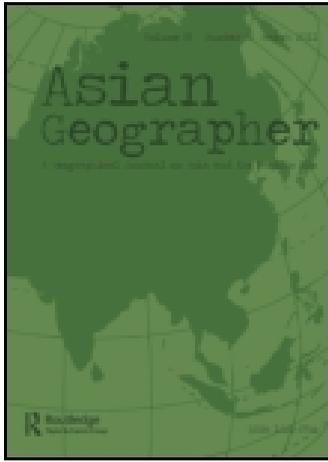


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Rural women migrants in the Pearl River Delta: analysis of migration motivations at the household scale

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Most previous studies conclude that rural women's migration is motivated to maximize their household economic income and their migration is largely decided by their parents or husbands. But the picture of rural women's migration in China is more complicated. This paper aims to explore why rural women in China migrate to cities to seek off-farm employment at the household scale. We emphasize intra-household relationships in analysis and employ rural women's narratives about migration and their families to reveal their migration motivation. Models of filial daughters, liberal daughters and ambivalent mothers are presented to interpret the diversity and complexity of rural women's departure from the countryside: (1) filial daughters whose migration is a part of household economic strategies, (2) liberal daughters whose migration is for individual welfare and (3) ambivalent factory mothers whose migration is the result of negotiations among accompanying husbands, childcare and paid work. Moreover, we have placed rural women migration in the particular background of regional development in China and find that there are many more liberal daughters than filial daughters, which are caused by rural development, their parents' increasing earning power and lower fertility in the countryside. We argue that both maiden workers and factory mothers play an active role in their migratory decision-making.

Keywords: rural women migrants; migration motivation; gender; household; the Pearl River Delta

Introduction

In the past, women were restricted by family and society that their mobility was lower than men in China. However, in post-Mao period women are as mobile as men (Fan 2008, 94). According to the sixth Census in 2010, there are 221 million migrants (floating population), who have been away from their official *hukou* registration locations to another county/city for at least half a year, and nearly half of them are women (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). Rural women migrants have been a hot topic in research of gender and migration. In 2009, the number of rural labor force is 230 million, and 150 million of them are rural migrant workers, who are holding agricultural *hukou* but working in cities (All China Federation of Trade Union 2010). Thus, over 70% of the floating populations of China are rural migrant workers.

Our research draws on samples of rural migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) to present rural women's migratory motivation at the household scale. The PRD is one of the

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largest destinations of internal female labor migrants in China. Since the 1980s, the economies of Hong Kong and Guangdong Province have been integrated closely under the model of “front shop-back factory”, and the PRD has developed rapidly with dramatic economic transformation from the primary sector to the secondary sector (Shen 2002; Sit 2000; Wong and Shen 2002). The PRD has become well known as the “world factory”. Due to the active inflow of foreign capital (Fan and Lu 2001), the local economy of the PRD has developed a huge light manufacturing industry, which provides large quantities of employment opportunities (Shen et al. 2000). These employment opportunities have drawn flows of intra-provincial and inter-provincial migrants (Fan 1996; Li 1997; Shen, Wong, and Feng 2002; Shen 2011). The number of migrants in the PRD was 1.85 million in 1986, 3.2 million in 1988 and rose sharply in the 1990s (Li et al. 2003). According to the fifth Census, the number reached 21.6 million in 2000, and 50.03% of them were women. Especially among inter-provincial migrants, the number of women is much larger than men (7.28 million versus 6.87 million). In the previous research, scholars have indicated that factories prefer to recruit women as they are perceived to be meticulous to detail, efficient, easy to control and capable of handling delicate work (Lee 1995; Pun 2005). Therefore, migration to the PRD is gendered, since more women enter this place to work as migrants.

The migration of rural young women to factories is a new phenomenon after the reform and opening up policy, and they are called *dagongmei* (working girls) (Chang 2008; Pun 2005). Woon (2000) argued that there are two kinds of young women migrants based on the relationships between them and their parents. They are filial daughters who leave home to work primarily as a result of decisions made by their parents and rebellious daughters whose reason for migration is to seek independence from the patriarchal family. Maiden workers are expected to return for marriage and stay in the countryside thereafter. According to Fan (2008, 92), a husband–wife split-household arrangement is the most popular model among peasant migrant households in China. Married women play crucial roles in split-household strategy. They stay in villages to farm and raise children when their husbands pursue migrant work outside. However, Zhang (2009) found that there is a rising new form of rural women’s marriages, named “neolocal marriages”, which is defined as young migrant couples setting up their post-marital homes in the host cities, not the hometowns of grooms or brides. The large-scale out-migration of women from the Chinese countryside has posed a major challenge to family relationships and the dominant understandings of gender roles that underpin those relationships (Jacka 2006).

An important issue about female labor migrants in the PRD is why female labor migrants move to the PRD region (Shen 2011). This paper is to examine the migratory motivations of female labor migrants by considering the relationship within the household to find out their roles in migration decision-making. Migratory motivation is often analyzed from economic and social perspectives in migration research (Ackers 1996; Gamburd 2003; Huq-Hussain 1996; Naved, Newby, and Amin 2001). However, a household perspective is also important and valuable to study migration motivation. Household approach involves both social and economic issues, but it is different from social or economic perspective in migration research. Because it addresses intra-household relationships, figures household power hierarchy and dynamics, and identifies women’s roles in families.

Even for young individual migrants, household factors are relevant to their migration process (Bonney and Love 1991). For instance, the pattern of peasant migration in Calca Province in Peru reveals the complexity of family participation in external labor markets (Radcliffe 1986, 1991). There is high mobility among “fathers” and “daughters”, but low mobility among “mothers” and “sons”. In this case, the organization of labor within households is examined in order to show how the multiplicity of class relations, which is a structured patriarchal process, shape different outcomes for male and female members. Most researchers consider that the migration

of unmarried young women is for maximizing the household economic income (Lawson 1998; Woon 2000) and married women are dependent in the migration (Raghuram 2004).

This paper aims to draw a picture of rural women's migration at the household scale, and explore the way, involving intra-household relationship, gender hierarchy and gender roles in families, as well as particular regional economic development, in which rural women's migration is constructed. We emphasize that the relationships between rural women and their family members can explain the migration of maiden as well as matron workers. Is the migration of rural maidens¹ for household income maximization? Are rural matrons² the dependents in their migration to cities? These are the questions that will be examined in our research.

The paper begins with a discussion of household approach and then a brief introduction to our fieldwork in the PRD. Filial daughters, liberal daughters and factory mothers will then be examined in three sections, respectively, afterwards. The paper concludes with a short discussion about the ratio among three groups of rural women migrants and the motivation of their migration at the household scale.

Methodology

Maximizing economic return, based on the neoclassical and Marxist theories, is one of the household models to explain intra-household relationships. Both neoclassical and Marxist theories view the household as an undifferentiated unit, and use a unitary model to represent the household and domestic labors (Folbre 1982). They assume that every member in the household has the same preference that their economic behaviors can be deduced as a set of responses to wages and prices.

Critiques of the unitary household models in both neoclassical and Marxist theories initially focus on the failure of these models to take into account intra-household inequalities and conflicts. Feminists argue that the household should not be regarded as a basic unit, and researchers should pay more attention to intra-household relationships among family members (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). In the field of migration study, feminists comment that the decision-making within the household is shaped by conflicts between the desires, expectations and understandings of different household members, gendered differentials in power, control over resources in the household and intra-household divisions of labor, all of which are shaped by society-level discourses relating to gender (Chant and Radcliffe 1992, 23; Lawson 1998; Wolf 1992, 20–23). Feminist researchers emphasize the importance of intra-household power dynamics in shaping divisions of labors by assigning domestic work and income-earning responsibilities to various household members (Bruce 1989; Hart 1992; Wolf 1992). Intra-household hierarchies of gender and generation can contribute to explaining the mobility of women and men. Furthermore, they can examine not only the empirical outcomes of intra-household inequality, but also the mechanisms producing those unequal outcomes (Lawson 1998).

Our study examines the motivations of rural women's migration to the PRD at the household scale and it explores how rural women's migration is constructed by gender and household. The household scale contributes to reveal rural women's migration through addressing intra-household relationships, figuring household power hierarchy and identifying women's roles in families. In practice, feminists stress understanding participants' life cycles through qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, observation and ethnography, which can facilitate a bottom-up approach and represent their voices by narratives directly (McDowell 1997; Nagar et al. 2002). Under the influence of these feminist arguments and household approach, we employ multiple methods in data collection about rural women's migration, in order to minimize the degree of specificity of certain methods. In the next few paragraphs, we will introduce our fieldwork to collect data as well as methods to analyze data.

Our fieldwork is to collect firsthand data through observations, interviews and questionnaire surveys. Zhuhai, Dongguan and Shenzhen are selected as fieldwork places, all of which are within the PRD (Figure 1). Zhuhai and Shenzhen are two special economic zones in China, which are undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization. The PRD is a leading export manufacturing and processing center in China. Thousands of factories in the PRD offer millions of employment opportunities, attracting rural residents to move from inland areas. In each of these three cities, the number floating population is much larger than the residents who are with local *hukou*.

The surveys were mainly conducted at three kinds of places, which are concentrated places of migrant workers: (1) inside the factories including the workshops and dormitories, (2) the public places near factories such as playgrounds, squares, parks, supermarkets and (3) the rented houses near factories. In total, 66 interviews and a questionnaire survey with 878 respondents have been taken in the fieldwork. The questionnaire was designed to consist of four parts: marriage and household, migratory and working experience, wage and consumption and future plans.

In this paper, we use the data of marriage, household, migratory and working experience to reveal women’s migratory motivation at the household scale. Among 878 questionnaire respondents, there are 280 men (31.9%) and 598 women (68.1%). Their average age is 25.8 years, average number of education years is 10.7 years and migratory duration is 6.3 years. Since our research focuses on women migrant workers, there are more female than male respondents in samples, and male samples are collected for comparison. Questionnaire survey data can present general pictures of migrant workers’ characteristics on particular items, such as demographical attributes, marriage, household, wage and consumptions, but semi-structured in-depth interviews in our research can get rich insights about migrants’ experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings. In-depth interviews enrich rural migrants’ narratives and help us interpret women rural migrants’ motivation for their migration in the context of their household relationships.

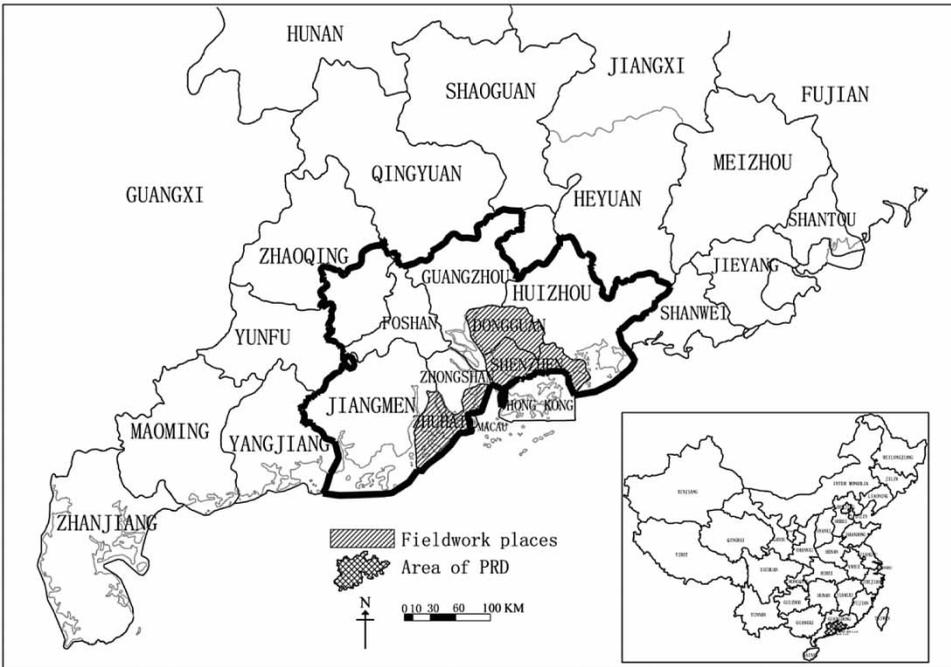


Figure 1. The fieldwork places and area of the PRD.

To represent the motives of rural women's migration at the household scale, we focus on the intra-household relationships among different members, especially between migrants and their parents, husbands, male siblings, children, etc. We post three models to explain their diverse migratory motivation: (1) filial daughters whose migration is a part of the household economic strategies, (2) liberal daughters whose migration is for individual welfare and (3) ambivalent factory mothers struggling between childcare and paid work.

Filial daughters: migration as a part of the household economic strategies

Filial peasant daughters have been referred to by Gaetano (2004) and Woon (2000). Their migration is not decided by themselves, but by their parents. These peasant daughters are required by parents to send back remittance frequently. Why do they have to accept parents' arrangements to become migrant workers far away from their hometowns?

First, it's more likely for rural young women to become surplus labors than other family members. By the end of 2006, one rural household contained 0.6 ha agricultural land on average in China, including farmland, grassland, woodland, etc. (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2008). One factory woman told us that there were four members³ in her household in Hunan Province, but they only had 2 mu (1 ha = 15 mu) of farmland, and the income from land was not enough to support her family at all (Interview 2009-06-29-I). When the land resource is not abundant, surplus rural labor will appear in households. Young peasant daughters, who are culturally and ideologically excluded from the heavy work of agriculture, become superfluous laborers at first. At this time, they would seek off-farm employment in cities, especially when their parents learn that young women are more employable in coastal factories (Zhang 2007).

Second, patriarchy and gender discrimination in the household are important for rural young women's leaving villages. "The daughter, who has got married, likes the water which has been poured out" is employed by Chinese to describe the relationship between daughters and families. Once the daughters get married, they are not valued as domestic laborers for natal families, which is caused by patrilocal marriage. Therefore, peasant daughters usually cannot gain parental support and investment on education. Many rural parents consider raising daughters a "losing business" since daughters will leave and join another family after marriage. However, raising sons is different in their minds, since they regard raising sons as family name continuation and support for their elderly lives. According to a survey in Gansu Province in 2007, it is still true that rural families expect future support from sons more than daughters and consider daughters as less capable or less worthy of investment (Hannum, Kong, and Zhang 2009). Our informants in South China's factories claimed that some rural parents hoped their daughters could contribute to the natal family economy as much as possible before marriage, such as dropping out of school, helping in farmland, working as migrant workers in factories or even demanding high bride premiums for marriage. Daughters do not obtain the same status as their male siblings, which is one of the reasons why they accept parents' arrangements to become migrant workers in coastal factories.

Third, peasant daughters are always the first victims of the poor rural family economy. Several women respondents mentioned that their families were poor, thus they had to move to work as migrant workers to earn money. Ms Song, who came from Hunan Province, was a sewing worker in a factory of Dongguan at the time of interview. She went out to work at the age of 16 when she just finished junior high school. Being asked the question about equality between her male sibling and her in household, she had a sigh and said,

at that time, my school performance was better than my little brother. However, my family was so poor that my parents did not have enough money to afford both of our school fees. There was actually

unfairness between boys and girls in the household. If not, why was the one who had to drop out school me, not my little brother? (Interview 2009-06-30-D)

The case of Ms Song is not unique, which is common and happening to millions of rural young women in China, especially in inland and undeveloped areas. Ms Song narrated gender preference in the household by using the case of her school. Interestingly, it is rare that rural sons have to drop out of school to be migrant workers to earn money to support their female siblings' school. Rural young women are at the lowest status in the household due to gender and age. They have to be filial to accept parents' arrangement to move out as migrant workers in coastal factories.

In addition to the above three points, a strong willingness to return financial support to their natal families before marriage is another important reason for peasant daughters' migration. Under the custom of a pooled income for family farming, the majority of young women working on the land do not get an independent wage, and it is difficult to distinguish their contribution to the household income from others in family (Zhang 1999). With off-farm employment in cities, factory maidens in our samples believe that they can contribute to their natal family economy. Ms Zhao, who came from the nonPRD area of Guangdong province, was a worker in a plastic hardware factory in Dongguan. She went out to work in the PRD after senior high school. Her younger brother was studying medicine in a university at the same time. Her father paid her younger brother's tuition fee and she supported his accommodation. Ms Zhao was required to send RMB 600–700 to her brother every month. About the remittance, she said, "I do not hope any payback from my little brother for my financial support in recent several years. ... I just consider it as a form of repaying my parents (Interview 2009-06-26-C)". Parents realize that the time before marriage is the golden period for daughters to contribute to the natal family economy, so they also hope their daughters remit as much as they can by using the ideology of returning to previous parental support.

In summary, the filial daughter model posits that young rural women move away from home to work in cities under the pressure from parents. As surplus household laborers and victims of poor family, filial rural daughters have to accept their parents' arrangement to be migrant workers in cities. On the one hand, rural daughters' migration helps to reduce financial burden in the household, such as saving tuition fees. On the other hand, rural daughters' migration helps to increase household income as they are required to send remittance. Their parents feel contented with the benefit from daughters' migration, but the parent–daughter relationship is not close in filial daughters' families where parents play the roles of demanders.

Liberal daughters: migration for individual welfare

The filial daughter model can only explain rural women migrants whose migration follows parents' arrangements. However, many rural parents can support their daughters' education. They do not need their daughters' remittance either, and even some of them are willing to support their daughters' outside lives financially. Why do these rural daughters still migrate out to work in the factories far away from their hometowns? Economic reasons to maximize household income cannot explain these rural daughters' migration motivation. Contrary to filial daughters, their migratory decision is made by themselves, not their parents, and they are entitled liberal daughters in our research.

In our questionnaire survey, the respondents are asked to evaluate six migratory reasons by using a 7-point Likert Scale. There are seven degrees for each reason, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In the analysis, we first value all the degrees: "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "slightly disagree" = 3, "no idea" = 4, "slightly agree" = 5, "agree" = 6 and "strongly

Table 1. Results of the 7-point Likert Scale for various migration reasons by gender.

Reason	Male samples		Female samples		<i>t</i> -Test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
It is difficult to get a job with high wage in hometown	4.49	1.90	4.33	1.77	1.07
To live independently	4.96	1.76	5.13	1.60	-1.25
To make money to support families	4.92	1.72	5.04	1.59	-0.91
To accompany families	3.64	1.89	4.23	1.82	3.72***
To broaden view	5.20	1.63	5.52	1.27	-2.49**
To enjoy urban life	3.44	1.96	3.16	1.72	1.72

** $P < 0.01$.

*** $P < 0.001$.

Source: Authors' survey (2009).

agree" = 7. Table 1 is the result of the 7-point Likert Scale for six migratory reasons, categorized by gender. We find that "to broaden view" is the most popular reason for both women and men respondents.

Life in the countryside is simple, boring and not as charming as cities in many rural migrants' minds. The villages go to sleep at night and there is little entertainment. However, cities never go to sleep and there are bars, cyber cafes, supermarkets, etc. Rural young women are eager to travel to cities to broaden their views and get more life experience.

Moreover, agricultural production and rural life is tough and rural young women want to move out to cities. Several factory maidens in our fieldwork agreed that they are more comfortable with factory jobs than farm works, because farmers need to work outdoors under any weather condition including sun, rain and snow, but factory workers usually work indoors with air conditioners in some factories. Moreover, farmers never have rest on weekends or during holiday, as agricultural production is a continuous and uninterrupted process, especially when dealing with diverse plants in the same time. In short, rural young women are not willing to stay on farmland as their parents are, but want to move out to work in cities.

Ms Tian, who came from Hunan Province, was working in an electronics factory in Shenzhen as a line leader at the time of the interview. About her migration, she said,

My father always hopes that I can continue to go to school and learn more. At that time, my father could make about RMB 800 a month, which would support my school fees. However, I saw that some girls in our village, who were five or six years older than I was, migrated out to work in Guangdong. In the Lunar New Year, they came back home with beautiful clothes They told me that the world outside was different from our village. I envied them so much that I told my father that I wanted to quit school and migrate to Guangdong to work. My father was so angry that he did not agree at first. We did not reach an agreement for a long time. At last, my father did agree. . . . One week later, I migrated out to Guangdong with two fellow villagers. (Interview 2009-07-24-F)

According to this case, liberal daughters are usually expected by parents to stay at home to continue school. Some factory matrons said that they went out to work for the first time after marriage, since their parents did not allow them to leave their hometowns and work far away alone. However, many peasant daughters are not satisfied with the simple and tough life in the countryside anymore as their parents, especially when they learn that being migrant workers in cities can help them break away from traditional rural life.

In addition, "to live independently" is the second most popular reason for liberal peasant daughters' migration, according to our questionnaire survey. Living independently does not

only indicate economic independence, but also more autonomy from parents. Rural households are full of patriarchy and parents want to control their children strictly about everything. Parental controls on daughters are stronger than on sons. But the power by parents is reduced due to the geographical distance with their daughters after their daughters leave. Rural young women feel more liberal after migration. They can make friends freely without parents' strict supervisions. Many young women migrants enjoy the independence and liberty, while they are leaving their parents and working in the PRD, which is one of the attractions of migration in their minds.

Ms Hu, who came from Hubei, was working at an assembly line in a plastic hardware factory in Dongguan. About migration, she said,

in 2002, when I was 15, I did not like to go to school. Therefore, I went out to work with my elder sister. We firstly went to Guangzhou and had been there for several years . . . Last year, my mother asked me to go back home and work in the factories nearby. She said the current pay in hometown is higher than before. However, I do not want to go back, because I think that the best thing outside is that I am not supervised strictly by our parents anymore. This is also what I enjoy the most. (Interview 2009-09-26-A)

In contrast to the filial daughters, the liberal daughters made migratory decisions by themselves. Their migration is not driven by the household demand, but by their individual desire for personal autonomy, self-development and improvement of life chances. The liberalness is particularly common among better-educated young rural women, according to our fieldwork, which is also consistent with previous research (Woon 2000; Zhang 2007). Formal education has played an important role in rural women's migration in China as it helps them to break away from the traditional norms and attitudes that tie women to domestic activities and restrain women's ability to participate in labor activities outside the home community (Yang and Guo 1999).

Ambivalent factory mothers: negotiations among accompanying husbands, childcare and paid employment

Models of filial and liberal daughters can only represent the migration of factory maidens, but there are also many working mothers in the factories. Mothers are supposed to stay at home to look after their children and elders. There are 253 married women respondents in our questionnaire survey and 237 of them have child(ren). However, about three quarters of their children are stayed behind in hometowns, when working in the PRD. Why do they need to leave hometown to work far away as migrants in the PRD? Most previous studies regard married women's migration as dependent on their husbands (Raghuram 2004). Thus, the first question we want to examine is whether the factory mothers in our samples are dependent migrants.

The samples in the questionnaire survey include 253 married women migrants and 218 of them are living with their husbands in the same city. So nearly 90% of the women respondents migrate with their husbands, who are spouse migrants. Among the married women respondents, 48% agree that "to accompany their husbands" is one reason for their migration, but only 10% indicate that their migrations are decided by husbands, while 84% consider that they are the decision-makers for their migration. They are ambivalent about their migration and they experience negotiations among accompanying husbands, childcare and paid employment.

Ms Xie, who came from Hebei Province, explained her dilemma when she made her decision to migrate.

My husband went to Dongguan to work when my son was about ten years old. . . . At that time, the life was much tougher for my husband when he was working outside alone. He had to cook and wash

clothes by himself. No one would take care of him if he was sick. A few years later, I also migrated out and left my son to be looked after by his grandmother in our hometown. ... However, working outside is painful because we need to separate from our son. We feel ashamed that he was growing up alone in our hometown all these years. ... It is a difficult decision. If I stay at home, I cannot take care of my husband and if I migrate out with my husband, I cannot look after my son. (Interview 2008-12-28-A)

Although it is the first explanation for married rural women's migration, "to accompany husband" is not the only one. Thus, factory mothers are not the dependent migrants as in international migration and their motivation for migration is not just to follow their husband, but to earn as much as they can to support the families in countryside.

Besides accompanying their husbands, rural mothers' moving is also for maximizing household income. They mentally negotiate between childcare and paid employment. Ms Li, who came from Hunan province, was working in a factory of Dongguan, while her husband was also working in another factory nearby. In her mind, she was not willing to leave her children far away to work in the PRD.

Indeed, I would not like to move. I prefer to stay in my hometown even though I need to work harder and may be more tired. But I can look after my son and daughter if I stay at home. ... My husband asked me to go out with him. He told me that working outside is not as tiresome as working at home (farming) and can bring higher income for us. ... For the welfare of our children, I agreed with my husband and migrated out to work several years ago. (Interview 2009-06-29-E)

One important reason for rural mothers' leaving their children is that they cannot make enough money in rural areas to feed their families. They are low-educated and unskilled and the only way to earn money is to be migrant workers in coastal areas (Fan 2003). Rural mothers have a clear motivation for migrating: to earn money to support families, which is different from filial and liberal daughters.

Why cannot they make a good life in rural areas? The most important reason is the unequal development between rural and urban areas, as well as between agriculture and industry (Shen 2011). China is a typical case of a dual economy. It has supported the development of secondary and tertiary industries in cities, but neglected rural development for many years. Rural residents cannot make enough income from agricultural production for their families, and there is not enough off-farm employment opportunities in the countryside (Zhang 2007), thus they have to seek employment as migrants in cities. One respondent wrote down her experience about migration from the countryside to cities in her questionnaire: "farmland work is just for physical exercise, but not for money. So I have to go out to earn money for life". Many Chinese peasants cannot profit from agriculture production, which is a push factor for their departure. This is because their farmland is limited and cannot achieve economies of scale, and the price of agricultural products has not been valued for many years.

Rural mothers usually go out with their husbands after the Lunar New Year, and return home several days before the next Lunar New Year. They get together with their children in hometown during Lunar New Year holidays. But some factory mothers do not go back home every year as the transportation fee around Lunar New Year is much higher than usual. Their migration is at the expense of separating from their children for a long time. According to one investigation in Beijing, during 2004–2005, most of the migrants' children stay in their hometown for education due to the *hukou* system, administrative and financial barriers (Goodburn 2009). It's a dilemma for rural mothers to make migratory decisions, since they are suffering negotiations among accompanying husbands in cities, childcare in hometowns and paid employment in the urban labor market. The unequal development between rural and urban areas, as well as between agriculture and industry, is crucial reasons for rural mothers' departure from villages. Interestingly, few

rural fathers have strong emotional ambivalence as rural mothers between migrant work and leaving their children, because they are constructed as “working outside” in traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, women are supposed to work inside on housework, childcare and elder care. Moreover, few rural fathers in our research considered accompanying their wives is one migratory motivation.

The ratio among three groups of rural women migrants in the PRD

In our fieldwork, we met all of the three groups of factory women: filial daughters, liberal daughters and ambivalent mothers. However, the ratio for each group is not equal to each other. We estimate the ratio among them according to several steps based on our questionnaire survey samples. At first, we distinguish maiden migrants from married factory women, according to their marriage. Then, we separate filial daughters and liberal daughters among factory maidens by two variables: one is who made their migratory decision (themselves, parents or others); the other is whether they were required for remittance by families. We define filial daughters’ migration as decided by their parents and they are required to remit back home at the same time. In our questionnaire samples, only 2.4% women respondents are filial daughters, but 32% of them are identified as liberal daughters because they make migratory decisions by themselves, and are not required for remittance by families. Besides, 39.6% of them are ambivalent factory mothers (Table 2). The number of liberal daughters is much larger than filial daughters. This is caused by rural development, their parents’ increasing earning power and lower fertility in the countryside. Rural economy, especially in urban fringes and outskirts, has developed rapidly in recent years by more and more supports from the state, remittances from rural migrants and relocations of industries within China. Factory maiden workers’ parents are at the age of 40–60, who are still active in labor market. Some of their parents work at off-farm jobs in their hometowns and some also work as migrants. Their parents’ earning power liberates peasant daughters from heavy financial burdens of remittance. Lower fertility, result of family planning policies, means that most peasant daughters have no more than one sibling, which brings them more parental support such as education. Better education contributes to rural young women’s liberalness and breaking away from the traditional lives of rural women, such as their mothers and grandmothers.

However, there are other two cohorts: one group is the rural women who make migratory decisions by themselves, but are required remittance by family (15.6%); the other group is the rural women who follow the decision of others, but are not required remittance (4%). Therefore, it is not easy and not necessary to categorize every respondent into one specific group. We present

Table 2. The proportion of filial daughters, liberal daughters and ambivalent mothers.

	Indicators	Remittance required	Remittance nonrequired	Subtotal
Unmarried female labor migrants	Migratory decision by respondents	93 (15.6%)	192 (32.1%)	285 (47.7%)
	Migratory decision by others	14 (2.4%)	24 (4.0%)	39 (6.5%)
	Subtotal	107 (17.9%)	217 (36.3%)	324 (54.2%)
Married female labor migrant	With children	237 (39.6%)		
	Without children		19 (3.2%)	
	Subtotal	256 (42.8%)		
Missing data		18 (3.0%)		
Total data		598 (100%)		

Source: Authors’ survey (2009).

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groups of filial daughters, liberal daughters and ambivalent mothers to explain rural women's migration to cities at the household scale generally, but not to categorize every rural woman into one specific group.

Conclusion

Besides *hukou* system (Chan 2012; Chan and Zhang 1999), the labor market (Fan 2002) and individual-level attributes (Zhu and Chen 2010), we argue that the household is also an important scale in rural–urban migration study in China. Most researchers argue that unmarried women's migration is for maximizing household economic income (Lawson 1998) and married women are dependent migrants (Raghuram 2004). However, rural women's migration in China is much more complicated. Our research draws on factory workers' migratory experience to reveal why rural women leave home to be migrants in the PRD from the household scale. We emphasize intra-household relationships in migration research and employ narratives of rural women migrants and their family members, including parents, husbands and children, to represent the household power hierarchy, as well as women's roles in families. We suggest models of filial daughters, liberal daughters and ambivalent mothers to explain diverse migratory motives for factory women in the PRD.

Filial daughters' migration is decided by their parents to maximize household economic income. They are usually the surplus laborers, victims of poverty, patriarchy and gender discrimination in the household. They have a strong willingness to financially support natal families before marriage. However, liberal daughters want to migrate out to broaden their views because rural life is simple and tough. To "live independently" and "get more autonomy from parents" are the popular reasons for liberal daughters' departures from countryside. Factory mothers are in a dilemma as migrants because after migration they can accompany husbands and earn money, but they cannot take care of their children who are staying behind in hometowns.

More importantly, we have placed rural women migration in the particular background of regional development in China, and find that there are many more liberal daughters, who are for individual wellbeing and more autonomy from parents, than filial daughters, who are for maximizing household economic income. The reasons have been explained by aspects of rural economic development, their parents' increasing earning power and low fertility in rural areas. We present the complexity of rural women's migration that rural mothers' migration is not only tied to their husbands, but also the outcome of negotiation and consideration of various choices of accompanying husbands, childcare and paid work. Therefore, rural women are playing active roles in their migratory decision-making, which is different from previous research about women and migration.

Building on *hukou* system (Chan 2012), labor market (Fan 2002) and individual-level attributes (Zhu and Chen 2010), the paper contributes to a better understanding of rural women's migration process especially at the household scale. The representation of the motivation of women migrants is useful to reveal the dynamics of regional migration and urbanization in China at the household scale and beyond.

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Notes

1. Rural/factory maidens are the young women who are not married, to which filial daughters and liberal daughters belong.
2. Rural/factory matrons are the married women who usually have child(ren), to which ambivalent mothers belong.
3. It's a nuclear family that there are parents and two children.

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