their husbands. The following indicators are used to show the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production in this chapter:

- 1) Does agricultural feminization lead to the regression of agricultural production? From the female peasants' perspective, this part mainly focuses on the differences between husband and wife in doing the farming. At the practical level, are there changes in cropping schemes and farming areas after female peasants take over the main farming work in the household? Are there differences in the production yield? Are there differences in using agricultural production inputs (quantity and quality)? At the symbolic level, who can do better farming work in the female peasants' opinion? What are the factors that condition who can farm better?
- 2) Female peasants' views on the role of agricultural production. Ideological thinking affects female peasants' practice in doing the farming as well. At the symbolic level, the following questions are used to explore and illustrate their views on farming: How do female peasants value agricultural production? What is the role of agricultural production in the household in their opinion? Do they like farming? Will they abandon farming when they have other livelihood strategies to carry out? What are the factors conditioning their willingness to continuing farming?
- 3) Difficulties and expectations in doing the farming. Beyond understanding female peasants' current practice and evaluation on agricultural production, exploring their difficulties and expectations in farming can contribute to the food security issue from

the policy making perspective. Precisely, are there difficulties when female peasants are doing the farming? What are their expectations on farming (e.g., training, credits)?

## 5.2 Does agricultural feminization lead to agricultural production regression?

As remarked in the introduction part of this chapter, some scholars believe that agricultural feminization leads to the regression of agricultural production. However, from the viewpoint of female peasants, they think there is no difference between their own and their husbands' way of farming. According to these women, there is no regression of the agricultural production. If the hypothesis that agricultural feminization leads to agricultural production regression is correct, there should be differences in cropping schemes, farming areas, farming inputs or farming outputs. The following four aspects can support female peasants' statements that there is no relation between the regression and their way of farming: First, female peasants state that there is no change in farming areas and cropping schemes initiated by them. Second, there is no difference in the quantity and quality of agricultural production inputs used. Third, the agricultural production yield is more or less the same in the households of women who are mainly doing the agricultural production and in the households of women who are doing the farming work together with the husband. Fourth, whether one can do good farming work depends on the experience accumulated in farming over the past years, there is no correlation with the gender issue.

### 1) Cropping scheme and farming areas

Within the climate and geographical condition factors, female peasants might introduce changes into the reigning cropping scheme. However, generally speaking, female peasants in Yang Village did not induce such changes. Peasants grow rice (from June to October) and wheat (from November to May) in rotation every year. In this respect, there is no difference between the households where mainly women are involved in farming and those where the couple is doing the farming together.

As to the farming areas, there are some increases and decreases. However, my investigation shows that there are few changes in farming areas led by female peasants' initiatives, especially any decreases in farming areas. In order to attract outside development investment, the local government expropriates the land from the peasants to construct roads and factory premises. This is the common reason for decreases in farming areas in the research site. According to the land management law implemented in 1999, the peasants should re-allocate the land to the state for public interests, such as construction of highways, water conservancy facilities and national defence projects. It is legal to expropriate the land for public interests and there is little space for peasants to modify<sup>2</sup>. The increases in farming areas in the farming households are usually temporary and land transfer often occurs within the family clan.

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<sup>1</sup> We only discuss the changes in crop farming in this section, because vegetable gardening and poultry raising for own consumption are always women's territory and the market-oriented poultry raising only happens in households where a man and woman are farming together.

<sup>2</sup> The issues of farming areas and cropping scheme are exactly discussed in the part of 6.2.3 in Chapter 6.

Farming the land of the brothers (who migrate to cities to work) and/or parents (who are too old to farm) are frequent cases. The available land for sub-renting is usually a small plot, varying from 2 to 4 *mu* and the cost of sub-renting is low, around 200 Yuan per *mu* per year.

To sum up, there is no difference in cropping scheme and farming areas between the two comparative sub-groups and there is almost no change in cropping scheme and farming areas led by female peasants’ willingness. In their opinion, female peasants will not leave the arable farm land barren when the husbands are working far away from home. Moreover, female peasants will not propose to decrease the farm land actively if they do not have other stable extra-job beyond farming or while their physical condition can cope with farming activities. Generally, if there is a regression of the agricultural production caused by the decreases in farming areas, it is not initiated by female peasants actively.

2) Agricultural production inputs - quality and quantity

Beyond changes in farming areas and cropping scheme, differences in agricultural production inputs can also lead to the regression of agricultural production. In most situations, there is no difference in applying different kinds of agricultural production inputs. This is illustrated in two aspects from the investigation. Firstly, the local shops are the main sources of purchasing agricultural production inputs for peasants in Yang Village and there is almost no difference in the varieties of agricultural production inputs sold in the local shops. Data in Table 5.1 support that there is no difference between the households in which women are the main labour force in farming and those households in which women are doing the farming together with the husband.

**Table 5.1: Places of purchasing farming inputs(%),  $X^2(2)= 2.526, p=0.283$**

	Village	Town	County town	Total
Sub-group 1	12	86	2	100
Sub-group 2	16	76	8	100
Total	14	81	5	100

Regarding the reasons for choosing a particular shop to purchase the farming inputs from, transportation cost, inputs cost and trust constructed by previous transactions are the decisive factors. As one woman explained,

*“Usually, we buy the farming inputs, such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, in the local town shops. It is not so far away. It takes 15 minutes to go there by electrical bicycles. Moreover, the price of the inputs in town shops is lower than that in the village shops. There is also more choice in the town than in the village... It is true that the prices of the farming inputs in the county town shops are a bit lower than the local town shops. But the transportation fee is higher. Nowadays, a return bus ticket is 12 Yuan and there is a higher risk of buying fake farming inputs. You know, we usually know the town sellers and they cannot cheat us. We are not familiar with the county town sellers, and sometimes you cannot remember the shops’ locations clearly where you bought the farming inputs. Additionally, if the farming inputs do not work well, you cannot get in touch with the sellers easily...”*



Secondly, quality is the most essential factor to be considered for most peasants in the process of purchasing agricultural production inputs. Data in Table 5.2 confirm this argument and there is no difference between the female peasants who are doing the primary farming work in the households and the control group of women. In fact, there is an underlined reason for choosing which kind of farming inputs to buy. As a female peasant mentioned,

*“To guarantee the yield is the aim of agricultural production. If you do not choose inputs of good quality, it means you might have a reduction in the yield in the end... So, you must put the quality factor in first place when buying farming inputs... Beyond guaranteeing the quality, you can bargain with the sellers about the price. Definitely, nobody wants to pay more money when he/she buys the same products as others... In fact, the price of one certain kind of product is more or less the same, especially in the shops located in a relatively small place, like a town. If it is too expensive in one shop, nobody will buy the inputs from there.”*

**Table 5.2: The most essential factor of purchasing agricultural materials (%)**

		Price	Price and quality	Quality	Other <sup>3</sup>	Total
<b>Purchasing seeds</b> <i>(X<sup>2</sup>(3)= 5.225, p=0.156)</i>	Sub-group 1	2	14	78	6	100
	Sub-group 2	4	6	90	0	100
<b>Purchasing fertilizer</b> <i>(X<sup>2</sup>(3)= 3.292, p=0.349)</i>	Sub-group 1	12	10	72	6	100
	Sub-group 2	4	12	82	2	100
<b>Purchasing pesticides</b> <i>(X<sup>2</sup>(3)= 2.671, p=0.445)</i>	Sub-group 1	6	10	82	2	100
	Sub-group 2	2	18	76	4	100
<b>Purchasing farming machine</b> <i>(X<sup>2</sup>(3)= 5.540, p=0.136)</i>	Sub-group 1	4	26	68	2	100
	Sub-group 2	6	47	45	2	100

Most female peasants put the quality factor in first place when they purchase agricultural production inputs and there is no difference in the quality of applying agricultural production inputs in the two sub-groups of female peasants. As to the quantity of the farming inputs applied in agricultural production, some scholars stress that women are more ‘expense-reducing’ and men are more ‘income-enlarging’ in agricultural production (Ley and Kobayashi, 2005). However, in Yang Village, only one female peasant indicates that she uses less fertilizer and pesticides because she wants to reduce the farming cost. Most female peasants argue that they have not changed the quantity of farming inputs used. There is no gender difference in how many farming inputs are used (see Table 5.3) and how many inputs used depends on the farming area and growing stage of the crops. One female peasant stated,

*“Even though you want to have a higher yield, you cannot use more seeds, fertilizer or pesticides than the crops need. If you put more seeds in a fixed farming area, the seedlings will be very small and they will not grow well because they fight for the water, air, fertilizer and pesticides... If you use more fertilizer than the crops need, it will cause the crops to die... Did you notice there were some yellow crops in the field?(PS: I went to the field to apply pesticides with this*

<sup>3</sup> ‘Other’ in Table 5.2 indicates families who do not decide this affair by themselves in this situation. For instance, there is a relative of the family who is in the business of selling agricultural production materials, then, this family usually let this relative decide and choose the agricultural production materials instead of them. The family trusts the relative and they believe the relative can choose better farming inputs than them by balancing the quality and the price of the products.

woman together before the interview.) One possible reason is that the peasant have used more fertilizer than needed... As to the pesticides, yes, you can apply more pesticides to the crops. However, if there is no need, it only means you are wasting money.”

**Table 5.3: Differences in quantity of farming inputs between women and the husbands (%)**

		Woman uses more	No difference	Husband uses more	Total
Fertilizer ( $\chi^2(2)=5.161$ , $p=0.076$ )	Sub-group 1	8	90	2	100
	Sub-group 2	0	100	0	100
Pesticides ( $\chi^2(2)=1.334$ , $p=0.513$ )	Sub-group 1	4	94	2	100
	Sub-group 2	2	98	0	100

In addition, although most female peasants argue that there is no gender difference in applying agricultural production inputs, it is relevant to point out that 65% of the female peasants think they have used more and more fertilizer and 72% of the female peasants believe they have used more and more pesticides in the past years in general. This is harmful to the food safety and it needs to be paid more attention. As Calvin et al. (2006) stated, “many of China’s food safety problems can be traced back to the farm level, as some farmers still rely heavily on the use of highly toxic pesticides to cope with various production problems” . It is really ridiculous to find out that although nearly all the peasants know it is harmful to use a large amount of pesticides, they still use more and more in reality. Some peasants even stated the reason for using more chemicals like this,

*“Yes, it is harmful to use lots of pesticides on the crops. We know it. However, it is not for our consumption, it is for your citizens (They were looking at me and telling it with smiles).”*

It is true that they treat own-consumption food and market-oriented food differently, especially for the produce in the vegetable gardens<sup>4</sup>. However, from a long-term perspective, they will not benefit from it. As Bian (2004)assumed, “massive use of pesticides and other pollutants also leads to the land becoming heavily polluted.” So it is definitely harmful to them sooner or later too. Current legislation is unable to protect consumers from the consequences of food production, more detailed and strict regulations need to be made and implemented.

### 3) Agricultural production yield

Compared to agricultural production inputs, agricultural production yield is a more telling way to evaluate the gender differences in ways of farming directly. My investigation shows that there is almost no difference in the average yield of those women who are mainly doing the farming by themselves and women who are doing the farming together with the husband, neither the rice yield nor the wheat yield (see Table 5.4<sup>5</sup>). The average rice and wheat

<sup>4</sup> See section 6.2.1 in chapter 6, especially Table 6.1.

<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, the “gross earnings” issue mentioned in the attached questionnaire (No. 2.1.2) is related to the rice and wheat yield, respectively. During the investigation, I had also investigated the yield, which is not shown in the questionnaire design.

production yields in both sub-groups were around 500 kilo per mu and 350 kilo per mu in 2011. Furthermore, they sell produce at similar prices, which implies that there is no big difference in the average earnings from the two kinds of produce either (rice: around 1100 Yuan per mu in 2011; wheat: 670 Yuan per mu in 2011). Of course, agricultural production yield is associated with the farming inputs they used.

**Table 5.4: Yield of rice and wheat in 2011(%)**

	Yield (kilo)	450	470	480	490	500	510	520	530	550	Total
<b>Rice</b>											
( $\chi^2(8)=3.842$ , $p=0.871$ )	<b>Sub-group 1</b>	1	1	5	8	22	7	4	1	1	50
	<b>Sub-group 2</b>	3	1	3	9	20	6	5	0	3	50
	<b>Total</b>	4	2	8	17	42	13	9	1	4	100
<b>Wheat</b>											
( $\chi^2(8)=2.755$ , $p=0.949$ )	<b>Sub-group 1</b>	3	6	2	11	9	9	3	3	4	50
	<b>Sub-group 2</b>	2	5	3	16	5	10	3	3	3	50
	<b>Total</b>	5	11	5	27	14	19	6	6	7	100

**Table 5.5: Kinds of wheat seeds women use in 2011(%, $\chi^2(3)=1.251$ ,  $p=0.741$ )**

	One kind	Two kinds	Three kinds	Four kinds	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	24	62	12	2	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	29	61	10	0	100
<b>Total</b>	26	62	11	1	100

In addition, in order to guarantee the yield, nearly three quarters of the female peasants grew more than one type of wheat seed in 2011 (Table 5.5) and there is no difference between the two sub-groups. Many women stated much like the following,

*“Well, if I cannot farm well, why is there no difference in the yield between my family and in those households where husband and wife are farming together? You know, the men in those households are the main labour force in agricultural production.”*

*“Yes, I do not have so much scientific knowledge from training and it is also true that my educational level is low. However, I want to have a good yield in agricultural production as well. If you have a higher yield, it means that you can get more money by selling produce... I am also afraid that I might have a bad yield so I grow more than one type of seed to decrease the risk of having poor yield.”*

*“Before choosing the seeds, fertilizer or pesticides, I asked relatives and/or the villagers first to find out what products are good. Of course, I will not just buy one type of agricultural product as that is not sensible. If you grow more than one strain, at least in the end, there is one type that can maintain the yield.”*

#### 4) Who can do better farming – men or women

The foregoing three parts in section 5.2 mainly discussed the practices of female peasants in farming to support their argument that there is no regression induced by them in agricultural production. Ideological thinking and behaviour are mutually influenced. This part will focus on female peasants' view on the regression of agricultural production at the symbolic level.

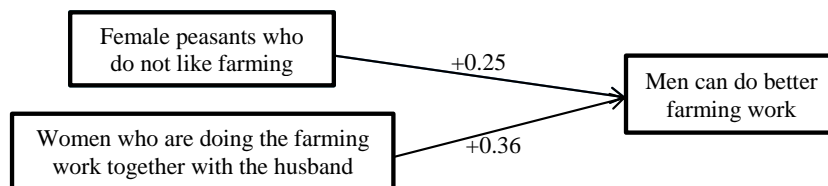
Do they think they cannot do such good farming work as men? What are the factors affecting who can do better farming work? In practice, I try to operationalize this with the following question: “who can, in your opinion, do better farming, men or women?”

Data in Table 5.6 show that there is a significant correlation between the role of women in agricultural production and their opinion on ‘who can farm better, men or women’. The chi-square value is 9.470, which is significant at the 0.01 level. Moreover, although 40% of women in the first sub-group and 50% of women in the second sub-group believe that men can do better farming work than women, it is interesting to find out that 22% of the women who have the primary role in agricultural production think that women farm better than men. Only one woman in sub-group 2 agrees with this opinion.

**Table 5.6: Women’s opinion on who can farm better (%),  $\chi^2(2)= 9.470, p=0.009$**

	Men better	The same	Women better	Total
Sub-group 1	40	38	22	100
Sub-group 2	50	48	2	100
Total	45	43	12	100

Further regression analyses show that beyond who does more labour contribution to farming, the feeling of female peasants towards farming also affects their opinion on ‘who can do better farming work, men or women’. Figure 5.1<sup>6</sup> supports this argument. If female peasants do not like farming, they tend to agree that men can do better farming work than women. The regression coefficients are +0.36 and +0.25, respectively.



**Figure 5.1: Path diagram of 100 women’s opinion on ‘who can farm better’ ( $R^2=0.13$ )**

However, the results in Figure 5.1 can be seen the other way around. That is, those female peasants who like farming and who are doing the most farming work themselves tend to believe they can farm better than men. Normally, when people like something, they have more interests in doing it and they have higher possibilities of performing it well<sup>7</sup>. Regarding the factor of undertaking the farming work mainly by themselves, female peasants think it helps them accumulate the experience in farming, and this contributes to their confirmation on the view they can farm better than men. Female peasants think the experience accumulated from daily practice is the decisive factor that influences one’s good performance in agricultural production. They presented the following justification,

<sup>6</sup> In this path diagram, I only mentioned the significant correlations. However, theoretically, there are more factors which could be relevant but not significant. The variables involved in the analyses include: age, education attainment, place of origin, migrant work experience, extra-job beyond farming, husband’s work place, household economic situation, judgment on the role of agricultural production in the household, women’s working years in agriculture.

<sup>7</sup> The factors that condition female peasants’ attitude on like farming is carefully discussed in the following Figure 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6.

*“Who can farm better? It does not depend on whether you are a man or a woman. There are some men who can farm better than women and there are also some women who can farm better than men. If you continue farming for some years and you are not stupid, you can farm well.”*

Farming is an experience accumulated activity, like biographical recorded respondent Wang mentioned,

*“You feed it (the farming crops) well, and then, it also feeds you well. After some years in doing farming, you can do good farming work.”*

‘Learning by doing’ is the common model by which peasants acquire the knowledge or accumulate the experience in agricultural production. Nearly 60% of female peasants (58% resp. 54%) state that their own farming knowledge is based on learning in daily practice or they learned it from their parents(-in-law)<sup>8</sup> (32% resp. 34%). If they have difficulties in doing the farming, they usually exchange experience or information with other peasants in the village and/or consult the agricultural production material shops’ staff. When they do not know the disease the crops have got, they can take a sample of the diseased crop to the sellers who usually can help them solve the problem. The husbands of most female peasants, who are doing the agricultural production work mainly by themselves, usually have worked away from home more than ten years. It means that women, rather than men, were the main labour force in agricultural production in recent years. They have accumulated more experience actively and/or passively than the husband. Comparatively, the husbands did not accumulate so much experience as their wives, so it is understandable that left-behind women tend to confirm they can do better farming than the husbands. As some left-behind women said,

*“He (the husband) does not know how to farm. For more than ten years, he has not done the managerial work in agricultural production. Only during the busy /harvest season, he came back to do the work I could not do, such as, driving tractors or doing heavy work. I know more things about farming than him.”*

A previous migrant couple, who just came back to the village in 2011, confirmed this from another perspective,

*“We do not know how to farm, you know, in the past years, and we have not had anything to do with farming. We left the village to work elsewhere when we decided not to study anymore. We do not have any experience in farming. Admittedly, during the peak season, we sometimes came back to help our parents. However, my father often criticized us because of the stupid mistakes we made.”*

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<sup>8</sup> There are many farming tips accumulated by the peasants themselves in the past farming years, which cannot easily be found out from text books. For instance, some respondents indicated, *“Three hours before raining, you should not apply the pesticides as it does not work.”*; *“If you want to weed by manual labour, not herbicides, you should do it around midday; it is usually very hot, then the grass will die completely.”*

Generally, whoever is doing the main farming work in the households can do better farming than the other people in the households. In addition in the interviews there are also some female peasants who stress how they are better at farming than the men.

*“Women are more careful than men. Female peasants even tend to grow crops on the edge of the farm land; male peasants do not always do this. Men are careless. If you make comparisons from this viewpoint, maybe our farming style can have a higher output. Why can't we farm better than men?”*

### **5.3 The role of agricultural production in the households**

Action and thinking are mutually influential. One supportive case is the regression result of Figure 5.1 that women who like farming tend to confirm they do better farming work than men. This part will continue to focus on women's ideological thinking about agricultural production. Female peasants' judgements on farming work can influence their practice in farming and vice versa. Precisely, this part will expand the discussion by analysing the following three questions: “What is the role of agricultural production in the households in female peasants' opinion?”, “Do female peasants like farming?” and “Will female peasants abandon farming when they have another livelihood strategy?”

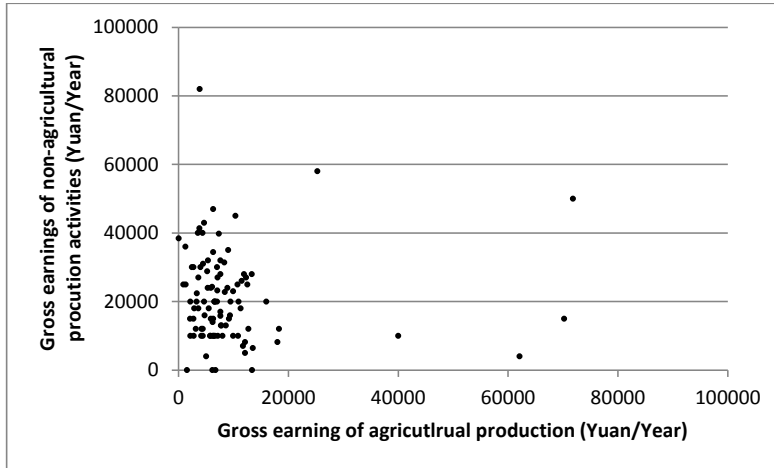
As many studies showed, the economic contribution of migrant jobs is bigger than farming (e.g., Osella and Osella, 2000; Valentine et al., 2009). The higher income from migration work implies that agricultural production is not the main economic source for most households. This is the reality in Yang Village as well. Earnings from an extra off-farm job (mainly done by the husbands) is the main economic source for most households. Agricultural production contributes comparatively less to the households' earnings. As female peasants said,

*“The net yearly income from farming is equal to the income of two or three months' working as a migrant.”*

*“Farming cannot make the family become rich; it can only keep the family members alive. If we want to have more money for our children's education, marriage, or more savings, we should migrate to work and earn some additional money beyond farming.”*

Results in Figure 5.2 support the argument – the earnings from non-agricultural production activity is the main household economic source - in general. In Figure 5.2, X-axis stands for the gross earnings from agricultural production and Y-axis stands for the gross earnings from extra-job beyond farming. The gross earnings of agricultural production include some families' market-oriented poultry raising activity. Most of the higher values in gross earnings of agricultural production stand for the market-oriented poultry raising activity and nearly all of these cases are from the households in which wife and husband are farming together. For the households in which agricultural production is mainly limited to crop farming, the net earnings of farming is equal to half of the gross earnings in general.

Moreover, the family labour input cost is not taken into account. As to the gross earnings from extra-jobs beyond farming, it includes the earnings from the wife's temporary jobs around the village locality but it is mainly earned by the husband's migrant job. The husband's costs in the work place vary from 200 Yuan to 1,500 Yuan per month and the mode, median and mean values of the costs of the migrant husbands living away are all around 500 Yuan per month. Relatively, these expenses take one fourth or one fifth of the gross earnings. The net earnings from extra-job beyond farming is absolutely more than the net earnings from crop farming.



**Figure 5.2: Household economic sources situation of 100 respondents**

Results in Figure 5.2 support that earnings from an extra-job, mainly the husband's migrant job, is the main economic source in the households. However, this does not imply that the earnings from agriculture is not important to the households. Instead, the relation between agricultural production and non-agricultural production is complementary. In most households, agricultural production and non-agricultural production activities are both needed. The man and woman are sustaining the households equally. Figure 5.3<sup>9</sup> helps give us a clearer idea about the separate yearly earnings of the wife and husband in the households. From the figures in Figure 5.3, it is true that in 92 households the wife's earnings is less than the husband's earnings. However, this is the situation without calculating the contribution of all kinds of household chores done by the wife, such as cooking, washing and caring work for children and elderly people. It is impossible to calculate the value of all these tasks within the households in money, nor is it the point of

<sup>9</sup> For the left-behind women households, being that these women are doing the agricultural production work mainly by themselves, the following computing formulas are used: wife's earnings = crop farming earnings + poultry raising earnings + extra-job earnings; husband's earnings = migrant job's earnings. As to the households for women in the control group, due to the wife and the husband are doing crop farming together, some husbands have migrant earnings and some wives have extra-job earnings beyond farming, then, the computing formulas for them are: wife's earnings = 50% of the crop farming earnings + 50% of the poultry raising earnings + extra-job earnings beyond farming; husband's earnings = 50% of the crop farming earnings + 50% of the poultry raising earnings + migrant job earnings.

this chapter. The point here is that the roles of the wife and the husband are complementary and agricultural production and non-agricultural production activity are complementary as well. In addition, it is necessary to point out that there are 8 women in the 100 respondents that have higher earnings than their husbands. 2 women are from sub-group 1, they both have extra-job beyond farming (making rubber ball and working in the watermelon yard in the village). The other 6 women are from sub-group 2. 3 women are running village shops, 1 is working in the watermelon yard, 1 is sewing accessories to semi-finished clothes and the last woman is a teacher. Generally, having an extra-job beyond farming contribute to the economic status of the woman within the household.

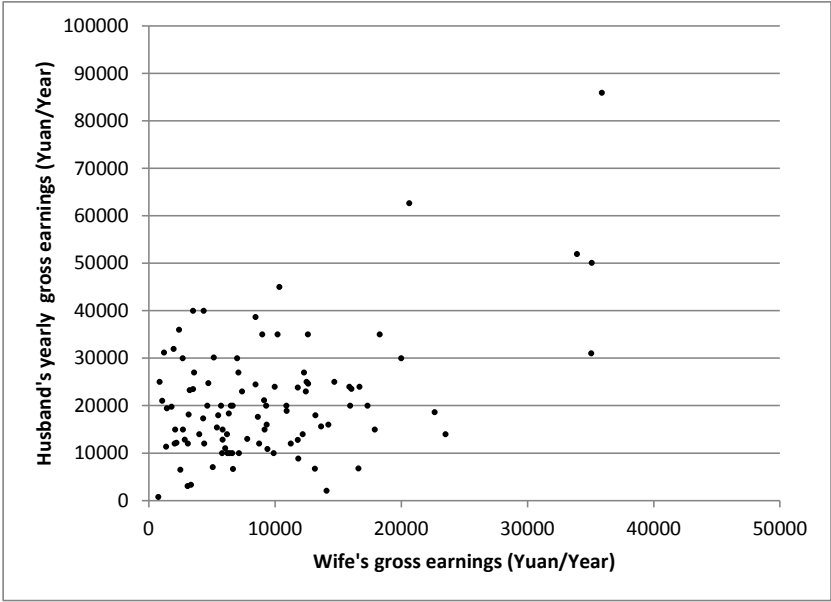


Figure 5.3: Earnings of the husband and wife in 100 households

Agricultural production is essential to the households and women give a substantial contribution to the households as well. Women’s work in farming provides food and/or money to the household members, a refuge for the uncertainty of the migrant jobs of the husbands, a guarantee to avoid being a burden for the children when one gets old. Women’s earnings from agricultural production and/or extra-job beyond farming cover the expenditure of the households and allow the husbands’ earnings to be saved for other big affairs in the households. Without women’s work and earnings, the earnings of the husbands cannot be saved and the husbands cannot work away from home without worries<sup>10</sup>. The wife and husband are making a living together and each of them plays an important role for the households. However, when moving from actual practice to the value-loaded perception of this practice, it turns out that 65% of the women confirm that farming only plays a supplementary role in the households (Table 5.7). They tend to underestimate their own

<sup>10</sup> This is discussed in depth in section 6.3 of chapter 6.



contribution to the households. Furthermore, there is no difference between the left-behind women households and the households where women are doing the farming together with the husband.

**Table 5.7: The role of farming in the household (%, $X^2(2)= 3.740$ ,  $p=0.154$ )**

	A supplementary role	The same role as other economic activity	A main role	Total
Sub-group 1	72	14	14	100
Sub-group 2	58	12	30	100
Total	65	13	22	100

Theoretically, agricultural production and non-agricultural production jobs function equally for the households. However, in reality, even women themselves think it is different. Women believe men make more contribution to the households because men earn more money than women. They also believe men's work is more important than their own work at home. It is ridiculous to say the role of women is unimportant if they just do all the work within the household. Absolutely not! The couple makes a living together! The problem is that the women do not rate their work in the households as important it should be. They still think they are doing less important things in the households. This is the gender issue in their ideology. Even if the migration of the husbands provide, theoretically speaking, space for women to get a more equal gender relation with men, in practice it still seems that women continuously follow the traditional gender norms and that they consolidate gender inequality through the practices and normative frameworks<sup>11</sup>.

Anyway, changes about farming's role at the practical and symbolic level seem a threat for agricultural production from a long-term perspective. The relatively bigger contribution of the earnings from migrant jobs might trigger a new problem for farming. The male labour forces, especially the young rural residents, do not want to farm anymore. They do not like farming and some even want to stop farming. The investigation in Yang Village also shows this statement to apply. 31% of female peasants dislike farming (Table 5.8) and 32% of female peasants think they can stop farming if they have other livelihood strategies beyond farming (Table 5.9).

**Table 5.8: Whether women like farming (%, $X^2(3)= 14.363$ ,  $p=0.002$ )**

	Like	Neutral	Dislike	Total
Sub-group 1	18	36	46	100
Sub-group 2	44	40	16	100
Total	31	38	31	100

**Table 5.9: Women's opinion on abandon farming (%, $X^2(1)= 0.735$ ,  $p=0.391$ )**

	We cannot abandon it, it is a kind of guarantee	We can abandon it if we have enough money or other job opportunity	Total
Sub-group 1	64	36	100
Sub-group 2	72	28	100
Total	68	32	100

<sup>11</sup> Gender relations between husband and wife are further discussed in Chapter 6.

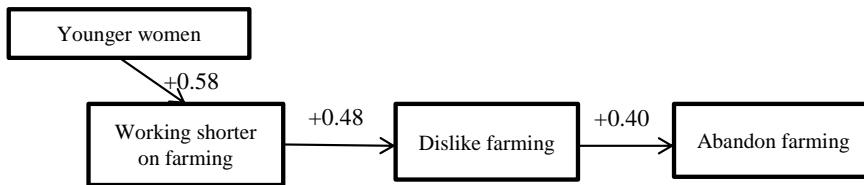
It is interesting to see the fluctuations of the percentages in Tables 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 in combination and the results in the three tables are interrelated to some extent. Especially, there is a significantly different judgement between the two sub-groups in their opinion on 'whether they like farming'. Women who are doing farming work mainly by themselves tend to dislike farming (18% resp. 44%, Table 5.8), and they show more negative attitude to the role of farming in the family (14% resp. 30% women in sub-group 1, Table 5.6), and they indicate more often than others that they would abandon farming if they had other livelihood opportunities (36% resp. 28%, Table 5.9). There is a significant correlation between women undertaking most of farming work in the households at the practice level and whether they dislike farming at the symbolic level. The chi-square value is 14.363 and it is significant at the 0.01 level (Table 5.8). Left-behind women do more farming work at home and they make more contribution to farming, however, they dislike it. Their satisfaction about their work is low and it seems farming is a drudgery for them. Why is the left-behind women's satisfaction in their work low? What are the factors that condition the differences of the two sub-groups of women in their opinion on agricultural production? A possible explanation for this is: For those women who are doing the farming work mainly by themselves, when there are difficulties in farming, they have to face the problems alone and deal with the problems by themselves. However, for the comparative group of women, doing the farming work together with the husband, the husband can deal with the problems for them or at least they can deal with the problems together. So, left-behind female peasants tend to dislike farming when compared to the comparative group of female peasants. Furthermore, another possible explanation for left-behind female peasants' low satisfaction in their work in farming might be: Women's contribution in farming is not valued and recognized properly, even from the women own perspective<sup>12</sup>. More earnings from the husbands' migrant jobs make women feel more depressed and stressed, and the fact that they cannot earn so much money as the men, consolidate women's thinking that they are doing less important work than men within the households.

From the perspective of food security at household and national level, it is positive to see that more women say they cannot stop farming than women who say they would abandon farming if they had enough money or other job opportunities. However, it is important to be aware that over a third of the women (32%, Table 5.8) would abandon farming if they had more money or other job opportunity. It is essential to explore the underlying reasons for this attitude, because it is a potential risk for the agricultural production in China from a long-term perspective.

The multiple regression analyses in two sub-groups and the whole group of female peasants show that there is a strong correlation between female peasants' attitude in disliking farming and abandoning farming in general. For different sub-groups of women, there are differentiated factors that condition their willingness to continue farming.

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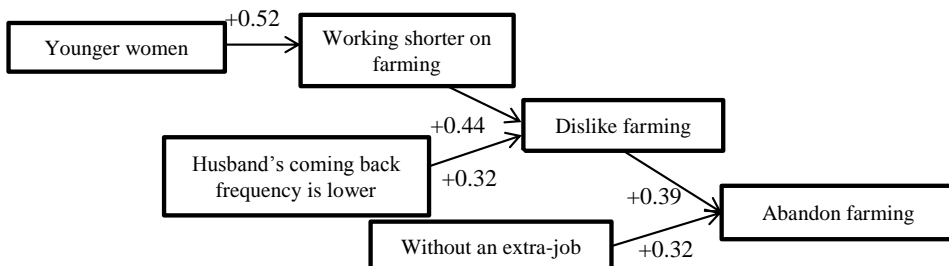
<sup>12</sup> Female peasants' views on 'contribution to farming' and the factors that condition it are illustrated in section 6.5 in Chapter 6.



**Figure 5.4: Path diagram of 100 women's opinion on 'abandon farming' ( $R^2=0.36$ )**

For the whole group of women, data in Figure 5.4<sup>13</sup> illustrate that the younger female peasants tend to dislike farming and tend to abandon farming. The path diagram can be read from the other way around as well, that is, older female peasants tend to like farming and tend to stick to farming. This is the reality in rural China. The welfare system for elderly people is not perfect in rural China. Most elderly people do not have endowment insurance like other citizens. When their physical condition permits, elderly peasants will do the farming to support themselves. Farming is a main economic source for them when they are old. Before, the land was the pillar of the family which provided foods and some additional money to the whole family. Of course, there was no chance, or not so many chances, to migrate to earn money at that time. In general, land/farming meant life. Now, compared to the economic contribution of other activities, land loses its primary position in the household. Older people understand this change deeply. Mr. Li (aged 52) said,

*"The young generation does not have strong feeling for the land like we do. It seems they do not care about land and farming. Can you imagine? In 1990, I had the chance to take the entrance exam of a bachelor study. All teachers believed I could pass the exam. But you know what, June is the harvest time. I needed to harvest for the whole family, so I did not sit the exam. I have not regretted that until now, because I knew that all family members (five people, Li, Li's wife, two daughters and one son) would die if I did not harvest at that time... For my parents, land was even more important than it is for us. The point of producing food or doing farming work used to be more obvious than it is today. They suffered from the famine period and they believe there would be no disaster if they could get produce from land, even though they did not have any money. You know, money is nothing, if there is no food, money is useless."*



**Figure 5.5: Path diagram of the opinion of women in sub-group 1 on 'abandon farming' ( $R^2=0.30$ )**

<sup>13</sup> The path diagram only shows significant correlations. The variables could be relevant but not significant in the analyses include: educational attainment, place of origin, migrant work experience, husband's working place, contact frequency with the migrant husband, household economic situation.

For the left-behind women, if the women do not have an extra-job beyond farming, they tend to abandon farming. The partial regression coefficient is +0.32 (Figure 5.5). However, the path-diagram can also be read from the other way around. That is, having an extra-job beyond farming helps women continue farming. As mentioned in chapter 4, extra-job for female peasants in Yang Village means those relatively temporary jobs inside or around the village locality, such as working in the watermelon yard, village wood processing factories or working at home to make rubber balls or toys. Earnings from these extra-jobs can cover almost all the daily expenditure, which mainly includes food costs, water, electricity and gas charges, as well as pocket money for (grand)child(ren).

Moreover, the years of working in farming and husband’s coming back frequency are factors affecting women’s opinion on whether they like farming. The results indicate: Female peasants who have worked in farming for only a short period tend to dislike farming and the partial regression coefficient is +0.44. If the husbands do not come back often, left-behind women tend to dislike farming and the partial regression coefficient is +0.32. The higher physical and emotional burden might be the underlying reasons. Husbands who come home frequently can help the women with heavy tasks in agricultural production and they can also help to relieve women’s negative emotions. In addition, the years of working in farming is significantly related to the age of the respondents, and the partial regression coefficient is +0.52.

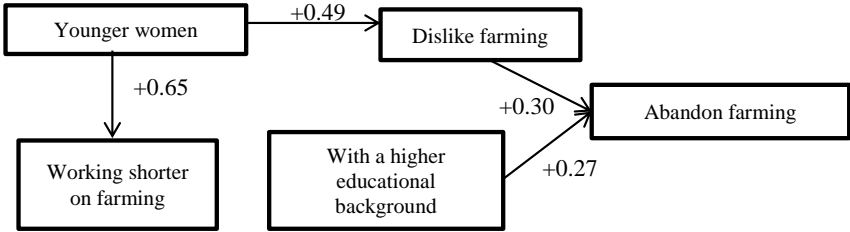


Figure 5.6: Path diagram of the opinion of women in sub-group 2 ‘abandon farming’ (R<sup>2</sup>=0.19)

As to the control group of women, there is no direct significant correlation between their years of farming and whether they like farming. Data in Figure 5.6 show vividly that younger women who are doing the agricultural production work, tend to dislike farming (the partial regression coefficient is +0.49) and then tend to abandon farming (the partial regression coefficient is +0.30). Moreover, those female peasants with a higher educational background in the control group tend to abandon farming too. The partial regression coefficient is +0.27. This is also a kind of reality in rural China, people with higher educational background do not want to go back to rural areas nor do they want to do the farming.

From the three path diagrams, at least one recommendation can be deduced for the future of farming and rural development in villages similar to Yang Village in China. Having an extra-job beyond farming, such as making rubber balls or toys at home, working in the watermelon yards or village wood processing factories, is neatly associated with the willingness of left-behind women to continue agricultural production. This viewpoint is consistent with the

argument developed by van der Ploeg and Ye (2002). So, decentralized industries in the rural areas should be helpful for stimulating female peasants' willingness to keep farming. In fact, decentralized industries not only can offer more rural women the extra-job opportunities beyond farming, but also it can attract the male labour force to return home to work. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that the local government should pay careful attention to the characteristic of the factories and the factories should not generate as much pollution as they are currently doing. A long and comprehensive perspective should be taken into account.

Furthermore, the regression results from the three path diagrams also show that younger female peasants do not want to do the farming or continue farming when they have other livelihood opportunities, and the last path diagram indicates that the women with higher educational background also tend to abandon farming. How to avoid these negative tendencies for agricultural production and rural development? How to stimulate young and educated people to stay in rural areas and continue farming work? This needs more consideration at the policy making level, not only for the food security issue, but for the rural development from a long-term perspective.

#### 5.4 Difficulties and expectations in agricultural production

Difficulties and expectations in doing the farming can impact agricultural production. This part will show the difficulties and expectations of female peasants in doing the farming and present some recommendations from the policy making perspective. Generally, female peasants' difficulties and expectations in farming consider the following three aspects: 1) labour shortage in the busy season; 2) lack of farming resources sometimes (e.g., water, credit and training); 3) land use conflict between farming and non-farming activity.

##### 1) *Labour shortage in the busy season*

60% of female peasants argue there are no difficulties within agricultural production and 36% of female peasants point out that labour shortage is the most difficult thing in farming (Table 5.10). There is no difference between the two sub-groups of women. Labour shortage mainly happens in the busy season and most women's husbands come back to help them. If the husbands cannot come back to the village to do the harvest and the land preparation work (mainly refers to the ploughing land work done by using tractors), the women usually hire people to do it.

**Table 5.10: The most difficult thing in agricultural production (%),  $X^2(3)=1.6000, p=0.659$**

	Purchasing production materials	Labour shortage	Other	No difficulties	Total
Sub-group 1	2	30	2	66	100
Sub-group 2	2	42	2	54	100
Total	2	36	2	60	100

For some women, labour shortage in agricultural production also occurs in the non-busy season, especially when they need to take care of the small child(ren). There is a conflict between doing the farming work and caring for small children. Children over five years old are sent to kindergarten and the (grand)parents do not need to worry when they need to do the

farming work. However, when the children are younger than five years old, there always needs to be somebody around to take care of them. If there is nobody to take care of the children when the woman needs to do the farming work, such as applying pesticides, the woman must take the children to the field. It is not convenient and sometimes it involves taking risks. Like biographical recorded respondent Li (who has a son studying in the high school and a daughter studying in the kindergarten) recalled,

*“It was hard when she (the daughter) was young. My parents-in-law are not in good physical condition and they could not help me take care of my daughter. That summer in 2009, I had to go to the fields to apply pesticides to the rice crops. There was nobody to take care of her, so I took her with me. I put her on the edge of the paddy field and told her to stay there until I had finished the work. After nearly half an hour, I suddenly found she had fallen asleep on the edge of the paddy field. I was so scared, you know? If she had fallen into the water and drowned, I would have regretted it for the rest of my life... Some disasters like this have happened in this village before. I know one boy, who was being cared for by his grandmother, died because he ate the pesticides in the field. The grandmother was spreading pesticides and she did not notice.”*

Besides, labour shortage in the busy season, there is another underlying issue, that women cannot use the farming machines. Traditionally, managing farming machinery was the territory of men’s work. My empirical research finds that there is no woman who can drive the tractor to plough the land and transport the crops from field to home in Yang Village. If the women could use the farming machines like the men, it would definitely alleviate their difficulties in farming. The farming machine being ‘so big and heavy’ is the main reason for the fear of female peasants in managing it. So, making farming work easier for female farmers is becoming essential. Farming machinery is designed for a male body size and shape, thus too large and relatively heavy for women. Many respondents mentioned the fact they cannot drive tractors during the busy season as being their biggest barrier and problem in doing the farming. This is also a main reason for the male labour force coming back during the busy season. That is not to say that husbands should not come back, but one of the effects is that female farmers tend to deny their own contribution to the farming work in the family because of their husband’s help in the busy season<sup>14</sup>. If there would be machinery that could be managed easily by women, it would also contribute to gender equality and women’s well-being. A similar example is shown by the electrical bicycle case in the research site. Nearly no woman in Yang Village can drive a motor car and they used bicycles in previous years. However, since the introduction and usage of electrical bicycles in around 2005, women have become more mobile and now they can go to the nearby town to buy things or visit relatives and friends. This has expanded their geographical territory and social networks. It stimulates the gender equality between men and women in the rural areas to some extent.

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<sup>14</sup> This argument is further elaborated in Table 6.16 in Chapter 6.

## 2) Lack of farming resources sometimes

Beyond seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, few female peasants mentioned farming resources, such as water, credit, subsidy and insurance. The investigation shows that most female peasants (70%, Table 5.11) can get water to irrigate the farm land when they need to. For the rest 28% of female peasants, the relatively high geographical location of their farm land or the relatively far away distance from the village hydropower station are the main reasons for the lack of water resource when needed. There is no difference between the two sub-groups of women and there is no ‘discrimination’ that follows husbands’ migration. However, many female peasants state that privatization of the hydropower station ownership is a problem. Before 2008, the two hydropower stations in Yang Village were the village’s public property. However, the village committee sold them to two villagers to manage. Since then, villagers have to pay 20 Yuan every time they need to irrigate the farm land. In most peasants’ opinion, this brings them another economic burden in the agricultural production.

**Table 5.11: Whether women can easily get farming resources when they need in farming(%)**

		Uneasy	Have no idea	Easy	No need	Other	Total
<b>Water resource</b> ( $\chi^2(2)= 2.143, p=0.343$ )	Sub-group1	30	0	70	0	0	100
	Sub-group 2	26	4	70	0	0	100
	<b>Total</b>	28	2	70	0	0	100
<b>Credit</b> ( $\chi^2(4)= 5.901, p=0.207$ )	Sub-group 1	22	36	12	30	0	100
	Sub-group 2	24	44	18	12	2	100
	<b>Total</b>	23	40	15	21	1	100

Credit is another kind of farming resource. In Yang Village, nobody had ever got credit from the local banks for crop farming. 21% of female peasants (Table 5.11) assume there is no need to apply for credit for crop farming. Some women said,

*“Farming inputs are divided into small pieces and it does not cost so much every time. For instance, applying pesticides to rice, it costs around 20 Yuan per mu every time. There is no need to apply for credit for farming... There is also no opportunity to expand the farming scale. There is not so much available farm land.”*

For the other 23% of female peasants, they know it is not easy to get credit from bank, not only for farming needs, but for nearly everything. Some female peasants stated like this,

*“It is not easy to get credit. Besides submitting the certificate of your house ownership, you need to find another three people to guarantee your application, mortgaging their houses as well. It means the three people would have to pay the money back should I not be able to return it on time. So it is difficult to find guarantors... It is hard to get credit.”*

Besides, a usual practice in Yang Village reduces the need to apply for credit from the bank. That is, peasants can get the agricultural production materials without paying directly and they can pay back after selling the produce during the harvest season. The sellers and the peasants know each other well and they can make the deal without any kind of contract when

the peasants do not have cash in hand. Trust is the key factor in the deal. As indicated by some female peasants,

*“If you do not have cash in hand, you can get the fertilizer or pesticides without paying it straightaway. The seller will record the deals and they will come to collect the money during the harvest season. They know you will have money when you sell the produce... There is no need to sign any kind of contract. We know each other. Nobody will cheat or renege on the deals. Nobody wants to have a bad reputation. If you do not pay the money back after the harvest, nobody will make deals with you next year.”*

As to the views on the farming policies, i.e., farming subsidies policy and farming insurance policy, no female peasant can present clearly the contents of these two policies (Table 5.12) and only some know how much they got or paid relating to the subsidies or insurance. Actually, all the peasants in Yang Village purchased the farming insurance, but 58% of women in the control group assumed they did not purchase it (Table 5.13). Every year, peasants pay 2 Yuan per *mu* to insure the farm land, in case of natural disasters to agricultural production, such as freezing and floods. How much compensation payments peasant can get depends on the degree of the disaster. In Yang Village in 2011, there was a freezing rain in the summer which destroyed some wheat crops and peasant got around 100 Yuan per *mu*.

**Table 5.12: Whether women know clearly about the farming subsidies policy and the farming insurance policy (%)**

		Have no idea	Only know got/paid how much money	Total
Farming subsidies ( $X^2(1)=0.000, p=1.000$ )	Sub-group 1	56	44	100
	Sub-group 2	56	44	100
	Total	56	44	100
Farming insurance ( $X^2(1)=0.000, p=1.000$ )	Sub-group 1	86	14	100
	Sub-group 2	86	14	100
	Total	86	14	100

**Table 5.13: Whether women have purchased the farming insurance (%.,  $X^2(2)=55.200, p=0.000$ )**

	No	Have no idea	Yes	Total
Sub-group 1	0	52	48	100
Sub-group 2	58	0	42	100
Total	29	26	45	100

The national government give farming subsidies to peasants as well. There are subsidies for growing good seeds, purchasing farming machine and so on, however, few peasants know this clearly. Many women stated the following when referring to farming subsidies issues,

*“I do not know clearly how it works; I just know I can get some money every year. Every household has a bank deposit booklet to record the subsidies they get from the local banks that cooperate with the governments. You can withdraw the subsidies with the deposit booklet anytime.”*

As to the reasons for ‘carelessness’ about the subsidies, female peasants presented two viewpoints: First, farming subsidies is not a lot of money every year. Usually, it is around 100 Yuan per *mu* per year. Second, they do not know clearly about the exact contents and the



mechanism of related information communication system does not function well in the research site. For most peasants, “*Having some additional money is better than nothing. How much peasants get in subsidies depends on how much the government gives.*”

### **3) Land use conflict between farming and non-farming activity**

Relatively speaking, land is the most important farming resource in agricultural production. If there is no farm land, there is no yield. It is true that where there have been land enclosures, there has also been rural resistance, revolts and even revolutions (Borras Jr and Ross, 2007). In Yang Village, land use conflicts also exist and the conflicts are shown between crop farming and non-crop-farming conflicts (e.g., construct commercial residential buildings or factory buildings). In the past three fieldwork years, I witnessed several land use conflicts between farming and non-farming activity in Yang Village. As discussed in section 4.1.1, the local government encouraged the local villagers to rent out more and more land to watermelon/flower yards and/or to sell more and more land to merchants to build commercial residential buildings or industry buildings. These industrialization and modernization trends can be found in many others places in rural China.

Facing the decreases in farming land, peasants have little power to prevent the process. For those households who can get money from migrant jobs or other activities, it is good to sub-rent out the land or sell the land. Some women judge it positively,

*“It is good to sub-rent the farm land to the bosses. They can give us 1,000 Yuan per mu per year, which is almost equal to the earnings we can get from growing crops. Moreover, we do not need to invest any time and money in it. We can also get some money by doing some extra-jobs, such as making toys at home.”*

However, for those households who cannot get enough money from other sources or those households who are losing farming land year by year or those households who only have elderly people, they see renting out land and selling land negatively. Biographical recorded respondent Zhang is a typical case. Before 2010, there was a total of 4.4 *mu* farm land in Zhang’s family. In 2010, the village committee ‘encouraged’<sup>15</sup> her family to sell 0.9 *mu* to a businessman to build a commercial residence building and she got 14,000 Yuan in compensation. In 2011, the village committee ‘encouraged’ her to rent out 2 *mu* of farm land to a villager to grow watermelon and vegetables and she got 1,100 Yuan every year for the 2 *mu* farm land. The contract of sub-renting functions for 5 years. In 2012, Zhang sold another 1 *mu* of farm land to another businessman to build a commercial residence building. Now, Zhang’s family has only got 0.5 *mu* of farm land left. She is really worried about the continuous diminishing of farming land. She said,

*“Now, there is almost no farm land in my family. Is it a safe situation? I am 51 years old and my husband is 54 years old. How many years can he work away from home to earn money? What can we do when he cannot migrate anymore?”*

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Encouraged’ is equal to ‘forced’ to some extent. It is discussed carefully in the part of 6.2.3 in Chapter 6.

*You know, we are getting older and older, the bosses dislike employing elderly people. They think we are useless. We also do not want to rely on our sons if we can farm... Yes, the rent money is similar to the earnings from growing crops, but we do not have our own food now, the feeling is different... I do not want anybody to take up my land anymore. However, there is no way to avoid it if the government wants to use the land... We should keep some land for farming. It is a kind of guarantee.”*

How much is left is more essential than how much is taken away. When more and more land is taken away, more and more peasants will fear for their livelihood in the future like Zhang. Peasant farming is an effective way to face a crisis (e.g., Rosset, 2011). How to protect peasants' land use rights and how to balance the development farming and other economic activities are becoming central to rural development in China.

## 5.5 Conclusion

“The sharp rise in food prices in 2008 and the financial crisis gave rise to an unprecedented increase in hunger, resulting in renewed calls for investment in agriculture... It is very important, whether we are a civil society, donors or academics, to acknowledge that the voices of small holder farmers are the most important when talking about feeding the world in 2050. It is incredible how the voices of poor farmers are left out. Instead of designing plans to feed the world in Geneva, Brussels, Washington DC or Seattle (in case of the Gates Foundation), the solutions have to come from farmers' groups themselves. The questions and solutions are there!” (Vermeulen, 2010). This chapter has discussed three main questions related to agricultural production from the perspective of female peasants: First, whether women's increased participation in farming lead to the regression of agricultural production; Second, female peasants' views on the role of agricultural production and the factors that affect their willingness to continue farming; Third, the difficulties and expectations female peasants facing in agricultural production.

To sum up, female peasants do not agree with the argument that their way of farming represents a regression of agricultural production. This viewpoint is consistent with de Brauw et al. (2012) and in this research it can be supported with information about farming areas, cropping scheme, farming inputs and yields. Firstly, there has been no change in farming areas and cropping scheme initiated by female peasants due to the migration of the husbands. Secondly, according to the women, there is no difference in the types and quantity of agricultural production materials used in farming, such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides. Thirdly, there appears to be no difference in agricultural production outputs and gross earnings between the women in the two sub-groups. Moreover, at the symbolic level, some women assume they can do the farming work as well as men can and some women even say they are better farmers than their husbands. In their view, being better farmers depends on how long they have been farming and the accumulation of farming experience. Most of the migrant husbands have worked far away from home for more than ten years, so they do not have much experience in agricultural production.

Although agricultural production and non-agricultural production activities in the households are complementary to each other and they both make contributions to the livelihoods, women do not rate their work and their contribution as important as they should in practice. In women's opinion, the economic contribution of agricultural production is perceived as being less important compared to the migrant earnings. Some female peasants indicate that they would abandon farming if they had other job opportunities. This is a threat not only to the food security of the family, but also to the national food security. Further multiple regression analyses find different trajectories to maintain the willingness of female peasants to continue farming. In general, female peasants tend to continue farming when they like farming and older female peasants like farming more than younger female peasants. When female peasants like farming, they also tend to confirm they can do better farming than men. If the husband comes back frequently, this helps women to like farming. In addition, for left-behind women, having an extra non-agricultural part-time job strongly contributes to their willingness to continue farming. Hence, decentralized rural industries can benefit the farmers' food security and the national food security.

Labour shortage, especially in the busy season, presents the biggest difficulty for female peasants in doing the farming. Not being able to use farming machinery designed for the male labour force is a barrier for female peasants in the peak season. Designing and producing women friendly farming machinery might solve their difficulty in farming and it could also contribute to the gender equality to some extent. Additionally, improving the information communication mechanism of farming subsidies and farming insurance policies for female peasants could also consolidate their recognition of their role in agricultural production and benefit food production in a long-term perspective. Moreover, how to balance the land use conflict between agricultural production and other economic activities needs more consideration, not only by scholars, but also by local governments.



## Chapter 6 The Impact of Agricultural Feminization on Gender Relations

Theoretically, the term ‘feminization’ refers to the increased participation and authority of women in certain domains. ‘Agricultural feminization’ mainly refers to the phenomenon that women are increasingly doing the largest proportion of farm work within the farming household, as well as playing an increasing role in decision-making about farm management. The former is called labour feminization and the latter is called managerial feminization. As mentioned in the literature review section, different scholars have different understandings of agricultural feminization. That is, some stress the increasing workload women are experiencing in agricultural production; others focus especially on the decision-making power of women in agricultural production. Due to different understanding of agricultural feminization, different conclusions are drawn about whether there is agricultural feminization even within one country, like China. Whether or not there is agricultural feminization in rural China depends on the view of the social scientists, i.e., on the concepts he or she uses. It depends on specific tasks in the agricultural production they are doing and related decisions and it also depends on the degree of doing and deciding in different tasks. Generally, the existing research have focused mainly on the issue of labour feminization in China (e.g., Gao, 1994; Kang, 2008; Sun and Zhou, 2008), and the managerial or the decision-making parts have been relatively under exposed (there are few exceptions, e.g., the research of Song and Vernooy (2010)), especially from the perspective of the women who are experiencing the phenomenon. Be it as it may, it is assumed that feminization is having an impact on gender relations. Whether this is the case is assessed in this chapter.

### 6.1 Introduction

Traditionally, agricultural production was primarily considered as men’s work and housework as women’s work. Women also did agricultural field work, but their work was supplementary and they were not the main labour force in agriculture. Since the 1980s, with the urbanization and modernization process in China, rural dwellers have had more opportunities to work elsewhere due to the relaxation of the household registration system (*hukou*<sup>1</sup>, 户口). With the migration and off-farm jobs of men, women started to do the principal work in agriculture production, which was a big change. This change is amply described in other studies conducted in different regions in China (Chang et al., 2011; Dénurger et al., 2010; Gao, 1994; Mu and de Walle, 2011; Song et al., 2009b), though variations between region and different groups of women occur.

Husband’s migration not only brings an extra economic source to the family but it also provides chances and spaces for the stay-behind women and allows them to decide things within the households and on the farm, which might influence the gender relations between husband and wife (e.g., Hugo, 2000; Radel et al., 2012). Generally, there are two views about

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<sup>1</sup> *Hukou* system has fostered a deep division between the city and the countryside (e.g., Chan and Zhang, 1999; Cheng and Selden, 1994; Liu, 2005; Wu and Treiman, 2004), which enforces state control over the residence and mobility of the Chinese population. For some related articles about the components and changes of this system, please see, e.g., Chan and Buckingham (2008) and Wang (2004).

the impact of a husband's migration on gender relations - it either improves or deteriorates gender equality. For instance, Hugo (2000:5) argues, "migration ...can function as an external change agent, which can set off, facilitate, or catalyse the empowerment process". Fu (2003) stresses that women obtain more power in decision-making on agricultural production, which gives them more confidence, enforces their status and increases their influential power in village public affairs. However, other scholars assume that women's enlarged participation in agricultural production results in a lowering of their family status (Li et al., 2000; Zhang, 2006), because the relative income gap between them and their husbands is larger than before. It also reduces women's educational opportunities and expectations because the burden they suffer from is heavier than before (Yuan, 2006; Zhang, 1999; Zhu, 2001) and it increases the dependence on men (Gao, 1994; Li et al., 2000; Wang, 1999), which enforces the gender inequality (Deng, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009).

Gender is "a socially created concept which attributes differing social roles and identities to men and women...The prevailing division of labour between the sexes has led to men and women assuming unequal positions in terms of power, prestige and wealth (Giddens, 2006:467)." Synthesizing the literature on gender definition and understanding, I understand gender as unequal rights and status for men and women, which implies women's inferior rights and positions in their livelihoods and it is influenced by cultural norms. Generally, gender operates both at the practical/material level and the ideological/symbolic level. At the material level, gender relations are about the reality of how men and women act in a particular context. The justifications of these gender relations belong to the symbolic level of gender relations. When it comes to farming households, gender relations might be in the labour division and decision-making process of agricultural production, household affairs and more general village public affairs. These are located at the material level and it will be discussed first in the following part of this chapter. Then, as to the ideological level, the key questions are: how people understand the existing labour division and decision-making in farming, household affairs and village public affairs, and what are the justifications. These will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

With the background of male labour force migration, this chapter aims to explore the changes in gender relations, to explore women's awareness of gender equality between them and their husbands in the households, and furthermore, to find out the factors that condition women's awareness in pursuing gender equality from a long-term perspective. The following four main questions guide the analyses in this chapter: First, after the migration of the husbands, how is the decision-making of women in agricultural production evolving when they increase their workload? Second, do the changes in decision-making power in agricultural production lead to more general changes in decision-making power in household affairs? Third, does it lead to the changes in women's role in village affairs? Fourth, what are the factors that condition women's awareness/justifications in gender equality? The following indicators are used to reflect agricultural feminization's impact on gender relations:

- 1) Agricultural feminization's impact on gender relations in agricultural production:  
Based on the description of labour division in agricultural production in the household,

women's decision-making power changes in agricultural production will be discussed and analysed. 'Who does what' and 'who decides what' in agricultural production are the main questions.

- 2) Agricultural feminization's impact on gender relations in household affairs: Do changes in the decision-making power in agricultural production lead to the changes in decision-making in household affairs? To be precise, who has the decision-making power on daily expenditure? Who has the decision-making rights on big affairs, such as children's education or marriage? Who is keeping the money in the household? Are there differences in using their own income and their husband's income?
- 3) Agricultural feminization's impact on gender relations in village public affairs: Traditionally, men attended to the village public affairs. Do possible changes in decision-making power in agricultural production and the absence of men lead to changes in decision-making power in village public affairs? Who attends and decides to attend the village cadres' election and village meeting? Who attends and decides to attend the maintaining social relations activity? Do female peasants have more decision-making after becoming the main agricultural production labour force in the households?
- 4) Awareness/Justifications in gender relations and potential factors affecting the awareness of gender equality in agricultural production and household affairs: As to the justifications of gender relations in agricultural production, I use 'what is your opinion on a husband not working on the farm but deciding everything in farming' and 'who makes more contribution to farming in your opinion' to explore. And the question 'who makes more contribution to family' in their opinion is used to explore the justifications of women's awareness in household affairs. Then, the factors that condition certain awareness are analysed by using multivariate regression analysis.

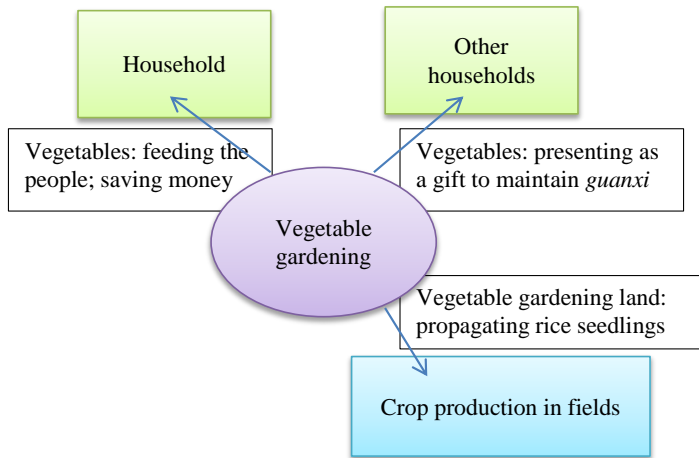
## **6.2 Gender relations in agricultural production**

Agricultural production in this research includes vegetable gardening, animal breeding activity and crop farming (i.e., rice and wheat production in rotation). In this section, the gender relations between husband and wife located in the process of production in these three aspects will be discussed one by one.

### **6.2.1 Vegetable gardening**

Traditionally, vegetable gardening was considered 'inside' work, which was the women's task and a part of the housework. There has been no change in the past years according to Yuan's (2010:163-158) comparative research that home garden management is definitely the women's domain. It seems to be a culturally rooted gender division of labour in the household, even in the extension services. Sachs (1996) finds that rural women are focusing on garden produce. My research confirms this: vegetable gardening is women's territory within the households. In Yang Village, 85% of the respondents have a vegetable garden around their houses and women do all the vegetable gardening.

As to the function of vegetable gardening, home gardens played an important role in the collective era. In that era, all land belonged to the commune and was under the management of the collective’s production team. Farming households made their living by cultivating collective land and earning working points. They only got a small plot of home garden land for private use. “Households had different incomes because of differences in home garden management.” (Van Luong and Unger, 1998:64; Wertheim, 1973) At the present time, compared to the migrant jobs and crop production, vegetable gardening does not bring in as much money as it could do in the communist period. Neither do the female peasants think vegetable gardening is a substantial part of the household. They would never mention vegetable gardening as a part of agricultural production if I had not mentioned this issue explicitly. “*It is enough for the household consumption*”, “*We do not need to pay additional money for the vegetable consumption*” and “*There is only a small plot of gardening land*” are the common judgements for vegetable gardening.



**Figure 6.1: Functions of vegetable gardening in the household**

From their statements, it seems vegetable gardening does not play an essential role in the households. However, from the field work, I found out that the vegetable gardening’s important function is self-evident and the women’s role in managing it is neglected and is not recognized. My empirical research finds that vegetable gardening plays some essential roles in the households: feeding the family members and saving on some daily expenditure for the households; providing the rice seedlings for the crop production in fields; functioning as a gift to maintain *guanxi* with relatives or friends of the households. The functions of vegetable gardening are shown in Figure 6.1. Mainly women manage the vegetable gardens and they make the gardening play a substantial function, however, the women’s essential role in this is not recognized.

Firstly, vegetable gardening can save on daily expenditure for the household and feed the household members with safer vegetables. The gardening size varies from 0.1 *mu* to 0.5 *mu* and 86% of the vegetable gardens are less than 0.2 *mu* in Yang Village. It seems to be just a



small plot of land, but almost all the female peasants (98%) think the output of vegetable gardening is sufficient for the family's consumption needs so they do not need to buy vegetables at the market. Women can decide what kind of vegetables they want to grow in the plot and there is no difference between the two sub-groups. Of course, they take their family members' diet preferences into account when deciding on the types of vegetables to grow. To some extent, the climate and geographic condition dictate that there is little difference in vegetables types grown among villagers. The vegetable types include cabbage, pepper, eggplant, carrot, sweat-potato, beans, cucumber, pumpkin, tomato, leek, celery, white gourd and so on. Beyond saving money for the household, vegetable gardening provides family members safer food. Nearly 80% of female peasants (see Table 6.1) state that they do not use chemicals in the vegetable garden, because "*it is for the family members*". The rest (20%) of the respondents say they use less chemicals on the vegetable gardening crops than on the field crops, although sometimes they must spread it to kill the harmful insects. There is no significant difference between the two sub-groups. Female peasants clearly know and manage their own-consumption food differently than the selling-out produce.

**Table 6.1: Whether chemicals are used in vegetable gardening (%),  $X^2(1) = 2.182, p=0.140$**

	Not use	Use	Total
Sub-group 1	71	29	100
Sub-group 2	84	16	100
Total	78	22	100

Secondly, there is flexibility in managing the vegetable garden, especially during the rice seedlings growing season. Vegetable gardening land functions as the propagating ground for rice seedlings. In May every year, peasants need to grow the rice seedlings for the rice production from June to October. They usually use the gardening land and replace the vegetables with growing rice seedlings. "*Growing rice seedlings does not need much land*" and "*facilitating the management of the rice seedlings in a nearby place*" are the main reasons for this. As some female peasants mentioned,

*"It does not take up much land; you only need 0.2 mu to grow rice seedlings if you have 10 mu to farm later... It is more convenient to take care of and manage the seedlings when you grow it nearby your house. You can check the growing condition from time to time and irrigate it when necessary. When big wind or abominable cold weather comes, you can protect it in time."*

In addition, those female peasants who usually have more than 0.2 mu gardening land (14%) will use the surplus land for wheat or rice production as well. This produce is given much care and less pesticide in the process of the management, as it is usually for self-consumption.

Vegetable gardening was initially women's territory. When the rice seedlings are grown in the vegetable garden, women are responsible for them. Especially when the husband has migrated for work, it is women's work. Rice seedlings are basic to the rice production. Propagation of good seedlings is closely connected to the productivity of the rice harvest later in the year. However, from the investigation I found, no women stress their important role in growing rice seedlings and their part in this process is neglected and not recognized.

Thirdly, vegetable gardening is a useful tool in maintaining *guanxi* with relatives and friends, which is associated with its 'low-chemical' feature. There is a significant trend that more commercial residential buildings have emerged and more and more peasants (want/plan to) purchase apartments in the township or in the county town. There are many ways to keep in contact with previous neighbours, villagers, relatives, such as mobile phone calls and visits during the traditional festivals. However, during the investigation, I found out that taking home-grown vegetables as a gift to give friends or relatives, who do not have a vegetable garden in the town or county town, is one of the effective communication ways. Respondent Li said,

*“I did not grow so many vegetables this year, because there is only me at home and I cannot consume so much...Sometimes, my relatives give some produces they have to me and I also give them my own produce...Just a small plot of gardening land is enough for the family... Before, if I had more produce than I could eat, I would give them to my relatives in the towns. You know, they do not have gardening land and I do not use so much pesticide. They know this and like my vegetables.”*

Instead of selling the surplus vegetables on the local markets, female peasants tend to give them away as presents. They seldom sell the surplus produce from their own vegetable gardens. This is mainly related to economic orientation.

*“Nobody wants to sell the surplus vegetables now, you know. When we have the harvest time for one species, it means you find a lot of the same vegetable available and so the price, of course, is very low. Therefore it is not worth going to the local market to sell it. Of course, there are some peasants selling home-grown vegetables. In most cases, they are elderly people or poor people or maybe they do not have anything else to do... It is not worth it; we can earn more money by using the time at home..., making rubber balls or toys or such like.”*

Generally, the women's important role in managing vegetable garden in this way is taken for granted and it is not seen as something of importance.

In addition, generally speaking, the working relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in undertaking the household chores, including gardening, animal breeding activity and housework is close. For instance, Chen (2004) assumes “work activities of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law are not independent of each other, but rather reflect a coordination of activities.” Moreover, he points out education is a determining factor in sharing housework between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. “In a rural household, a more educated daughter-in-law may have a wage job, and the mother-in-law may engage in an agricultural side-line, such as gardening or animal husbandry. Or, it could be that the daughter-in-law does agricultural fieldwork while the mother-in-law stays at home, mainly responsible for domestic side-lines and housework...The mother-in-law is likely to be responsible for childcare, allowing the daughter-in-law to participate in other lucrative work (Chen, 2004).” The studies

conducted by Unger (1998) and Wertheim (1973) even pointed out that the close working relationship between older women and young people in the communist period, ‘the older women worked in the private home garden to generate additional income, while younger people worked in the collective fields’. However, there is no close relation between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law in vegetable gardening in the specific case of Yang Village and *fenjia*<sup>2</sup> (分家, i.e., the change in household structure) is the main reason according to my field work. If the respondents live with the parents-in-law, sometimes the elderly people in the households undertake the gardening task. But nowadays, most of the female peasants live separately in their own houses<sup>3</sup> and most of them manage it themselves. The parents-in-law may give some help during the busy farming season in vegetable garden. So there is no big change compared to the situation before the husbands’ migration and there is no vivid difference in the two comparative groups of women.

### 6.2.2 Poultry raising

Regarding the poultry raising activity, there are two types in general in Yang Village: market oriented activity and own consumption activity. Women who are the main contributors in agriculture in the household mainly raise poultry for own consumption while women in the control group usually do it together with the husband as a market oriented activity. The research results show that the poultry raising activity, especially the market-oriented breeding activity, is stimulated when the husband works in and around the village. Of the women in sub-group 2, 46% are doing poultry raising activities, which mainly include breeding a large number of chickens (3,000 to 6,000). In the sub-group of left-behind women, only one woman is raising one sow and 13 piglets for commercial reasons (32% of the women in sub-group 1 are raising poultry). Most of female peasants in sub-group 1 (94% of the women who are raising poultry) are mainly raising chickens, ducks or geese for their own family consumption. The breeding numbers vary from 5 to 20. And “*getting eggs to help the child(ren) to get enough nutrition*” is the main driving force of managing it. Respondent Wang, who started to take care of her grandson one year ago, said,

*“I am breeding eight chickens. I started it last year. There are enough eggs for my grandson to eat...You know, the chickens we have are the free range chickens. The quality of the eggs is better than those from the factories...”*

Generally, in the households where animal breeding is taken as a market-oriented activity, women and their husbands more often do the work together. This tendency is obviously shown in the second sub-group households. In these households, the women tend to be the helpers and the men play the main role in poultry raising. As one woman said,

<sup>2</sup> *Fenjia* means divide a large household into some small households. It usually happens because of the ‘marriage of the son’ and it is mainly about distributing the family property, such as housing. In this village, after *fenjia*, the separated households usually have their own houses to live in.

<sup>3</sup> The average household size is 4.4 (including migrant workers) in Yang Village. Usually, they have two children, which mean most respondents do not live with the parents-in-law. 95% of the research households have their own separate house; they have divided up the family with the parents-in-law. This is one major change in the previous years in the rural areas. Before, three or even four generations lived together in the same house or yard. Now they live separately, but usually still in the same village.

*“I just help my husband raise the chickens. I do not have so much technological knowledge as him. He injects the vaccines and buys the fodder for the chicken. He contacts the traders to sell the produce. I just help him when he needs it, such as inoculating the chicken or cleaning the chicken shed. My main task is washing, cooking and cleaning for the whole family.”*

If the poultry raising activity is mainly for own consumption, it is mainly done by the women. The decision-making in these two types of activities also presents vivid differences. Commercial poultry raising activity is usually decided by the husbands or by the couple together while own consumption breeding activity is mainly decided by women themselves.

### **6.2.3 Crop farming**

Theoretically, female and male peasants have differences in their agricultural production, as many studies show. For instance, based on the framework of Beus and Dunlap (1990), Chiappe and Flora (1998) point out that although both men and women seek independence, an opportunity to contribute to the community and diversity of product in agriculture, there are very different meanings and contexts attached to these ideas. For example, when discussing independence, women show more interests in ‘expense-reducing’ rather than ‘income-enlarging’ activities preferred by their male counterparts. Moreover, women pay more attention to quality and spirituality of family life than men. McGehee et al. (2007) also argue women have higher motivation for agri-tourism entrepreneurship than men. Besides, female-led farms had higher costs related to diseases control, but lower costs in irrigation in agricultural production (Fok and Wang, 2011).

Previously, agricultural production was realized mainly by the male labour force. With the migration of the male labour force, female peasants have become the main labour force in agricultural production in some households. Relatively speaking, stay-behind women have more space to do agricultural production based on their own intention or interests. They could change the staple food crops into cash crops, increase or decrease the farming areas and do farming in a different way from men engaged in agricultural production. This part pays attention to the changes in doing and deciding crop structure, farming areas, purchasing agricultural production materials and selling produce.

#### ***1) Female peasants have not changed the crop structure according to their own wishes***

Crop farming in the research site mainly refers to the wheat and rice rotational production. Yang Village is located in the plain area and there is a lot of rain, sometimes even flooding, during the summer season due to the geographic and climate condition. More than ten years ago, peasants mainly grew maize but because maize cannot absorb a lot of water, then, the local government encouraged the villagers to grow rice and wheat in order to circumvent the flood disaster. Now only a few villagers with high farm land grow maize (10%)<sup>4</sup> on a small

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<sup>4</sup> Maize production is not the main agricultural produce in Yang Village. To some extent, it can be understood as a way of using all the farm land sufficiently, only then, people cultivate it. Of the respondents who grow maize,

piece of land (the average farming area is about 1 *mu*, varying from 0.2 -2 *mu*). In general from the research it was found that there is no big change in crop structure caused by private household decisions. All women are still producing the same crops, rice and wheat, as when the husband was at home. Furthermore, there is no difference between the two sub-groups regarding this aspect. Climate and geographic condition and market demand are the main reasons for this. Some respondents stated,

*“Even though we want to change, we cannot. We should follow the laws of nature. Every year there is so much rain during the summer time, we cannot grow crops other than rice. Otherwise, we cannot get any harvest.”*

Moreover, whether the peasants change the crop structure is related to the demand of the market, which is associated with the local government’s policy orientation.

*“There are no people who grow other things. Why not? If there are not so many people who grow this kind of crop then there is no acquisition. You grow it but nobody purchases it on-site and so you need to find your own market. Would you grow it? You should be concerned about the market demand.”*

In addition, from the interview with the village cadre and township leaders, the local governments play a certain role in guiding the peasants to grow a certain kind of crops based on the geographic and climate condition.

There are possibilities of changing the crop structure from rice and wheat into cash crops, such as flowers, mushrooms and watermelons, especially into greenhouse crops, as some local merchants are now doing. However, the stay-behind women with a migrant husband usually do not make changes to crop structure. Labour force, technology, knowledge and economic capital and market are barriers for them. Like the animal breeding activity mentioned in the previous section, relatively large scale (not for family consumption) or commercial raising activity are only done by the couple together and the woman usually assists her husband.

## **2) Few changes in farming areas led by female peasants’ initiatives**

In respect of the changes in farming areas, there is no difference between the households of the stay-behind women and the control group of women. One fifth (21%, Table 6.2) of the respondents increased their farming area, which mainly vary from 2 to 4 *mu*. They usually farm the land of their relatives (often husband’s migrant brother or elderly parents) or other migrant villagers. In the increases in farming areas, 62% of them are farming the land of relatives (see Table 6.3). It is common that land transfer usually happens inside the extended family first, which seems a norm as well. If there is no extended family member to farm the land, the other villagers would be in second place to rent the land. In other words, there is a sequence issue in the face of ‘increased’ farming area. Migration is a common phenomenon in

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half do not sell the maize produce, but use it for their own consumption; 30% of them sell all the produce and 20% of them consume part and sell the rest.

the research site and some couples migrate together. Then, their idle farm land is cultivated by their stay-behind brothers or relatives. Besides that, elderly parents, who cannot farm anymore because of poor physical condition, also distribute their land to their son(s) to farm. These are the frequent land transfer cases in Yang Village.

**Table 6.2: Changes in farming area (%),  $\chi^2(2)= 0.500$ ,  $p=0.779$ )**

	Increased	No change	Decreased	Total
Sub-group 1	22	38	40	100
Sub-group 2	20	45	35	100
<b>Total</b>	21	41	37	100

**Table 6.3: Reasons for increases in farming areas (N & %)**

	Farm relatives' land		Rent land from other villagers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sub-group 1	7	64	4	36	11	100
Sub-group 2	6	60	4	40	10	100
<b>Total</b>	13	62	8	38	21	100

The internal land transfer cost among relatives and even villagers is low. If the female peasants farm the relatives' land, they usually do not pay any rental fee for using the land. Instead, they would give some rice and wheat produce when the relatives come back at the end of the year, which is common sense in the research site. As most female peasants indicated,

*“I do not pay for farming his brother’s land. After all, they do not want to farm and they can earn more money with migrant jobs...We take care of their land... We will give them some produce for their own consumption when they come back. They never ask for money from us either.”*

There is only one person in each group that rented around 15 *mu* farm land from several villagers and the rental fee is very low (200 Yuan per *mu* per year).

How much land to farm is a relatively big decision in the households and almost all the female peasants agree it should be discussed with the migrant husband. The opportunity to farm land from others, the female peasants' physical condition, whether the female peasant can find a more lucrative local extra-job and how to balance caring for children or elderly people, are the factors they should consider during the negotiations and discussions with the husbands. It seems there is no difference among female peasants in the decision-making process of farming more land, because they usually say “*we discuss together*”. However, the biographical material tells us that it is essential that whoever initiates the idea to cultivate more land understands the decision-making process and the gender relationship between wife and husband in agricultural production. Liu is one case,

*“I wanted to farm more land. I suggested this idea first when I heard that some peasants intended to rent out their land. My husband did not agree at the beginning as he thought it would be so hard to manage so much land. I cannot go out to work because my son needed me around to take care of him. However, I*

*believe I can hire people to help me when needed and the rental cost is not high...The common reality is a left-behind woman farms all the land, around 5 mu, in the household, but it is possible that you farm 10 or 20 mu when there is available farm land. In the end, I rented the land from three families. Two of them are couple migrants and the other land is from an old couple. The old couple only have one migrant son and they cannot manage the land because of their poor physical health.”*

Alongside increases in farming areas, there are also decreases and 37% of the female peasants experienced a decrease of arable farm land (see Table 6.2). The main reason for this is related to the urbanization and modernization progress happening in Yang Village. In the research site, it mainly refers to attracting investments from outside to contribute to the local economy, which is one major working objective of the local government. According to my field survey, 65% of the decreases in farming area are due to the construction of new roads and factory premises.

The other reason for decreases in farming area is renting out the land to local merchants, which is also under the local government’s guidance. Compared to staple food production, cash crops, like flowers or watermelon planting, can contribute more to the local economy than the staple food crops. When some merchants/villagers want to do this kind of activity on a large plot of farm land, the local leaders will help them to obtain the land from peasants. The watermelon and vegetable yard, mentioned in section 4.1.2 in Chapter 4, is one case. Two villagers initiate the idea of running the business of growing and selling watermelon and out-of-season vegetables. It is supported by the village cadre, because this relative economic activity can stimulate and develop the local economy development. Then, the local government helped him rent the land from other villagers (the cost was 550 Yuan per *mu* in 2011 and 1000 Yuan per *mu* in 2012). There was a new flower yard from Oct., 2012. According to my investigation, 35% of the decreases in farm land are due to this process. From some peasants point of view they like to lease out the land, because they can get approximately 1,000 Yuan per *mu* per year, which is nearly equal to the net annual earnings from agricultural production.

However, there are some peasants who do not want to lease the land out, especially those people who do not have the capability to earn money from other activities, like migrant jobs. Even though they do not want it, they cannot change the situation as the local leaders are more powerful than they are. Li said angrily when I interviewed her about the land decreasing issue,

*“I almost do not have any land now. In 2010, the village committee asked us to rent out around 2 mu to others to grow watermelon. This year (in 2012), the village committee wants to rent it out to grow flowers. Another 1 mu has gone. I do not agree but cannot do anything about it, you know. Not so many people like farming now. They can earn more money with migrant jobs. They like leasing the land out, when the village cadre proposes it. But for me, my family’s economic*

*situation is not good. I can save some money if we eat our own produced food. You only need to pay the processing fee. We will definitely spend more money for daily consumption later...If you do not rent out your land to grow flowers, the village cadre will enforce it and there will also be a problem when you do manage the farm land if it is only you who does not lease the land out. If all the farm land around you is growing flowers, nobody wants to harvest your crops by machine anymore.”*

Generally, it is not only women, but also the husbands that have limited decision-making power on the farming area in the research site.

In fact, there are possibilities to change the farming areas and the crop structure. However, data in Table 6.2 illustrate that there is no significant difference between the two sub-groups. To some extent, this means two points. One point is that women are not able to change because there is not so much idle land resource on the village transferring market. The average farm size is 5.5 *mu* in Yang Village, including the changed condition, which is small. Transferring the idle farm land inside the extended family is the mainstream. The other point is that women who are doing the primary farming work in the households, do not have more willingness to change the farming style and farming areas than women who are helpers of the husbands in agricultural production in the households. The reason behind this opinion is that most peasants do not think farming is very important anymore and they just want to maintain the current situation. Data in Table 6.4<sup>5</sup> indicate that caring for (grand)child(ren) is the most important task amongst all the tasks in the household for 79% of the female peasants. Farming is just an activity from which they can earn some money besides caring for the children at home and maintaining a guarantee for the migrant husband. Also it offers something for the future when they are old.

**Table 6.4: Women’s opinion on the most important task in the household (%),  $X^2(3)=1.977, p=0.577$**

	Caring for (grand)children	Farming	Housework	Other	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	82	14	0	4	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	76	20	2	2	100
<b>100</b>	79	17	1	3	100

Most female peasants argue like this,

*“Of course, the most important task at home is to take care of the child(ren). Agricultural production is also important, but not as important as caring for the child(ren). You can rent out your land to others to farm and migrate outside to work, if you do not have children to take care of... Agricultural production is not so time-consuming. In the difficult harvest time, I can hire other people to manage it... We can do farming while caring for the child(ren).”*

<sup>5</sup> The original question is: what is the most important work for you in the household? a. taking care of and supervising (grand)child(ren) b. farming c. housework d. taking care of elderly e. other



“At least we can get some food and money from farming... When we are old, he (referring to the migrant husband) cannot work elsewhere anymore and then we need to do farming to feed ourselves. If we are too old to farm, we will distribute our land to our son(s) and get some food from them to survive. Besides caring for children, we can farm and keep this guarantee of the household...We do not increase the farming area. There is no available land and we cannot manage a larger farming area anyway. Just maintaining the current situation is enough for us.”

### 3) Female peasants have more decision-making power in buying agricultural production materials and selling produce

As illustrated in the analytical framework, agricultural feminization includes labour feminization and managerial feminization. The literature also shows that rural Chinese women are taking over farming in many rural villages of China, such as in Shandong(Judd, 1994), Sichuan(Jacka, 1997), Yunnan(Bossen, 2002) and Fujian, Jiangsu, Shandong and Shaanxi (Wolf (1985), cited by Gao (1994)). However, ‘taking over’ in these studies mainly means doing the work. As to what kind of specific tasks, the degree of undertaking the specific tasks and the decision-making parts, these details were rarely discussed.

According to my investigation, regarding the work of growing rice and wheat, women who have a primary role in agricultural production do nearly all the management work related to it. This includes growing seedlings, sowing seeds, transplanting the seedlings, spreading pesticides and herbicides, applying fertilizer, part of the harvesting work etc. The women who are at home together with the husbands also do these tasks, but the workload they undertake is less than the left-behind women and also less than their husbands. The women in sub-group 1 do everything themselves. Their workload is obviously heavier than the work load of women whose husbands are around when farming work is needed. Specifically, compared to the women in sub-group 2, female peasants in sub-group 1 are relatively more involved in the purchase of agricultural production inputs (e.g., seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides, see Table 6.5) and they also more often sell the produce. The data further state that these husbands are relatively more involved in the sale of agricultural produce (40%) and less in the purchase pesticides (8%), seeds (10%) and fertilizer (18%).

**Table 6.5: Labour division between husband and wife about purchasing and selling of crops<sup>6</sup> (%)**

		Husband	Together	Woman	Others	Total
Purchasing seeds ( $X^2(3)=47.659$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	10	2	80	8	100
	Sub-group 2	76	4	16	4	100
Purchasing fertilizer ( $X^2(3)=33.771$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	18	6	62	14	100
	Sub-group 2	76	2	18	4	100
Purchasing pesticides ( $X^2(3)=46.453$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	8	2	84	6	100
	Sub-group 2	74	2	20	4	100
Selling produce ( $X^2(3)=24.627$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	40	10	50	0	100
	Sub-group 2	70	22	6	2	100
Purchasing farming machine ( $X(3)^2=5.6$ ; $p=0.133$ )	Sub-group 1	70	22	2	6	100
	Sub-group 2	80	8	0	12	100

<sup>6</sup> ‘Others’ in Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 refers to the person who has the advantage in certain area. The person usually has the kinship with the respondent. For instance, in purchasing seeds, some peasants have the relative who is doing the selling seeds activity, then they can follow this relative’s recommendation.

As to the reasons for women participating less in selling produce than purchasing seeds, fertilizer or pesticides, one is the time factor between selling produce, the harvest time and the husband's returning home time. This is the main reason mentioned by female peasants for their relative lower participation in selling produce.

*“He (the husband) comes back to help me during the busy season. It is more convenient that he sells it when he is at home during the busy season.”*

Essentially, ‘convenient’ is detailed in the following meanings from their perspective: First, it is not easy to store and preserve the produce at home, so they sell the produce.

*“We should sell the produce after harvest. There is no place to store it at home and it is not easy to preserve. It is very perishable, if you do not care for it carefully.”*

Second, it takes time and labour force to guard the produce from theft if you store much produce at home, so they sell the produce.

*“Sometimes, you should keep an eye out during the harvest season. Otherwise, you might lose your produce if you store it at home and there is nobody at home to guard it. You know, since there are almost no young and strong men in the village nowadays. Even though thefts seldom happen, you should still keep your eyes open. If you sell it directly after harvest, you do not need to worry about this.”*

Third, it is a barrier that some female peasants do not know how to use the weighing machine for selling produce. Although not so many respondents mentioned this issue as the reason for selling produce directly after harvest, because they can ask for help from the neighbours or villagers when they need to sell the produce, it should be one part of the agricultural production training. Besides, women have advantages in bargaining generally, but there is little space for bargaining in the selling produce process. The food buyers will give different purchasing prices according to different quality standards. There is no difference in the price among households. Moreover, there are also some female peasants who cannot indicate any reason; they just think ‘it is normal that the husband sells the produce.’ The hidden rule seem to be this: It was the husband's task before his migration so it should be the husband's task when he returns. In addition, the taste of the food is another reason for the peasants to sell the produce. In Yang Village, especially the rice does not taste as good as the rice from northeast of China. With the marketization and the improvement of people's living standard, some local people do not consume their own rice anymore. Instead, they buy other better products from the market. Of course, this relates to the family economic situation to some extent.

In Yang Village, the degree of agricultural mechanization is not high. Large farming machines are only used in land preparation and harvest. This is associated with the seasonal

migration of rural male labour force<sup>7</sup>. Usually, the husband comes back during the harvest season to help the wife harvest and then do the land preparation for the next season before migrating again. In the harvest season, peasants hire reaping and threshing machine to help them harvest and they use their own tractors to transport the produce from the field to their homes, which is usually done by men. Then, the men plough the land for the next farming season before leaving again.

Farming machinery is a long-term investment and relatively expensive. It costs a relatively larger amount of money than the other production inputs, such as fertilizer and seeds. Around 10 years ago, peasants in Yang Village began to own tractors and 90% of the households have at least one tractor at home. It is a big affair in the household and the husband participates more than women. Data in Table 6.5 also illustrate that almost no woman (2% resp. 0) can decide on buying farming machine by herself and the percentage is obviously lower than their involvement in purchasing other inputs. ‘Big affair’ and ‘experience’ are the reason given by female peasants for explaining the low participation in purchasing farming machines. As some women said,

*“A farming machine costs thousands of Yuan at least. He (the husband) is the household head and he should make these decisions. He knows more than me about machines so he should buy and decide.”*

*“The husband also has more chance to access the information about the different makes of machinery and evaluation the information from outside than us. He can discuss or consult his workmates about what make of machinery we should buy.”*

However, it is interesting to find that there is more ‘together’ action of the couple in sub-group 1 than in sub-group 2 from the data in Table 6.5. Moreover, relative decision-making data in Table 6.6 tells us that female peasants in sub-group 1 also participate more in purchasing farming machines. This implies that women who are actually managing the farm have more decision-making power in some aspects of agricultural production beyond undertaking the workload of these aspects. From the chi-square values in Table 6.6, the stay-behind women significantly have more decision-making power in purchasing seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and farming machines and selling produce, especially compared to the control group of women.

**Table 6.6: Decision-making on purchasing agricultural materials (%)**

		Husband	Together	Woman	Others	Total
Purchasing seeds ( $\chi^2(3)=44.625$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	14	4	80	2	100
	Sub-group 2	74	8	14	4	100
Purchasing fertilizer ( $\chi^2(3)=28.475$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	24	8	66	2	100
	Sub-group 2	74	6	16	4	100
Purchasing pesticides ( $\chi^2(3)=44.625$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	14	4	80	2	100
	Sub-group 2	74	8	14	4	100
Selling produce ( $\chi^2(3)=19.981$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	36	24	40	0	100
	Sub-group 2	64	30	4	2	100
Purchasing farming machines ( $\chi^2(2)=25.279$ ; $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	20	74	0	6	100
	Sub-group 2	64	24	0	12	100

<sup>7</sup> Abdelali- Martini et al.’s research(2003) in Syria in Asia also states that mechanization is an important factor affecting the seasonality and the composition of labour demand in agricultural production.

Comprehending Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 in conjunction, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, beyond the routine workload (e.g., spreading fertilizer, applying pesticides and growing seedlings) undertaking daily management work in agricultural production, women especially participate more on the purchasing agricultural production materials (i.e., seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and farming machine) and selling produce aspects. Second, there is a consistency between who is doing the work and who is deciding it in agricultural production, even though there are slight percentage fluctuations. Third, if we take labour division and decision-making as the two factors to measure the degree of agricultural feminization, data in Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 indicate that agricultural feminization is not in all the agricultural production tasks, but in some specific tasks, and the degree of agricultural feminization depends on specific tasks in agricultural production. There are many factors affecting this according to the information from the interviews. For instance, the degree of agricultural feminization in purchasing fertilizer is lower than the degree of agricultural feminization in purchasing seeds and pesticides. This is associated with the weight of the fertilizer. Many female peasants said,

*“It is too heavy for me to buy it and transport it by myself. Usually, my husband does it for me when he is at home. It is not perishable; you can store some at home. If it is not enough, then I can buy just a little from the shop.”*

Fourth, whether female peasants can make their own decisions depends on ‘big’ and ‘small’ affairs. Women divide affairs within the households into big and small affairs. For big affairs, such as purchasing machinery, they cannot make their own decisions and this is the reason for the lower degree of agricultural feminization in purchasing farm machinery.

According to my investigation, agricultural feminization in Yang Village at least means that female peasants who are mainly doing the agricultural production work in the households, have participated more in purchasing seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and farm machinery and selling produce. Theoretically, according to the division of labour feminization and managerial feminization, stay-behind female peasants in Yang Village have participated more in doing and deciding about purchasing agricultural production materials and selling produce. The degree of labour feminization is higher than the managerial feminization. The degrees of agricultural feminization in different tasks are differentiated.

### **6.3 Gender relations in household affairs**

In the foregoing part, the labour division and decision-making issues in agricultural production have been discussed. This part focuses on wider gender relations between husband and wife within the household. Exactly, it discusses the issue of decision-making and use of money within the household. Generally, women still do not have significant decision-making rights in big household affairs. However, age, education and husband’s working place are the factors that affect women’s awareness in pursuing equal decision-making rights in the households.

### 1) Gender inequality is already in the discourse: big and small household affairs

Chinese villagers usually divide the household affairs into two types – big affairs and small affairs. Small affairs mainly refer to the daily expenditure, such as buying vegetables or meat, paying electricity, gas or water charges. The small affairs are the common things for meeting the needs of the whole household. To most women, big affairs refer to the things that need more money or the things that would make a long-term and essential impact on the family, which mainly relate to a son's education, marriage or elderly people's illness and even funeral expenditure (see Table 6.7<sup>8</sup>).

**Table 6.7: The contents of 'big affairs' in the household (% , multiple-choice question)**

	Marriage of child	Educational of child	Build new house	Farmin g	Illness/funeral	Household appliance	Maintaining <i>guanxi</i>	Spend much money	Lending money to others	No big affair	Total
Sub-group 1	35	35	25	13	13	5	15	10	3	8	160
Sub-group 2	29	33	23	15	13	17	15	10	3	6	166
Total	32	34	24	14	13	11	15	10	3	7	163

In China, a son's education and marriage are the biggest things in the households, which are also the reasons for the migration of male labour force in the rural areas. The educational cost mainly refers to the accommodation fee, boarding expenses, and even school-choosing fee or sponsorship<sup>9</sup>. The marriage money includes the bride price, buying or building a new house and purchasing certain household appliances (e.g., TV, washing machine and fridge). These are major economic costs of the rural households from a long-term perspective. In reality, what are the big affairs is related to how much needs to be spent on the affair. "The things which cost more than 1,000 Yuan" or "the things that cost more money than the usual daily expenditure" are the big affairs in their opinion.

Then, 'who is keeping money?' and 'who can decide the big affairs?' are becoming essential issues. From the investigation, I find that 34% of the women are in charge of the purse strings in the households (see Table 6.8), but only 6% of them can decide big affairs in the households and 44% of them need to follow the husband's decision on big affairs (see Table 6.9). As the housewives, women usually have the decision-making rights to arrange and manage everything about the daily lives of family members. If they use the money for the necessary daily household expenditure, for instance, purchasing food, they do not need to discuss this with or report to the husband, regardless whether the husband is a migrant worker or not. As to the big affairs, it is different.

**Table 6.8: Who keeps money in the household (% ,  $X^2(3)=2.247$ ,  $p=0.523$ )**

	Husband	Together	Woman	No money to keep	Total
Sub-group 1	24	22	40	14	100
Sub-group 2	22	30	28	20	100
Total	23	26	34	17	100

<sup>8</sup> The original question is: what are the big affairs in your opinion? It is an open question. The respondents could give more than one answer.

<sup>9</sup> Usually, entrance to a school depends on the student's results. However, if the student and the family want the student to enter a better school, they need to pay more money than the standard tuition fee. This is called sponsorship.

**Table 6.9: Who decides on big affairs expenditure (% $X^2(2) = 2.841, p=0.242$ )**

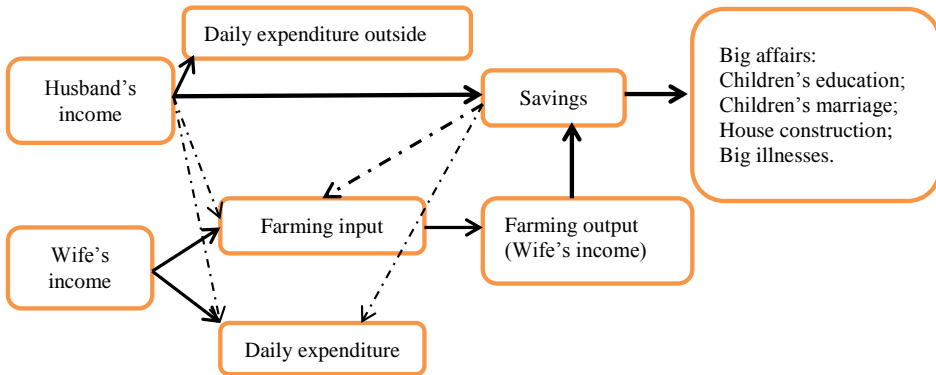
	Husband	Together	Woman	Others	Total
Sub-group 1	46	44	10	0	100
Sub-group 2	52	44	2	2	100
<b>Total</b>	49	44	6	1	100

“I can decide the small affairs and he decides the big affairs” is the common answer to the question of decision-making in household affairs. The general decision-making model in household affairs is: women decide the small affairs and men decide the big affairs. It seems there is no problem. However, gender inequality is already in the discourse of this gender division in big and small affairs. Why do women only decide small affairs and men decide big affairs? It is true that children’s marriage and education are big affairs in the households. But can we say daily life is not a big thing? In fact, daily life is the foundation of the ‘big affairs’ they mentioned. If there is nobody looking after daily life needs, people cannot live. The discourse itself tries to make differences in gender and it causes women to neglect and deny their own contribution to the households.

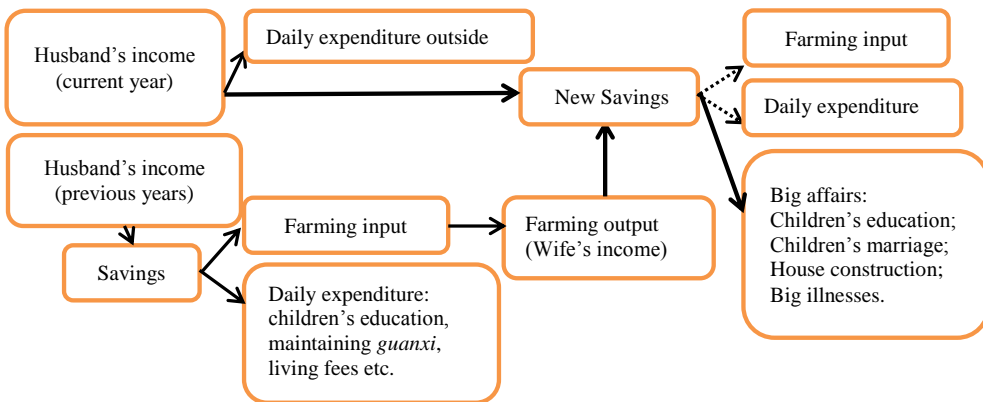
**2) Women’s extra-earning consolidates the gender inequality in big household affairs**

Left-behind women doing more decision-making in agricultural production, does not lead to their having more decision-making rights in big household affairs. However, there are some stay-behind women who have an extra-job beyond farming. Does the earning from the extra-job benefit their status in the households? From the money using model (i.e., Figure 6.2 and 6.3) in the households, I find that the money earned from the extra-job of stay-behind women is still used for the ‘small affairs’ in the households, which consolidates/fossilizes the existing gendered division of money use with the households.

From the field work, I find that there is no difference in money use from a gender perspective in the households of the control group. These women live with their husbands together in the village and mostly do the same things as the husbands, which mean they usually put the earnings together. This is the main reason for there being no difference in using ‘whose’ money. They put the money together and pay things for the households. But for the left-behind women, the husbands’ migration provides them more opportunities to decide things within the households, of course, including ‘how to use the money’. As illustrated in Table 6.9, the stay-behind women do not have more decision-making rights on big affairs and they do not have more participation in keeping money, either. However, from the interviews, I find that there is a big difference between the stay-behind women’s households with extra-earning beyond farming and the ones without extra-earning.



**Figure 6.2: How to use money in the household (sub-group 1, who have extra-earnings)**



**Figure 6.3: How to use money in the household (sub-group 1, who do not have extra-earnings)**

Figure 6.2<sup>10</sup> and Figure 6.3 are the figures about ‘money use flows in gender perspective in the household’ based on the interviews’ information. Figure 6.2 shows the situation when the wife has an extra-job beyond farming and Figure 6.3 stands for those stay-behind women who only do farming and without extra-earning beyond farming. Among the 50 stay-behind female peasants, there are 18 who had an extra-job (such as, working in the village watermelon yards, village wood processing factory or making rubber balls or toys at home) beyond agricultural production and all of them indicate that they use their own income firstly for daily expenditure. They would keep the husbands’ earning to deal with the big affairs later on. In their opinion, the husband’s earning is the biggest income source in the households. They should use the other relative small amount of money first and keep the bigger amount for big

<sup>10</sup> The original question is: are there any differences in use of your and your husband’s earnings? a. no b. yes (exact details and why?) Actually, it is not easy to explore this issue from the investigation. The respondents always give the answer that there is no difference in using the husband or their own income in the household when you interview them. However, when you asked them what kind of money they use first, they give you different answers, especially the women who have the extra-job beyond farming. This is also one tip for doing investigation or interviewing. Try to explore the same points in different ways, especially for those difficult or embarrassing questions. This is also helpful to check the veracity of the results.

affairs. Nevertheless, it is inspiring to find if women have extra-earnings beyond farming, they invest their own earnings into farming (Figure 6.2). As discussed in Figure 5.5, liking farming and having an extra-job beyond farming are factors that condition women's willingness to continue farming. Although there is no direct correlation between women's feelings about farming and their extra-job beyond farming in statistics, their qualitative description about how to use money (Figure 6.2) might support that women tend to like farming when they can invest money into farming.

However, the women's earning being used to finance daily expenses does not definitely imply changing gender relations. This is due to the fact that the daily expenditure is seen anyway as a small affair in the household from foregoing discussion within the household. That is, the women's extra-earning is still for the small affairs in the households. Moreover, with the support from women's extra-earning, the function of the husband's earning for the household big affairs is becoming more obvious. At least, the husband does not need to transfer the money back home so often when the household has another income source. The husband can keep the money and bring it back at the end of the year, which is a relative bigger amount of money than in the situation when he transfers the money back in small amount regularly. The relative bigger amount of money is then saved directly for the big affairs in the household later on. This stimulates a clearer division of the money use in big and small household affairs in gender perspective. This process consolidates the relative higher status of the husband in the household and detracts from the woman's interests to some extent.

It is necessary to mention that this gendered division in money use within the household is associated with the job feature of the migrant husband and the economic situation of the household. Some studies stress the function of the husband's remittance is substantial to the households and the husband would transfer the money back home when the family needs it, for daily expenditure or for big affairs (Adger et al., 2002; Du et al., 2005). This research confirms this. However, there are some small changes in the format or the function process of the remittance in the research site. The common situation is that, in recent years, more and more families have their own savings or the wife has her own extra earnings, so the husband does not need to transfer the money every month, especially for the daily expenditure of the household. The household can use the saving first before asking the husband to transfer the money. Moreover, whether the husbands transfer money every month also relates to their own job characteristic. For instance, if the husbands work on the construction sites, they do not usually get paid monthly. Instead, they get paid after finishing the project<sup>11</sup> or just before they are going home (usually during the peak farming season or the traditional New Year festival).

Generally, although women's earning from the extra-job is not so much, especially when compared to the husbands' migrant jobs, it can almost cover the daily expenditure of the stay-behind woman and her children, such as, purchasing meat and paying electricity and water

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<sup>11</sup> Usually, the project leaders could not get all the money from the developer before finishing the project, then, the workers could not get their pay from the project leaders. This point can also help the readers to understand why there were some scandals about the migrant workers who could not get paid after finishing the work in China. It is a common rule that the migrant peasants get paid after finishing the project. Of course, if the migrant peasants need money urgently for something, they usually can get an advance payment during the project.

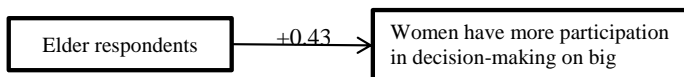


charges. Sometimes, it even covers the agricultural production cost in the household. However, the female peasants still think it functions only for the small affairs within the household. The function of women's extra-earning should be recognized. 'Big' and 'small' is relative. Every little makes a mickle - small amounts of money kept over a period could become a larger amount; and large amounts of money can be used in small affairs as well. Take a similar example, if you have 1,000 Euros and you spend it on one item, you will remember this purchase and remember how much it costs and how difficult it was to earn it. However, you will not have the same feeling if you spend the 1,000 Euros a hundred or a thousand different times only on small things. It is difficult to calculate clearly the total of the earnings of the stay-behind woman from caring, farming, housework and an extra-job. It may be larger than the earnings of the husband; at least, it might not be 'small'. To sum up, women's extra-earning function in the 'small' affairs within the household consolidates the existing gendered inequality in household affairs. 'Big' and 'small' affairs division diminishes women's rights and women's contribution to the household should be re-recognized.

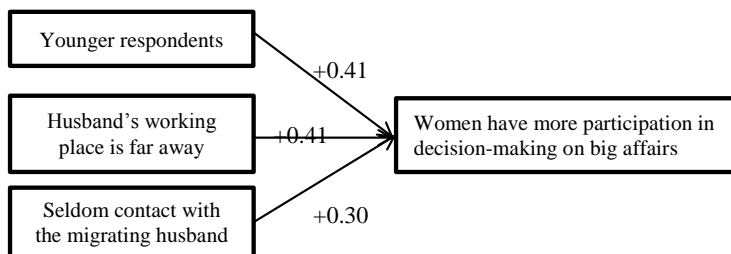
In addition, it needs to be stressed that although extra-earnings beyond farming does not help to improve the gender equality in the household; it makes women feel more comfortable when comparing themselves with other women who do not have an extra-job in the village. My empirical research finds that women who have an extra-job beyond farming are usually seen as 'young (at least healthy)', 'useful' and 'competent' and with a better standard of living (i.e., economic aspect).

### 3) *Different factors influencing the decision-making on big affairs in the households*

The results in Table 6.8 and Table 6.9 support the argument that there is no difference in keeping money between stay-behind women and the control group of women. Moreover, stay-behind women's greater participation in agricultural production does not lead to more decision-making on big affairs in the households. However, from the multiple regression analyses, I find that there are other different factors that condition women's decision-making on big affairs in different groups.



**Figure 6.4:** Path diagram of 'decision-making on big affairs' (100 respondents,  $R^2=0.18$ )



**Figure 6.5:** Path diagram of 'decision-making on big affairs' (sub-group 1,  $R^2=0.38$ )

Figure 6.4<sup>12</sup> and Figure 6.5 present the factors influencing women's decision-making rights on big affairs in total and in different sub-groups. The analysis shows significant correlations in different groups of female peasants. From all the 100 respondents, elder female peasants tend to participate more in big affairs' decision-making and the regression coefficient is +0.43. However, this positive and significant correlation between age and decision-making, which I find for the sample as the whole, goes strongly back to sub-group 2 where there is a remarkably strong and positive correlation between age and participation in big affairs. In sub-group 1, the relation is negative. Here younger women tend to have more participation in decision-making on big affairs (partial regression coefficient is +0.41). For female peasants in sub-group 1, besides age, distance of the husband's working place from the village and the frequency of contacts with the husband are factors affecting women's participation in decision-making on big affairs as well. If the husband works far away from the hometown, the women tend to have more decision-making rights on the big affairs (partial regression coefficient is +0.41).

Furthermore, if the husband does not have contact with the stay-behind wife frequently, the woman behaves more actively in decision-making on big affairs (partial regression coefficient is +0.30), which of course also shows the confidence and trust between the husband and the wife. To some extent, this figure also expresses that the husbands' migration provides more opportunities for their wives to be more independent in deciding big affairs in the households. Finally, for the female peasants in sub-group 2, those with higher educational background have participated more in decision-making in big affairs in the households (partial regression coefficient is +1.00).

Three conclusions can be derived from the three path diagrams: Generally speaking, it applies that elder, and therefore more experienced, women tend to have more say on big affairs. This reflects the traditional gender relations. The old Chinese saying *duo nian de xi fu ao cheng po* (多年的媳妇熬成婆) reflects this vividly and it means a daughter-in-law living through years' life experience becomes a mother-in-law eventually. Previously, woman did not have any power in the household after marriage and she had to just follow all the decisions of the husband. After giving the birth to a son, her status in the family went up a bit but it was still lower than the husband and the son. After the son's marriage, her status was not the lowest in the household anymore, because the daughter-in-law took her place. From then on, she could have some say within the family.

Secondly, it applies that within the category of left-behind women, being young, having rare communication with the husband and a long geographical distance between husband and wife, all contribute to women having more participation in decision-making on big affairs. This reflects the reality that the younger generation of women in rural China have more awareness of their own relatively equal status and rights in the household than the older generation.

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<sup>12</sup> The original question in the questionnaire is: who can decide how to use the household income on big affairs? a. oneself b. husband c. negotiation(the couple) d. others. The path diagram only shows the significant correlations. The other insignificant variables involved in the analyses also include: household economic situation, extra-job beyond farming, migrant work experience, the fact that who is keeping money and working years on farming.

Additionally it reflects the relatively independent personalities of the younger generation in rural China. The fact that absentee migrant husbands seldom contact the stay-behind woman might mean they give more space to the woman and/or they trust that the women have the competency to deal with the affairs reasonably, or the women themselves create more chances to be independent actively.

Thirdly, for women who work with the husband at home together, if they have higher educational background, they tend to have more say in big affairs within the households. Compared to the women whose husbands are far away, the control group of women live with the husbands every day. There is relatively less space for them to challenge the traditional gender norms. However, higher educational background provides them chances to make changes in gender relations. As some scholars have already pointed out, 'from the individual perspective, a woman is empowered when she is literate, educated, and has productive skills, access to capital, confidence in herself and so on'(Longwe, 1998) and 'education is an effective way to be empowered'(Kabeer, 2005). To sum up, the three figures indicate that there is yet not a specific solution that fits all the situations and the gender relations are changing along different trajectories for different types of women. Even though it is not yet the mainstream that men and women have an equal say in deciding the big things in the households, there are different drivers (such as being young, having higher educational background, having a geographical faraway absentee migrant husband and seldom having contact with the migrant husband) that stimulate changes in the existing gender relationships and that make women become more independent and empowered.

#### **6.4 Gender relations in the village public affairs**

When the husband is at home, he is the person who goes outside to attend the relatively public affairs, such as the village election, village meeting, and collective labour work. Besides, as the household leader, he usually attends the social activities, such as weddings, funerals, visiting a new-born child and mutual visiting during festivals. Of course, the woman sometimes also attends the latter activities, which are more private familial events. To attend these kinds of activities is essential to maintain and construct the social network, even though some activities could bring them more economic burden. This part of the thesis includes two main parts, the village affairs and the relatively private affairs as just mentioned, to explore the attendance and decision-making situations after the migration of the husbands.

In China, villagers' committee elections were formally enacted as a national law in 1988. Villagers currently have the right to select their own cadres in their villages, but different regions have implemented the law non-uniformly. In some places, villagers actively participate in elections, which enhanced local governments' responsiveness and raised the level of public goods provision (Luo et al., 2007; Shen and Yao, 2008; Zhang et al., 2004b). However, there are also many cases where many people failed to show up for the elections. Some scholars have explored a wide range of factors that condition the participation in elections, including age, gender, education, level of economic development, clan and family ties as well as political trust (Hu, 2006; Oi and Rozelle, 2000; Tao et al., 2011; Zhong and Chen, 2002).

The village committee election situation in Yang Village has not been developed so well. As the regulation required, there is one election every three years, which should be a democratic election. But the common rule here is the local people do not want to attend the election, nor does the local township government want to see a democratic village committee election. The local government will authorize some candidate to be elected. Every rural household has the legal right to vote, but as one respondent said,

*“Usually, we do not vote. When the working group (usually one of the members is from my production team, maybe the team leader) came to my house and asked us to vote, we would say, ‘you can help me vote and vote for anyone you want to’. We do not want to step into the muddy water. It does not matter who will be the village leader.”*

There is no any other peasant cooperative organization beyond the village committee to support or supervise the election process. There is no true democratic election.

The current village cadre was authorized by the township government last year. He was the village cadre 10 years ago, who is also a member of the local township government. During the interview, he mentioned,

*“There is no village election attended by all the common villagers actually. But usually the communist party members attend and present some opinions. There are nine villager teams in Yang Village; every production team has at least one representative attending. The village cadre needs to be a communist party member, there are totally around 20 party members in the village... Also these people usually attend the village meeting. There are not so many village meeting every year. Almost all the committee members have their own commercial activities. For instance, the deputy village cadre is running a construction team in the county town and I have a fish pond to cultivate and sell fishes. Of course, the village committee members do not migrate far away to work, which is a prerequisite to be a member.”*

The village cadre’s words explained the reasons why 89% of the female peasants think there is no village election or village meeting.

As to the collective labour activity in the research site, there has not been so much in recent years. The collective labour activity can be traced to the collective era, in 1950s. At that time, there were some production teams (*sheng chan dui*, 生产队), which usually were the mutual help teams (*hu zhu zu*, 互助组). At that time, people almost did everything collectively, such as agricultural production together, and they helped each other as a group. They usually lived near to each other. Later, after the implementation of the Household Responsibility System in 1980s, the term ‘villager team’ took the place of ‘production team’. There are nine villager teams in this natural village, but not so much collective activity nowadays, which is mainly because of the stronger sense of individualism.

At the present time, collective labour activity mainly refers to repairing the bridge, the road or planting the trees alongside the roads (which are the collective property). Due to the changes of social circumstance, such as rural male labour force's migration, there are also some changes to the collective activities regulations. Now, at the beginning of every year, the village cadre and the village bookkeeper collect money called *yi zi dai lao* (substitute fee for labour, 以资代劳) and *yi shi yi yi* (one case one meeting, fees for managing the village collective affairs, 一事一议) for collective activities which could happen in the year. If something needs labour and money, the village committee can use this money to pay for it. How much the villagers pay depends on how many adults in their households.

According to the village cadres,

*“Now every household should submit some money every year for collective activities, such as repairing roads sometimes or planting the trees. The amount of payment depends on how many adults within the household because all the adults should contribute to the labour force when there are some collective tasks to be done. Then, when there are some tasks involving a labour force in the village, the people who do participate can be paid (by the money gathered in the name of yi shi yi yi and yi zi dai lao). It is a kind of fairness between villagers. Otherwise, there is nobody who wants to contribute anymore.”*

In fact, there are not so many things the collective labour forces do together now. Not everyone has the chance to earn the money back, so some people even think there is no collective activity nowadays.

*“There is no collective activity now. Before, the villagers worked together to repair the roads. My husband always attended, he has the strength to do it. If he is not at home and the village cadre asked me to do it, I attended it and I could earn some money. But I do not always have the chance to do it.”*

If there is the chance to ‘contribute’ to the collective labour activities in the village, the women would do it to earn some money instead of the husband. This is illustrated in the following Table 6.10 to some extent.

**Table 6.10: Labour division and decision-making about collective labour force(%)**

		Husband	Together	Woman	Others	No activity	Total
<b>Do</b> ( $X^2(2)=3.116$ , $p=0.211$ )	Sub-group 1	0	0	26	0	74	100
	Sub-group 2	16	0	0	0	84	100
	<b>Total</b>	8	2	1	0	89	100
<b>Decide</b> ( $X^2(4)=4.846$ , $p=0.303$ )	Sub-group 1	4	2	20	0	74	100
	Sub-group 2	16	0	0	0	84	100
	<b>Total</b>	8	1	0	2	89	100

Indeed, from Table 6.10, the women do more collective labour force activities in the village when they have the chance to do it, that is, when the husband is not at home (89% of the respondents did not join the collective activity in the recent years). Whereas the husbands in

the second sub-group usually undertake the collective labour force contribution responsibility. Usually, it is not a big deal and usually whoever does the task can decide it themselves.

Beyond attending the public affairs in the rural village, public affairs of the rural households also include attending the marriages, funerals and birth ceremonies and gift exchanges during the traditional holidays (e.g., Spring Festival). These social activities, called *guanxi/ ren qing wang lai* (人情往来) in Chinese society, are the activities of personal or group relationship and network. *Guanxi* could be established by different relationships, for instance, those among kin and neighbours, or through marital alliance (Christiansen, 1990). *Guanxi* is regarded by the villagers as the social capital needed to reach their social and economic goals (Cai and Zhu, 2005). Maintaining traditional bonds of kinship and native place ties (*guanxi*) is also one of the main mechanisms for reducing the risks attached to migration (Mallee, 1997). Rural areas in developing countries offer limited opportunities for smooth consumption via 'formal' financial and insurance markets, and self-protection and risk sharing via informal and voluntary community structures are prominent approaches to reducing exposure to risk (e.g., Coate and Ravallion, 1993; Rosenzweig, 1988; Townsend, 1994; Udry, 1994).

There are two kinds of maintaining *guanxi*, social spending and positional spending. "The former is a broad category of expenditures, at least partly motivated by spending decisions of others. It encompasses positional spending as a special case. Positional spending, then, focuses on status seeking as the deeper motivation for a concern about relative consumption (Brown et al., 2011)." It is a bit difficult to explore which kind of spending the respondents do in the research site. Some do not want to be isolated and some want to show the special relationships with the *guanxi* host. For instance, some respondents pointed out,

*"If you do not want to be excluded or isolated by other residents, you should attend the social activities of others, such as wedding and funerals, and give at least the same amount of money as other people who have a similar relationship as you to the host."*

How much you spend on one ceremony depends on the intimacy of the two families.

*"Of course, how much you contribute depends on the intimacy you have with the host. Usually, closer relationship cost you more money."*

But there are diverse features in different families and for different relationships, which indicates the intimacy of the families.

*"For my family, if we attend the activity of the relatives of my own natal family, we pay 100 Yuan every time. For my brothers or sisters (of my own parents), we pay 500 Yuan. For the relatives of my husband, we pay 200 Yuan every time. If closer relationship, we pay 500 Yuan."*

There is no doubt that how much the family should spend for one activity usually also relates to the past *guanxi* records.

*“How much it costs to attend one ceremony is not decided by our willingness. It depends on the previous situations. If your family had had something before, they came and gave you 100 Yuan; you should give back 100 Yuan. If they gave you 500 Yuan, you should give back 500 Yuan. This is reasonable and understandable.”*

For both weddings and funerals, all of the surveyed households keep detailed records of expenditure as well as gift received (Brown et al., 2011). Yan (1996) writes, “Ritualized gift giving is also associated with the custom of making and preserving gift lists. Gift lists are homemade books on red paper (funeral gift lists are made on yellow paper) inscribed with a traditional Chinese calligraphy brush. They serve as a formal record of all gifts received by the host of a family ceremony.”

Attending social activities like weddings and funerals is men’s territory in rural China, especially for activities not related to the wife. The women usually live patrilocally after marriage and they are seen as the ‘poured-out-water’ which means they are not a member of the natal family anymore but they belong to the husband’s family. In Yang Village, the situation is also like this. When the couple are both at home, usually the husband attends the social activities. However, with the migration of the husband, there are more women involved in these *guanxi* affairs, especially when compared to the women’s husbands who are around the home. The contents in Table 6.11 illustrate this exactly. 86% of the women in sub-group 1 attend social activities instead of their husbands now.

**Table 6.11: Labour division and decision-making in maintaining *guanxi* (%)**

		Husband	Together	Woman	Others <sup>13</sup>	Total
<b>Do</b> ( $X^2(2)=33.185$ , $p=0.211$ )	Sub-group 1	8	0	86	6	100
	Sub-group 2	62	0	32	6	100
	<b>Total</b>	35	0	59	6	100
<b>Decide</b> ( $X^2(2)=21.777$ , $p=0.000$ )	Sub-group 1	8	62	30	0	100
	Sub-group 2	42	54	4	0	100
	<b>Total</b>	25	58	17	0	100

However, it is more essential to explore the diverse percentages about the decision-making in the table. Some women think there is no need to discuss with the husband and they can decide, because,

*“Whether you attend the other families’ activities or not depends on whether they had attended your previous activities or whether they would attend your activities in the future. If they had attended, you should also do so. Then, you just go along. Even though you might discuss this with your husband, you should go anyway. If not, it is not reasonable.”*

But most think they should discuss it with the husband, especially when they will also have something soon to celebrate or a memorial or the relative is far-away.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Others’ in the Table 6.11 stand for the situations when other people out of his/her own household take the money or gift to the ‘*guanxi*’ host, because maybe the peasant does not have time at that moment.

*“Discussing with the husband how much we should pay is reasonable. We should decide whether to attend. There is almost no contact with some distant relatives. If we do not want to have any more contact later, we will not attend their celebration or ceremonies. If attending, how much to spend should also be negotiated.”*

*“My son is going to be married this Spring Festival. If we want more people to attend our ceremony, we should attend others now. If we want to get back more, we should spend more now. Sometimes, it is not only about money, but also about your reputation. Of course, nobody likes to be isolated and it is a shame if not so many people attend your ceremony or they give little money.”*

In addition, there is a trend that who attends depends more on whose relatives they are, although this is not shown in the contents of the table. Some respondents mention,

*“If his relatives have affairs, he goes. If he is not at home, maybe I attend or we ask somebody to give the money instead of us and we do not go. If the affairs are hosted by my relatives, I attend.”*

## **6.5 Gender relations at the symbolic level: traditional and new thinking**

The foregoing part has focused on gender relations located at the practice level. This part will focus on the ideological thinking and justifications of female peasants in the encountered practices. I mainly stress two aspects, that is, women’s awareness of their status in agricultural production and their awareness of more general inequalities in the household.

### ***1) Justifications of gender relations on agricultural production***

The foregoing illustrations state that the stay-behind women (i.e., female peasants in the first sub-group) are undertaking more workload in purchasing seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, farming machines and selling produce. They also have more participation in decision-making of these activities, although the degrees of feminization in different activities are highly diverse. In reality, the stay-behind women decide more things in agricultural production, which is also shown from the chi-square value in Table 6.12 when compared to those women who are at home farming with their husbands. However, how is their awareness about the increased decision-making power? Do they think they should decide more when they are doing more in agricultural production? What are the factors that condition their awareness? In the research, I use the questions, “who is making more decision in agricultural production at present time?”, “if your husband does not farm, but he wants to decide or decides everything in agricultural production, what is your opinion?” and “who makes more contribution to farming”, to try to explore female peasants’ awareness in their own decision-making power in agricultural production.



**Table 6.12: Who decides more in agricultural production (%, $\chi^2(2)=31.859$ ,  $p=0.000$ )**

	Husband decides more	Codetermination	Woman decides more	Total
Sub-group 1	24	24	52	100
Sub-group 2	44	54	2	100
<b>Total</b>	34	39	27	100

From these analyses, I find that for the whole group of women, the reality of their decision-making power in agricultural production is consistent with their opinion on it (see Table 6.13, the chi-square value is 17.085, which is significant at the 0.01 level). Data in Table 6.14 and Table 6.15 support two points. First, women in sub-group 1 decide more in agricultural production than the husbands, but 83% (Table 6.14) think ‘it is alright’ that the husbands decide more in farming. Second, compared to the stay-behind women, the control group of women do not show the gap between their participation in agricultural production and their opinion. When the husbands decide more in agricultural production, they all think “it is alright” (100%, Table 6.15). To sum up, there is an obvious gap between the reality and the opinion of who should decide more in agricultural production in the left-behind women group. The changes in reality do not directly lead to the gender relations changes at the symbolic level. To some extent, women themselves strictly follow the traditional rules that men as the household heads should have the decision-making power in everything within the households.

**Table 6.13: 100 respondents’ opinion and reality about ‘who decides more in agriculture’ (%, $\chi^2(4)=17.085$ ,  $p=0.002$ )**

	husband decides more	codetermination	woman decides more	Total
It is alright	82	56	59	66
Have no idea	18	5	11	11
It is wrong	0	39	30	23
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

**Table 6.14: The opinion and reality of women in sub-group 1 about ‘who decides more in agriculture’ (%, $\chi^2(4)=6.426$ ,  $p=0.170$ )**

	husband decides more	codetermination	woman decides more	Total
It is alright	83	67	58	66
Have no idea	17	0	12	10
It is wrong	0	33	31	24
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

**Table 6.15: The opinion and reality of women in sub-group 2 about ‘who decides more in agriculture’ (%, $\chi^2(4)=12.494$ ,  $p=0.014$ )**

	husband decides more	codetermination	woman decides more	Total
It is alright	100	52	82	66
Have no idea	0	7	18	12
It is wrong	0	41	0	22
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100

Interviews from the investigation explain the reasons for the gap between the reality and the opinion. Firstly, the female peasants believe the husband, as the household leader, has the right to decide everything in the household, even though he does not work. The supportive statements from the investigation are like,

*“He is the leader of the family”;*

*“He is a man and I am a woman. I should follow his decision.”*

Secondly, agricultural production is not so essential now, especially when comparing the earnings of the migrant husband from an economic perspective. Since this change, some women think anyone who wants to decide can decide and a wrong decision will not lead to a big disaster. As some respondents argued,

*“Agriculture is not a big affair. Almost everything in agricultural production, I can decide by myself. My husband believes my decision is correct.”*

*“There are no big things in farming, so if he wants to decide, he can decide.”*

Thirdly, for some respondents, to maximize the family’s interest is the final objective, which is more important than pursuing the relative equal status in the households. In their opinion, both the husband and the woman have as the main aim to make the family better. Women believe the intention of the husband in making more decisions is to make the family better. Some women indicated,

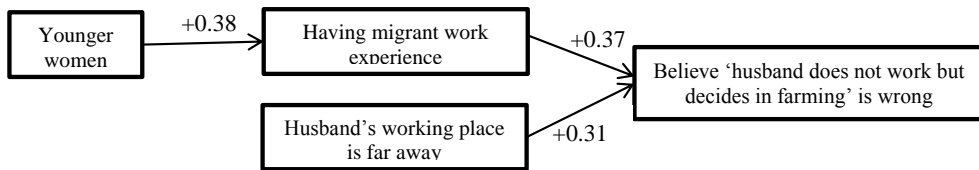
*“We both can decide agricultural production issues. And our decision should meet the farming’s need.’ ‘He is also worried that I cannot buy the good agricultural materials. It is understandable that he wants to participate in the decision-making process.”*

In general, “*he is the household head*”, “*farming is not important*” and “*we both are working for the family*”, these are the three main reasons mentioned by the women. Nonetheless, there remains some perplexity, because if farming is really not important, why do the women not decide everything? Why do the stay-behind try to ‘deny’ the reality that they decide more things in agricultural production? It seems the stay-behind women try to give more ‘face’ to the migrant husband when they are doing and deciding more things in agricultural production. It seems they are denying their own contribution to farming to ‘protect’ the status of the husbands in the household. From this thinking, a deduction can be made is that the stay-behind women are continuously controlled by and reproducing the traditional gender norms – “man is superior to woman” and “woman should obey the husband after marriage”.

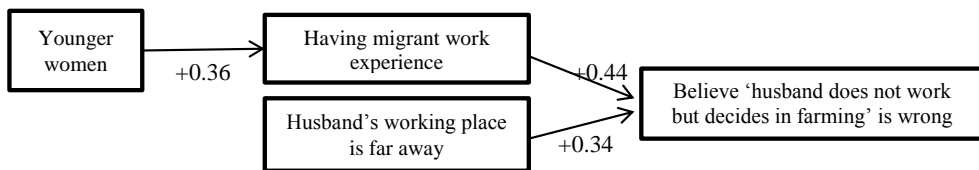
However, beyond this traditional thinking, some answers of the new thinking from the investigation can be drawn as well, i.e., “*the one who is working in agricultural production should decide the things in it.*” An important sub-group of women stress it is wrong that although the husband does not work in agricultural production he decides/wants to decide things. Then, further multivariate regression analyse find out that women’s justifications of gender equality awareness in decision-making in agricultural production are conditioned. It depends on the distance of husband’s working place from the village and the female peasants’ previous migrant work experience.

The multiple regression analyses indicate that women, who had migrant work experience before, tend to show more a positive attitude to pursue their equal rights in decision-making in

agricultural production. From Figure 6.6<sup>14</sup> and Figure 6.7, the regression coefficient is +0.37 in all respondents and the correlation is stronger in sub-group 1, which is +0.44, but there is no correlation in this respect in sub-group 2. Female peasants have more chances to experience and feel the modern culture when they are working away from home than those who do not engage in the work outside of the household. It is a kind of potential imperceptible influence to their lives when they come back to the village, which is helpful for them to recognize their own contribution to the household. For instance, one stay-behind woman, who worked away from home before and later came back to care for the son, ironically said to me, “*He (the husband) should pay me for caring for the son at home. If I work away from home, I can also earn some money by caring for other people’s son.*”



**Figure 6.6: Path diagram of 100 women’s opinion on ‘husband’s no work but decides’ ( $R^2=0.20$ )**



**Figure 6.7: Path diagram of the opinion of women in sub-group 1 on ‘husband’s no work but decides’ ( $R^2=0.27$ )**

The analyses also show that if the husbands are working far away from the hometown<sup>15</sup>, their wives tend to confirm their own decision-making power in agricultural production. The partial regression coefficient is +0.31 in the 100 respondents and +0.34 in the sub-group 1 (there is no correlation about this in sub-group 2). The regression in the first group of peasants is also higher than the whole group. However, it seems contrary to the previous results shown from Table 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15. Those three tables support that the husbands of the left-behind women decide more in agricultural production in reality than the husbands of the other group. It is possible and reasonable. Although 28% of the left-behind women said they would discuss the agricultural production situation with the husband during a phone call, I cannot evaluate or check the impact of phone call communication on the decision-making in agricultural production, even in the biography recording period. It is sensible to investigate the communication contents from female peasants. Nevertheless, it is sure that previous

<sup>14</sup> The path diagram only shows the significant correlations. The other insignificant variables involved in the analyses include: education attainment, contact frequency with the migrant husband, household economic situation, extra-job beyond farming, opinion on who can do better farming work, working years of women doing the farming, opinion on whether to abandon farming.

<sup>15</sup> About husband’s working place, there are migrant husbands in both sub-groups’ households. But the main difference between the migrant husbands in both sub-groups is that the husbands in sub-group 1 are long-term migrants, who are away more than 6 months every year. The migrant husbands in sub-group 2 are short-term migrants, most of the time, they stay with the women in/around the village.

migrant work experience can stimulate female peasants' awareness in their own decision-making rights in the households.

In addition, in this research, I also used a direct question to explore female peasants' awareness in their own decision-making rights in agricultural production, that is, 'who makes more contribution to farming in your opinion?' Female peasants who are doing more work in agricultural production should confirm their own contribution, but the research results show that nearly one third of them confirm that the husband makes more contribution to farming than them. These women consider the gravitation centre of their work to be located in the household. Not doing the heavy work is the main reason for denying their contribution in farming.

**Table 6.16: Who makes more contribution to farming (% ,  $X^2(2)=20.889$ ,  $p=0.000$ )**

	Husband	Equal contribution	Woman	Others	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	28	28	44	0	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	62	30	6	2	100
<b>Total</b>	45	29	25	1	100

In Table 6.16, 44% of the female peasants in sub-group 1 think they make more contribution than the husband in agricultural production. Logically, all the women in sub-group 1 should stress their own contribution to farming, at least they do more work in it, but 28% of the stay-behind women stress the husbands' contribution to the farming work. As to the reasons, the 'heavy' part in agricultural production that cannot be easily done is the first given reason.

*"Although we are doing all the management part, the part we cannot do, such as using the machine to plough the land, is the most essential part. So they make more contribution to farming than us."*

Secondly, men have more accumulated knowledge of farming than women generally in their opinion.

*"My husband has more knowledge about farming than me. Before he migrated, he did the farming and he did it very well. Now, if I have some doubts about farming, I will call him and consult him. So he makes more contribution than me."*

Thirdly, investment in farming is also a factor that conditions the judgement of the contribution to farming:

*"I do not earn extra money and I use his earnings to invest into farming. He makes more contribution."*

## **2) Justifications of gender relations in the households**

Whilst the previous section focuses on unequal decision-making in farming and the associated justification of it, this section moves to the household and it especially discusses how gender inequality within the household is justified. As to the contribution to family, earning more

cash is the main criterion to evaluate it in general. Data in Table 6.17 illustrate that there is almost no difference in the two sub-groups of female peasants' opinion on who makes more contribution to family. Nearly 60% of them think the husband makes more contribution and nearly 40% of them confirm their equal contribution to the family with the husband.

**Table 6.17: Who makes more contribution to family (%),  $X^2(2)=3.886$ ,  $p=0.143$ )**

	Husband	Equal contribution	Woman	Others	Total
Sub-group 1	54	34	12	0	100
Sub-group 2	58	40	2	0	100
Total	56	37	7	0	100

Compared to the husband's migrant earnings, woman earns less (even though all the farming earnings are calculated into the woman's earnings). How much they can earn separately determines the family status between husband and wife to some extent. As some women mentioned,

*"My husband can earn 100 Yuan per day and I just earn less than 10 Yuan per day."*

*"I am using the money earned by my husband."*

*"Taking care of children and elderly make no contribution. He earns more cash money than me, so he contributes more to the family."*

Undertaking risk is also a criterion to judge the contribution to the family in the women's opinion. Some pointed out that,

*"My husband is undertaking more risk than me. He is working on the construction site away from home. Sometimes, it is dangerous. It is not so easy to earn the money. Relatively speaking, there is not so much risk at home. So, he makes more contribution to the family."*

The arguments of the female peasants, who confirm their equal contribution as the husband to the family, mainly focus on the at-home and away-from-home labour division pattern. These women believe the couple cannot live without each other. Some argued,

*"He can earn more money but I do all the things within family. We are equal."*

*"We are both trying our best to provide the family members with better lives."*

*"We both contribute to the family."*

*"We cannot live without each other."*

For those female peasants who stress their own contribution to the family, the reasons are also understandable. They believe they do all the tasks in the family and deal with all the matters by themselves, including taking care of children and elderly people, managing the farming

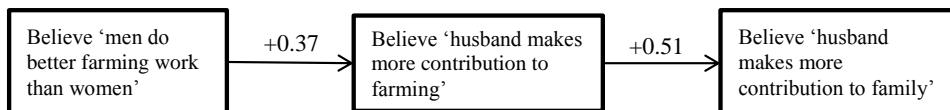
work, dealing with the social activities and trying to earn more money. Although there usually is no big affair needed to be undertaken by the woman alone, it is hard for one person to deal with all the things in the family well and keep the family going on peacefully. Some respondents mentioned,

*“In the family, I am more tired than him. My husband also agrees that I make more contribution than him to the household.”*

*“Yes, he earns more cash than me for the household. If I go out to work, I can also earn some money. But our aim is to take good care of the child. I stay behind because I want to give good care to the child. My husband earns money and suffers a lot away from home, because he also wants to give a better living standard to our child. At home, beyond caring for the children, I need to do the farming work and I need to consider and manage everything that happens in the family. I think I make more contribution to the family than him in general.”*

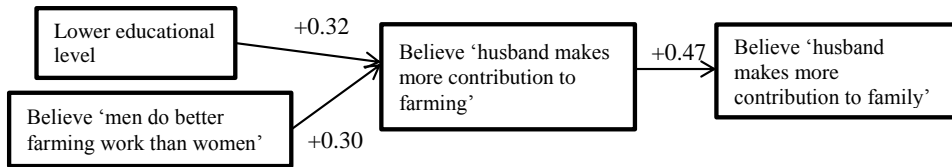
From the foregoing analyses, there are many different criteria to judge ‘contribution to farming’ and ‘contribution to family’ according to female peasants’ opinion. Furthermore, it seems there is no difference between the statements of the two sub-groups of women. However, from the multiple regression analyses, different factors emerge that affect female peasants’ opinion on “who makes more contribution to farming” and “who makes more contribution to family”.

Figure 6.8<sup>16</sup> shows that there is a strong correlation between “who makes more contribution to farming” and “who makes more contribution to family” (regression coefficient is +0.51, 100 respondents). If the female peasants believe “the husband makes more contribution to farming”, they tend to confirm “the husband makes more contribution to the whole family”. Moreover, female peasants’ opinion on “who makes more contribution to farming” is related to their opinion on “who can do better farming work (men or women, and regression coefficient is +0.37, 100 respondents)”. And within the sub-group 1 of female peasants, their educational background is also an indirect factor that conditions their judgement on who makes more contribution to the family. Women who have lower educational background tend to believe the husband makes more contribution to farming and women who believe men can do better farming work than women have the tendency to believe the husband makes more contribution to farming.

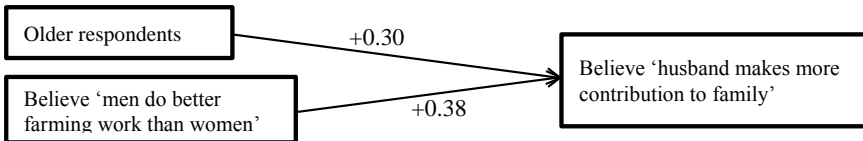


**Figure 6.8: Path diagram of 100 women’s opinion on ‘contribution to the family’ (R<sup>2</sup>=0.26)**

<sup>16</sup> There are also factors that condition female peasants’ opinion on ‘who can do better farming’. These have been already illustrated in Table 5.6 and Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5. The path diagram only shows the significant correlations. The variables involved in the analyses also include: migrant work experience, extra-job beyond farming, husband’s working place, household economic situation.



**Figure 6.9: Path diagram of the opinion of women in sub-group 1 'contribution to the family' ( $R^2=0.22$ )**



**Figure 6.10: Path diagram of the opinion of women in sub-group 2 'contribution to the family' ( $R^2=0.23$ )**

In combination, data in Figures 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 represent the traditional thinking of female peasants in the research site to some extent. The diagrams can be also read in the other way around: they disclose, as it were, the new thinking of female peasants. When having a higher educational attainment, the women tend to confirm their own contribution to farming and to family. Women who believe they can do better farming work than men also have the tendency to stress their own contribution to farming and to family. Farming is some women's main territory and the earnings from farming could be calculated as women's earning now. They have the awareness that they do and suffer the same, or more than the husband.

## 6.6 Conclusion

China is experiencing big migration from rural areas to urban areas and this leads to a crucial change in the composition of agricultural production labour force. This results in an increasing dependency on women's labour input and they are becoming the primary labour force to maintain and contribute to food security and rural development in China. Exploration of what really happens in agricultural production and in female peasants' lives at the farm level from their own perspective is meaningful and substantial at present time. The present chapter aims to get a more comprehensive understanding of women's status, power and gender relation with the husband in agricultural production and in the households under the large migration background of the male labour force.

In this chapter, I mainly discussed four questions at two levels: At the material level, I discussed gender inequalities in agricultural production, in household affairs, in village public affairs. At the symbolic level, I discussed female peasants' awareness and justifications of their status and rights in the households and explored the trajectories for changing the gender inequality. By comparing the current situation of the left-behind women and the women who are in and around the village with their husbands, the research finds that women in sub-group 1 show more participation in purchasing agricultural production materials and selling produce than the comparative sub-group of female peasants. In general, they have more decision-

making rights in agricultural production, although with differentiated degrees in different activities.

However, more decision-making rights does not necessarily lead to the general gender equality in the household affairs. Women in two sub-groups have not shown big difference in doing and deciding the household affairs. They divide the affairs into big affairs and small affairs. Small affairs mainly refer to the daily affairs, which do not cost lots of money each time and which are usually for the direct needs of the family members. Instead, big affairs refer to all kinds of decision-making and money spending on children's education, marriage, illness and elderly people's medical cost and funeral expenditure. Left-behind women have higher decision-making power in agricultural production affairs. However, regarding the big affairs in the households, few of them could decide by themselves. This result is consistent with the research result of Yuan (2010:82). She pointed out in her PhD thesis that, "in the municipality of Kaizuo (in Guizhou Province in China), female-headed households are the households in which women are the main decision-makers regarding household chores, agricultural production (including the buying of seeds), animal breeding, gift giving, borrowing money, taking care of elderly people and children, and marketing. Yet, for most female-headed households, the most important events for the household are still under the control of men, such as building a house, or arranging wedding ceremonies and funerals." As a matter of fact, the discourse of "big and small" division itself tries to make differences in gender and it makes women neglect and deny their own contribution to the households. Moreover, the women with extra-earnings beyond farming do not show much decision-making power in big household affairs, either. As the money from the extra-job earned by stay-behind women is still used for the 'small affairs' in the households, it consolidates the existing gendered division of money use in the households. However, the extra-earnings beyond farming provide women with opportunities to invest their own income in farming and this might contribute to their feelings about liking farming and then continue farming. Furthermore, the multivariate regression analyses tell us also that gender relations are changing in different trajectories for different types of women and there is not one specific solution that fits all the situations. Even though it is not the mainstream that men and women have equal power in deciding the big things in the households, there are different drivers (such as being young, having a higher educational background, having a faraway geographical distance with the migrant husband and seldom contact with the migrant husband) to stimulate to change the existing gender relationships and to let women be more independent and empowered.

Regarding the public affairs, I mainly discuss the issues of attending village election, attending village meetings, contributing the village collective labour force, and maintaining *guanxi* – to attend the weddings or funerals of other people (such as relatives or villagers). In regard to the village meeting and village election affairs, there is no real democratic election. Only the communist party members in the research site really participate in the village election and meetings. As to the village collective labour affairs, paying money instead of contributing to the manual labour is the mainstream. Although some women want to earn some money back by their own labour contribution, stay-behind men, instead of women are



usually the few people who get the ‘opportunities’ in the few collective affairs (such as planting trees or repairing public village road). In addition to the affairs related to the village committee, the public affairs of the rural households also include the social activities related to their relatives, such as weddings, funerals, birth of a child and traditional festivals’ visits. Before the migration of the husband, the husband was usually the person to attend the social activities because he is the head of the household and he can represent the whole household. After the migration of the husband, more women are attending this kind of social activities than before, and also the women in the control group. This might contribute to the building of women’s own social networks and to their own development from a long-term perspective, even though more than half of the women indicate that they need to discuss the affairs with the husband before their actions.

As to the analyses of gender inequality at the symbolic level, i.e., the awareness of female peasants about their own right in farming and in the household, I use their opinion on ‘husband is not working but decides things in agricultural production’, ‘who makes more contribution to farming’ and ‘who makes more contribution to family’ to evaluate. The research finds that although all stay-behind women are making the main contribution in agricultural production, nearly half of them deny their own contribution and stress the husband’s efforts. Generally, women themselves strictly follow the traditional rules that men, as the household heads, should have the decision-making power on everything within the households, even though men do not work on the affairs in practice. The multiple regression analyses find that there is a significant correlation between female peasants’ opinion on who makes more contribution to farming and who makes more contribution to family. Women who believe the husband makes more contribution to farming tend to confirm the husband also makes more contribution to the family. For the left-behind women, the lower educational background and their belief that the husband can do better farming work than they can, are the factors affecting their opinion on husbands making more contribution to farming, and then affecting their belief that husbands make more contribution to family. This reflects the typical traditional thinking in some women’s minds. On the contrary, the same path-diagrams also refer to factors that associate with new thinking and their justifications show the differentiated trajectories for changing the unequal gender relations.

Generally, with the migration of the husbands, the stay-behind women do more farming tasks than before and they have more decision-making participation than before and more than the other women whose husband is at home. However, this is not equal to the same decision-making power in everything in the households. On one hand, the daily practice and the symbolic thinking in agricultural production and household show that left-behind women are doing the small, light and unimportant tasks within the households. The work women do still is perceived as relatively insignificant and supplementary to the work of the men in the households. They are still in the second place. Nevertheless, different trajectories for making changes also emerge in the existing unequal gender relations. The factors, such as being young, having a higher educational attainment, having previous migrant work experience, have a faraway geographical distance with the migrant husband, positively contribute to more equal gender relations.

In conclusion, gender relations between women and their husbands are still strongly influenced and controlled by the traditional culture in China. As I discussed in the beginning, the norm that women should remain inside the household, for instance, is still having an impact on women's decision-making and behaviour. However, there is always room for change. The migration of the husband creates room for making changes in gender relations and, there are different development trajectories in the two sub-groups of women to modify the narrow gender framework gradually. For instance, stay-behind women who are younger, and rarely have contact with the far-away migrant husband tend to recognize their own rights in decision-making on big affairs. Additionally, those stay-behind women with higher educational background tend to recognize their own contribution to farming and to the households. For the women who are in and around the village with the husbands, being relatively highly educated makes them have higher participation in household big affairs' decision-making and being young help them realize their own contribution to farming and family.

## **Chapter 7 To Be a Somebody or To Be a Nobody –Women’s Well-being and Identity**

In recent years, large scale labour migration has had a substantial impact on rural China. Large amounts of rural male labour force work away from home for long periods until they are old, while rural female labour force also often migrate when they are young, but generally return to the village to get married(Wang and Fan, 2006). After marriage and especially childbirth, most women remain in the village. Consequently, all the work involved within and around the household, such as agricultural production work and caring for children and elderly people, is mainly managed by women. Although migration work is the best and perhaps the only option to make ends meet and is widely perceived to be the key to improve peasant households’ well-being (e.g., Croll and Huang, 1997; Tan, 1996), the most scholars argue that out-migration, while improving household income, has a negative impact on the well-being of left-behind women. For instance, the increases in labour time and excessive responsibilities could be harmful to women’s physical and mental health (Ren and Dong, 1997) and their own development (e.g., Yuan, 2006; Zhang, 2006). How do women experience the life after the migration of their husbands? How do they subjectively perceive the quality of their life? Are they happy? If they are not happy, how do they deal with tough situations? Exploration of what really happens in women’s lives from the involved women’s own perspective is meaningful and essential to make contribution to the improvement of their well-being.

This chapter aims to get a further comprehensive understanding of the current situation of left-behind women’s objective and subjective well-being. It also strives to explore the factors that contribute to women’s happiness and well-being. Then, at the end, by synthesizing women’s expectations on well-being related issues, this chapter tries to make a constructive contribution to policy making. Methodologically, in order to explore the impact of outmigration on women’s well-being situation, I use the comparative approach in this chapter as well. That is, comparing the left-behind women’s well-being situation with the one of the women doing the farming work together with their husbands. Furthermore, this chapter also uses materials collected by using biography recording and participatory observation. Well-being issues, like affection between husband and wife, are very sensitive issues for rural women to respond to openly. This makes the latter two research methods strategic.

### **7.1 Introduction**

Since the 1980s, the migration of rural male labour force to the urban areas is becoming mainstream in the process of development in China. With the migration of men, the children, women and the elderly people are left-behind in the villages because of the institutional restrictions (e.g., *hukou*, household registration system) and economic limitations. So instead of men, women have become the main labour force in the households managing the agricultural production work, as well as caring for children and elderly people. On the one hand, studies about migration mainly focus on the well-being situation of migrants (Freidenberg et al., 1988; Knight and Gunatilaka, 2010) and the significance of migration for

the experiences of migrants themselves (Fan, 2008; Jacka, 2005; Solinger, 1999), for the household economic level (Du et al., 2005), for the agricultural production yield (Rozelle et al., 1999b) and for the urban communities and national development (Page and Plaza, 2006; Zhang and Song, 2003). On the other hand, there are studies that aim to understand the social consequences of migration for rural communities of origin, and the situation of those who remain in the countryside (e.g., Abas et al., 2009; Mu and de Walle, 2011; Murphy, 2004). The majority of the available studies argue that outmigration has a negative impact on the well-being of the left-behind women. Scholars claim that left-behind women have particularly heavy workloads, are under high levels of stress and suffer from poor mental and physical health (Wu and Ye, 2010; Xu, 2009b, 2010); they suffer from feelings of loneliness and insecurity (Wu and Ye, 2010; Xu, 2009b); and the relations with their husbands are relatively unsatisfactory, loaded with conflicts and unstable (Li, 2008; Lou, 2004; Xu, 2009a, b). Furthermore, due to this negative impact, outmigration of the male labour force negatively affects women's own development from a long-term perspective (Li et al., 2000; Lin, 2003; Yuan, 2006; Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 1999; Zhu, 2001).

Grace and Lennie (2002) argue that rural women in the literature are always construed as the other, be it as victims or as heroes/saviours. In this chapter, I do not want to take rural women in Yang Village as the other. My aim is to explore their own understanding and judgements on their well-being situation after the migration of their husbands. Furthermore, departing from the illustrations of the well-being condition experienced by female peasants, I will exemplify how they deal with the hardships in their daily lives and how they help themselves to be happy. At the end, this chapter will discuss women's expectations on well-being related issues. The following indicators are used to show the impact of husbands' migration on women's well-being in this chapter:

- 1) Well-being situation/physical burden and emotional burden. The leading question in this section is: "Which in your opinion is the better situation, the couple farm together or the woman alone does most of the farming work?" Based on the discussion of the general judgements of women on the situations, this section expands the discussion to the physical burden and emotional burden that left-behind women have experienced. Regarding objective well-being, it mainly discusses the physical burden in doing agricultural production, caring and housework within the households. It also refers to the potential risks in doing farming and women's physical condition. With regard to subjective well-being, the chapter explores women's emotional burden, such as loneliness and lack of affection, by using questions related to 'contact information with migrant husband' (emotional support from the husband) in the questionnaire, biography recording and participatory observation.
- 2) How to deal with the hardships and the factors that condition female peasants' happiness. This part uses the in-depth interview and participatory observation materials from biographical recorded cases to illustrate some factors, such as education, migrant work experience, women's birth place, marriage form and local belief, that help women be happy and help them avoid loneliness.

- 3) Expectations on well-being related issues: The following open questions were investigated during the field work, “What are your expectations on training and organizations?”, “What kind of information you would like to know” and “what is your expectation of your son and/or daughter?” These questions can reflect their suffering and the situation with which they are to some extent not directly or indirectly pleased, which is an essential part contributing to the development of women’s well-being.

## 7.2 Physical burden and emotional burden

“Well-being is conceived as arising from a person’s material/objective, cognitive/subjective and relational conditions” (Newton, 2007). Well-being is a general term for the condition of an individual or group, for example, their social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical state. High well-being means that the individual or group's experience is positive in some sense, while low well-being is associated with negative experiences. McGregor (2004) notes, “at any point in time the well-being of an individual is the outcome of the resources they have; the needs that they are able to fulfil; and their subjective evaluation of their state of well-being. These three outcomes are interconnected and are reproduced in the process of interaction with wider structures of family, community and society.” As to burden, it is often treated as distinct concept from well-being and it is a predictor of well-being (Chappell and Reid, 2002; Pearlin et al., 1990; Stull et al., 1994; Yates et al., 1999). Burden is commonly understood to be composed of both objective and subjective components (Vitaliano et al., 1991), which will be discussed in this section.

As we know, women in sub-group 1 are mainly left-behind women and their husbands are working far away from home; the control group of women are usually farming together with their husbands. Are the women satisfied with their current labour division? Whether women feel satisfied with the current labour division definitely affects their well-being? Then, in the investigation, all women were interviewed about their judgements on the following questions: “Farming together with the husband or farming by woman alone, which situation is better in general? Which situation makes you happier? And which situation is better for women in your opinion?”

**Table 7.1: Which situation is better, farming work done by couple together or mainly by woman (%)**

		Farming together	Have no idea	Mainly by woman	Total
<b>Which situation is better in general</b> ( $X^2(2)=1.659$ , $p=0.436$ )	Sub-group 1	66	6	28	100
	Sub-group 2	54	6	40	100
	<b>Total</b>	60	6	34	100
<b>Which situation is happier for women</b> ( $X^2(1)=2.929$ , $p=0.231$ )	Sub-group 1	68	12	20	100
	Sub-group 2	52	22	26	100
	<b>Total</b>	60	17	23	100
<b>Which situation is better for women</b> ( $X^2(2)= 2.291$ , $p=0.318$ )	Sub-group 1	76	14	10	100
	Sub-group 2	62	22	16	100
	<b>Total</b>	69	18	13	100

The analyses results in Table 7.1 show the following points. On the one hand, from the chi-square values, there is no difference in the opinions of the three questions between the two

sub-groups of women. Generally, most women in both sub-groups think it is better that the couple farm together than women mainly do the farming work alone. However, there are gaps between the reality that left-behind women are experiencing and their judgements. 66% of left-behind women point out that farming together with the husband is better in general than farming mainly by themselves; 68% of left-behind women think farming together with husbands makes them happier than farming on their own; and 76% of left-behind women assume farming together is better for women than farming alone. Even though farming together with husband is perceived as better than farming alone by left-behind women, the reality they are experiencing is they are farming mainly by themselves. On the other hand, women in the control group have higher percentages in thinking farming work mainly done by women is better in all the three cases (40%>28%; 26%>20%; 16%>10%). There are pros and cons in both situations; farming together or farming mainly done by women. In each situation women have to assess a balance<sup>1</sup> then women tend to admire the situations of the other sub-group. In addition, the women in two sub-groups show higher rates in giving a 'have no idea' answer to the specific women-related questions than to the general question. Women are reluctant to admit the influence of out-migration on themselves. The following parts illustrate the physical burden and emotional burden due to male labour forces' migration.

### **7.2.1 Physical burden**

Regarding the physical burden of women, this part mainly discusses women's burden in agricultural production, caring and household work, their physical condition and risks in doing agricultural production.

#### **1) Heavier physical burden in agricultural production**

Peasants in Yang Village mainly grow rice (June - October) and wheat (November - May) in rotation every year. The two harvest seasons are the busy seasons and each one lasts around 20 days. Around the beginning of June, peasants need to harvest the wheat, plough the land and then plant the paddy rice. The harvest work is usually done by the reaping and threshing machines. Most families do not have these relative big and expensive machines and they hire the machinery to do it. In 2011, the cost of harvesting 1 *mu* farm land was around 120 Yuan<sup>2</sup>. After finishing the work done by the reaping and threshing machines, peasants need to drive the tractor to transport the produce home and then do the land preparation work for the next season's rice production. Actually, prior to the wheat harvest season, peasants usually grow the rice seedlings in the vegetable gardens at the beginning of May. After the land preparation work, peasants transplant the seedlings from the vegetable garden into the field. In the peasants' opinion, the workload in the peak seasons is very heavy. Even though the husband usually comes back to help them, it is still very hard work. Some women described it like this,

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<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint is consistent with Chayanov's viewpoint to some extent. "The mechanism Chayanov devised for explaining how the family acted is his labour-consumer balance. Each family seeks an annual output adequate for its basic needs; but this involves drudgery." (Thorner, 1986: xvi) For my own research, the balance between migrant earnings and suffering is a new form.

<sup>2</sup> The exact cost depends on the crops growing situation. For instance, if there are many flattened crops in the field, it will cost more than the average price to harvest it, because it takes more time to finish the work.

*“During the harvest season, we feel tired every day. Every morning, we need to get up when the sun rises, have a quick breakfast and go to the field to work. You know, it is better to work before the heat of the day. It is more comfortable to work in the morning, because it is not so hot. Moreover, it is better for the rice crops. If you plant it around midday, it is likely to scorch... Then, at midday, we come back to have lunch and then go to work again until the night falls... The reasons for working so hard during those days also relates to the weather and climate condition. You know, *qiangzhong qiangshou* (抢种抢收) is very important, which means you should hurry the harvesting and hurry the planting always considering the weather condition. If you do not work hard during those days, you might miss the right moment to plant it. You might face rain or other problems which will lead to a lower yield in the end.”*

**Table 7.2: Women’s working hours during busy and non-busy season**

	Busy season		Non-busy season	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	10.49	2.17	1.63	0.93
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	9.94	2.67	1.45	0.69

Compared to the women whose husbands are doing farming work together with them at home, left-behind women suffer from more workload. Data in Table 7.2 support this argument. Even though the gaps between the figures in the table are not large, left-behind women in the interviews confirm that they suffer more than the control group of women. They indicated,

*“Of course, we suffer more than them (women whose husbands are doing farming together with them). For instance, we need to do everything on our own, such as buying pesticides<sup>3</sup> or applying it to the crops. If the husband is at home, the husband will definitely do it so the woman does not need to suffer from the workload and the heat.”*

*“During the harvest season, although the husband comes back to help me, he just stays for around 20 days. I need to grow the seedlings by myself before he returns. After he leaves, I need to do all the rest of the management work in agricultural production as well. For the women who are farming together with their husbands, the husbands are usually the main labour force in agricultural production and the women are the helpers. It means, if the work only needs one labourer, the husband will do it. If it needs two labourers, then the woman also participates.”*

For left-behind women, although the husbands come back to harvest during the peak season, the workload is different compared to the women who can do it together with the husband. Some left-behind women said,

<sup>3</sup> This argument is supported by the data in Table 6.5 in Chapter 6. Left-behind women undertake almost all the work in purchasing agricultural production materials. Women in the control group show relatively lower rates in doing these activities because their husbands usually undertake these.

*“Actually, the husband comes back only to do the heavy or the physical work during the harvest season. The other tasks in the agricultural production, he cannot do better than me as I have more experience than him, for instance, the work of transplanting the paddy rice seedlings from the vegetable garden to the field. He mainly transports the seedlings to the field and I plant the seedlings in field. He cannot control the depth of the seedlings well in the water and soil, which will definitely influence the growth of the crops later on... Of course, I think I am more tired than him, even though we work for the same amount of time.”*

**2) Almost no leisure time in the households**

Beyond crop farming, most female peasants need to do the caring and housework as well. Most of women claim that they do not have any leisure time (91%, Table 7.3). The main point mentioned by female peasants for not having any leisure time is caring for children and/or elderly people in addition to the farming work. My investigation finds that 88% of the women are taking care of children and/or grandchildren and only 12% of women do not need to take care of anybody (Table 7.4). Caring for children is more tiring than caring for elderly people, in the women's opinion, especially caring for those children under 5 years old. It takes more time and energy. Biographical recorded respondent Wang has been caring for her grandson since 2010. One year after her grandson's birth, the daughter-in-law migrated together with Wang's son so Wang takes full responsibility for the care of her grandson. She said this,

*“It is very tiring, you cannot leave the grandson alone at any time only when he is sleeping. You see, my room is not tidy and clean. I do not have time to clean it when he is awake. Even though I have cleaned it, after ten minutes, he destroys all the cleaning work I have done... There is no leisure time for me. I always do the cooking, washing and cleaning work when he is sleeping... I cannot get enough sleep, he always gets up early in the morning and I need to get up when he gets up and prepare his food. When he is playing, I must constantly keep an eye on him in case of risks.”*

**Table 7.3: Whether women have leisure time in the households (%),  $\chi^2(1)=1.099$ ,  $p=0.295$ )**

	No leisure time	Have leisure time	Total
Sub-group 1	88	12	100
Sub-group 2	94	6	100
<b>Total</b>	91	9	100

**Table 7.4: Caring work for (grand)child(ren) (%),  $\chi^2(3)=5.225$ ,  $p=0.156$ )**

	Child(ren)	Grandchild(ren)	Child(ren) and grandchild(ren)	No need	Total
Sub-group 1	56	26	4	14	100
Sub-group 2	38	42	10	10	100
<b>Total</b>	47	34	7	12	100

For the left-behind women, caring work becomes more difficult when agricultural production work is needed. Women must balance the two tasks. Left-behind women face the issue of labour force shortage usually at those moments. Asking the neighbour or parents-in-laws to



take care of the children for a short period is commonly the case. It definitely depends on the physical condition of the parents-in-law. Biographical recorded respondent Wang continued like this,

*“There are only two people at home. My husband, son and daughter-in-law are all working far away from home. Yes, you can hire labourers to do the farming work. However, if you hire people all the time in farming, the earnings from farming might be inadequate to meet the expense. Most families only hire people during the harvest season and I need to do the management work by myself. If I need to go to the field, for instance, to apply pesticides, I will utilize the siesta after lunch. I will put the grandson in my neighbours’ house and ask them to take care of him for a while and I go to the field.”*

**Table 7.5: Whether undertaking caring work for elderly people physically (%),  $X^2(1)=2.852$ ,  $p=0.091$ )**

	Yes	No	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	42	58	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	26	74	100
<b>Total</b>	34	66	100

For some women, they also need to take the responsibility of caring for the parents-in-law. Even though most of the respondents divide up the family, usually after the birth of the first child, and live in the separate houses, it does not mean they do not need to take care of the parents when the parents get old. Usually, peasants do not want to be a burden to the children if they can farm or migrate to work. When they cannot work but can live independently, elderly people get money and/or food from the household(s) of the son(s) equally to support themselves. When they cannot live by themselves, the sons take care of them in turn. Data in Table 7.5 reflect the situation that the women take care of the elderly people physically in Yang Village. Biographical recorded respondent Zhuang is one supportive case. Zhuang is taking care of the daughter (a primary school student), the son (also a primary school student) and the mother-in-law who is in bad physical condition. Zhuang has a very full timetable every day and she described her daily life like this,

*“I get up at 5:40 in the morning every day and I prepare the breakfast for the children. In the meantime, I do the household chores. At 7:00 am, I ask the children to get up and help them have breakfast. Then, I send the children to the school. After that, I can do the things in the farm land or come back to wash clothes. Around 5 o’clock, I pick up my children and bring them back home and prepare dinner for them. After the dinner, I boil warm water for the children and the mother-in-law to have showers. I go to bed around half past nine in the evening... You know what, due to the bad physical condition of my mother-in-law, I need to prepare separate meals for her. She cannot eat the same food as we do; she needs more soft food. I have the feeling that I am cooking all the time. Every day, I do washing as well. Two young children and one elderly person, I do not want others to say I am lazy... However, this year, the weeds in my farm land are higher than others. I did not have time to spread the pesticides when it was*

*needed because I was taking care of the mother-in-law... When the physical condition of my mother-in-law was good, I had leisure time to meet my friends. Now, I seldom have time to meet my friends (Zhuang referred to the friends in the nearby village) as caring for my mother-in-law really takes a lot of my time."*

For those women who have an extra-job beyond farming, their workload is heavier and they usually have little leisure time. Biographical recorded respondent Li is one case that fits this situation. Li's husband is working in Zhenjiang (south part of Jiangsu Province) and he earns around 2,000 Yuan per month. Li has an older son studying at the high school and a younger daughter studying at the primary school. She needs money for the children's education and to save money for the son's marriage. She made rubber balls in addition to farming before September, 2012, and then, she started to work in the garment factory in the town because the younger daughter began to study at the primary school of Hu Township. She can drop off and later pick up the daughter on her way to work and back. Li was always busy doing something when I interviewed her, she had not stopped making rubber balls when I interviewed her in 2011 and she said,

*"There is no way to relax. I need to earn as much money as I can. If I make 3 rubber balls a day, I can earn 24 Yuan. This can cover the living cost of my son, daughter and me. Except in the winter time, I always get up before 5 o'clock, you know, when it is light outside. After getting up, I do the cleaning, washing and cooking, and then, I can make rubber balls until my daughter wakes up at half past seven. After having breakfast together, I will take her to the bus waiting point<sup>4</sup> to send her to kindergarten at half past eight. Then, I can go to the field to do farming work when it is needed or come back home to make rubber balls. I do that until half past four in the afternoon, and then I pick up my daughter and prepare dinner for her... I go to sleep around ten o'clock every night. I make rubber balls also while watching TV with my daughter..."*

Of course, whether female peasants have leisure time or a more physical burden depends on the economic situation of their households. Li's economic situation is not good in Yang Village; this is also one reason for her working so hard. She said,

*"My husband does not have a good physical condition and he cannot earn so much money as other strong men in the construction site. My son needs around one thousand Yuan per month for studying at the boarding high school. The small daughter also needs money to attend kindergarten. I must utilize all time I have to make as many rubber balls as I can to get more money."*

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<sup>4</sup> In Yang Village, there are two informal 'bus stops' for the school bus to pick up and drop off the village students (the picture about electronic bicycle in Appendix F, Picture 13, was taken at the village 'bus stop', the women there were waiting for the children after school). All the primary schools and middle schools in the research site are boarding schools. However, none of the primary school students in Grade One board. Students above Grade Two can choose to board or commute every day. All boarding students go back home every two weeks. All middle school students board and go back home every two weeks. Primary school students are usually picked up and dropped back by the school bus, so, there are bus waiting points in the village. All the kindergartens also have this pick up and drop off service in the research site.

Most left-behind women have a full timetable and they are busy every day. During the investigation, some women indicated,

*“I could not think about all the tasks I usually do every day when you asked me. However, I have the strong feeling that I do not have any leisure time and I do not have any spare time. Everything takes time. There are so many household chores I need to manage every day.”*

### 3) Physical condition and potential risks in agricultural production

Heavy workload impacts women’s physical condition negatively. About one third of women in Yang Village suffer from a bad physical health. When commenting about their bad physical conditions, women usually refer to relatively serious complaints that involve taking pills often, such as arthritis, lumbar intervertebral disk herniation, bony spur, gastritis, high blood pressure, cerebral thrombosis. 26% of female peasants point out that they suffer from these complaints and they need to take tablets every day (Table 7.6). Although 74% of the women think they do not have a serious illness, they confirm they often have all kinds of aches and pains in their body. Frequent pains include pains in their waist, arms, shoulder, back, waist and legs. There is no proof that can definitely support the significant correlation between women’s physical burden and their physical condition. However, regression analyses find that women’s bad physical health is significantly correlated with their relative old age. The regression coefficient is +0.26 ( $R^2=0.07$ ). This can support the saying *jilao chengji* (积劳成疾) which means getting ill from overwork.

**Table 7.6: Women’s physical condition in their own opinion (% ,  $X^2(2)=1.529$ ,  $p=0.465$ )**

	Good	Neutral	Bad	Total
<b>Sub-group 1</b>	56	14	30	100
<b>Sub-group 2</b>	68	10	22	100
<b>Total</b>	62	12	26	100

It is a fact that left-behind women undertaking lots of work in the households is a factor that influences women’s physical condition. This is also supported by the information from the interviews. Biographical recorded respondent Li said,

*“My physical condition is not good; I have high blood pressure and arthritis. During the rainy season, I feel pain in my cervical vertebra, waist and legs... I have really worked a lot in the past years. Now, the economic situation is better. Since he (her husband) started working in Zhenjiang, I have undertaken all the work at home. I buy the fertilizers and pesticides etc. I manage the land and sometimes I go to the field to remove the weeds by hands. I take care of two children at home and I make rubber balls. Take making rubber balls, for example, it needs lots of strength. If you want to make more balls, you need to sit there and use your hands and strength to sew continually. After several hours, you will feel pain in your wrists, arms, back, waist and legs. It is very tiring... Crop farming is also tiring. I need to carry the pesticide sprayer when I apply pesticide to the*

*crops. The capacity of the sprayer is usually 16 litres. I usually need to carry it half or two thirds full when I apply the pesticide solution, it is very heavy. Can you imagine? At midday during the hot summer time, I am spraying pesticides in the field... I do not have the choice to live a comfortable life now. I need to work hard for my children, my husband and myself."*

In addition, during the investigation, from the participatory observation, I found a potential risk when peasants are conducting farming work. That is, both male and female peasants do not have enough knowledge about safety procedures when using chemicals such as pesticides and fertilizer. Usually, peasants do not protect themselves when spraying pesticides or herbicides to the crops. For instance, they do not wear mouth-masks and gloves. Neither do they take the wind direction into consideration when they apply the chemicals, nor do they even wash their hands properly after finishing the chemically related work.

My observation of peasants' use of chemicals started from one field trip with the biographical recorded respondent Liu in 2011. At midday in May in 2011, I went to the field to apply pesticides to the wheat together with biographical recorded respondent Liu. Before going to the field, Liu changed from her normal clean clothes into dirty ones which needed to be washed soon and she changed into a pair of old shoes, without any other protection. In order to save some energy, Liu carried an empty sprayer, an old motorcar helmet (to use as water ladle) and the pesticides powder separately instead of blending the pesticides powder beforehand with water. She said there was a small ditch with water in it near to her farm land and she could mix the powder there. Then, we headed to her farm land. When we arrived at the ditch, she tore apart the external packing with her bare hands without gloves and put the pesticides into the sprayer. Then she got water from the ditch by using the motorcar helmet and poured it into the sprayer until there was enough according to the pesticides powder handling instruction. After finishing the work, she just threw the 'empty' pesticides packing away without any thought. At that time, I found many other discarded pesticides packing around the ditch. Then, we started the spraying work. I just followed her when she was doing the work. There was a slight wind that day, but she did not change the spraying direction according to the wind direction during the whole process. Actually, Liu knew it was harmful if you spray the pesticide against the wind direction. However, nobody wants to walk to the field and not do anything once there. And Liu thought she could close her mouth when she applied the pesticides against the wind, then any harm would be minimized. After the work, we went back home and she washed her hands without any soap. I think she thought her hands were clean because she had washed them in clean water.

Can we say there is no correlation between their physical condition and the way they are using chemicals? It is not a single or unique issue in rural China, some scholars have already mentioned it in their research (e.g., Qiao et al., 2012; Sachs and Alston, 2010). Training about chemicals use in agricultural production is urgent and necessary. The story of biographical recorded respondent Zhang illustrates the importance of the need for training on how to use chemicals from the users' side. One midday in the summer in 2011, Zhang decided to apply herbicides to the rice crops. She knows that the herbicide is harmful to human beings'

physical health through watching TV. So she decided to wear a raincoat and wellington boots to protect her. After dressing, she went to the field with a full sprayer of herbicide solution. However, after a period of working in the field, she felt faint because of the hot weather and the suffocating effect of the raincoat.

### 7.2.2 Emotional burden

Physical burden and emotional burden mutually influence each other. Compared to the physical burden, the emotional burden is more difficult to explore and illustrate in the investigation. However, my search finds out that left-behind women usually endure the worries themselves. They have a lower degree of revealing the worries to the husbands than the control group of women. Left-behind women are carrying a bigger emotional workload than the women whose husbands are at home. Moreover, from the biography recording and participatory observation, left-behind women express feeling more loneliness than the women whose husbands are at home together with them and the emotional support from the husbands is essential to release left-behind women's emotional burden. Furthermore, the negative judgements about their own contribution to agricultural production and to the households is also one kind of emotional burden experienced by left-behind women.

#### 1) Worries

Some women in Yang Village do not have any leisure time because they utilize the time undertaking more work to earn more money and about 70% of them have pressure in their lives. Data in Table 7.7 show that 24% of the women have relative high pressure and 47% of them have some pressure in their daily lives. The pressure comes mainly from two issues: they need money to support the children's education and marriage; they need to save for a pension for themselves. There is no difference between left-behind women and the control group of women in the feeling of pressure.

**Table 7.7: Whether women have pressure in their lives (%),  $X^2(2)=0.998$ ,  $p=0.607$ )**

	Relative large pressure	Some pressure	No pressure	Total
Sub-group 1	28	46	26	100
Sub-group 2	20	48	32	100
Total	24	47	29	100

However, there is a significant difference between the two sub-groups of women whether they will reveal their worries to their husbands. Left-behind women usually endure the worries themselves instead of telling the migrant husbands and the control group of women tend to share their worries with their husbands. The chi-square value is 9.261, which is significant at the 0.01 level. Results in Table 7.8 indicate that left-behind women tend to carry the emotional burden themselves and this is harmful to their well-being.

**Table 7.8: Whether women usually tell the husbands actively about their worry (%),  $X^2(2)= 9.261$ ,  $p=0.010$**

	Do not tell	Some tell, some do not tell	Tell	Total
Sub-group 1	38	20	42	100
Sub-group 2	14	16	70	100
<b>Total</b>	26	18	56	100

As to the reasons, left-behind women usually put the husbands' interests in first place. They indicated the following reasons,

*"I do not want to tell him if there is no big need for him to come back. You know, he is working on a construction site. If I tell him, he might worry when he is working. It is dangerous... During our phone calls, I seldom tell him about the bad things going on at home."*

*"If there are really big things happening in the household, I would let him know. For instance, if the parents-in-law are seriously ill, I would let him know as soon as possible. Maybe he needs to come back... Children's educational affairs I also need to tell him about and he wants to know as well. If the children are around when he calls home, he always chats with the children. He can encourage the children to study hard... However, anything about me is not important... Most families are like ours (it means there are lots of left-behind women in the village). Other women can endure and undertake all the tasks at home; so I can do it as well."*

## 2) Loneliness

Results from my investigation show that all the left-behind women have contact with the husbands by phone<sup>5</sup> when the husbands work far away from home. In most of the cases, the husband is usually the person who actively contacts the left-behind wife<sup>6</sup> and the contact frequency is about once every week or two weeks<sup>7</sup>. The couple often talk with each other for approximately five minutes about the children's situation, agricultural production issue and mutual concerns<sup>8</sup>. During the investigation, few women directly indicated their feelings of loneliness. However, from participating in their informal talks and their daily lives, I find that left-behind women are suffering from loneliness, which can be shown from the following two aspects indirectly.

<sup>5</sup> Exact information is: 97% of left-behind women have contact with the husbands by phone calls and the other 3% of women usually send messages by phone to communicate with the husbands.

<sup>6</sup> Results of 'who is usually the one who initiates the contact?': Husband (83%); woman (8%); almost the same (8%). These results are related to the working situation of the couple. Relatively speaking, there is a fixed work period in the husband's migrant job and the woman's timetable is more flexible.

<sup>7</sup> Contact frequencies of stay-behind women with their migrant husbands: every day (8%), 2 days – 1 week (56%), one a week – once a fortnight (31%), once a fortnight – once a month (3%) and once 1-3 months (3%).

<sup>8</sup> Results of usual speaking time of contact:  $\leq 1$  min (3%), 1-3 mins (42%); 4-10 mins (39%) and 11-30 mins (17%). Results of most frequent topics of contacting: (grand)child(ren) (44%); agricultural production (28%); mutual concerns and exhortations (25%) and parents-in-law (3%).

First, loneliness is reflected from the type of TV shows left-behind women like to watch. Although the migrant husbands usually contact left-behind women by mobile phone, it is a different way of experiencing affection when compared to the women whose husbands are at home. Left-behind women are reluctant to admit they miss the husbands and that they are suffering from loneliness; it makes them ‘lose face’ according to the culture. This also makes it difficult to explore the women’s feeling on this aspect in the investigation. However, from the co-living experience with the biographical recorded respondents, I find that left-behind women like watching TV shows about love. For instance, Liu is one case. She said her favourite TV show was *baili tiaoyi* (百里挑一, which means one of one hundred) from Dragon TV of Shanghai Municipality. *Baili tiaoyi* is a kind of blind dating show that helps young people meet someone to fall in love with, a potential husband. Every show, there are three female guests who can select a date from a 100 male guests. The selection process and the communication process between female and male guests are the main contents of this show. I watched this show with Liu one day in 2011, she was very happy and even laughed very loudly twice during the whole show. She also expressed her opinion about the male guest or the female contestant, as to who she thought was beautiful or handsome, and what kind of person she liked and who she would choose if she were the female contestant. The biographical recorded respondent Zhuang also indicated that TV dramas about love were her first option when she had time to watch TV. She even said directly when I asked her the reasons for like watching the TV dramas about love,

*“The reasons? I think I like these kind of dramas because I need more love. I have not experience true love in my opinion. You know, my marriage was special circumstances (she was deceived and coerced by human traders and she was bought by her husband when she was 18 years old). Now, actually I have affection for my husband. However, my whole life, I think there has been a lack of true love. When I am watching this kind of drama, I can imagine what the feeling of love is and it is a kind of compensation.”*

Second, loneliness is reflected in left-behind women’s informal chatting. When I was living in the biographical recorded respondent Liu’s home, I heard the following conversation which reflects the loneliness of left-behind women. It was around 5 o’clock in the afternoon, which is usually the time to start preparing the dinner. After picking up the son from the bus stop in the village, Liu, her son and I were walking back to Liu’s home. On the way, Liu met one of her best friends who is also a left-behind woman in the village.

Liu started the conversation, *“Hi, XX, what are you doing?”*

Her friend responded, *“Nothing, I just came back from the field and I applied pesticides to the wheat. And you? Did you spray pesticides to your farm land yet?”*

Liu said, *“Yes, I did it yesterday... I do not know what I should cook for Maomao (the nickname of her son) tonight. What are you cooking tonight?”*

Her friend replied, *“I have no idea, either. Actually, I do not want to eat, although I am hungry... Your situation is better than mine, you can see your son every day but I cannot (her*

*son is studying at boarding school and he only comes back every two weeks)... It is lonely and boring with only me at home.”*

Liu smiled and said, “*Yes, if Maomao is not at home, I don't have the desire to cook, either... Ok, I need to go home to cook for him now (referring to her son). You can drop by my house when you have time...*”

### **3) Dissatisfaction**

Beyond worries and loneliness experienced by left-behind women, the dissatisfaction that left-behind women have about their role in agricultural production and in the households is also one part of their emotional burden. Compared to loneliness and worries that left-behind women expressed, this dissatisfaction is deeper and hidden. As discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, although left-behind women are the main contributors in agricultural production and in the households, they tend to dislike farming. It seems agricultural production is a kind of drudgery for left-behind women. They are working at it but they are dissatisfied with the situation. This absolutely affects left-behind women's emotional well-being. The gender issue behind the phenomenon points to an understanding of the situation. Then, there is a substantial need for left-behind women to recognize and confirm their own contribution to agricultural production and work within the household. Enough and fair recognition of left-behind women's role and contribution in agricultural production and in the households can improve not only gender equality, but women's well-being as well.

### **7.3 How to deal with the hardships (factors that condition female peasants' happiness)**

Compared to the women in the control group, left-behind women suffer from worries, loneliness and dissatisfaction about their role in agricultural production and within the household. However, the investigation also reveals that there are some factors conditioning women's happiness. There are many factors influencing happiness, such as, family relationships, economic circumstances, one's own health, work and social life (Bowling and Windsor, 2001) and leading a normal life with different obligations and responsibilities (Ophem and Heijman). My research finds that the factors affecting women's happiness are also the factors that show women's identity. If a woman's identity is the 'somebody', she tends to be happier than the 'nobody' in general. 'Somebody' and 'nobody' in this context relate to whether local people know the women's names to some extent. Name is an important marker of an individual's identity, as Giddens (2006: 1020) argued in his book *sociology*, “an important marker of an individual's identity is his or her name, and naming is also important for group identity.”

In rural China, usually women are not known by their own names after marriage by the other village member of their husbands' village. They are often called *mou jia de*(某家的), which means “some family's (wife)” but people usually do not speak out the word of 'wife' openly which is a bit metaphorical and “s” represents 'wife' in this context. For instance, the surname of the household head (usually the man is the household head) is Wang, then, the wife of Wang is often called “Wang's”. However, there are some women in Yang Village that



are known by their own names instead of ‘whose wives’. Education, migrant work experience, women’s birth place and marriage form and local belief are the factors that condition whether a woman is a ‘somebody’ instead of a ‘nobody’.

### ***1) Education***

Usually, women have lower levels of education than men in rural China. Rural women are particularly disadvantaged in acquiring educational credentials (Wu and Treiman, 2004). My investigation in Yang Village also supports this viewpoint. However, there are some women who have relatively higher educational levels than other women. Women with higher levels of education show their strength in supervising children’s education, which also helps them to be ‘somebody’ in the other villagers’ perspective. The biographical recorded respondent Liu is one supportive case.

Liu has a junior middle school educational background, which is relatively higher than other women in the research site. She is a bit more ‘famous’ than other women in the village. Many people know her full name instead of Li’s (her husband’s family name is Li). She farms 20 *mu* land mainly by herself and she takes care of her son (studied in the kindergarten in 2011) and the daughter (she studied in a boarding junior middle school and came back home every two weeks in 2011). Liu seldom shows loneliness according to my observation from the co-living experience. Every day, there are visitors dropping by to chat with her. Especially, during the afternoon after the son has returned from school, at least two other women drop by. The two women are both left-behind women. One is the same generation as Liu and she takes care of her son. The other is an older generation and she takes care of the granddaughter of her eldest son. They come to Liu’s house because they need Liu’s help to supervise the children’s homework. The two young children are classmates of Liu’s son. Liu can supervise her son’s homework and she supervises the friends’ two children at the same time. Beyond supervision, Liu can chat with the two left-behind women every day and she is the core in the communication. Due to her higher educational level, Liu tends to be a popular person with whom neighbours or villagers want to make contact and form a good relationship. Supervision of the children by using one’s own educational knowledge is a way of expanding the social network and a method of avoiding loneliness in Liu’s life. She is not a ‘nobody’ who is only known by her husband’s family name, instead, people know her full name and Liu is a ‘somebody’ in Yang Village.

### ***2) Migrant work experience***

Not only men, some rural women have also migrant work experience before marriage. In Yang Village, 45% of women have previous working experience away from home. As some scholars indicate, return migrants show to have advantages in their lives. For instance, migrant experiences enhance people’s entrepreneurial ability (Ma, 2001), women’s greater personal autonomy (Davin, 1996) and even the demographic mobility of women could result in ‘feminization’ of the household headship (Chant, 1998). Migrant experiences strengthen women’s power in the households to some extent. Furthermore, according to my investigation,

women's previous migrant experience benefits their well-being as well. When compared to the women who do not have migrant experience, the women with previous migrant experience are seen as well-informed. They are usually the information giver, advice consultant and communication core in their lives and they are relatively open. Due to the information and experience they have, these women tend to be happier than other women. They are 'somebody' in villagers' opinion and they suffer from less loneliness through communicating with others. The stories of biographical recorded respondents Liu and Wang support this viewpoint.

The same woman Liu got to know her husband when she worked in a restaurant in the county town after studying in junior middle school. Liu was a waitress and her husband was a chef in that restaurant and they fell in love later. After marrying, Liu's husband went to Beijing to work as a carpenter and she migrated together with her husband. However, very soon, she found she was pregnant so she could not work. Instead of going back home immediately, Liu stayed there with her husband until the last month before giving birth to her daughter. She said, every day she went out for a walk and she experienced urban life in Beijing. Later, she came back to the village to give birth to her daughter and she migrated again when the daughter was 5 years old (when she could go to the kindergarten). Then, Liu worked in the garment factory where her husband worked. After 3 three years, she came back to Yang Village to supervise the daughter's education because the results of the daughter's schooling were not good at that time. Liu described the most memorable thing was her life in the garment factory with other workers. Liu said the following words with smiles,

*"You know, it was very interesting. At that time, we got up at 7:00 o'clock in the morning and started work at 7:30. We needed to punch our work card before half past seven, otherwise, we would be treated as late and we would miss some earnings in the end. However, nobody wanted to get up in the morning. We wanted to sleep as long as we could. Later, we found a solution; we just gave our cards to one person to let her punch all the cards and we took this in turn. We helped each other... In the non-working time, we went out shopping together. Actually, most of us did not buy anything, particularly the married women. We saved money, as much as we could for our children. We just did window shopping but we were happy."*

Co-living and co-working experience of Liu in the garment factory taught her more about how to get along with others. This is also a reason why others like Liu in Yang Village.

The biographical recorded respondent Wang also has migrant work experience and she is one of the earliest migrants in the research site. In the villagers' opinion, Wang is brave, smart and well-informed. She does good farming work as well. When her friends are planning a new activity, they usually come to consult Wang. Wang also provides other villagers temporary extra-job information by using the social network she built in the previous migrant experiences. Wang does not have high educational background but her different migrant work experiences help her to build her social networks. More than ten years ago, Wang started to

sell fish in the county town. At that moment, it was not safe in the county town because of frequent thefts and robbery incidents. However, Wang said,

*“I needed money to support my family at that time; otherwise, we could not survive. My husband and I found we could catch the fish in the river near to our village free of charge. We got the idea of selling the fish in the market in the county town. The first time I went to the county town with the fish we had caught the day before, I was worried about robbery as well. However, I thought I should try and maybe I could have the chance to make some money. I went there myself and I sold all the fish quickly that day and nothing bad happened. I got my first ‘pot of gold’ and I found doing business could get more money than farming. I could not stop doing business anymore... Yes, one day later I was confronted with a robbery attempt. Two men followed me for a long way and I knew they wanted to rob me. However, in the end, I pretended to be strong and I threatened them by saying ‘I do not have money to give you. You can go away. If you rob me, you will meet the same situation if you go to my field later.’... (Laughing)... I think they thought I was a woman with underworld background and they went away... Later, I stopped the selling fish activity because more and more people joined the business. In the past years, I have had several different experiences. I previously did the market-oriented pigs raising. I grew mushrooms from 2003 and 2004. I also worked in a restaurant in the county town for some months. Now, when I have time, I go outside to find temporary jobs on the construction site. I can do many kinds of jobs, such as decorating and plaster rendering work.”*

Besides earnings money through all kinds of activities, Wang also sometimes provides the villagers with related information and she can also give some advice when others need suggestions. Wang is also extravert. Moreover, the participatory observation helped me find out about the impact of the modern society on Wang’s family and on herself. For instance, Wang is more fashionable than other people. She is the only woman from her generation to wear earrings and a necklace. Moreover, she bought a modern sofa and bed for her son’s marriage, which are seldom found in other villagers. Due to these characteristics, many people like talking to her and, of course, they know Wang’s full name. Wang is a ‘somebody’ instead of a ‘nobody’. Many migrant work experiences are the main factors connecting Wang with other people in the village and this helps her avoid loneliness.

### **3) Marriage form and birth place of the women**

Marriage is another factor influencing women’s well-being. There is an old saying in China, *nan pa ru cuo hang, nu pa jia cuo liang* (男怕入错行女怕嫁错郎), which means wrong trade for man is as bad as wrong man for woman. A woman’s well-being depends on her marriage (Fan and Huang, 1998). According to Skinner (Skinner, 1997), marriage forms includes residential arrangements, succession, family property inheritance, power structure within the family, and so on. Marriage can be divided into patrilocal marriage and matrilineal

marriage according to whose natal family is lived with after the marriage<sup>9</sup> (Jin et al., 2001; Li et al., 2003; Li et al., 2004). In Yang Village, all the marriages are virilocal marriages. In this research, I define marriage forms according to the way the two people got to know each other. There are generally four possibilities in Yang Village, love-match marriage, blind date marriage, exchange marriage and mercenary marriage.

These four types of marriage are closely related to the women's place of origin. Blind date marriage is similar to the parents arranged marriage. Traditionally, parents arranged marriage was the usual marriage form in rural China. Two young people could not meet each other independently and their parents made decisions for them. The two families are usually not far away. Blind date marriage is a transformed form of the arranged marriage and the two people can be in touch for some months or years beforehand to get to know each other better before the marriage. This kind of marriage still happens in two families that are not far away from each other. Exchange marriage happens in the poor families, they exchange daughters as daughters-in-law. The two families are not far away from each other, either. Love-match marriage usually starts in the school or in the work place. More and more young people's marriages belong to this category. As to the fourth type of marriage, mercenary marriage, strictly speaking, is a kind of criminal act as the brides are usually deceived or coerced by women traders and then are sold on to the grooms. Nevertheless, it is a kind of reality in rural China. When adult men cannot find a appropriate spouse due to their physical weakness or poverty in the family, mercenary marriage is one way to solve their troubles. Usually, the two natal families are very far away from each other. In Yang Village, 95% of the married women are from the same province (see Table 4.1). Mercenary marriage usually happens in the remaining 5% of households, to women from other provinces. The bought wives are mainly from Guizhou and Yunnan Provinces in the southern part of China.

The relationship between the married daughter and her natal family was often protective and nurturing, and the protection was mutual (Liu and Chan, 1999). The marriage form influences the women's social support network. In a study (Liu, 1999) of the social support network of women who are suffering from maltreatment, it was found that in the case of arranged marriages, the natal families substantially supported their married daughters because they believed that if they arranged the marriage, they were obliged to help their daughters to cope with the ensuing problems. In the case of love-match marriages, it is the daughters who made the decision; the natal family has no responsibility to intervene in their married daughter's marital conflicts. This means that love-match marriages limit women's support from their natal families. Of course, the distance from the natal family influences women's social support network as well. The biographical recorded respondent Zhuang is one supportive case.

Zhuang is a victim of human trafficking. She was coerced by the human traders when she worked in the nearby city in her home province, Guizhou Province. And then, she was sold to

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<sup>9</sup> The concept of patrilocal marriage and matrilocal marriage are equal to virilocal marriage and uxorilocal marriage. Virilocal marriage is defined as a wife moving to her husband's family and living with her parents-in-law at the time of marriage, whereas uxorilocal marriage is defined as a husband moving to his wife's natal family and living with his parents-in-law at the time of marriage.

the research site for 5,000 Yuan when she was 18 years old. Zhuang's hometown is in Guizhou Province in the south part of China. There is no legal marriage certificate for Zhuang's marriage. To avoid her running away, she had been kept under close watch before giving birth to her child. One year after giving birth to her daughter, she had the chance to go back to visit her parents in Guizhou and she said she planned to run away and not come back to Yang Village again. However, she could not imagine what would happen if her daughter got a step-mother so she returned to Yang Village in the end. After that, she made a life for her daughter and the relationship between her and her husband became better and better as time went by. Nearly nobody knew Zhuang's full name or even her family name in Yang Village. Even after her death in a car accident, which was big news in a small village, the villagers did not know her name. When the villagers referred to the car accident, they always use the general term *maozi*<sup>10</sup> to refer to Zhuang.

Zhuang was treated differently by the villagers due to her place of origin and marriage form. Most married women in Yang Village are from nearby villages or towns within the same province. Zhuang was special. When she had worries and unhappy issues, she could not tell her parents as she did not want them to worry about her. Zhuang had two good friends with similar marriage experiences and she said she just communicated with them to share her feelings. She felt only the people with a similar background, such as birth place or marriage form, could understand her. Of course, there were also language barrier and living custom barriers for her at the beginning of her life in Yang Village. She indicated,

*“I could not understand their language and I did not understand what they were saying at the beginning. However, I can speak mandarin and they can speak some as well. Now, I can understand all the contents of the conversations... I do not like eating rice, I like eating wheat flour. The eating habits are different... At the beginning, I did not know how to farm well here. The farm land condition is also different from my hometown... Of course, I cannot tell my mother that I am not happy or what I am suffering. My fortune is not good, I admit. I do not want them to worry a lot about me.”*

The biographical recorded respondent Liu and Xie are the opposite cases from Zhuang. Liu is from another town in the same county and Xie is from the same village as her husband. They can go back home anytime they want. Especially, Xie, she has only a five-minute walk to go to her natal home. Xie's husband and her father are both migrants. Her mother has an extra-job in the town's garment factory. Xie takes care of her daughter and the son at home and does the farming work. She can always go back to assist her mother with housework and even the farming work as well. Xie is very pleased with her living situation,

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<sup>10</sup> People in Yang Village call the people from southern part *maozi* (毛子) and the people from northern part *kuazi* (垮子). They are nicknames. Beyond referring to the pronunciation of the people, *maozi* refers to the cunning personal characteristic and *kuazi* refers to the simple and honest personal characteristic of people from the northern part of China.

*"I do not feel lonely at home. I can go back home whenever I want. I dislike my parents-in-law. The family divided up after my husband's younger brother married. My parents-in-law live with the younger brother's family. My mother-in-law takes care of the younger brother's son. You know, I also want her to take care of my children, and then, I could find temporary jobs to earn some money like others do... It is fine. When I see my son, I do not feel bad. I can always go back to stay with my mother. You know, some complaints you cannot tell your mother-in-law, but you can tell your own mother."*

Comparatively speaking, Xie and Liu can get more support from their natal families than Zhuang due to their birth places. Zhuang experienced different barriers in her early life after marriage, such as language, diet and farming working. Zhuang's social network was narrow and her friends were mainly her neighbours or the nearby relatives of her husband's family or the women who have similar background as her. Few villagers knew her full name or even her family name and most people use the general term *maozi* to name her. Zhuang is a 'nobody' in villagers' opinion. However, the special original place and culture from her hometown provides Zhuang with strength to build her social network, to make knitted handmade shoes. Almost nobody else in Yang Village can do this. Zhuang mentioned it took at least around one month to make one pair of shoes. She used her spare time to make the shoes and send them to her friends to build her own network in Yang Village. Zhuang was relatively lonely compared to other women in Yang Village. She took me also as her friend. The reason she told me her feeling directly might be because she and myself are both 'outsider' of Yang Village. She also sent me one pair of the handmade shoes as a gift.

#### **4) Local belief**

Religion, as a community resource, benefits the well-being of people as well (Knight et al., 2009; Maton and Wells, 2010; McFadden, 2010). In the research site, there is also a local religion that provides opportunities and places to let people release their feeling and pressure. As a matter of fact, this religion is really local and it is different from Christianity and Catholicism. The main theme of this local belief is to tell people to do good things to others. In Yang Village, there are two informal local belief organizations and they use the abandoned primary school classrooms as churches for gathering people. People can join anytime they want. Believers gather every Wednesday and Saturday morning for nearly two hours to sing hymns and pray for the people who need help. For most people, beyond finding the peace in their heart from the belief, believe that attending the group activity is a good opportunity to meet and chat with other people during the gathering.

The biographical recorded respondent Li is one of the leaders in one local belief organization. Due to the position in the organization, she is known by others as a 'somebody' that can help people release sorrow. The trust in Li is due to some extent to Li's previous experience. The family situation of Li's natal family was not good when she was young. She has an elder brother, an elder sister and a younger brother. Her father's physical condition was not good and her parents let the elder brother and sister go to school. It was necessary that somebody

did the farming work for the household. Li was chosen to do all the work with her parents in the household. She did not have chance to go to school. She indicated,

*“My parents thought it was useless for girls go to school. However, they let my elder sister get schooling. There was more than 10 mu farm land in my family at that time. They needed somebody to help them. They love their sons and my elder sister had already been to school, so they asked me to help them. I started to do the farming work with them when I was 12 years old. I suffered a lot and I believed my destiny was misery. You cannot imagine. The most miserable thing is my marriage. When it was the time to arrange the marriage for my elder brother, my parents did not have any money. Later, they decided to use me in exchange for a wife for my brother. I could not have any say in it. My destiny was bad... And then, I got married to my husband; he is nine years older than me. His younger sister is my elder sister-in-law. The economic situation of my husband’s family was also bad at that time... I hated my parents and I disliked my husband after the marriage. The first years, we did not live as man and wife. When he tried to touch me, I pinched him. He knew I disliked him and he slept alone. My parents and the parents-in-law did not know what really happened between me and my husband. They thought I had physical problems and I could not get pregnant. My parents-in-law scolded me with very dirty words, like ‘you are a pig who cannot have piglets’. I hated them but I did not say a word... After two years, I accepted the reality as I knew I could not change it. It was also because my husband treated me well. He did not beat me or scold me when I treated him badly... I planned to give birth to a baby. However, my physical condition was not good for getting pregnant at that time. We went to the hospital to check and the doctors said I did not have any disease. What was the reason? We did not know... Later, somebody told me if I believed the local belief, I could get pregnant. I attended their activities and I prayed devoutly. It was amazing because later I got pregnant and I had my son... Due to the pregnancy, I believed in this local belief and gradually I became one of the leaders. When I had time, I would guide the people to pray or sing hymns. I would also persuade others to join the organization by telling them of my own experience.”*

In fact, Li’s family economic situation is bad within the village. Her parents’ family and that of her parents-in-law are also very poor. She was married to a man (who is nine years older than her) in exchange for the man’s younger sister marrying her older brother. She felt to be looked down by others and she hated the two families at the beginning. Due to long-term negative emotional feelings, she could not get pregnant for the first three years of her marriage. Later she participated in the local ‘Christianity’ activity and she felt she had found a place where she could be happy and confident, especially after she became a leader in the belief’s organization. Although she did not have the chance to go to school because of the poor family situation, she can preach to others and give public speech, which is not a capability that every common village woman has. When somebody wants to pray for something, they need Li to help them to organize and host the ceremony. This capacity and

identity in the 'local church' helps Li to be more confident and to be happy. Furthermore, for the common people who attend the activities given by the local belief organizations, they can also get positive feelings by sharing and communicating with others. Local belief activities at least provide people opportunities and places to meet each other and share their feelings.

Beyond education, migrant work experience, women's marriage form, place of origin and local belief, there are also other factors that condition women's well-being. For instance, their expectations of the future, the economic gap between women's natal family and the husband's natal family, and their work burden in the households, these are all factors influencing women's well-being. If women have a bright hope for the future, they tend to be happier than those women without hope. If the natal family's economic situation is better than the husbands' family, the women tend to have a feeling of advantage in the household, which benefit her well-being as well. If their workload is not too heavy, women definitely benefit from it. As Knight et al.(2009) argued, whether women feel happy or unhappy is closely associated with their reference group. For rural women, the reference group is not urban women, but the women in the same village. If they have certain strength in a certain territory that others have not got, women would be treated as a 'somebody' instead of a 'nobody'. Women would have the feeling that they are needed by others and they tend to be confident and happy, which of course benefits their well-being.

#### 7.4 Expectations on training, organization, information and children

The foregoing illustrations support that education, migrant work experience, women's place of origin, marriage form and local belief are important factors affecting women's well-being. Beyond these, women's expectation on training, organization and information and children can indicate the needs to benefit their well-being. Moreover, their expectation of their children reflects the aspects they would like to change in their lives. The following questions were used in the investigation, "What are your expectations on training and organizations?", "What kind of information you would like to know" and "what is your expectation of your son and/or daughter?" The investigation finds that farming information and children's educational information are concerns that indeed influence women's opinion, although 40% of women have not thought about this issue before. There is no difference between the two sub-groups of women and the correlation value is not significant (Table 7.9). As some women said, "Taking good care of children is the most important thing for me at home." Nearly all the women indicated that they would like the children to receive as much education as they can. They would try their best to support the children's education by earning more money when they can. As to the information about education, it mainly refers to the information about academic majors, colleges or universities. During the investigation, I was always asked to give advice about choosing a college and degree majors.

**Table 7.9: The most concerned information (% ,  $X^2(7)=10.945, p=0.141$ )**

	Far min g	Selling produc e	Farming and RD policy	Protecting migrants' interests	Health and medical information	Education information for children	Oth er	Have no idea	Tot al
Sub-group 1	20	0	0	6	2	26	12	34	100
Sub-group 2	10	2	2	2	0	36	2	46	100
Total	15	1	1	4	1	31	7	40	100



Regarding the farming information, many women think they should have information about choosing good seeds, fertilizer and pesticides or poultry raising. This viewpoint is supported by the data in Table 7.10. Li contended this,

*“There is no training about farming or poultry raising in these years, I do not know what really happened. Actually, we need somebody to come and tell us how to select seeds, fertilizer or pesticides... Now, we farm and we exchange information with other villagers. It is not enough. For instance, we do not know how to deal with the large amount of harmful insects in the wheat production. We do not know how to cope with that situation. Some peasants tried to make smoke to drive the insects out. It did not work well. The only thing we could do was to use more pesticides...”*

**Table 7.10: Expectation on training (% , multiple-choice question)**

	Farm ing	Poultry raising	Eliminatin g illiteracy	Skills for migrants jobs	Health care knowledge	Other	Have no idea	Total
Sub-group 1	30	10	2	10	0	8	52	112
Sub-group 2	26	16	2	12	8	4	62	130
Total	28	13	2	11	4	6	57	121

Moreover, it is exciting to find that around 21% of women indicated they would like to have a leisure association (Table 7.11), which would alleviate women’s loneliness to some extent in some women’s opinion. The biographical recorded respondent Liu had seen a dancing association when she was in Beijing with her migrant husband before giving birth to her daughter. She said,

*“It is nice to have that kind of association. We would have something to do during the evening, especially during the non-busy seasons. When I do not have work in farming or caring work for children, I usually stay at home to watch TV. It is not good that you always stay at home. I think a dancing group would be good for our physical condition and emotional state... However, nobody organizes this kind of activity. I am just a common woman and I am not a leader. If I initiated this activity, other people would think I am not well behaving. They would think I cannot endure the loneliness... Maybe the government can set up this activity.”*

**Table 7.11: Expectation on organization (% , multiple-choice question)**

	Economic cooperatives	Leisure association	Skills association	Credit organization	Other	Have no idea	Total
Sub-group 1	6	22	8	0	14	62	112
Sub-group 2	14	20	4	0	0	72	110
Total	10	21	6	0	7	67	111

Regarding the expectations of their children, most respondents indicated that they hope the children can get as much education as possible. The ideas behind this viewpoint is that the women themselves feel regret that they did not have enough education due to various factors. Of course, some women and men’s migrant work experiences also help them recognize the importance of education. They want their children to make up for the drawbacks they faced in

their own lives. The biographical recorded respondent Li really regrets that she did not go to school when she was young. She said,

*“If I had the chance to go back, I would not follow my parents’ decision. I think I would go to school. You know, one reason that I cannot migrate far away to work is I am illiterate. If I migrate, maybe I will go to the wrong toilet if there is nobody else enters it... I am working so hard to earn money to support my children’s education. I hope my son can go to university. After graduation, he can earn more money and have a better life than me.”*

## 7.5 Conclusion

In general, rural people in China are not living for themselves after becoming adults. To be precise, after marriage, people need to work hard to support their own family and their parents at around 25 years old. In the first few years, they are mainly busy with the children’s education. After educating their children, they need to save money for the children’s marriages, especially the sons. They are old once they finish the tasks of supporting their children’s education and marriage. And then, another task comes, that is, caring for the grandchildren until their physical condition does not allow it anymore. Not only women, but also men, seldom consider their own well-being in first place and they are reluctant to admit their negative emotional feelings. With the large migration of the rural male labour force, women became the main labour force for every task in the households. Beyond the physical burden in the farming work and caring work, women also endure the emotional burden, such as worries, loneliness and dissatisfaction. Compared to those women who are living together with the husbands at home, left-behind women suffer more physical and emotional burden. They seldom have leisure time and they try to earn as much money as they can by using their spare time. However, they do not lend enough important recognition to their contribution to the family and the farming work.

Compared to the control group of women, left-behind women are generally unhappier. Although they know it is better to farm together with the husband, they have to do all the tasks at home by themselves and endure all the negative feelings alone. However, it is stimulating that some left-behind women cope with the hardships by utilizing some positive factors they have. Having higher educational level, migrant work experience, shorter distance between women’s natal family and the husbands’ family and a local religious belief, are all positive factors that benefit left-behind women’s well-being. These relative strengths, compared to the other people in the village, help them to be confident and to be a ‘somebody’ instead of one of those people nobody cares about. These strengths provide left-behind women more opportunities to communicate with others and enable them to avoid being lonely. To sum up, women’s identity is associated with their well-being. Well-being of women is related to their capacity of network building.

Furthermore, according to the burden and the expectations of women on training, association, information and their children, the following recommendations need to be considered. First, training courses, about how to safely use agricultural chemicals and purchase good

agricultural production materials, are needed. Second, the local government could choose an experimental unit to initiate a leisure association for women in the village. This might provide more chance and space for women to alleviate their feelings of loneliness and contribute to their well-being. Third, teachers in the schools need to make contact with the students' parents and tell them more information about the academic majors or college that suits their children. Fourth, more positive recognition about women's role in farming and in the household should be given and stressed, not only for the gender equality, but for women's well-being.



## Chapter 8 Conclusions and Discussion

This thesis explores the impact of agricultural feminization on agricultural production, intra-household gender relations and women's well-being. It also examines the factors that contribute to agricultural production, gender equality and women's well-being from the female peasants' perspective. The thesis is based on a survey of 100 female peasants, key informant interviews, six biography recordings and participatory observation. All data is collected in Yang Village in the northern Jiangsu Province of China. Furthermore, this research takes into account the comparative perspective, comparing the situations of women who mainly farm by themselves (most of them are left-behind women) and women who farm together with their husbands. The latter sub-group is the control group. This comparison aims to explore the changes in the livelihood of women who are experiencing the increased labour workload in agricultural production.

In this final chapter of the thesis, I reflect on the original research questions of this study and address them by using the findings from the empirical studies. Then, some discussion and policy recommendations are put forward. Finally, some critical reflections of this thesis are elaborated.

### 8.1 Thesis findings

As elaborated in Chapter 1, the research objectives in this research are: 1) to identify the differentiated nature of labour division and decision-making in agricultural production in the context of women's increased labour participation in agricultural production; 2) to gain understanding about how women's increased labour participation in agricultural production influences agricultural production at the household level and whether the change leads to a regression of agricultural production; 3) to make available insights into the changes in intra-household gender relations in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs, and to examine the factors that contribute to gender equality between husband and wife; 4) to explore the impact of women's increased labour participation on women's well-being and the factors benefiting women's well-being. Below, the individual research objectives are addressed by bringing together findings and insights from the different empirical chapters.

#### *Research objective 1: to identify the differentiated nature of agricultural feminization in the context of the changing gender division of labour*

As a consequence of male labourers' rural-urban migration, women's labour participation in agricultural production has increased. In the existing literature, little attention is paid to the differentiated nature of labour division and decision-making in agricultural production when women have increased their labour participation in farming due to the migration of the male labour force. There is also a lack of description of what kind of tasks women do and decide upon in agricultural production and the degrees of doing and deciding in the differentiated

tasks. So, this research takes this as one objective and it is mainly answered and discussed in Chapter 6.

Generally, women undertake the routine management workload in agricultural production when the husband is working away from home, tasks such as spreading fertilizer, applying pesticides and growing seedlings. Comparatively, left-behind women participate more in purchasing agricultural materials (i.e., seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and farming machines) and selling produce than the control group of women. There is a consistency between who is doing the farming task and who makes decisions, even though there are slight fluctuations. For instance, the percentages of left-behind women's labour and decision-making participation in purchasing seeds are higher than that of their labour and decision-making participation in purchasing fertilizer and those of purchasing farming machinery and selling produce. The frequency and time of the husband's returning is one of the factors that influence women's labour and decision-making participation rates in specific tasks in agricultural production. Migrant husbands usually come back home during the two busy seasons (June and October) and the Chinese New Year Festival. One essential aim of coming back home for the migrant husbands is to assist the women in the harvesting work, especially the work that women cannot easily do, such as driving tractors to transport the produce from field to home and doing land preparation work for the next farming season. During the same period while back home, some husbands help wives sell the produce and purchase some kind of agricultural production materials for some specific reasons. For instance, the migrant husbands usually buy fertilizer for women before leaving home, because fertilizer is usually heavier to transport than seeds and pesticides and the men have the physical strength.

Compared to the labour participation rates in specific tasks (i.e., purchasing seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and farming machines and selling produce) in agricultural production, women's corresponding decision-making participation rates are generally lower. Doing and deciding are different things. Whether women decide about specific things in agricultural production depends on the characteristics of the things being 'big' or 'small' in women's opinion. Big affairs refer to expensive one off items, such as purchasing farming machinery. Big affairs need to be decided by husband or negotiated with the husband. Women have lower labour participation and decision-making participation rates in big affairs than in small affairs in agricultural production. Alongside the division between 'big' and 'small', the difference between 'heavy' and 'light' is also important. "Women do the light work and men do the heavy work" is the usual response from women when commenting on the labour division in agricultural production. Heavy work mainly refers to the tasks in harvesting and land preparations which are also the tasks that women cannot undertake.

Apart from crop farming, agricultural production in Yang Village also includes vegetable gardening and poultry raising activities. Regarding vegetable gardening, this is mainly done and decided by women alone. Commonly, there is no need to discuss the vegetable types or quantity with the husband before growing. Vegetable gardening was, and still is, women's territory. However, the significance of vegetable gardening in the household has not received the attention it deserves and women's important role in it is not recognized by women nor by

scholars. Vegetable gardening plays an essential role in the households: 1) The vegetables feed the family members with non-chemically polluted, or less polluted, food and helps to save some daily expenditure for the households; 2) The vegetable gardening land provides the place for growing the rice seedlings for the crop production in fields; 3) The vegetables functions as a gift to maintain *guanxi* with relatives and friends of the households. Mainly women manage the vegetable gardens which provide such substantial functions; however, their essential role is neglected and not recognized.

Poultry raising activities can be divided into market oriented poultry raising and for own consumption. Research finds that market-oriented poultry raising is stimulated when the husband is working in and around Yang Village and it usually happens in the households of the control group of women. Raising thousands of chickens is the mainstream. Moreover, the husband is usually the manager or the decision-maker in it and the wife is the husband's helper. For the left-behind women's household, poultry raising for their own consumption is central and the main driving force is to produce chicken, ducks or geese eggs to help the (grand)child(ren)'s nutritional intake. When own consumption poultry raising takes place, the women are usually the practitioners and decision-makers about the poultry types and numbers.

In short, as Schutter indicated, the share of women's employment in agriculture varies from activity to activity (Schutter, 2013). Agricultural feminization shows a differentiated nature in labour division and decision-making, and this differentiated nature is closely associated with the gender framework in doing and deciding. Although the physical absence of the migration husband theoretically provides the space for left-behind women to do and decide more things in agricultural production, my empirical research finds that women's participation in agricultural production is continuously caged by the existing gender framework. Gender inequality in agriculture is not changed, but re-affirmed and re-produced.

***Research objective 2: to explore how women's increased labour participation in agriculture influences agricultural production and whether there is a regression of agricultural production***

With the migration of a considerable part of the male labour force, China is facing a crucial change in the composition of agricultural production labour force. This results in an increased dependency on women's labour input and women have become the primary labour force to maintain and contribute to the food security and food sovereignty in China. Some scholars (e.g., Chikwama, 2010; Fan and Zhu, 2007; Peterman et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2009) perceive it as a regression that negatively affects food production. This research starts from the perspective of female peasants who are experiencing the changing process and explores their own judgement on the impact of their increased labour participation in agriculture on agricultural production and whether there is a regression in agricultural production induced by their farming behaviour. These points are mainly discussed and answered in Chapter 5.

My research finds that female peasants do not agree with the argument that their way of farming represents a regression of agricultural production. This argument is consistent with

the research results of Fok and Wang (2011), Rozelle et al. (2006) and Zhang et al. (2004a). Their researches also support that women-run farms earn at least as much revenue on their plots as farms run by men. Female peasants support their argument with information about farming areas, cropping scheme, farming inputs and yields. Firstly, although there are changes in farming areas after the migration of the male labour force, few of these changes are initiated by left-behind women. Moreover, there is no change in cropping scheme and women still grow rice and wheat in rotation every year. Secondly, according to the women, there is no difference in the types and quantity of agricultural production materials used in farming, such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, between them and their migrant husbands, and between their households and those of the control group. They purchase all the input materials in the shops in the township or county town. How many input materials are used mainly depends on the farming areas. Thirdly, there is no difference in agricultural production outputs and gross earnings between the households in the two sub-groups. Furthermore, beyond the facts that women illustrated at the practical level, some left-behind women assume they can do the farming work as well as men can and some even say they are better farmers than their husbands. In their view, being better farmers depends on the time they have been farming and the experience they have accumulated while farming. Most of the migrant husbands have worked in the cities for more than ten years and they do not have much experience in agricultural production.

According to the interviewed women, agricultural production is not as lucrative as migrant jobs. However, this does not mean agricultural production is not important to the peasants' livelihood. Instead, agricultural production and non-agricultural production activities, such as the migrant job or women's extra-jobs beyond farming, are complementary to each other in the households. They both make contributions to the households. Nevertheless, women do not evaluate their work and their contribution as highly as they should. For most women, the economic contribution of agricultural production is perceived as being less important when compared to the migrant earnings. On one hand, the women's attitude reflects that their thinking is still constrained by the existing gender division framework of labour in the household, i.e., the man does the important thing and the woman does the unimportant thing. On the other hand, the women's attitude also influences their willingness to continue farming. Some female peasants indicate that they would abandon farming if they had other job opportunities. This is a threat not only to the food security of the family, but also to the national food security and food sovereignty. Further multiple regression analyses find different trajectories to maintain the willingness of female peasants to continue farming. In general, female peasants tend to continue farming when they like farming. If the husband comes back frequently, this helps women like farming. In other words, togetherness is essential for women's willingness to continue farming. Moreover, having an own extra-job beyond farming strongly contributes to women's willingness to continue farming. This findings is similar to the viewpoint of Huang (2012) that "if a local area is moderately industrialized and its villagers, who are suitable for non-farming occupations, can commute between the work sites and their home, their involvement in farming would be greater."



In addition, the research finds that labour shortage in the busy season is the biggest difficulty facing female peasants in farming. Being unable to use farming machinery designed for the male labour force is a barrier for female peasants in doing work in the harvest season. Additionally, since women are not familiar with the farming subsidies and farming insurance policies, improving the related information communication mechanism is needed. Furthermore, there is a land use conflict between agricultural production and other economic activities in Yang Village, just like in many other rural villages in China. From the angle of food security and rural development, finding the right balance between different types of land use needs more consideration from scholars and local governments.

There is no doubt that the food provision in China depends on women to some extent and agricultural production cannot continue without the involvement of women. It would be a threat to China's food security and food sovereignty. Decentralized rural industries to provide women and even men nearby extra-job opportunities beyond farming could contribute to women's willingness to continue farming and thereby contribute to the food security and food sovereignty in China.

***Research objective 3: to make possible changes in rural gender relations in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs visible***

Beyond labour division in agricultural production, decision-making is the other essential aspect in agricultural production which needs to be explored in depth. Theoretically, a husband's migration not only brings an extra economic source to the family but it also provides chances and space for the stay-behind women and allows women to decide things within the households and on the farm. This might influence the gender relations between husband and wife. Research objective 3 is about the impact of women's increased labour participation in agricultural production on the intra-household gender relations in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs. Compared to research objective 1, research objective 3 discusses the changes of more general gender relations in household affairs and village public affairs. Research objective 1 emphasizes the diversity and differentiated nature of women's participation in different agricultural tasks' labour division and decision-making.

As illustrated in the discussion of research objective 1, compared to the women who are doing the agricultural production together with the husband, left-behind women have higher decision-making participation in agricultural production. Moreover, women's decision-making participation rates in agricultural production depends on the characteristic of the issue being 'big' or 'small', or 'heavy' or 'light'. 'Big' and 'heavy' delineates the territory of the husband, even if he is a migrant. Moreover, this labour division and decision-making model in gender is also shown in household affairs and village public affairs. Kelkar indicates a similar viewpoint, 'big things' belong to men and 'small things' belong to women (Kelkar, 2007). Generally, women's increased decision-making does not lead to the general gender equality directly in the household affairs. Women in the two sub-groups do not show big difference in doing and deciding household affairs. They divide the issues into big and small

affairs. Small affairs mainly refer to the daily issues, which do not cost a lot of money each time and which are usually for the direct needs of the family members. Instead, big affairs refer to all kinds of decision-making and money spending on children's education, marriage, illness and elderly people's medical cost and funeral expenditure. As a matter of fact, the discourse on big and small affairs tries to make the differences in gender invisible, and it neglects and denies women's own contribution to the households. Even the women with extra-earning beyond farming do not show much decision-making power in big household affairs, because the extra-earnings are still used for the small affairs within the household. It consolidates the existing gendered division of money use in the households. Nevertheless, the multivariate regression analyses indicate that gender relations are changing in different trajectories for different groups of women and there is not one specific solution that fits all the situations. Generally speaking, it applies that older and therefore more experienced women tend to have more say on big affairs in the household. This reflects the traditional gender relations. For the left-behind women, being young, seldom having communication with the husband and a long geographical distance between husband and wife, all contribute to women having more participation in decision-making on big affairs. This reflects the reality that the young generation of women in rural China has more awareness of their own relatively equal status and rights in the household than the older generation. Correspondingly, for the control group of women who work with the husband at home together, if they have higher educational attainment, they tend to have more say in big households affairs.

Regarding the village public affairs, I mainly discuss the issues of attending village election, attending village meetings, contributing to the village collective labour force, and maintaining *guanxi* (attending relatives' or villagers' weddings or funerals). There is no real democratic election in Yang Village and only party members really participated in village elections and meetings. As to the village collective labour affairs, such as repairing the public roads or planting trees alongside the roads, paying money instead of contributing the manual labour is the mainstream. There are not so many collective affairs in the village nowadays. When there are collective affairs that need labour contribution, the male labourers in the village are usually the ones to attend. Left-behind women usually do not have the opportunity to contribute. Beyond the village affairs related to the village committee, the public affairs of the rural households also include social activities related to their relatives and friends, such as weddings, funerals, birth of a child and traditional festivals' visits. Before migration, the husband was usually the person who attended these social activities. Compared to the women who are farming together with the husband, left-behind women participate more after the migration of their husbands. This will contribute to their social network building and development from a long-term perspective.

This research also explores the gender inequality between wife and husband at the symbolic level, i.e., the awareness of female peasants about their own rights and position in farming and in the households. This is operationalized by questions about women's opinion on, 'husband is not working but still decides things in agricultural production', 'who makes more contribution to farming' and 'who makes more contribution to family'. The research finds that even if the stay-behind women are making the main contribution to agricultural production,

nearly half of them deny their own contribution and stress the husband's efforts. Even though the migrant husbands do not farm, 66% of women think 'it is alright' that the husband decides farm related things because 'the husband is the household head'. To some extent, women themselves stick to the traditional views on gender division of labour and decision-making in the household. Women's opinion on who makes more contribution to farming and to the family, reflect their traditional thinking as well. The analyses support that there is a significant correlation between female peasants' opinion on who makes more contribution to farming and who makes more contribution to the family. Women who believe the husband makes more contribution to farming tend to confirm the husband also makes more contribution to the family. The lower educational attainment and their belief that the husband can do better farming work than they can, are factors affecting their opinion on husbands making more contribution to farming, and affecting their belief that husbands make more contribution to the family. This reflects the typical traditional thinking in some women's minds. Conversely, the opposite side of the factors related to the traditional thinking refers to new thinking. Women's justifications show the differentiated trajectories for changing the unequal gender relations. For left-behind women, having higher educational attainment is helpful to safeguard equal gender relations with the migrant husband. Whereas for women who are farming together with the husband, being young is a strength to pursue equal gender relations with the husband.

In conclusion, some scholars (e.g., Fu, 2003; Hugo, 2000; Matthews and Nee, 2000; Radel et al., 2012) propose male labourers' migration provides women more space to re-balance the gender inequality between husband and wife. However, my empirical research finds that the gender inequality is not changed but re-affirmed and re-produced. On one hand, in the context of the migration of the husband, the left-behind women do more farming tasks than before and they have more decision-making participation than before. It is also true that there are some factors (such as being young, having a higher educational attainment, having previous migrant work experience, and having a faraway geographical distance with the migrant husband) which positively stimulate the equal gender relations. However, on the other hand, the intra-household gender relations has not changed a lot and it is still caged in the overarching gender framework.

My argument is not in line with some scholars' viewpoints that men's migration and women's enlarged participation in agriculture results in a lowering of women's family status(Li et al., 2000; Zhang et al., 2006b) and an increase in the dependence on men(Gao, 1994; Wang, 1999), which enforces the gender inequality(Deng, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009). On the other hand, my research results do not support the argument that men's migration and labour feminization in agriculture provide the space for women to plead for more equal gender relations with men. The unequal gender relations are re-affirmed and re-produced through this process. Women are still in second place and their work is still perceived as relatively insignificant and supplementary to the work of the men in the household. As Judd(1994:254) argues, women's practice of everyday life is constantly denied and pervasively devaluated. de Rooij's research about female peasants in the Netherland shows a similar viewpoint, "although the wife undoubtedly has an influence on the design of the production process and

on changes in it, her influence appears selective and narrower than that of her husband.”(de Rooij, 1992:232)

***Research objective 4: to examine the impact of agricultural feminization on female peasants' well-being and the factors that benefit their well-being***

In recent years, large scale labour migration has had a substantial impact on rural China. Compared to the men, women usually stay at home after marriage, especially after childbirth, to take care of the child(ren) and the family. Consequently, all the work involved within and around the household, such as agricultural production work and caring work for children and elder people, is mainly managed by women. How do women experience and evaluate their life after the migration of their husbands? Which situation is better, farming together with the husband or farming mainly by women? How do they subjectively perceive their quality of life? How do they deal with the tough situations? These are the research questions related to the fourth research objective and the main findings are shown in Chapter 7.

Compared to the control group of women, left-behind women generally are less happy. Although they know it is better to farm together with the husband, they have to do all the tasks at home by themselves and endure all the negative feelings alone. There are pros and cons in both situations - farming together or farming mainly done by women. Usually, migrant workers provide more earnings than when they stay at home to farm and/or do an extra-job beyond farming. However, the husbands being at home can benefit women's physical and emotional well-being. Therefore, it is rather difficult to combine the economic benefits and emotional benefits and then it seems that women in different sub-groups tend to envy the situations of the comparison sub-group. Moreover, women are reluctant to admit the influence of out-migration on themselves because women show higher rates in giving a 'have no idea' answer to the specific women-related questions than to the general questions. As to the physical burden, left-behind women experience a heavier burden in agricultural production than the control group of women. Their working hours during busy and non-busy farming seasons are longer than those of the control group of women. There are so many tasks to do. Women almost have no leisure time in the households due to workload from agricultural production and caring. If there is some spare time, women use it to earn additional money by making rubber balls or toys or working in the village factories. In addition, women face the risks in agricultural production to some extent, especially when they lack enough knowledge in use of agricultural production materials, such as hazards from the chemical agricultural pesticides and fertilizer. Furthermore, as aforementioned in objective 2 and 3, women do not lend enough important recognition to their contribution to the family and the farming work. Women have not got the recognition they deserve.

In general, Chinese rural people seldom put their own well-being first, especially after marriage; they are not living for themselves anymore. To be precise, after marriage, at around 25 years old, people need to work hard to support their own family and their parents. In the first few years, they are mainly occupied with the children's education. After educating their children, they need to save money for the children's marriages, especially the sons. They are

old once they have finished the tasks of supporting their children's education and marriage. And then, another task comes, that is, caring for the grandchildren until their physical condition does not allow it anymore. Not only women, but also men, seldom consider their own well-being first and they are reluctant to admit their negative emotional feelings. With the large migration of the rural male labour force, women have become the main labour force for every household task. Beyond the physical burden in the farming work and caring work, women also endure the emotional burden, such as worries, loneliness and dissatisfaction.

However, it is stimulating that some left-behind women cope with the hardships by utilizing some positive factors. Having higher educational level, migrant work experience, a shorter distance between women's natal family and the husbands' family and a local belief, are all positive factors that support left-behind women's well-being. These relative strengths, compared to the other people in the village, help them be confident and be a 'somebody' instead of one of those people who nobody cares about. These strengths provide left-behind women more chances to communicate with others and help avoid women being lonely. To sum up, women's identity is associated with their well-being. Well-being of women is related to their capacity of network building.

## 8.2 Discussion and policy implications

This research was conducted in Yang Village in the Northern Jiangsu Province in China. It is a typical village in the plains which is one of the main agricultural production areas near to the east coast of China. Yang Village is not so far away from the relatively developed southern part of Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province and Shanghai Province-level Municipality. Peasants in Yang Village have the geographical advantage of being able to migrate and find temporary jobs in these developed areas. As to the gender related culture, Yang Village is influenced by the traditional Chinese gender culture, as are most parts of China – 'woman's territory is inside and men's is outside'<sup>1</sup> – the woman usually takes the responsibility of caring for the family members and does the household chores while the man is the breadwinner. Although some women migrate when they are young to the cities and work there, they usually come back to village to take care of the children and the family after marriage, and they do agricultural production simultaneously at home. Compared to caring for the (grand)children and family, doing agricultural production work takes second place for most women. Men's migration and caring for children at home (cultural influence) are the main reasons for the women's staying behind and for their increased labour participation in agricultural production. Theoretically, the changes in the labour division between husband and wife imply possible changes in intra-household gender relations, and might impact on women's well-being as well.

In this section, I mainly conclude and discuss the significance of agricultural production, the significance of women's contribution and relevant gender studies in rural China at the

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<sup>1</sup> The 'inside' and 'outside' terms are described by Francesca Bray as 'inner' and 'outer'. She assumes that the gender spatial distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' in China may seem to parallel the Western categories of domestic and public, but the Chinese categories of 'inner' and 'outer' are not so much distinct, exclusive domains as boundaries are shifting along a continuum (Bray, 1997:261).

theoretical level and propose some policy options for pursuing positive impact on agricultural production, gender relations, women's well-being and rural development at the practical level. The questions stressed and answered in this section include: Is the significance of agricultural production suitably recognized? Is women's significance in agricultural production and household properly recognized by female peasants? Are rural gender studies in China on the right track? Have female peasants been properly presented in rural gender studies? What do the findings mean for policy? What is the possible orientation of rural development in China?

***Is the significance of agricultural production suitably recognized?***

Agricultural production directly relates to the food security and food sovereignty issue both at the farm household level and at the national level. Whether the significance of agricultural production is recognized properly or not might influence peasants' willingness to continue farming and decision-makers' policy recommendation. My research finds that the important role of agricultural production is ignored or is not recognized properly by female peasants. This non-affirmative attitude is harmful to the food security and food sovereignty in China. From the female peasants' viewpoint, agricultural production is not so important to the household because its economic contribution is relatively smaller than that of the husband's migrant job in the city. Caring for the children at home is the supreme responsibility of the women. As a consequence, some women even pointed out that they would abandon farming if they had other job opportunities around the village.

In reality, however, the function of agricultural production is essential and it should be stressed and confirmed properly. Agricultural production is not as lucrative compared to the migrant job, however, it guarantees the food safety and food security of the rural households and it provides shelter for the migrant husband. Perceiving agricultural production at a higher level guarantees the national food security and food sovereignty as well. It is also about the quality of rural life, landscape and nature (Ventura and van der Ploeg, 2010:326). Although the earnings from agricultural production is less than that of migration, it covers the daily expenditure of the household which is a small affair in women's opinion. Men's migrant earnings can only be used for 'big' affairs because daily expenditure has already been taken care for. 'Big' and 'small' are relative terms. We cannot say big affairs in the household are important and the small affairs are unimportant. The earnings from agricultural production covers and maintains the livelihood of the family members. Without this support from agricultural production, can the husband's contribution to big affairs be shown significantly? In addition, as we know, the migrant jobs of the rural male labourers are usually temporary. Due to the restriction of household registration system and high cost of living in the cities, most rural migrants have to come back to the village when they get old or sick. They can continue to farm for some years for survival and avoid being a burden to the children.

Having their own produced food means not only surviving when there are risks in migrant jobs or becoming old or sick; it also means they can have safe food. The safe food can contribute to building and maintaining the social network of the family as well. Peasants usually use little or no chemicals, in their own consumption food, such as rice and vegetables.

Uncontaminated food is favourite gifts especially for those people who do not have a plot of farm land. Giving home grown gifts is an effective way to contribute to the building and development of social network of the households. To sum up, agricultural production is still playing an essential role in peasants' daily lives. As the central actors of agricultural production at present time in rural China, women should recognize the significance of agricultural production. In practice, the research shows that a nearby extra-job beyond agricultural production and the high frequency of the migrant husband's coming back are positive factors affecting women's willingness to continue farming. Thus, this research recommends that decentralized rural industries could be helpful to stimulate peasants' willingness to keep farming, not only for female peasants but also for migrant husbands. If there are more job opportunities around the village, the male labour force does not need to migrate to far away cities to work, either.

### *Are rural gender studies in China on the right track?*

Gender is an essential issue in this thesis. Synthesizing and reflecting the empirically findings, is women's significance in agricultural production and household recognized properly in gender studies and are rural gender studies in China on the right track? As a matter of fact, my empirical research did not show supportive proof and there are some black holes that need to be addressed in rural gender studies in China.

The first black hole is that the view of the involved women themselves is nearly absent. What is known as 'actor oriented approach' is basically lacking for most Chinese scholars, so far, in studies on agricultural feminization, although a few scholars (e.g., Ye and He, 2008; Ye and Pan, 2008; Ye and Wu, 2008 ) paid attention to it and used it to conduct research. Nobody else can have a deeper understanding of women's life worlds than the women themselves. All the policy options and analyses should be based on women's own understanding and judgement.

The second black hole in gender studies in China is that little attention is really paid to decision-making aspects in agriculture. In the studies about agricultural feminization in China, more scholars illustrate the reality that rural women undertake an increased workload in the labour process of agricultural production. On the contrary, not so much attention is paid to the decision-making aspect and to see the changes of women's decision-making power in agricultural production and household. Moreover, not enough attention is paid to the differentiated nature in the labour participation nor to the decision-making participation in agricultural production. In addition, in the context of male labourers' migration, some scholars (e.g., Buvinić and Gupta, 1997; Gartaula, 2011; Wilkinson, 1987) call the left-behind households 'female-headed households' and call the women 'de-facto household heads' (the men 'de-jure household heads'). I cannot agree with this title. In Chinese context, the household head is usually the person who can decide everything, especially big affairs, in the household. The household head is usually male, which is often registered in the *hukou* system officially. Men's absence, due to temporary migrant job in cities, does not directly mean that left-behind women are fully empowered to do the decision-making for everything in the

household. Therefore, in my opinion, it is not correct to identify left-behind woman as 'de-facto household heads' or left-behind household as 'female-headed households'.

The third black hole is that most of the existing gender studies take women as passive victims and put the negative judgement centre stage. This is reflected in the mainstream of existing studies about women's farming behaviour on agricultural production, and the impact of women's increased labour participation in agricultural production on gender relations and women's well-being. There is hardly any attention paid to 'positive deviations', since empirical diversity is not given any important theoretical significance. It is also true from my research that women face physical and emotional difficulties in agricultural production and in their daily lives when the husband is far away. It is important to point out and describe the difficulties or the negative impact for scholars, but in my opinion it is more essential to explore how women deal with the difficulties positively. Policy proposals drawn from women's own experience or judgement on tackling the difficulties could be more effective than idealistic thinking, and can meet the needs of women more appropriately.

Negative judgements are harmful when it comes to recognizing women's contribution and significance in agricultural production and in the household as well. My research supports that women's contribution to agricultural production and household has not gained the significance it deserves, not only by scholars to some extent, but also by women themselves. Compared to the women who are farming together with the husband, the left-behind women undertake the main workload in agricultural production in the household. They do the daily management work in agricultural production and they also undertake some workload together with the husband during the busy season. They are the main contributors to agricultural production as I have shown throughout this thesis.

As to the negative judgement about women's well-being, my research stands by the argument that women's increased workload in agricultural production is harmful to their well-being. Compared to the women who farm together with the husband, left-behind women are generally unhappier. Left-behind women not only undertake more workload in agricultural production and in the household, they also endure negative feelings, such as loneliness and worry. Even more important, the multiple regression analyses find that a higher educational attainment, previous migrant work experience and a shorter geographical distance with the migrant husband all help women to cope with the hardships. Moreover, women's important identification needs to be stressed. Women's contribution to agricultural production and the household needs to be re-recognized and confirmed. In addition, farming machinery should be designed more women-friendly. The agricultural related training and technologies should also take women's viewpoints and needs first and in central place. Furthermore, it might be useful to organize some kind of leisure group for women in the village. The women who have one or more of these advantages can be encouraged to share their experiences gradually through group activities in this informal group to stimulate gender equality sense, release the feelings of loneliness, expand women's social network and benefit women's well-being. The function of group activity can release the negative feeling of those participating as has been discussed by Yuan(2010:95) in her PhD thesis. In this sense, the local industries can perform these



functions as well. As we know, the peasant workers in the local industries are usually from the same living or nearby places. Women have similar backgrounds and common topics to share. To sum up, organizing women in some way to work or share experiences together is a possible recommendation to benefit women's well-being and gender equality. In this sense, beyond contributing to women's willingness to continue farming, decentralized rural industries are rather urgently needed for women's well-being and gender equality as well.

The fourth and the final black hole in existing gender studies in China is related to the influence of the modernization and urbanization ideology. The 'modernization of agriculture' is the main paradigm that is currently underlying the study of agricultural and rural development. Within this framework there is hardly any conceptual space for specific development trajectories that build on an increased role of rural women. Like Yang Village, many rural villages in China are experiencing the process of modernization and urbanization. More and more people are migrating to urban areas to work and then buying an apartment in the home town or the home county instead of going back to their home village when they return. De-populated rural villages are becoming common and obvious. It seems all the policies are encouraging this process. For instance, the education supervision issue of the left-behind children is becoming obvious as a consequence of labour migration over the past years. In order to cope with this issue and also optimize and integrate educational resources, the state implemented the school mapping policy to close down the village primary schools and merge them into the township primary boarding schools. This led to more de-populated and lifeless rural villages. In addition, more and more farm land is rented by small and big enterprises to grow economic crops (e.g., watermelon and mushroom) or used by estate developers to build commercial residential buildings or industry buildings. Local government plays the leading role in this process of diminishing farm land. All these facts support that the rural development trajectory is urban oriented, or towards urbanization. Should this be the only way of rural development? There could also be an alternative rural development way which takes the rural residents as the main actors. Taking rural people's needs as the starting point and distributing the resources gradually to the rural areas, not concentrating in urban areas, is also a possible approach. This will not only release the burden of urban infrastructure system, but also can benefit the life quality of rural residents from a long-term perspective.

### ***What is the possible orientation of rural development in China?***

The households of left-behind women and those of the women who farm together with the husband are the pillars of rural development in contemporary China. To synthesize, this thesis illustrates and summarizes the current situation of rural people's livelihood. Generally, for both type of households, agricultural production is not the only way to make a living. Instead, multiple job holding is becoming the mainstream of the rural people in making a living, this is also illustrated by van der Ploeg and Ye (2010). Some people migrate to cities to find job opportunities and some others find job opportunities around the village locally. As a matter of fact, exploring the livelihood of the left-behind households and the households where women and men work together around the village, is a kind of reflection of the trajectories of rural development, and even the link between rural and urban economy.

This thesis goes against the modernization and urbanization ideology in China to some extent. Rural development should not be a process that results in de-population. A depopulated region will be hard to repopulate and some lessons can be learnt from France (Buller, 2000; Preiss et al., 1997) and South Africa (Hoogendoorn et al., 2009; Preiss et al., 1997). It is negative trend that more and more peasants are losing farm land every year. Agricultural production is essential for the 1.3 billion Chinese population's food consumption and it also supports the food sovereignty and food safety of China. Moreover, rural development should regard the culture of the rural villages as well, such as, the marriage and funeral ceremonies, traditional arts and culture and even the local languages. The vitality and charm of these traditions contribute to farming civilization and (agri)culture. Urbanization and modernization is harmful to this kind of culture. Is it a step in the right direction if the offspring does not know their own culture and the diversity of the culture is lost? Making the rural areas attractive and robust, in my opinion, is the right path for rural development. Furthermore, rural development is really about people and interrelations among people. As the Chinese sociologist Fei and his colleagues pointed out in their book *Earthbound China* (1945), the Chinese rural society was an earthbound society and an acquaintance society (where residents knew each other well). Now, the situation has changed greatly. Village residents have become more distant, indifferent towards each other and even atomized. It seems that everyone is becoming a 'nobody' in the rural society. This impacts negatively on the well-being of rural people. Especially left-behind women are suffering from loneliness and worry due to the absence of the migrant husband. Group activities can help them release the negative feelings. As we saw, some women indicated that the motivation for joining the local belief activities resides in the possibility of meeting many people and talking with others. Rural community can be places for encounters and places that stimulate the interaction and cooperation of rural people. It should be a place where people can feel happy and harmonious, and where people can feel or become a 'somebody' in other's eyes. In fact, there are alternative development trajectories. Like some scholars examined, rural development could be multifunctional (Knickel and Renting, 2000; van der Ploeg et al., 2010:165) and it could cover issues such as diversity, environment, cooperation, innovation, autonomy and social commitment (Monllor, 2012). Considering modernization ideology from an opposite viewpoint, some possible ways to develop the rural areas follow.

First, the farm land needs to be protected by implementing strict policies and related supervision system. Land is the basis of agricultural production. Land is also a stable resource, a guarantee of subsistence or a safety net. In fact, there are strict policies implemented by the state, such as Notice of the State Council on the Promotion of Economical and Intensive Land in 2008. However, the implementation results are not so pleasant. As mentioned in Chapter 4, village committee and township government can always find the mechanism to expropriate the farm land legally. "It is important to remember that land use change will have a differentiated impact among these various strata of the rural poor and between the rural poor and the non-poor including rich farmers, landlords, moneylenders and traders." (Borras Jr and Franco, 2010) Rural people in different class, the representatives, should have certain participation rates in the decision-making process of judging the use of the farm land. There

also should be an effective channel to help peasants to address the wrong actions and appeal to the higher authorities for help.

Second, training and extension services need to take the female peasants into account and pay attention to their special needs, such as designing women friendly farming machinery. In the process of conducting the research, I have strongly felt that women have little knowledge about farming insurance and farming subsidies. Moreover, women do not use agricultural chemicals safely. These all need the extension service or related training. As the main labourers in agricultural production, their needs should be put first and centre. It is essential to point out that extension method, e.g., training and demonstration, should be seen as facilitation of learning and knowledge embedding process (Chowdhury et al., 2013). In the process of extension, communication is an essential part. The providers or the professionals of extension services should facilitate the potential changes and needs (Leeuwis and Aarts, 2011). Furthermore, designing women friendly farming machinery can help women solve the labour shortage difficulty in the peak season. To some extent, it can benefit gender equality as well. As Beaver(1986:85) discussed, the major, traditional sex-role difference in farm work was that women did not operate farm machinery, such as tractors or mowing machines, as long as a male was available to do so. This technical division of labour served to reinforce a woman's subordination to a man.

Third, rural industries with multi-functions could be developed to release women's feeling of loneliness. As proposed in this thesis, decentralized rural industries could help women get an extra-job beyond farming and then stimulate their willingness to continue farming. As a matter of fact, participation in group work in the local factories provides women with more chances to share their feelings and avoid loneliness. Decentralized rural industries can be places where encounters occur. They might provide more chance and space for women to alleviate their feeling of loneliness. If these rural industries could also provide job opportunities for male labour force, it is a better solution. Regarding this viewpoint, Akay et al (2012) propose that there is an urgent need to research the impact of short-distance migration and long-distance migration on migrants' well-being. This research supports that short-distance migration does not only benefit the husbands' well-being, but also benefits the women's emotional feelings.

Fourth, enhancing women's gender equality sense by encouraging the women, who have relatively stronger gender equality sense (e.g., with migrant work experience or with relatively higher educational attainment), to take the leading role in publicizing and sharing their experiences, for instance, in leisure groups or farmer cooperatives. Moreover, women should also be told formally that they actually have equal rights to men and that women contribute to the household just like the men do. There is no important and unimportant or big or small division in agricultural production and household affairs. Important and unimportant, big and small are mutually dependent on each other. Moreover, they need to have the same participation and decision-making rights in agricultural production, household affairs and village public affairs. Fundamentally, some common practices in rural areas need to be changed. For instance, women should have the same opportunity and right to apply for credit

from the bank. However, the reality is that if the women want to apply for credit from the bank, they must use the husband's name. Another case is related to agricultural production, women should actually have the same land usufruct as men and the land at least should be titled under their names in the official documents.

Fifth, rural village could be more attractive. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned recommendations all contribute to making the rural village more attractive. This can also be done from at least by the following two ways. Firstly, re-distributing the fundamental resources from county town and townships to villages, such as the educational resource, gradually. For instance, if it really pursues the equality of education, everybody should be able to enjoy the educational sources equally. Why should the village students go to townships and even the county town to get the same or better education? The state needs to take more measures to encourage teachers to go to villages. Secondly, farming can also be multi-functional to make rural areas robust. For instance, farming can be a way of leisure for the urban residents, a way of learning things about agriculture for students and farming can also go the direction of sustainable orientation to grow green or organic food and to conserve the natural environment. In this respect, China has a long way to go in rural areas. To sum up, from a long-term perspective, if there are equal or similar fundamental resources in rural areas as in the urban areas, more return migrants would like to stay in the village and contribute further on the rural development with their broadened horizons and enlarged knowledge gained from the migrant work experience.

### **8.3 Critical reflections**

There are, I guess, some drawbacks in this research. These are basically induced by the limited field work time and funding. If I had had enough economic support or I could have conducted the research continually, the following improvements could have been realized.

1) If there was more field work time and funding, the sample size could have been expanded. The current sample size is small, although it is enough for taking one village as the sample selecting pool. Moreover, more biography recordings could have been done in the control sub-group, i.e., women who are doing the farming work together with their husbands. In this sub-group, there are some migrant returnees, such as the returned migrant couple who run the decoration shop in the township mentioned in Chapter 4. This might benefit to understand the process of rural development.

2) Long-term participatory observation and biography recording might help to get improved results. This research finds that togetherness (shorter geographical distance between migrant husband and wife) is essential for increasing women's well-being and women's willingness to continue farming. The impact of togetherness needs to be further researched. In my opinion, for instance, comparisons between couples with different levels of togetherness can be made.

3) Comparisons between different types of rural villages involving women's increased labour participation in agricultural production could be studied. It will help research generalization. Location of research site really matters. As the research of Ren and Dong(1997) shows, even

rural women in two villages with different distance to the county town or city in the same province, have different degrees of involvement in farming. Yang Village in this research can only represent a rural village in the plain area (for agricultural production) which is located near to the east coast of China, i.e., near to the developed cities. Moreover, there are some extra-job opportunities for left-behind women around their living places. However, there are different types of rural villages. For instance, in the southern mountainous provinces, there are also many male labourers migrating to cities to work, but there are not so many extra-job opportunities for the left-behind women.

4) The interrelationship between women's access to land usufruct and their willingness to continue farming could be further researched, especially in the context of labour feminization in agriculture. To some extent, who takes the main responsibility in agriculture relates to the farm size managed in the household. For instance, Fok and Wang(2011) argue that "the smaller the size of the farms, the higher was the frequency of farm heads involved in off-farm activities on a long-term basis, and consequently the frequency of farms being run by females." Moreover, Li et al.(1998) point out that land tenure and associated property rights affect the production behaviour of farmers and the right to use land for long periods of time encourages the use of land-saving investments. There are few gender studies on this topic in the literature, especially in the process of women becoming the main labour contributor in agriculture. Is there any relation between female usufruct rights of land and their farming behaviour? It is an essential aspect of the food security and food sovereignty in China. This research intended to explore this issue. However, as hardly any women have land usufruct rights in Yang Village, making comparisons turned out to be impossible.

5) There might be a correlation between the life cycle of women and their burden (in farming and caring), which is not checked in this thesis. It is true that data in Table 4.4 do not support there is any significant difference in age between the women in the two sub-groups. However, it seems from the interviews and participatory observation that older women who are living together with the husband tend to have a higher burden than the younger women in the same group or the left-behind women. They usually take care of their child(ren) and grandchild(ren) together beyond farming, and they seldom obtain care from their child(ren). In addition, focus could be also paid to the woman who are older than 55 years old in rural China.

6) To reflect, is 'left-behind women' itself an engendered concept? In my opinion, the term 'left-behind women' is also gendered. It directly perceives women as the passive objects or 'victims' of men's out-migration. Why do not we say 'sent-away men' or 'liberated women'? It seems nonsense; actually it means something related to culture and gender. This reflection is also the reason that I use 'stay-behind women' in this thesis sometimes. It might be also interesting to explore and understand the gendered process of the term 'left-behind women' and to perceive women's own understanding on this term. This might contribute to the gender studies in China as well.

7) Finally, in this thesis, I indicate some possibilities, such as having a higher educational attainment, having migrant work experience or having an extra-job beyond farming, that left-

behind women can go beyond the traditional culture restrictions to have more equal gender relations with their husbands or women could be happier. Women with one or more of these characteristics could be called pioneers to some extent, like biographical recorded respondents Liu and Wang. However, for the majority of the left-behind women, they are still victims, even though I do not want to treat them as victims in the research. And then, how to deal with the tension? Can women really go beyond the average situation and how far can they go?

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Questionnaire of Women in Agriculture in China

Date of investigation: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of investigation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel./Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Questionnaire No.: \_\_\_\_\_

#### How to complete this questionnaire:

1. Please use the symbol "X" to indicate your choice, if you choose "other", please write the exact details.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, questions have only one possible answer.

#### 1. Personal Information

1.1 Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

1.2.1 Educational level attained?

a illiterate  b primary school  c junior middle school  d senior middle school or technical secondary school  e junior college and higher education

1.2.2 Parents' residence place/Residence place before marriage?

a within the same village as husband  b within the same town as husband  c within the same county as husband  d within the same prefecture as husband  e within the same province as husband  f other province  g other \_\_\_\_\_

1.2.3 Are you living in the place of your husband's birth?

a no  b yes  c other \_\_\_\_\_

1.3 What is your occupation?

a only agricultural work  b multi-job holding, mainly do agricultural production  c multi-job holding, mainly off-farm work  d only off-farm work   
 e only housework

1.4 How much agricultural production work do you undertake in your family (in the whole agricultural production)?

a 100%  b 50% or more(include 50%)  c less than 50%  c 0

1.5.1 Are you married?

a no  b yes  c other \_\_\_\_\_

1.5.2 Who are you living with now?

---

1.6 Do you have migrant work experience?

a no  b yes

**If you choose 'yes', please answer 1.6.1-1.6.5.**

1.6.1 When and where did you work? \_\_\_\_\_

1.6.2 How long were you there? \_\_\_\_\_ years

1.6.3 What was your work? \_\_\_\_\_

1.6.4 Why did you come back to the village?

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1.6.5 What in your opinion is the impact of the migrant work experience on yourself and your family (positive and negative)?

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## Appendices

1.7 Do you have a faith in the 'local belief'?

a no  b yes

**If you choose 'yes', please answer 1.7.1-1.7.4**

1.7.1 What in your opinion is the 'local belief'? \_\_\_\_\_

1.7.2 What do you usually do to follow this belief? \_\_\_\_\_

1.7.3 How long have you been a follower of this belief? \_\_\_\_\_

1.7.4 How did you start to believe this? \_\_\_\_\_

1.8 What is your physical condition?

a very good  b good  c ok  d bad  e very bad

**If you choose 'c', 'd' or 'e', please answer 1.8.1-1.8.2**

1.8.1 What kind of ill-health or disease do you suffer from(chronic or serious illness)?

1.8.2 What in your opinion are the reasons for your ill-health or disease?

1.8.3 And how do you usually deal with it?

a do nothing  b buy some pills  c go to see the doctors  d other \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.9 Husband information

1.9.1.1 Age of your husband: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

1.9.1.2 Age of your husband when you got married: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

1.9.1.3 Educational level attained by your husband?

a illiterate  b primary school  c junior middle school  d senior middle school or technical secondary school  e junior college and higher education

1.9.2 Your husband's occupation is: \_\_\_\_\_ (the exact off-farm job is \_\_\_\_\_)

a agricultural production  b manufacture and agricultural production   
c construction and agricultural production  d transportation and agricultural production  e  
catering industry and agricultural production  f business and agricultural production  g mining,  
quarrying and agricultural production   
h other \_\_\_\_\_  i I have no idea

1.9.3 Does your husband work away from the village?

a no  b yes

**If you choose 'yes', please answer 1.9.4- 1.9.14.**

1.9.4 Why does your husband migrate \_\_\_\_\_ ? The most important reason is \_\_\_\_\_ ?

a to earn educational fees for child(ren)   
b to earn money for health cover   
c to earn money to repay debts   
d to try to make some savings  (for what? \_\_\_\_\_)  
e to reconstruct house   
f to buy furniture or household appliance   
g other  (exact details \_\_\_\_\_)

1.9.5.1 How long is your husband away from home every year?

a less than 3 months  b 3-6 months  c 6-9 months  d 9-12 months

1.9.5.2 How long has your husband's migrant work experience been (so far)? \_\_\_\_\_ years

1.9.6.1 How much does your husband earn every month? \_\_\_\_\_

a less than 1,000 Yuan  b 1,000-1,500 Yuan  c 1,500-2,000 Yuan   
d 2,000-2,500 Yuan  e 2,500-3,000 Yuan  f more than 3,000 Yuan  g have no idea

1.9.6.2 How much of your husband's earnings goes to the family (annually)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

1.9.6.3 How much is the average daily expenditure of your husband when he is working away from home every month? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

1.9.7 How often does your husband come back? \_\_\_\_\_

- a daily  b weekly  c every 2-3 weeks  d monthly  e every 2-3 months   
 f every 3-6 months  g every 6-9 months  h every 9-12 months  i only once year or less

**If you do not choose 'a', please answer 1.9.7.1-1.9.7.2.**

1.9.7.1 When does your husband usually come back? \_\_\_\_\_

1.9.7.2 How long does he stay at home? \_\_\_\_\_ days

1.9.8 Your husband's work place is: \_\_\_\_\_ (the exact place is \_\_\_\_\_ )

- a inside the town/city  b inside the province  c another province   
 d a foreign country  e I have no idea

1.9.9.1 Do you have a mobile phone? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  b yes

1.9.9.2 Does your husband have a mobile phone? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  b yes  (if he has, how many years has he had it? \_\_\_\_\_ )

1.9.9.3 Do you have a landline phone? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  b yes  c I have no idea

1.9.9.4 Does your husband have a landline phone? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  b yes  c I have no idea

1.9.9.5 Does your husband have a fixed address? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  b yes  c I have no idea

**If your husband fits the daily return category, please skip 1.9.10-1.9.14.**

1.9.10 Which way do you mainly use to contact your husband?

- a phone calls  b send messages using mobile phone   
 c phone-calls and send messages using mobile phone  d write letters   
 e send e-mails  f ask others to pass oral messages  g other \_\_\_\_\_

1.9.11 Who is usually the one initiates the contact?

- a husband  b oneself  c almost the same

1.9.12 How often do you contact each other?

- a every day  b 2 days-1 week  c once a week once a fortnight   
 d once a fortnight - once a month  e once 1-3 months  f once 3-6months   
 g once more than 6 months  h no contact

1.9.13 If you contact with your husband by telephone, how long do you often talk?

- a less than 1 minute  b 1-3 minutes  c 4-10 minutes  d 11-30 minutes   
 e more than half an hour  f no contact

1.9.14 When you have contact with your husband, what do you often talk about (more than one answer possible)? \_\_\_\_\_ and which is the most popular topic of discussion? \_\_\_\_\_

- a child(ren)'s situation  b agricultural production   
 c parents/parents-in-law's situation  d mutual concerns and issues   
 e own distress and worries  f husband's distress and worries   
 g things happened in the city  h things happened in the village   
 i other \_\_\_\_\_

1.9.15 Do you usually tell your husband actively the things you are worried about?

a no  b some yes, some not  c yes

1.9.15.1 If you choose 'b' or 'c', the reason(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

**1.10 Child(ren)'s information**

1.10.1 How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

	age	sex	occupation	marital status	live with whom	whether divide up family property and live apart from parents-in-law
1 <sup>st</sup>						
2 <sup>nd</sup>						
3 <sup>rd</sup>						
4 <sup>th</sup>						

1.10.2.1 Do you have difficulties in taking care of (grand)child(ren)?

a no  b yes  (exact details: \_\_\_\_\_)

1.10.2.2 Who are you taking care of?

a child(ren)  b grandchild(ren)  c child(ren) and grandchild(ren)

d others \_\_\_\_\_  e no-one/no need

**2. Agricultural Production (Farming and/or Breeding)**

2.1 Who is the legal owner of the farm?

a husband  b oneself  c parents-in-law  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.1.1 Do you have your own farm land in the family?

a no  b yes

**If you choose 'yes', please answer 2.1.1.1-2.1.1.2**

2.1.1.1 How much area do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ mu

2.1.1.2 When and how did you get the farm land?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.1.2 How much farm land do you have in your family? \_\_\_\_\_ mu, exact details:

Crop kinds	Farming areas (mu)	Sell or not?	Gross earnings (per year)?

2.1.3 How much do you spend on buying fertilizer every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.4 How much do you spend on buying pesticide every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.5 How much do you spend on hiring extra labourers in agricultural production every year?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.6 How much do you spend on buying seeds every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.7 How much do you spend on renting land from others every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.8 How much do you spend on paying farming insurance every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan



2.1.9 How much subsidies could you get from the government every year? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.1.10 How much could you get by renting your land to others? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan

2.2 Do you do animal husbandry?

a no  b yes

**2.2.1 If you choose ‘yes’, exact details are:**

Breeds	How many do you breed?	Reasons for breeding these?	Who decides to breed these?	Sell or not?	Gross earnings (per year)?

2.3 Farming and animal husbandry, which one is your main task?

a farming  b animal husbandry   
 c no difference, the same importance  d I have no idea

2.4 How many hours do you spend on agricultural production work every day?

2.4.1 Farming: Busy Season: \_\_\_\_\_ hours; Non-busy Season: \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

2.4.2 Animal husbandry: \_\_\_\_\_ hours

2.5.1 What kind of tasks do you mainly undertake in farming?

2.5.1.1 Tasks in busy season: \_\_\_\_\_

2.5.1.2 Tasks in non-busy season: \_\_\_\_\_

2.5.2 What are the main tasks in animal husbandry?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.6.1 How many years have you been undertaking the main part of agricultural production work in your family? \_\_\_\_\_ years

2.6.2 Why are you the main labour contributor in agriculture in your household, not your husband? (more answers are possible)? \_\_\_\_\_

a one’s bad physical condition  b need to take care of the elderly people  c need to take care of the (grand)child(ren)  d one is illiterate or one’s educational level is lower than the husband  e the farming needs to be done  f one is too old to migrate  g one cannot earn as much money as her husband  h other \_\_\_\_\_

2.6.3 Who makes the decision that you need to stay at home?

a husband  b negotiation  c oneself  d others \_\_\_\_\_

2.6.4 What is the impact on you of being the main or supplementary labour contributor in agriculture (positive and negative)?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.6.5 What is the impact of being the main labour contributor in agriculture on agricultural production (positive and negative)?

\_\_\_\_\_

2.6.6 What is the impact of being the main labour contributor in agriculture on your family (positive and negative)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendices

2.6.7.1 Before undertaking the main farming work in the family, what was the workload you undertook? and what did your husband undertake? (If there is no need to compare, please skip this question)

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2.6.7.2 What do you undertake now? And what does your husband undertake?

---

2.7.1 Did you change the farming areas after you become the main labour force in farming?  
a increased the farming areas  b no change   
c reduced the farming areas

2.7.1.1 If you choose 'reduced the farming areas', what are the reasons (more answers are possible)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and which one is the most important reason? \_\_\_\_\_  
a temporarily handed over to others to manage  b leased to others   
c abandoned  d construction of road/houses  e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.2 Did you change the cropping schemes after you become the main labour force in farming?  
a no  b yes

2.7.2.1 If you choose 'b', what are the changes? \_\_\_\_\_  
Reasons for the changes? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.3 Is there any difference in the quantity of fertilizer use between your husband and yourself?  
a increased quantity of fertilizer use  b no change   
c reduced quantity of fertilizer use

2.7.3.1 If you choose 'a' or 'c', why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.4 Is there any difference in the quantity of pesticides use between your husband and yourself?  
a increased quantity of pesticides use  b no change   
c reduced quantity of pesticides use

2.7.4.1 If you choose 'a' or 'c', why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.5 Did you change the quantity of fertilizer use in recent years?  
a increased quantity of fertilizer use  b no change   
c reduced quantity of fertilizer use  d I have no idea/cannot remember

2.7.5.1 If you choose 'a' or 'c', why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.6 Did you change the quantity of pesticides use in recent years?  
a increased quantity of pesticides use  b no change   
c reduced quantity of pesticides use  d have no idea/cannot remember

2.7.6.1 If you choose 'a' or 'c', why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.7 How do you deal with the weeds in the farm land?  
a use weedicides  b remove them by hands/tools   
c partly use weedicides and partly physically  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.7.8 How do you deal with the farmyard manure (use for which land, vegetable garden?)? and why?

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2.8 Is there someone to help you in farming or household affairs?  
a no  b yes

2.8.1 If you choose 'a', why?  
a need help, but nobody to help  b do not need help  c other \_\_\_\_\_

2.8.2 If you choose ‘b’, who, when, what and how much? (e.g. child(ren), relatives, friends, neighbours, other people, etc.)

Who usually helps you?	When do you usually need help?	What kinds of help do you usually need?	How much does he/she help you? (percentage or hours)

2.9.1 Labour division and decision making in agricultural production (If it is impossible to compare, just skip the question.)

Contents		Before becoming the main labour force in agricultural production		After becoming the main labour force in agricultural production	
		Who did it?	Who decided it?	Who does it?	Who decides it?
Agricultural production	Farming areas	<del> </del>	<del> </del>	<del> </del>	<del> </del>
	Crops types	<del> </del>	<del> </del>	<del> </del>	<del> </del>
	Purchasing seeds				
	Purchasing fertilizer				
	Purchasing pesticide				
	Animal husbandry				
	Purchasing farming machinery				
	Selling produce				
Household affairs	Taking care of (grand)child(ren)				
	Taking care of elderly people				
	Purchasing household appliance or furniture				
Village Public affairs	Maintaining <i>guanxi</i>				
	Attending village election				
	Attending village meeting				
	Labour contribution to village collective affairs				

2.9.2.1 Which is the most important factor when you decide to farm certain crops (or breeds)?

- a price  b quality  c price and quality  d easy care   
 e stable yield  f other \_\_\_\_\_

2.9.2.2 Are there differences between you and your husband in this?

- a no  b yes  (husband: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.9.3.1 Which one is the most important factor when you buy seeds?

- a price  b quality  c price and quality  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.9.3.2 Are there differences between you and your husband in this?

- a no  b yes  (husband: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.9.3.3 Do you use all new seeds in farming? \_\_\_\_\_

- a no  [Detailed information: what percentage of the old seeds do you use? \_\_\_\_\_  
 from where (buy it from market or use your own old seeds)? \_\_\_\_\_ ]

- b yes

2.9.3.4 How many kinds of seeds do you buy usually in farming?

- a one kind  b two kinds  c three kinds  d four kinds  e or more

If you choose ‘b’, ‘c’ or ‘d’, why? \_\_\_\_\_

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2.9.3.5 Where do you usually buy the seeds?

a village shops  b township shops  c county shops

2.9.4.1 Which is the one most important factor when you buy fertilizer?

a price  b quality  c price and quality  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.9.2.2 Are there differences between you and your husband?

a no  b yes  (husband: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.9.5.1 Which is the one most important factor when you buy pesticides?

a price  b quality  c price and quality  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.9.2.2 Are there differences between you and your husband?

a no  b yes  (husband: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.9.6.1 Which is the one most important factor when you buy farming machineries?

a price  b quality  c price and quality  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.9.2.2 Are there differences between you and your husband?

a no  b yes  (husband: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.10 Sometimes, the woman does most of the work, but the husband makes all the decisions or most decisions. What is your opinion about this?

a it is all right  b it is wrong  c have no idea

2.10.1 If you choose 'b', do you want to change the situation? how and why?

---

2.10.2 Which is your current situation?

a mainly making the decision yourself  b mainly husband making the decision   
c co-determination

2.11 Do you like working in agricultural production?

a like it very much  b like it  c neutral  d dislike it  e greatly dislike it

If you choose 'c', 'd' or 'e', please answer: if the situation was you could do other things, what would you do and why? \_\_\_\_\_

---

2.11.1 What are the main problems when you do the agricultural production work?

---

2.11.2 Are you proud to be a farmer?

a no  b neutral  c yes  d have no idea/never thought about it

2.11.3 How do people value the farming work?

a not appreciate  b appreciate  c it depends  d have no idea/never thought about it

2.11.4 What is the most important work for you in the household?

a taking care of and supervising (grand)child(ren)  b farming  c housework   
d taking care of elderly  e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.11.5 If you could choose, what would you want to be?

a farmer  b housewife  c worker (away from home)  d other \_\_\_\_\_  e have no idea

2.12.1 In your opinion, can women do agricultural production as well as men/ their husbands?

a women farm better than men  b men farm better than women   
c no gender difference in doing the farming work  d have no idea

2.12.2 Where did you learn your farming knowledge?

A from own parents  b from husband  c learning by doing  d from the extension service   
e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.13.1 Would you abandon farming if you had other livelihood strategies?

a no, I could not abandon farming, it is a kind of guarantee

b yes, I could abandon farming if I had enough money or other job opportunity

c have no idea  d other \_\_\_\_\_

2.13.2 What is your opinion about the role of agricultural production in your family?

a it plays a supplementary role  b it plays a main role

c it plays the same role with other economic activity

d have no idea  e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.14 Do you have an extra-job beyond agricultural production?

a no

b yes  (exact details: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.15 Who is the main contributor to the family in your opinion?

a oneself  b husband  c husband and oneself have the same contribution

d parents-in-law/parents  e others \_\_\_\_\_

And why (what is the criteria) ? \_\_\_\_\_

2.16 Who does the main contribution to the agricultural production in your opinion?

a oneself  b husband  c husband and oneself have the same contribution

d parents-in-law/parents  e others \_\_\_\_\_

And why (what is the criteria) ? \_\_\_\_\_

2.17.1 In general, in the following situations, what in your opinion is better?

a only woman contributes to agricultural production

b woman contributes the most to agricultural production

c man and woman contribute equally

d man contributes the most

why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.17.2 And which is your current situation? \_\_\_\_\_

2.18 Which one is the main economic source of the household in your opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

and how much could you get from each activity?

a Farming  \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year b Breeding  \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year

c husband's migrant work \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year

d wife's off-farm job beyond farming  \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year

e son's earning  \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year

f farming and husband's earning from outside work

g other  \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/Year

2.19.1 Who controls the money in your family?

a oneself  b husband  c together(the couple)

d others \_\_\_\_\_  e no money to control

2.19.2 Who can decide how to use the household income on big affairs?

a oneself  b husband  c negotiation(the couple)  d others \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not choose 'a', then what kinds of expenditure can you decide?

What in your opinion are big affairs?

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2.19.3 Are there any difference in the use of your and your husband's earnings?

a no  b yes  (exact details and why: \_\_\_\_\_ )

2.19.3.1 Husband's earnings is mainly spend on \_\_\_\_\_

2.19.3.2 Your earnings is mainly spend on \_\_\_\_\_

2.20 What are the main household expenditures (more answers are possible)? \_\_\_\_\_

a means of agricultural production, such as fertilizer, agricultural chemicals

b daily expenditure  c educational fees for child(ren)

d health costs  e fees for maintaining *guanxi*  f other \_\_\_\_\_

2.20.1 Which is the highest expenditure? \_\_\_\_\_

2.21 How about your household economic level within the village according to your estimation?

a very rich  b rich  c medium  d poor  e very poor

2.22.1 Do you do the cleaning chores in the household?

a no  b yes  (how many hours do you spend on it per day? \_\_\_\_\_ hours)

2.22.2 Do you do the cooking chores in the household?

a no  b yes  (how many hours do you spend on it per day? \_\_\_\_\_ hours)

2.22.3 Do you need to take care of the elderly people in the household?

a no  b yes  (how many hours do you spend on it per day? \_\_\_\_\_ hours)

2.23.1 Daily expenses: how much money does your family usually spend on daily expense every month? \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan.

2.23.1.1 What is the money mainly spent on?

a food  b gas, water, electricity, etc.  c taking care of (grand)child(ren)

d health costs for family members  e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.23.2 Does your family have a vegetable garden?

a no  b yes  (vegetable gardening area: \_\_\_\_\_ *mu*)

2.23.2.1 Did you use pesticide in your vegetable garden?

a no  b yes

2.23.2.2 Does the produce from the vegetable garden meet your family's need?

a no  b yes

2.24.1 Can you easily get water resource when you need it in agriculture?

a no (and why? \_\_\_\_\_)  b yes

c have no idea

2.24.2 Can you easily get credit when you need it in agriculture?

a no (and why? \_\_\_\_\_)  b yes

c have no idea  d no need to apply credit  e other \_\_\_\_\_

2.25.1 Do you have some understanding of the agricultural subsidies?

a no  b yes, but only know how much money received every year

c yes, other \_\_\_\_\_

2.25.1.1 If you choose 'b' or 'c', what do you know exactly? And what's your opinion about it?

---

2.25.2 Does your family buy agricultural insurance?

a no  b yes  c have no idea

2.25.2.1 Do you have some understanding of it?

a no  b yes, but only know how much money is paid every year

c yes, other \_\_\_\_\_

2.25.2.2 If you choose 'b' or 'c', what do you know exactly? And what's your opinion about it?

---

2.26 An example: there are two cases, case 1, the husband staying at home to do agricultural production with his wife; case 2, the wife and others (e.g., help from husbands, neighbours, friends, relatives or hired labours, etc.) doing the agricultural production

2.26.1 Which situation in your opinion is better?

a case 1  b case 2  c no difference  d have no idea

2.26.2 Which one in your opinion has the higher production?

a case 1  b case 2  c no difference  d have no idea

2.26.3 Which one in your opinion is more harmonious (e.g., fewer quarrels)?

a case 1  b case 2  c no difference  d have no idea

2.26.4 Which one in your opinion is happier?

a case 1  b case 2  c no difference  d have no idea

2.26.5 Which one in your opinion is better for women?

a case 1  b case 2  c no difference  d have no idea

2.26.6 Which one is your own situation at present time?

a case 1  b case 2

2.27.1 What in your opinion is a good farming woman?

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2.27.2 In your opinion, are you a good farming woman?

a no  b no difference with others  c yes  d have no idea

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.28.1 What in your opinion is a good housewife?

---

2.28.2 Are you a good housewife according to your own view?

a no  b no difference with others  c yes  d have no idea

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

2.29.1 What kinds of tasks should you do in the family? Why?

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2.29.2 What kinds of tasks should your husband do in the family? Why?

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2.30 Another example: which one would you choose? Situation 1, you can have one *mu* good land and you can get 1000 Jin yield totally per year; Situation 2, you can have two *mu* poor land and you can get 1200 Jin yield totally per year.

a situation 1  b situation 2

and why? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Emotional or Psychological Information

3.1.1 What kind of difficulty do you have (more answers are possible)? \_\_\_\_\_ The most difficult one is \_\_\_\_\_

a agricultural production  b child(ren)'s education  c affection/relationship with husband  d conflict with other people  e other \_\_\_\_\_  f no difficulties

Exact details and how to solve:

---

3.1.2.1 If you choose 'a', then, what problems do you encounter in agricultural production (including planting and breeding) (more answers are possible): \_\_\_\_\_ The most difficult one is: \_\_\_\_\_

a difficulties of purchasing production materials  b labour shortage

c do not master production technology  d sales difficulty  e other \_\_\_\_\_  f no difficulties

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3.1.2.2 How do you usually solve it?

- a by oneself  b find help from parents-in-law/parents   
c find help from relatives  d find help from neighbours   
e find help from village cadres  f find help from friends   
g hire other people  h other \_\_\_\_\_

3.2 Do you often feel it is difficult to do the agricultural production work?

- a often  b sometimes  c few  d never

and why? \_\_\_\_\_

3.3 Have you ever borrowed or loaned money from others?

- a no  b yes

**If you choose 'yes', please answer 3.3.1 -3.3.3; If you choose 'no', please skip 3.3.1-3.3.3.**

3.3.1 Why did you borrow or loan the money?

- a means of production, such as fertilizer, agricultural chemicals   
b for child(ren)'s education  c health costs   
d for reconstructing house  e for a son's marriage   
f fine of disobeying family planning policy  g other \_\_\_\_\_

3.3.2.1 From whom did you borrow or loan the money?

- a relative(s)  b friend(s)  c neighbour(s)  d village cadre(s)  e personal loan  f other people \_\_\_\_\_

3.3.2.2 If you choose 'relatives', from whose relatives?

- a own relatives  b husband's relatives

3.3.3 Who borrowed the money?

- a husband  b oneself  c parents-in-law/parents  d other people \_\_\_\_\_

3.4 Do you feel any pressure/stress in your normal life?

- a relative large pressure  b some pressure  c no pressure

If you choose 'a' or 'b', please answer exactly \_\_\_\_\_

3.5 What do you usually do to release your pressure (more answers are possible)?

- a watching TV  b chatting with friends  c talking with husband   
d other \_\_\_\_\_  e no pressure

## 4. Networks and Other affairs

4.1 Are there some female groups/organizations in the village?

- a no  b yes

4.1.1 If you choose 'yes', exact details (features or criteria of groups, e.g. education, off-farm working experience, husband's working style, household economic situation, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_

4.1.2 If you choose 'yes', what kind of people can be enrolled as members of the group or organization?

\_\_\_\_\_

4.2.1 Are you a member of a group or organization?

- a no  b yes  (exact details \_\_\_\_\_)

4.2.2 If you choose 'yes', is this group helpful to you?

- a no  b yes  (exact details \_\_\_\_\_)



4.3 What organizations do you want to have in the village(more answers are possible)?

- a economic cooperation organization
- b arts association or organization
- c professional technical association or organization
- d funds or credit organization
- e other organizations \_\_\_\_\_
- f do not want to participate or never thought about this

4.4.1 What do you do in your leisure time (more answers are possible)?

- a watch TV
- b play poker
- c play mah-jongg
- d chat or visit relatives
- e read books or newspapers
- f go to the market
- g participate in cultural activities
- h other activities \_\_\_\_\_
- i no leisure time

4.4.2 Which is the main way you get news from outside world?

- a TV
- b radio
- c computer
- d from husband
- e from friends or villagers
- f other \_\_\_\_\_
- g not interested in information from outside world

4.5 Did you attend some kinds of training course?

- a no
- b yes  (exact details \_\_\_\_\_)

4.6 Which kind of training course do you want to have (more answers are possible)?

- a planting technical training
- b breeding technical training
- c legal literacy training
- d technology of working outside training
- e health-care knowledge training
- f other \_\_\_\_\_
- g have no idea

4.7 What of the following are you concerned about? (more answers are possible)and which concerns you most?

- a agricultural technology information
- b agricultural produce marketing information
- c rural and agricultural policy information
- d to protect the interests of migrant workers information
- e health and medical information
- f child(ren)'s educational information
- g other information \_\_\_\_\_
- h have no idea

4.8 How do think villagers see women who are the main labour contributor in agriculture?

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4.9 What is your understanding of women who are the main labour contributor in agriculture in the household?

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4.10 What is your plan for the future?

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## **Appendix B: Biography Recording Outline**

[Note: This biography recording outline is based on the questionnaire; all the biography recording respondents are selected from the questionnaire investigation respondents.]

### **1. The natal family**

- 1.1 Parents and siblings: the place of origin, education, marriage, current place of residence, occupation and economic situation;
- 1.2 Gender division of labour in the households of parents and siblings;
- 1.3 Make comparisons with the siblings, such as the opportunity of educational attainment; the expectation of the parents on every child;
- 1.4 Memorable things from childhood;
- 1.5 Memorable things from school period.

### **2. The husband's family**

- 2.1 Parents-in-law, brothers- and sisters-in-law: education, marriage, current place of residence, occupation and economic situation;
- 2.2 Gender division of labour in the households of parents-in-law and siblings-in-law;
- 2.3 Make comparisons between the husband and his siblings; the expectation of the parents-in-law on every child.

### **3. Marriage**

- 3.1 The process of getting to know the husband and marriage (arranged marriage or free love marriage, etc.);
- 3.2 The crucial factors that condition the marriage;
- 3.3 The dowry from the two families, especially compared to one's own siblings and the husband's siblings;
- 3.4 The expectation on the marriage of son and/or daughter.

### **4. Migrant work experience (if the woman has)**

- 4.1 The time, period and characteristic of the migrant job;
- 4.2 The reasons for doing the migrant job;
- 4.3 Memorable things from the migrant work period;
- 4.4 The reasons for returning the village;
- 4.5 The judgement and the impact of the migrant work experience;
- 4.6 Whether there are plans to migrate again, why or why not?

### **5. Agricultural production**

- 5.1 Before becoming the main labour force in agriculture, how was the gender division of labour and decision-making in agricultural production (what were done and decided by woman and the husband separately);
- 5.2 The current gender division of labour and decision-making in agricultural production (what are done and decided by the woman and the husband separately; what should be done and decided by the woman or the husband);
- 5.3 The changes in agricultural production after becoming the main labour in agriculture (e.g., farming areas, cropping scheme, use in agricultural production materials);
- 5.4 The differences between the woman and man in doing and deciding the farming work;
- 5.5 Difficulties in doing the agricultural production work and solutions;
- 5.6 The impact of changes in labour division on agricultural production;

- 5.7 The judgement of own role and position in agricultural production;
- 5.8 The judgement of the role and position of agricultural production within the household;
- 5.9 The judgement of the development orientation of agricultural production;
- 5.10 The criteria of being a good farmer;
- 5.11 Women's and men's strength in agricultural production;
- 5.12 The most important task in agricultural production? Why and who can do it?
- 5.13 Do you like to be a farmer? Are you proud to be farmer? Why or why not?
- 5.14 The expectation on agricultural production or related aspects;
- 5.15 Gross earnings from agriculture and expenditure in agriculture;
- 5.16 Years on farming and farming knowledge (e.g., dealing with harmful insects; choose good seeds, fertilizer or pesticide; choosing appropriate time for applying the agricultural production materials);
- 5.17 The couple farm together and the man migrates and the woman undertakes the main work in farming, what are the corresponding pros and cons in your opinion?
- 5.18 Understanding of agricultural subsidy, agricultural insurance and credit;
- 5.19 Agricultural production related training and extension services;
- 5.20 Opinion on the situation of losing farm land to the construction of commercial residence buildings.

## **6. Household affairs and village public affairs**

- 6.1 The gender division of labour and decision-making in household affairs production and village public affairs (what are done and decided by the woman and the husband separately; what should be done and decided by the woman or the husband);
- 6.2 Beyond agricultural production, the other workload description (e.g., taking care of the (grand)child(ren) and/or elderly people, household chores, or extra-job beyond farming); what is the most important task for you currently? If you could choose, what do you want to do? and why?
- 6.3 The difficulties in daily life and solutions;
- 6.4 The criteria of being a good housewife or mother;
- 6.5 The impact of changes in labour division in agriculture on household affairs and village public affairs;
- 6.6 The use of earnings in the household: gender difference in the use of money
- 6.7 Daily expenditure: main expenditure description; About food consumption, will the family consume own-produced rice and wheat (why or why not)?
- 6.8 Controlling and keeping money: who controls and who keeps the money? why?
- 6.9 Bank card(s) in the household: How many bank cards in the family? Does the woman know the pin code of the bank card(s)? Does the husband transfer the money back monthly (why or why not)? What is the remittance used? When did you start to have savings?
- 6.10 Opinion on village election: For example, who should go outside to vote, man or woman? Can a woman be the village head? Why and why not?
- 6.11 Opinion on the saying 'man is superior to woman'.

## **7. Woman's well-being**

- 7.1 Physical condition: (chronic) diseases and reasons;
- 7.2 The impact of changes in labour division in agriculture on women's well-being;
- 7.3 The cases of divorce in the village and woman's judgement on divorce;
- 7.4 The cases of domestic violence in the village and woman's judgement on domestic violence;
- 7.5 Leisure time: activities

7.6 What is your favourite TV program? What kind of teleplay/advertisement do you like or dislike? And why?

7.7 Who are your best friends? What are their situations (e.g., education, marital status, living condition, etc.)?

7.8 If you have quarrels with your parents-in-law or neighbours, what would your husband do? Would you tell your husband? why or why not?

7.9 Happiness: What does it mean to be happy? Are you happy (why or why not)? What kind of thing can make you (un)happy and why?

### **8. Husband's information**

8.1 Working place, return frequency, earnings, expenditure when doing the migrant job;

8.2 Contact frequency and contents; whether prepare gift for the left-behind family members (why or why not); whether share the positive and/or negative feelings with the husband (why or why not, if not, what do you want to share with the feelings).

### **9. Child(ren)'s information**

9.1 Age, sex, educational attainment, occupation, current place of residence and economic situation;

9.2 Desired family size; whether there are differences between the woman and other family members, if there are, what are the exact differences?

9.3 Expectation on the child(ren), especially paying attention to the gender difference;

9.4 What is your opinion on treating (grand)child(ren) differently, especially the different genders? For instance, somebody prefers to have a boy in the family, and what is your opinion? Somebody prefers to give better educational chances to the boy, and what is your opinion?

### **10. Rural development issues**

10.1 In the past years, what were the main changes in the village or the township (e.g., agricultural production, public transportation system, working opportunities, social welfare)?

10.2 The judgement on these changes;

10.3 Expectation on trainings or organizations;

10.4 The judgement or expectation on the orientation of rural development.

### **11. Participant observation**

11.1 The distribution and function of the rooms in the house (generation and gender difference);

11.2 The household appliance and decorations in the house;

11.3 The clothing and jewellery of the woman;

11.4 Farming behaviour (e.g., applying pesticide);

11.5 The timetable of woman's daily activities;

11.6 Paying attention to the information exchange during women's chat;

11.7 Exploring the situations when women are happy.

## Appendix C: Village Cadre Interview Guidelines

### 1. Natural conditions

- 1.1 Geographical condition and climate condition;
- 1.2 Public transportation condition;
- 1.3 Natural resources.

### 2. Demographic characteristics and migration

- 2.1 Composition of population (age, sex), household numbers;
- 2.2 Demographic characteristics of the migrants: number, age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, occupations, main working places, frequencies of coming back to village, earnings;
- 2.3 The judgement on the impact of migration/migrant work.

### 3. Agricultural production

- 3.1 Land allocation (gender issue); average farm land of each household;
- 3.2 Agricultural production services, e.g., training and extension services on some agricultural techniques, harvest services, irrigation services;
- 3.3 Agricultural production policies, e.g., subsidy and insurance, villagers' understanding degree and the implementation process;
- 3.4 Mechanization of the agricultural production: owning rate of the farming machines; gender differences in using farming machines;
- 3.5 Agricultural production co-operatives (whether they exist and exact details);
- 3.6 Gender division of labour and decision making in agricultural production (e.g., selling, purchasing and growing);
- 3.7 The judgement on women as the main labour contributor in agriculture (pros and cons);
- 3.8 Main difficulties in agriculture;
- 3.9 Expectation on agriculture.

### 4. Household affairs

- 4.1 Gender division of labour and decision-making in household affairs;
- 4.2 Main economic source for the villagers;
- 4.3 Controlling and using money; differences in gender and generation.

### 5. Village public affairs and other affairs

- 5.1 Village committee: functions and compositions;
- 5.2 Village election, village meetings and collective labour force affairs;
- 5.3 The relationship with the township government;
- 5.4 Communist party members in Yang Village: demographic characteristics (age, gender) and functions;
- 5.5 Organizations or associations (e.g., local belief organization, characteristics and activities), especially for women;
- 5.6 Village industries: introduction of the village industries (the development history/story of the village industries); judgement on the impact of village industries;
- 5.7 Social welfare system and changes in it (e.g., health insurance; endowment insurance);
- 5.8 Funeral and marriage culture;
- 5.9 Main changes in the past years in Yang Village and the judgement on the changes;
- 5.10 The judgement on women's contribution to rural development.

## **Appendix D: County/Township Government Interview Guidelines**

### **1. Natural conditions**

- 1.1 Geographical condition and climate condition;
- 1.2 Public transportation condition;
- 1.3 Natural resources.

### **2. Demographic characteristics and migration**

- 2.1 Composition of population (e.g., number, age, sex and education distribution), township/village numbers;
- 2.2 Demographic characteristics of the migrants (at the country/township level): number, age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, occupations, main working places, frequencies of coming back, earnings;
- 2.3 The judgement on the impact of migration/migrant work and the left-behind population (women, children and elderly people);
- 2.4 The judgement on women's contribution to agriculture, household and rural development;
- 2.5 Relevant policies for migrants and left-behind population (especially for women).

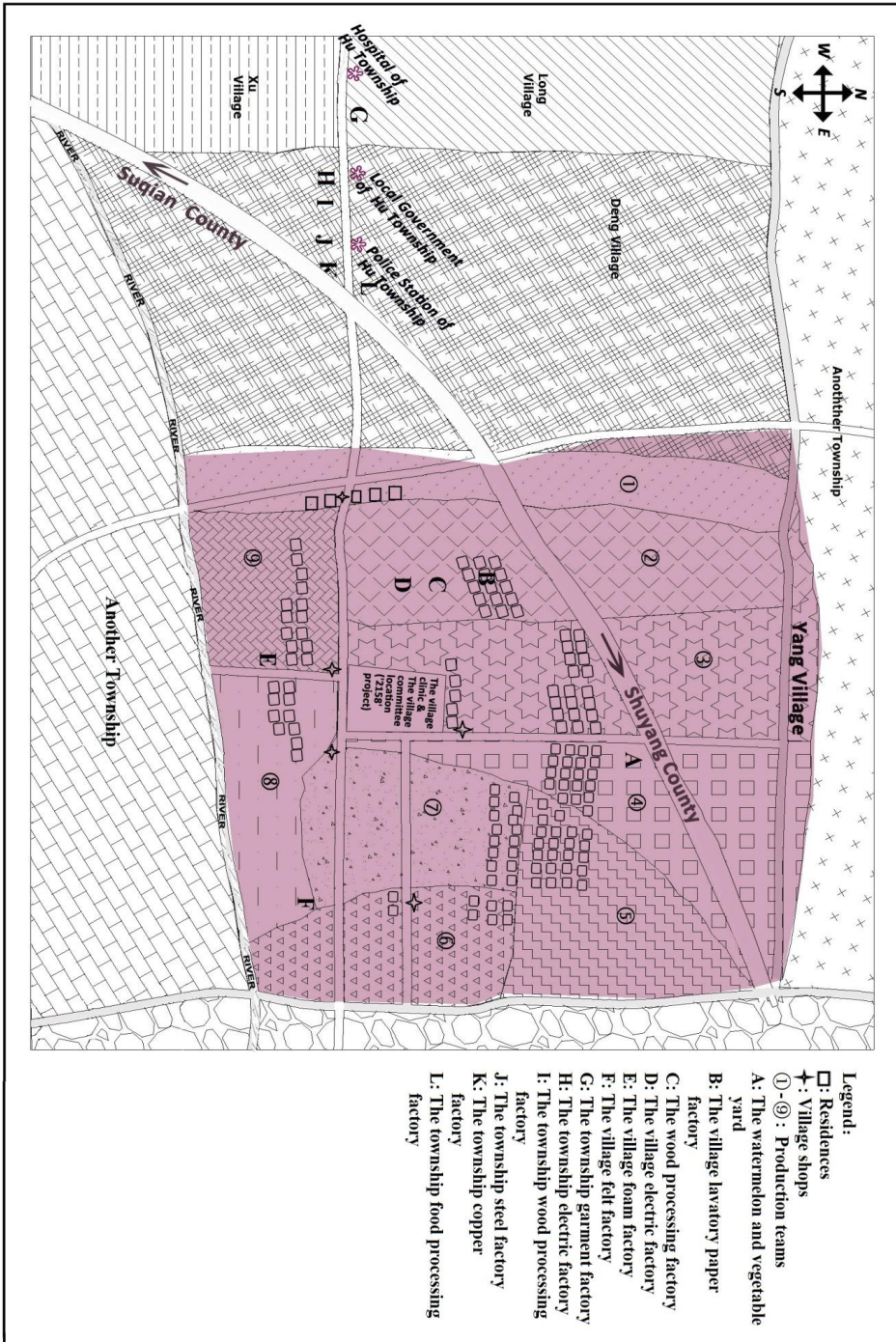
### **3. Economic development situation**

- 3.1 Main economic sources of the residents;
- 3.2 Introduction of the enterprises that employ rural residents (at the country/township level): numbers, scale, employed workers – gender difference, salaries; special policies for attracting rural industries;
- 3.3 Agricultural production: cropping schemes, arable farming areas; yield; selling; earnings; agricultural production insurance and subsidy; relevant training and extension services; agricultural mechanization situation; cooperatives; the judgement on the development or orientation of agricultural production; the judgement on 'losing/using farm land for commercial residence buildings'; the judgement on labour division and decision making in agriculture;
- 3.4 Development characteristics of the county/township.

### **4. Situation and judgement about Hu Township/Yang Village**

- 4.1 Relations with Hu Township/ Yang Village (what kind of relations and how to connect);
- 4.2 Similarities and differences between Hu Township and other townships (or Yang Village and other villages);
- 4.3 Development plan of Hu Township (or Yang Village), e.g., in agriculture, living environment, rural industries and etc.;
- 4.4 The judgement on development orientation of rural development.

Appendix E: Map of Yang Village and Local Industries



**Appendix F: Pictures of Women's Livelihood in Yang Village**

**Picture 1: Taking care of grandson**



**Picture 2: Cooking**





**Picture 3: Vegetable gardening**



**Picture 4: Farming – Applying pesticides to wheat**



**Picture 5: Making rubber balls (cottage industry, extra-job beyond farming)**



**Picture 6: Making toys (cottage industry, extra-job beyond farming)**



**Picture 7: Working in the village lavatory paper factory(extra-job beyond farming)**



**Picture 8: Working in the village electric factory(extra-job beyond farming)**



**Picture 9: Working in the village wood processing factory(extra-job beyond farming)**



**Picture10 : Village shop (villagers usually share information here)**



Picture 11: Local religious belief activity



Picture 12: Local market



**Picture 13:Electronic bicycle(commonly used by rural women)**



**Picture 14: Animal husbandry – chicken**



**Picture 15: New rural residence**







## Summary

Rural-urban migration of male labour force is an unstoppable process in China. Although some women also migrate to work in cities, most of these women return to the villages after marriage. They need to take care of the children and the family and to work on their smallholder farms. In general, women's labour participation in agriculture has increased due to the migration of the male labourers and they have become the main labour force in smallholder agriculture. This thesis is a sociological analysis on the impact of this change on the situation of these women and on smallholder agriculture from the women's perspective.

Chapter 1 introduces the societal and theoretical significance of the thesis. Food security, gender equality and women's well-being are main social concerns of this study. It also addresses knowledge gaps in the existing literature from the perspective of theoretical contribution. More precisely, this thesis pays special attention to the personal views of the women involved in agriculture; to the differentiated nature of agricultural feminization; emphasizes changes in intra-household gender relations and in women's well-being; and explores the factors that positively contribute to agriculture, gender relations and women's well-being.

To help readers to understand the context, Chapter 1 further presents recent historical changes in the gender division of agricultural labour and decision-making in China. 'Outside' and 'inside' are key words to understand the changes. Traditionally, man's territory is 'outside' and woman's territory is 'inside'. Due to rural out-migration, both the work territory of the man and the woman are expanding. Man's work territory even expands to the world 'outside' of the village. This study focuses on the impacts of the shifting borders of gender specific work territories on women's work, rural gender relations and food production.

At the end of Chapter 1, the four research objectives of the thesis are presented: 1) to identify the differentiated nature of agricultural production in the context of the changing gender division of labour; 2) to gain understanding about how the changes in the labour process of agricultural production influence agriculture; 3) to make possible additional changes in rural intra-household gender relations visible; 4) and to explore the impact of agricultural feminization on female peasants' well-being and the factors that condition female peasants to have a positive well-being situation.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the theoretical framework that underlies this thesis. It is based on a review of relevant literature on migration, agricultural feminization and gender and gender relations. Migration can be described as an isolated phenomenon or explained in connection with factors such as the institutional restrictions (hukou), economic goals, shortage of farmland, the abundance of household labour and cultural restrictions. However, whatever the decisive drivers are, migration is a household strategy. Clearly, it is important to investigate migration, but it is equally essential to get to know and understand the lives and work of the people staying-behind.

Agricultural feminization is closely associated with, but not a simple derivative of, the rural-urban migration of male labourers in China. Agricultural feminization implies labour division and decision-making. These two dimensions are often disconnected. The starting point in this thesis is that the process of agricultural feminization unfolds in a dynamic, albeit unequal way along five dimensions: 1) the changing social and gender division of labour; 2) the role of women in decision-making might be changing; 3) the degrees of participation in labour and/or decision-making might be differentiated due to different tasks in agricultural production; 4) this may influence agricultural production; 5) the same process changes the identity of women and gender relations with the husband in general. The feminization of agriculture does not occur in a linear way and changes in one dimension do not translate mechanically to other dimensions.

Gender, especially intra-household gender relations, is an essential issue in this thesis. Gender inequality in rural China exists in many spheres of life; it is for instance demonstrated by the 'son preference' culture; by the expression that women are in charge 'inside' and men 'outside'; by the traditional culture of 'san cong si de' which determines various moral principles women should live up to and which confirms women's lower social status; but also by the unequal access to and achievements in education. Gender inequality exists in agricultural production as well. For instance, though women have equal land usufruct rights, empirical reality demonstrates that things are often different.

When it comes to theoretically linking rural gender relations with phenomena as male out-migration and rural women's increased labour participation in agriculture, there is in China little research to build upon. This is one of the focal points in this thesis.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology utilized in this study. The research – which is a comparative research -combines quantitative and qualitative research approaches and uses survey research (face-to-face), interviews, biographies and participatory observation as research methods. Literature review is also part of the research. The choice for comparative research was made to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of agricultural feminization. Through stratification of the research group, two groups of farm women were selected: 50 women who are doing more than 50% of the farm work and 50 women who farm together with their husband but whose husband is doing more than 50% of the farm work. The husbands of the first group of women only work occasionally on the farm. Mostly, they have a job elsewhere, usually at large distance from the village. These women are often referred to as 'left-behind' women. The husbands of the second group of women are farmers or combine farm work with work in or in the vicinity of the village. In this way the differences and similarities between the work, position and experiences of two groups of women could be explored. To get more detailed information, the life histories of 6 of the women participating in the survey were compiled. Additional information was gathered from interviews with key persons in the village.

The research site Yang Village, located in Northern Jiangsu Province in China, is a typical agricultural production village. In 81% of the households at least one of the members is a

migrant labourer. Chapter 4 presents general information about Yang village and the women who participated in the research. The information contributes to the understanding and the discussion in the following chapters about the impact of farm women's increased labour participation on agricultural production (Chapter 5), the intra-household gender relations (Chapter 6), women's well-being (Chapter 7) and even rural development (Chapter 8). It presents information about land issues, local industries, administrative management, local services and organization. It also introduces female peasants' age, education, extra-jobs alongside agricultural production and information about their husbands and children. At the end of this chapter, an overview of the six biographical recorded women is presented.

Chapter 5 discusses the impact of labour feminization in agriculture on agricultural production from the perspective of the women involved in this process. Some scholars perceive a woman's increased labour participation in agriculture as a regression; it would negatively affect food production. However, this research shows that women hardly change the local farming style: the structure of farms, the cultivated area, the cultivation methods, the inputs used and the yields, all remain more or less the same. Female peasants do not agree with the argument that their way of farming represents a regression of agricultural production. Additionally, the willingness of female peasants to continue farming was explored. It appears that having a non-agricultural part-time job in addition to farm work strongly contributes to the willingness to continue farming. Hence, it can be assumed that a decentralization of industry towards rural areas could contribute to national food security. At the end of Chapter 5, problems and expectations of female peasants in agricultural production are illustrated. This research recommends that designing and producing women friendly farming machinery might solve some of their problems and that it could also contribute to gender equality to some extent.

Chapter 6 explores possible changes in intra-household gender relations in the rural households. Theoretically, the rural-urban migration of the husbands provides more space for the left-behind women to decide about more things related to farming and household affairs. The research shows that, women's increased labour participation in agriculture goes together with an increased say in the decision-making about agricultural production. However, in so-called 'big' affairs men's voice is still dominant. The research further finds that women's increased participation in agricultural labour and decision-making does not go together with an increased say in 'big/important affairs' in the household and a higher participation in village affairs. Female peasants are still controlled and caged by the traditional gender specific norms about labour division and decision-making. Moreover, they do not acknowledge the importance of their own contribution to agricultural production and neither to the household nor given the recognition they would deserve. In practice, they are still subordinate to men and the work 'inside' and 'outside' remains very much divided along gender lines. Intra-household gender inequality is re-confirmed and re-produced. Nevertheless, it is inspiring to observe that having an extra-job alongside farming, higher educational attainment, migrant work experience, or rare contact with their migrant husbands, all benefit women's willingness to have a more equal relationship with the husband within the household.

## Summary

Chapter 7 examines the current situation of left-behind women's objective and subjective well-being. Compared to the women who are living together with the husband at home, left-behind women are generally unhappier. They realize it would be better to farm together with the husband, but they have to do all the work, both in agriculture and the household, by themselves. They have hardly any leisure time or use it to do an extra-job like making rubber balls or working in the village wood processing factory. In this way they can earn some extra money to cover the daily expenditures. Besides the physical burden, left-behind women endure negative feelings, i.e., worries, loneliness and dissatisfaction. It is therefore stimulating to find factors that help some left-behind women to cope with the hardships in a positive way. Women with higher educational attainment, migrant work experience, membership of a local religious group, and living at a relatively shorter distance from their own parents, are relatively happier. They have a larger social network and more opportunities to communicate with others which let them be a 'somebody' instead of one of those people nobody cares about.

Chapter 8 summarizes the main empirical research findings. Then, it synthesizes the overall conclusions, presents some policy recommendations and elaborates some critically reflections for future research.

Based on the empirically findings, this research argues three points.

Firstly, the significance of agricultural production is not adequately recognized by the female peasants. To some extent, it induces the denial of their contribution to agricultural production and to the household.

Secondly, rural gender studies related to agricultural production in China is not on the right track, as is shown in the following four aspects: 1) the view of the involved women themselves is nearly absent; 2) little attention is paid to the decision-making aspects in agriculture; 3) women are usually taken as passive victims and negative judgements are commonly put centre stage; 4) within the framework of modernization and urbanization ideology, there is hardly any conceptual space for specific development trajectories that build on an increased role of rural women.

Thirdly, rural development could follow different trajectories that go against the current modernization and urbanization ideology in China. Rural development could also imply a strengthening of multifunctional agriculture and could cover the issues of diversity, environment, cooperation, innovation, autonomy and social commitment.

## Samenvatting

In China is de trek van mannelijke arbeidskrachten van het platteland naar de stad een niet te stoppen proces. Hoewel ook sommige vrouwen vanwege werk van het platteland naar de stad migreren, keren de meeste van hen na hun huwelijk terug om voor kinderen en familie te zorgen en het werk op hun boerenbedrijfje te doen. In het algemeen kan men zeggen dat sinds de trek van de mannen naar de stad de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen in de kleine boerenlandbouw is toegenomen en dat zij nu de belangrijkste arbeidskrachten in deze landbouw zijn. Dit proefschrift is een sociologische analyse van de effecten van deze verandering op de situatie van deze vrouwen en op de boerenlandbouw vanuit het perspectief van de vrouwen.

Hoofdstuk 1 schetst de maatschappelijke en theoretische relevantie van dit proefschrift. Het richt zich op de sociale vraagstukken van voedselzekerheid, gendergelijkheid en het welzijn van vrouwen. Het behandelt daarnaast blinde vlekken in de bestaande theoretische literatuur. Preciezer gezegd, dit proefschrift besteedt specifieke aandacht aan de persoonlijke visies van de boerinnen; aan de diversiteit van het verschijnsel feminisering van de landbouw; aan de veranderingen in de man-vrouw relaties binnen het gezin en het welzijn van de vrouwen. Daarnaast onderzoekt het de factoren die in positieve zin bijdragen aan de landbouw, de man-vrouw relaties (binnen het gezin en in de lokale gemeenschap) en het welzijn van de boerinnen.

Om de context van de studie voor de lezer te verhelderen, worden in Hoofdstuk 1 ook recente historische veranderingen in de arbeidsdeling tussen mannen en vrouwen in de landbouw in China, inclusief in de besluitvorming daarover, beschreven. ‘Buiten’ (‘outside’) en ‘binnen’ (‘inside’) zijn de sleutelconcepten om de veranderingen te begrijpen. Door arbeidsmigratie zijn de werkerterreinen van zowel man als vrouw verruimd. Die van de man verruimt zich zelfs tot de wereld ‘buiten’ het dorp. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de invloed van de verschuivende grenzen van genderspecifieke werkdomeinen op het werk en welzijn van de boerinnen, op de man-vrouw verhouding, en op de voedselproductie.

Hoofdstuk 1 eindigt met de presentatie van de vier onderzoeksdoelen van dit proefschrift: 1) identificatie van de diversiteit van de agrarische productie binnen de context van de veranderende arbeidsdeling tussen man en vrouw; 2) inzicht verwerven in hoe de veranderingen in de arbeidsdeling tussen man en vrouw op het boerenbedrijf de landbouw beïnvloeden; 3) het zichtbaar maken van mogelijke bijkomende veranderingen in de man-vrouw relaties binnen het boerengezin; 4) het onderzoeken van de invloed van feminisering van de landbouw op het welzijn van boerinnen alsook van de factoren die een positieve invloed hebben op het welzijn van deze vrouwen.

Hoofdstuk 2 werkt het theoretisch kader van dit proefschrift meer in detail uit. Het is geconstrueerd op basis van literatuuronderzoek over migratie, feminisering van de landbouw en gender en genderverhoudingen. Migratie kan als een op zichzelf staand fenomeen worden

beschreven of worden verklaard in relatie met economische doelen, een tekort aan landbouwgrond, een overschot van gezinsarbeid en culturele begrenzungen. Welke factor dan ook doorslaggevend is, migratie is een gezinsstrategie. Het is essentieel om het verschijnsel migratie te onderzoeken maar het is net zo belangrijk inzicht te verkrijgen in het leven en het werk van de mensen die achterblijven.

Feminisering van de landbouw is nauw verbonden met de trek van mannelijke arbeidskrachten van het platteland naar de stad maar het is geen simpele afgeleide daarvan. Het begrip feminisering van de landbouw bestaat uit twee aspecten en verwijst naar de arbeidsdeling tussen man en vrouw in het boerengezin en naar de besluitvorming over de landbouw. Deze aspecten worden vaak ontkoppeld. Het vertrekpunt van dit proefschrift is dat het proces van feminisering van de landbouw zich ontwikkelt op een dynamische maar ongelijke wijze langs vijf dimensies: 1) de arbeidsdeling op basis van sociale en sekse verschillen en de veranderingen daarin; 2) de rol van vrouwen in de besluitvorming en mogelijke veranderingen daarin; 3) de mogelijke differentiatie wat betreft werk en participatie in de besluitvorming als gevolg van een uiteenlopend takenpakket in de agrarische productie; 4) de mogelijke invloed hiervan op de agrarische productie; 5) de mogelijke veranderingen in de identiteit van de vrouwen en in de man-vrouw relaties in het algemeen.

De feminisering van de landbouw is geen lineair proces en veranderingen in een van de dimensies vertalen zich niet automatisch in veranderingen in andere dimensies.

Gender, vooral de man-vrouw relatie binnen gezin en huishouden, is een essentieel thema in dit proefschrift. Sekseongelijkheid is in veel facetten van de Chinese plattelandssamenleving te vinden, zoals de voorkeur voor een baby van het mannelijk geslacht; de gangbare uitdrukking dat vrouwen verantwoordelijk zijn voor 'binnen' en mannen voor 'buiten'; het onderschrijven van traditionele morele principes die stellen dat de vrouw de man moet gehoorzamen; of de ongelijkwaardige opleidingskansen voor jongens en meisjes op het platteland. Ook in de landbouw komt ongelijkheid tussen de seksen voor. Bijvoorbeeld, volgens de wet hebben mannen en vrouwen dezelfde grondgebruikrechten maar in de alledaagse praktijk pakt dat anders uit. Om op theoretisch niveau de relatie te leggen tussen rurale genderverhoudingen, de trek van mannen van platteland naar de stad en het toegenomen aandeel van vrouwen in de landbouw, is in China nauwelijks wetenschappelijk onderzoek te vinden waarop kan worden voortgebouwd. Dit is dan ook een van de belangrijke (aandacht)punten in dit proefschrift.

In Hoofdstuk 3 wordt de onderzoeksmethodologie beschreven. Het onderzoek combineert zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden, te weten de survey methode, biografie en interviews en participerende observatie. Daarnaast is literatuuronderzoek verricht. Om een beter begrip te krijgen van het verschijnsel feminisering van de landbouw is voor comparatief onderzoek gekozen. Voor het survey onderzoek in de vorm van face-to-face interviews werden via stratificatie van de onderzoeksgroep 100 vrouwen geselecteerd: een groep van 50 vrouwen die meer dan de helft van het agrarische werk zelf voor hun rekening nemen (groep 1) en een tweede groep van 50 vrouwen die ook op het bedrijf werken maar

wier echtgenoten meer dan 50% van het agrarische werk doen (groep 2). De echtgenoten van de eerste groep vrouwen wonen en werken elders, vaak op grote afstand van het dorp. Zij helpen hun vrouw alleen in de piektijden op het bedrijf. Hun vrouwen worden vaak 'left-behind' vrouwen genoemd. De echtgenoten van de tweede groep vrouwen werken op het boerenbedrijf of werken daarnaast ook elders maar dan dichtbij huis. Van zes vrouwen werd meer gedetailleerde informatie verkregen in de vorm van hun levensgeschiedenis. Interviews met sleutelfiguren in het dorp leverde meer algemene informatie over het dorp op. Na verwerking van de data werd aanvullende informatie in het dorp vergaard, ook ter controle van de resultaten uit het survey onderzoek.

Het onderzoek werd uitgevoerd in Yang, een typisch agrarisch dorp gelegen in het noordelijk deel van de provincie Jiangsu. Het overgrote deel van de huishoudens in Yang (81%) heeft minstens één lid dat arbeidsmigrant is. Hoofdstuk 4 geeft algemene informatie over het onderzoeksgebied, over de vrouwen die aan het onderzoek meededen en over hun gezinnen. Aanvullende informatie betreft de grondproblematiek, lokale industrie en, bestuurlijke zaken en werkgelegenheid buiten de agrarische sector. Deze achtergrondinformatie draagt bij aan een beter begrip alsook aan de discussie in de volgende hoofdstukken, te weten, de invloed van de toegenomen participatie van vrouwen in de kleine boerenlandbouw op de productie (Hoofdstuk5); op de man-vrouw verhoudingen binnen het huishouden (Hoofdstuk 6); op het welzijn van de vrouwen (Hoofdstuk 7); en op plattelandsontwikkeling (Hoofdstuk 8). Ter afsluiting van het hoofdstuk worden de zes vrouwen geïntroduceerd die bereid waren hun levensgeschiedenis met de onderzoekster te delen.

Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft hoe de boerinnen oordelen over de invloed van feminisering van de landbouw op de agrarische productie. Hun eigen ervaring is daarbij het vertrekpunt. Hoewel sommige onderzoekers de toegenomen arbeidsdeelname van vrouwen in de landbouw als een achteruitgang beschouwen (het zou een negatieve invloed hebben op de voedselproductie), laat dit onderzoek zien dat de vrouwen (uit groep 1) de lokale bedrijfsstijl nauwelijks veranderen. Zowel de bedrijfsstructuur als de hoeveelheid bebouwde grond, de methoden, de input en de opbrengsten van de gewassen blijven allen min of meer hetzelfde. De boerinnen zijn daarom van mening dat hun manier van boeren geen achteruitgang van de productie betekent. In dit hoofdstuk wordt verder ingegaan op de vraag of de boerinnen bereid zijn om in de landbouw te blijven werken. Het is opmerkelijk dat juist de vrouwen die betaald werk verrichten naast het werk in de landbouw hier positiever tegenover staan. De hypothese is daarom dat een decentralisatie van de industrie naar het platteland bij zou kunnen dragen aan voedselzekerheid op nationaal niveau. Aan het eind van dit hoofdstuk komen onder meer de problemen waar de boerinnen in hun werk tegenaan lopen aan bod. Een van de aanbevelingen van dit onderzoek is dat het ontwerpen en produceren van vrouwvriendelijke landbouwmachines enkele problemen zou kunnen oplossen en gender gelijkheid zou kunnen bevorderen.

Hoofdstuk 6 onderzoekt de mogelijke veranderingen in de man-vrouw verhoudingen binnen de huishoudens. Theoretisch gesproken zou de trek van de mannen naar de stad de achterblijvende vrouwen de ruimte bieden om over meer zaken te beslissen, zowel wat betreft

de landbouwactiviteiten als het gezin. Uit het onderzoek blijkt dat het toegenomen arbeidsaandeel van de vrouwen in de landbouw samengaat met meer zeggenschap over de agrarische productie. Als het echter beslissingen over 'grote' zaken betreft, is de stem van hun echtgenoot nog steeds belangrijker. Het onderzoek toont verder aan het toegenomen aandeel van vrouwen in arbeid en besluitvorming in de agrarische productie niet samengaat met meer zeggenschap over 'grote/ belangrijke' zaken in het gezin noch met meer participatie in organisatie en bestuur van het dorp. Ook de vrouwen die het grootste deel van het boerenwerk zelf verrichten zijn 'gekooide' vrouwen, ook zij zijn nog steeds onderworpen aan de traditionele normen ten aanzien van de arbeidsdeling tussen mannen en vrouwen. Bovendien blijkt dat deze vrouwen het belang van hun bijdrage aan de landbouw en aan huishouden en gezin niet onderkennen en dat ze daar evenmin van anderen waardering voor krijgen. In de praktijk van alledag zijn ze ondergeschikt aan de man en is de traditionele rolverdeling tussen de seksen (i.e. de vrouw 'binnen' en de man 'buiten') nog sterk bepalend. Aldus wordt de gender ongelijkheid binnen het gezin herbevestigd en gereproduceerd. Tegelijkertijd blijkt uit het onderzoek dat de wens om een meer gelijke relatie met hun echtgenoot te hebben sterker aanwezig is bij vrouwen met betaald werk naast het werk in landbouw en gezin; een hogere opleiding; en met ervaring als arbeidsmigrant. Hetzelfde geldt voor de vrouwen die weinig contact hebben met hun naar de stad gemigreerde man.

Hoofdstuk 7 onderzoekt het objectieve en subjectieve welzijn van de boerinnen. De vrouwen uit groep blijken, gemiddeld gesproken, ongelukkiger dan de vrouwen uit groep 2. De eerstgenoemde groep vrouwen is zich ervan bewust dat ze beter af zouden zijn als ze samen met hun man voedsel zouden kunnen produceren. Nu doen ze het meeste werk alleen terwijl ze ook de zorg hebben voor huishouden en gezin. Ze hebben daardoor nauwelijks vrije tijd en soms wordt die ook nog gebruikt om extra geld te verdienen voor de dagelijkse uitgaven. Bijvoorbeeld, met werk in de plaatselijke houtverwerkingsfabriek of door het doen van thuiswerk.

De vrouwen uit groep 1 worden niet alleen fysiek zwaar belast maar hebben ook last van negatieve gevoelens: ze maken zich relatief vaker dan de vrouwen uit groep 2 zorgen, voelen zich ontevreden en eenzaam. Het onderzoek wijst uit dat vrouwen die langer onderwijs volgden, ervaring hebben als arbeidsmigrant, lid zijn van een lokale religieuze groepering, en/of op korte afstand van de eigen ouders wonen, relatief gelukkiger zijn. Zij beschikken over een uitgebreider sociaal netwerk en hebben meer mogelijkheden met andere mensen te communiceren. Daardoor voelen ze zich 'iemand' en niet een van die mensen waar niemand om geeft.

Hoofdstuk 8 vat de belangrijkste empirische onderzoeksresultaten samen. Daarnaast worden de algemene conclusies en enkele beleidsaanbevelingen weergegeven evenals enkele kritische suggesties voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Gebaseerd op de empirische resultaten van dit onderzoek worden drie punten betoogd:



Ten eerste, de betekenis van agrarische productie wordt niet naar waarde geschat door de boerinnen. Hierdoor wordt, tot op zekere hoogte, hun bijdrage aan de agrarische productie en het huishouden ontkend.

Ten tweede, in China zijn gender studies in de landbouw niet op het juiste spoor. Dat blijkt uit de volgende vier aspecten: 1) de visie van de vrouwen zelf is nagenoeg afwezig; 2) er is weinig aandacht voor de rol van de vrouw in de besluitvormingskant van het werk in de landbouw; 3) vrouwen worden gewoonlijk als passieve slachtoffers neergezet en negatief beoordeeld; 4) er is binnen het ideologisch kader van modernisering en industrialisering nauwelijks conceptuele ruimte voor specifieke ontwikkelingstrajecten gebouwd op de vergrootte rol van plattelandsvrouwen.

Tot slot, plattelandsontwikkeling herbergt uiteenlopende trajecten in zich, inclusief ontwikkelingen die zich onderscheiden van het huidige spoor van urbanisering en industrialisering van het Chinese platteland. Een andere keuze is het versterken van multifunctionele landbouw en aandacht voor diversiteit, milieuvraagstukken, samenwerking, innovatie, autonomie en sociale betrokkenheid.

## 摘要

当代中国农村，男性劳动力外出务工转移是一个不可阻挡的过程。虽然部分女性劳动力像男性劳动力一样也转移到了城里务工，但大部分的女性会在婚后返回农村生育并照顾子女、照顾家庭并从事农业生产劳动。整体来讲，男性劳动力外出务工的事实在一定程度上使女性在农业生产中的劳动参与增加，并使其成为农业生产活动中的主要劳动力。男性劳动力外出务工、女性劳动力的农业生产参与程度增大，这是当代中国农村的重要变化之一。本论文采用社会学视角，对这一变化在农业生产、性别关系与妇女福利方面产生的影响进行了分析。

论文第一章主要介绍了本研究的现实意义与理论意义。现实意义主要体现在对粮食安全、性别平等及妇女福利等现实社会问题的关注上。从理论贡献的角度而言，本论文也在一定程度上弥补了现有相关研究领域的空白。确切地说，本研究特别关注从事农业生产的妇女本人的意见和农业女性化的异质性问题；强调家庭内部性别关系以及妇女福利的变化；并剖析了妇女在农业生产中的劳动参与率增加对农业生产、性别关系、妇女福利产生积极作用的影响因素。

为了帮助读者了解本研究的背景，除却介绍本研究的现实意义与理论意义，第一章同时介绍了中国当代农业生产中的性别分工及决策的历史变化情况。在中国农村，“外”与“内”是理解性别分工及决策历史变化的关键词。从传统意义来讲，男人的工作领域是“外”、女人的工作领域是“内”。“男主外、女主内”这一俗语即是对农村性别分工和决策分工的最好诠释。由于农村男性劳动力的转移，男女双方的工作领域都扩大了。男人的工作领域甚至扩展到了“村庄之外”。本研究即着重于分析此种基于性别分工变化的工作领域变化对妇女工作（即农业生产）、农村性别关系、妇女福利产生的影响。

第一章的最后部分展示了本研究的四个研究目标：1）解读劳动性别分工发生变化的背景下，农业生产的异质性特点；2）理解劳动性别分工变化是如何影响农业生产的；3）剖析劳动性别分工变化所引起的农村家庭内部性别关系变化；4）探讨农业女性化对妇女福利的影响，并探寻影响其对妇女福利产生积极作用的因素。

论文第二章阐述的是本研究的理论框架。它是在对劳动力转移、农业女性化、性别、性别关系的文献进行梳理的基础上产生的。劳动力转移可能只受单个因素的影响，或者受很多相互关联因素的综合影响，如制度限制（户口）、经济利益追求、耕地不足、家庭劳动力过剩及文化因素限制等。然而，不论哪个因素是关键，劳动力转移都是一个家庭策略，是家庭成员互动的结果。显然，调查、分析劳动力转移状况是重要的，但认识和了解劳动力转移背后的那些留守人口的工作与生活状况同样重要。

农业女性化与劳动力转移密切相关，但它又不仅仅是男性劳动力乡城转移的衍生物。农业女性化包括劳动参与和决策两个方面，但这两方面又经常是不连续的。因此，作为本研究出发点的农业女性化蕴含五个动态维度：第一，变化的劳动力社会分工及性别分工；第二，妇女的决策地位可能发生变化；第三，妇女在劳动力和/或决策方面的参与率可能会因为农业生产活动类型差异而有所不同；第四，上述三点变化都可能影响农业生产；第五，这些变化也可能对妇女的身份认同及其与丈夫之间的家庭性别关系产生影响。农业女性化不是一个线性的过程，这五个维度中任何一个维度的变化并不能直接导致其他维度的相应变化。

性别关系，尤其是家庭内部的性别关系，是本论文的一个重要研究问题。性别不平等在中国农村生活的很多领域都有体现，例如“重男轻女”、“男主外女主内”、“三从四德”等文化以及

“男女在受教育机会”等方面的不平等事实。虽然目前这些不平等现象在一定程度上有所弱化，但这些事实不仅仍在农村被广泛接受，而且依旧在无形中影响着农村妇女的生活，这些文化信条及人们已经不以为然的“不平等事实”也在一定程度上“固化”了妇女相对较低的社会地位。性别不平等同样存在于农业生产活动中。例如，虽然法律上明确规定女性享有和男性同等的土地使用权，但现实往往并非如此。

综合来讲，已有的中国研究很少综合考量农村性别关系与男性外出务工、女性的农业生产劳动增加的现实，将该现实与理论联系起来进行分析的研究更少。这也是本论文的出发点及研究重点之一。

论文第三章介绍了本研究所采用的研究方法。本研究综合运用了定量和定性研究方法，采用了问卷调查、访谈、生活史记录、参与观察等方法收集资料。当然，文献综述也是本研究的研究方法之一。为了更为深入的了解农业女性化这一现象，本研究采用了比较研究方法。通过分层抽样，研究对象选取了两个农村妇女群体：50名承担家庭农业生产劳动超过50%的妇女；50名承担家庭农业生产劳动低于50%的妇女。前一个群体常常被称为“留守妇女”，她们的丈夫一般在外务工，且务工地点多与村庄的距离较远，不能够经常回家。后一个群体往往被称为“非留守妇女”。有的“留守妇女”的丈夫在农忙期间回乡，帮助留守在家的妻子承担一部分农业生产劳动。一般而言，“非留守妇女”的丈夫往往和妻子一起从事农业生产活动，他们同时也拥有非农工作，只是工作地点在村庄附近，务工之余，他们依旧能够承担家庭中主要的农业生产劳动。通过对比，两个妇女群体的工作、地位、经验等方面的相似处或差异点从而得以体现。为了获得更为详细、深入、生动的资料，本研究还记录了6个“留守妇女”的生活史。此外，对村庄关键人物的访谈也为本研究提供了很多有用的信息。

本研究的地点是地处中国苏北的杨村。它是一个典型的农业生产村庄，村中81%的农户至少有一个家庭成员在外务工。论文的第四章介绍了杨村的概况及研究对象的基本情况，包括土地问题、地方产业、行政管理、本地服务及组织团体等情况。研究对象的基本信息包括年龄、教育程度、职业（除务农外）及其丈夫、子女的基本情况。第四章的最后则展示了6位生活史记录对象的生活概貌。这些基本信息有助于理解、讨论有关妇女在农业生产中的劳动参与率增加对农业生产的影响（第五章）、对家庭内部性别关系的影响（第六章）、对妇女福利的影响（第七章）、及对农村发展的影响（第八章）。

第五章从务农妇女的视角出发，探讨了农业劳动力女性化对农业生产的影响。有学者认为妇女在农业生产中的劳动参与率增加会对粮食生产带来负面影响。然而，本研究发现由于丈夫外出务工而在农业生产中劳动参与率增加的妇女，基本上没有改变农业生产方式，如种植类型、种植面积、种植放放及农业投入，并且这些妇女家庭的农业产量与那些以丈夫为主要劳动力的家庭的农业产量并没有明显的区别。这些妇女也不认为她们的耕作方式会对农业生产带来负面影响。此外，基于很多农民不愿意继续务农甚至某些地方出现的抛荒现象，本研究也进一步剖析了影响妇女是否继续从事农业生产意愿的因素。研究发现，如果留守妇女同时拥有非农工作，则是非常有利于其继续从事农业生产。因此，可以认为，地方产业的多样化、分散化可以促进国家的粮食安全。第五章的末尾阐述了妇女在农业生产中遇到的难题及其对农业生产的期望。本研究建议，设计和生产易于妇女操作的农业机械可能会有效解决她们普遍在农业生产中遇到的难题，即妇女很难操作庞大的、为男性设计的农业机械以及农忙季节缺乏劳动力的问题，并且，这在一定程度上也有利于促进性别平等。

第六章探讨了农村家庭内部性别关系的变化。理论上，丈夫的乡城流动给留守妇女提供了更多空间进行农业生产及家庭事务的决策。本研究也表明，留守妇女在农业生产方面的决策基本上随着

其在农业生产中的劳动参与增加而增加。然而，农业生产中“大事”决策依旧是由她们的丈夫做出的。研究进一步发现，留守妇女在农业生产中的劳动与决策参与提高并不直接导致其在家庭事务和村庄公共事务中等“大事”中的参与和决策增强。她们依旧深深地被传统的性别分工及决策观念影响、禁锢着。此外，虽然留守妇女在农业生产以及家庭事务方面发挥着很大的作用，但研究发现她们对自己的农业生产和家庭事务贡献的认同感远远低于她们应有的认同感，她们倾向于否定自己的贡献。在实践中，她们仍然服从于男性，她们的工作领域依旧受限于“内”与“外”的工作领域性别界限。家庭内部的性别不平等在一定程度上被再次肯定并重新塑造了。然而，令人激动的是，尽管如此，本研究发现妇女的以下特点有利于促进她们在家庭中与丈夫拥有相对平等的性别关系，例如，拥有一份非农工作，接受过相对较高程度的教育，拥有外出务工经验，与在外务工的丈夫较少联系等。

论文第七章探讨了留守妇女的福利状况，主要从主观和客观两个方面进行了讨论。相比那些和丈夫生活在一起的妇女，留守妇女的幸福感总体上低于非留守妇女。虽然她们更愿意和丈夫一起进行农业生产，但现实中她们不得不自己承担所有家庭劳动及农业生产劳动。她们几乎没有闲暇时间，即使在农业闲暇，她们也去找工作以挣更多的钱贴补家用。例如，她们会选择在家中加工皮球或在村里的板材加工厂工作。除了劳动负担，留守妇女还承受着诸多消极情绪，如忧虑、孤独和不满。因此，剖析那些能够提高留守妇女福利水平的因素是非常重要的。研究发现，如果留守妇女具有较高的受教育程度，或她具有外出务工经历，或她是当地某组织（如教会）的一员，或者她的现居地离其娘家较近的话，她都比其他留守妇女更加幸福。总体而言，这些留守妇女具有更大的社会网络，同时拥有更多机会与其他人交流，并在交往过程中成为其他人心目中的“重要他人”，而非其他人眼中“漠不关心的人”。成为“重要他人”意味着被别人需要，这会极大地提升留守妇女的幸福感。

第八章总结了本论文的主要研究发现，进而给出了研究结论、提出了一些政策建议。本章最后是对研究本身进行了一些批判性的思考，为后续研究提供了一定的思路。

本研究强调以下三点：

第一，农业生产的重要性并没有得到从事农业生产的妇女的充分认可。从某种程度上说，这在一定程度上导致了她们对自己的农业生产贡献和家庭贡献的否定。

第二，中国目前有关农业生产方面的性别研究并不在正确的轨道上，主要表现在以下四个方面：1) 缺少正在务农的妇女的研究视角；2) 很少注意农业生产中有关决策的内容；3) 妇女经常被视为被动的受害者，暗含一些对妇女的消极判断，这在一定程度上占据着现有研究的主流地位；4) 在现代化及城镇化的意识形态框架下，以农村妇女角色内容的增加为基础的特殊发展道路，几乎没有理论空间。

第三，农村发展是可以“违背”当前中国主流的现代化、城镇化思想的，它可以有不同的发展轨迹与路径。农村发展可能意味着促进多功能农业的发展，也可能需要关注多样性、环境、合作、创新、自主性和社会承诺等问题。

## About the Author

Xiangdan Meng (孟祥丹) was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1987 in Yushu, Jilin Province, P. R. China. She lived in her hometown until she went to China Agricultural University in Beijing in Sept., 2003. She majored in Sociology and obtained her bachelor's degree in July, 2007. Her bachelor thesis was about the livelihood of left-behind children in rural China. She was accepted as a MA candidate without taking the entrance exam for master studies because of the excellent scores in her bachelor studies. From Sept., 2007, she studied in the major of Rural Development and Management in China Agricultural University. She finished the master study in July, 2009 and her master dissertation, *Research on the Impact of 'School-mapping Policy' in Rural China*, was one of the top ten master dissertations in China Agricultural University in that year. Before graduation, she got four year's scholarship from Chinese Scholarship Council to study in Rural Sociology Group in Wageningen University in The Netherlands. In Sept., 2009, she started her PhD life in Wageningen and her research interests shifted to left-behind women and agricultural production in rural China.

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# Education Certificate



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<b>Name of the learning activity</b>	<b>Department/Institute</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>ECTS (1=28 hrs)</b>
<b>A) Project related competences</b>			
The sociology of farming and rural life	RSO	2009	6
Qualitative data analysis: procedures and strategies	YRM	2009	6
Understanding Rural Development: theories, practices & methodologies	RSO	2010	6
Writing research proposal	WASS	2010	6
ICRPS (International Comparative Rural Policies Studies) 2011 Summer Institute (2 weeks)	The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), Norway	2011	3
Visiting scholar in Roma TRE University in Rome, Italy (1 month) and Visiting Scholar in Universidade Federal Do Rio Grande Do Sul (UFRGS) in Porto Alegre, Brazil(10 days)	Economic Department of Roma TRE University and Economic Department of UFRGS	2011	4
<b>B) General research related competences</b>			
Introduction course	MG3S	2009	1.5
‘Agricultural feminization in rural China: Sociological Analysis’	Economic Department of Roma TRE University, Rome	2010	1
‘The impact of agricultural feminization in rural China – A case study from a rural village in Jiangsu Province’	WASS (PhD Day)	2012	1
‘The impact of agricultural feminization on gender relations in rural China’	XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology, Lisbon	2012	1
‘Agricultural feminization and food security: A case study from a rural village in China’	XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology, Lisbon	2012	1
‘Agricultural feminization and food security in rural China’	CERES Summer School, Amsterdam University	2012	1
<b>C) Career related competences/personal development</b>			
Information Literacy, including Introduction Endnote	WUR Library	2010	0.6
How to write a world-class paper	WUR	2010	0
Competence Assessment	WUR	2010	0.3
Project and Time Management	WUR	2012	1.5
Career Assessment	WUR	2013	0.3
<b>Total</b>			<b>40.2</b>

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